



REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LANGAGE ET DE PEDAGOGIE

ACTES DU DEUXIEME COLLOQUE DU CEBELAE

SUR LE THEME

ENSEIGNEMENT ET APPRENTISSAGE DES LANGUES ETRANGERES DANS LE CONTEXTE MULTILINGUE AFRICAIN : ENJEUX, DEFIS ET PERSPECTIVES

(Université d'Abomey-Calavi du 28 au 30 juin 2023)

**REVUE SEMESTRIELLE DU CENTRE BENINOIS DES LANGUES
ETRANGERES (CEBELAE)
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JUIN 2023

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« ENSEIGNEMENT ET APPRENTISSAGE DES LANGUES ETRANGERES DANS
LE CONTEXTE MULTILINGUE AFRICAIN : ENJEUX, DEFIS ET PERSPECTIVES »

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LIGNE EDITORIALE ET DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

1. LIGNE EDITORIALE

La *Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P)* est une revue scientifique spécialisée qui couvre les domaines de recherche tels que les lettres, la linguistique, la sociolinguistique, la didactique, les sciences de l'éducation et les sciences sociales. Les articles que nous y publions peuvent être écrits en français, en anglais, en espagnol ou en allemand. Ces articles sont reçus au secrétariat du comité de rédaction de la revue et envoyés en évaluation. Ceux qui ont reçu un avis favorable à leur soumission sont sélectionnés pour une réévaluation par les membres du comité scientifique en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Après les travaux préliminaires du secrétariat, le spécimen du numéro à publier est envoyé au comité scientifique et de lecture pour des corrections éventuelles et la vérification de la conformité des articles aux normes de publication de la revue.

Notons que les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

➤ La taille des articles

Volume : 12 à 15 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture (taille) : 12 ; police : Times New Roman.

➤ Ordre logique du texte

- Un **TITRE** en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long (au plus 2 lignes) ;
- Un Résumé est fait en français et en anglais ou en allemand (pour les articles rédigés en allemand). Le résumé doit comporter 50 à 200 mots maximum avec pour interligne 1. ;

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Les mots clés au nombre de 05 font partie du résumé ;

- Le second résumé ou abstract est juste la traduction du résumé original. Il est aussi fait de mots clés exactement comme dans le premier cas et suit les mêmes restrictions par rapport au nombre de mots ;
- Une Introduction ;
- Un Développement ;

Les articulations du développement du texte doivent être titrées et / ou sous titrées ainsi :

➤ Pour le **Titre** de la première section et sous-section

1 . Pour le titre de la première section

1.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section

1.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la première section,
etc.

➤ Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section

2. Pour le titre de la deuxième section

2.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section de la deuxième section

2.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la deuxième section,
etc.

➤ **Conclusion**

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la recherche

➤ **Bibliographie**

Les sources effectivement consultées et citées dans le texte doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulé :

- **Références Bibliographiques**

Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, Zone

titre, Lieu de publication, Zone Editeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif.

- Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Editeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2^{de} éd.).

- **La présentation des notes**

La rédaction n'admet que des notes en bas de page. **Les notes en fin de texte ne sont pas tolérées.** Les citations dans le corps du texte doivent être indiquées par un retrait avec tabulation 1 cm à gauche avec le texte mis en taille 11 et interligne 1.

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Le comité scientifique et de lecture est le seul organe capable de porter des jugements sur la scientificité des textes publiés. Le comité de rédaction de la revue s'occupe de la publication des textes retenus par le comité scientifique et de lecture.

Les avis et opinions scientifiques émis dans les articles n'engagent que leurs propres auteurs. Les textes non publiés ne sont pas retournés.

La présentation des figures, cartes, graphiques...doit respecter le format (format : 15/21) de la mise en page de *RIL@P*.

Tous les articles doivent être envoyés à l'adresse suivante : rilap2022@gmail.com et copie faite aux adresses (courriels) suivantes : rissikatouba@gmail.com / cebelaeuac@gmail.com .

NB : Un auteur dont l'article est retenu pour publication dans *RIL@P* participe aux frais d'édition par article et par numéro. Il reçoit, à titre gratuit, un tiré-à-part et une copie de la revue publiée à raison de quarante mille (40.000) francs CFA.

2. DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

La *Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P)* est un instrument au service des chercheurs qui s'intéressent à la publication d'articles et de comptes rendus de recherches approfondies dans les domaines ci-après :

- **Lettres :** littératures, cultures et civilisations ;
- **Langues :** linguistique, didactique des langues, traduction, interprétation des langues et communication ;
- **Sciences de l'éducation ;**
- **Sciences sociales ;**
- Les **sujets généraux d'intérêts vitaux** pour le développement des études en pédagogie, langues et sciences de l'éducation et sociales.

Au total, la *Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P)* se veut le lieu de rencontre et de dissémination de nouvelles idées et d'opinions savantes dans les domaines ci-dessus cités.

LE COMITE DE REDACTION

Colloque tenu à l'université d'Abomey-Calavi du 28 au 30 juin 2023

EDITORIAL

Au Bénin comme presque partout en Afrique, l'enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères se pratique par une diversité de méthodes : méthode directe, méthode par compétence, méthode communicative etc. Mais toutes ces méthodes ne permettent pas d'atteindre facilement l'objectif d'un enseignement/apprentissage efficient des langues étrangères visées ; ce qui fait penser aux limites de ces différentes approches d'enseignement dans le contexte multilinguisme africain. En effet, l'environnement d'apprentissage des langues étrangères en Afrique est caractérisé par la présence de plusieurs langues premières pratiquées au quotidien par les apprenants et qui ne sont pas sans impact sur le processus d'acquisition de la langue étrangère à apprendre. L'enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères dans un contexte comme celui-ci pose donc d'énormes difficultés pédagogiques et didactiques. D'où la nécessité de la transition linguistique Langues nationales (LN)/Langue étrangère (LE) dans une perspective interactionnelle en milieu plurilingue africain (J. Poth, cité par Agbéflé K. G. 2017). A cet effet, plusieurs stratégies ont été expérimentées dans la pratique de l'enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères pour la prise en compte de la langue première de l'apprenant. Linguistes, pédagogues et didacticiens de langue ont aussi proposé plusieurs théories en la matière.

L'objectif de ce colloque qui a réuni une soixantaine de participants est de croiser les regards de professionnels de l'éducation et de chercheurs (didacticiens, linguistes, pédagogues) travaillant selon

« ENSEIGNEMENT ET APPRENTISSAGE DES LANGUES ETRANGERES DANS LE CONTEXTE MULTILINGUE AFRICAIN : ENJEUX, DEFIS ET PERSPECTIVES »

différentes approches théoriques et issus d'horizons variés, afin d'identifier les difficultés actuellement rencontrées, les actions mises en œuvre et les perspectives qui se dégagent selon les différents contextes d'enseignement des langues étrangères en Afrique. Les communications ont porté sur les thématiques suivantes :

Thématique 1 : Approches théoriques d'enseignements des langues étrangères et plurilinguisme

Thématique 2 : Interactions plurilingues en contextes didactiques des langues étrangères

Thématique 3 : Culture et enseignement des langues étrangères

Thématique 4 : Numérique et enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères en Afrique

Thématique 5 : Homme, société, culture et langues

Dr Rissikatou MOUSTAPHA BABALOLA,
Maître de Conférences des Universités (CAMES),
Présidente du comité d'organisation

Colloque tenu à l'université d'Abomey-Calavi du 28 au 30 juin 2023

SOMMAIRE

THEMATIQUE 1 : APPROCHES THEORIQUES D'ENSEIGNEMENTS DES LANGUES ETRANGERES ET PLURILINGUISME1

1. Teaching Practices by using Andragogy Approach for EFL Teachers Trainees in Benin

Arlette J. Viviane HOUNHANOU

& Enagnon Françoise KOUYE.....2

2. English as a Foreign Language Needs Identification in Companies Specialised in Construction and Public Works for a Syllabus Design for Engineers at a University Technical Institute

Martin ADJINAN, Dossou Flavien LANMANTCHION,

& Juvenale AGBAYAHOUN-PATINVOH.....17

3. Educational Philosophy: A Critical Analysis of Four Major Philosophies for English

Mathieu Démondji TOSSOU.....37

4. Retard dans le Processus d'Aquisition du Français : Cas des Enfants Scolarises Agés de 4 Ans ½ - 6 Ans

Médard Dominique BADA

Obanshola Agnila Léonard Clément BABALOLA

& Mikaël Pierre-Désiré VIEGBE.....45

Colloque tenu à l'université d'Abomey-Calavi du 28 au 30 juin 2023

**THEMATIQUE 2 : INTERACTIONS PLURILINGUES EN CONTEXTES
DIDACTIQUES DES LANGUES ETRANGERES.....68**

**5. Effective Use of English in EFL Classes to develop Learners
Communicative Skills with some Secondary Schools of Oueme Region
in Benin Republic**

Sourou Corneille TEBA, Morel Marly MENSAH,

Sourou Désiré Christel ZINSOUVI & Bertin Y. DANSOU.....69

**6. Mehrsprachigkeit und DaF-Unterricht in Senegal: Vorschläge für die
Berücksichtigung der Mehrsprachigkeitsdidaktik in der
Lehrerbildung**

Ibrahima DIOP.....81

**7. Exploring Time-Management Impediments in Upper Secondary EFL
Classes in Benin's Ouémé-Atlantique-Littoral Region**

Coffi Martinien ZOUNHIN TOBOULA, Sylvestre Dèkandé TCHAGNONHOU

& Sessito Emeline VIHAYINOU.....98

**8. Contrastive Analysis of Gengbe and the English syllable structures at
onset level as used by Beninese Secondary Schools EFL learners of
the Mono region**

Régis Orens Kobéna Afadzi JOHNSON

Célestin AMOUSSOU & Flavien GBETO122

9. An Appraisal Perspective of English Language Student Teachers' Practicum at a Teacher Education College in Benin Republic.

Martin AHOUCANDJINO, Dossou Flavien LANMANTCHION,

& Juvenale AGBAYAHOUN-PATINVOH137

10. Quand les Langues de tous Elèves Tchadiens Rentrent en Classe

Isabelle GRAPPE

& Rufine L. SAMMA.....164

11. Introduction des langues nationales béninoises dans le système éducatif formel : une nécessité impérieuse pour leur vitalité et pour le développement

Bienvenu AZEHOUNGBO.....187

THEMATIQUE 3 : CULTURE ET ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES ETRANGERES.....198

12. English Language Learning Achievements in Secondary Schools: Perspectives for Language Certification in Benin

Azoua Mathias HOUNNOU, Bienvenu ADJOHA

& Mètogbé Agnès Laetitia YEGO.....199

13. The Contribution of English Clubs to the Teaching and Learning of EFL with Post-Beginners at Lycée Toffa 1^{er}, Porto-Novo

Akimi YESSOUFOU

& Crépin D. LOKO213

**THEMATIQUE 4 : NUMERIQUE ET ENSEIGNEMENT/APPRENTISSAGE DES
LANGUES ETRANGERES EN AFRIQUE.....226**

**14. Covid-19 and the Growth of e-Learning in Beninese Universities:
Impacts on Learners' Academic Performance**

Amadou SALAMI, Hogbeyetonle Issiaka DOSSOU-ABATA

& Israël Sunday DOTCHAMOU.....227

THEMATIQUE 5 : HOMME, SOCIETE, CULTURE ET LANGUES.....241

**15. Exploring Language Variation Features in Nigerian Pidgin English: A
Case Study of P-Square's *Chop my Money* and Yemi Alade's *Na Gode***

Servais Dieu-Donné Yédia DADJO.....242

**16. Students with Learning Disabilities in Teacher Education Programs:
Case Study of an English Department**

Fifonsi Chimène ZOHOUN, Dossou Flavien LANMANTCHION,

& Juvenale AGBAYAHOUN-PATINVOH.....260

THEMATIQUE 3 :

CULTURE ET ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES ETRANGERES

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ENGLISH CLUBS TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF EFL WITH POST-BEGINNERS AT LYCÉE TOFFA 1^{ER}, PORTO-NOVO

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Abstract:

This research intends to show the contribution of English club activities to communicative English learning in a French-speaking context like Benin. The study proceeds by a test/control research approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data have thus been collected using two tests, interview and direct observation with a sample of 20 participants of whom 16 students in the fourth form, four EFL teachers from Lycée Toffa 1^{er} de Jeunes Filles in Porto-Novo. After grading the students' oral and written productions, the study discovers that 75% of the student club members obtained the average grade of 10 out of 20, while only 12.5% of non-member students made it. It appears that students' participation in English club activities is beneficial not only for improving their English language skills, but also for developing their personality. As for the EFL teachers, they report to have gained more in terms of innovative teaching strategies, and improvement their speaking skill, by attending the club.

Key-words: English club, speaking, writing, communicative EFL learning, Lycée Toffa 1^{er}

Résumé:

Cette recherche vise à montrer la contribution des activités des clubs d'anglais à l'apprentissage de l'anglais parlé dans un contexte francophone comme celui du Bénin. L'étude procède par une approche de recherche test/contrôle, combinant à la fois des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives. Les données ont donc été collectées à l'aide de deux tests, d'entretiens et d'observations directes auprès d'un échantillon de 20 participants dont 16 élèves, et 4 enseignants d'anglais au Lycée Toffa 1^{er} de Porto-Novo. Après avoir noté les productions orales et écrites des élèves, l'étude révèle que 75 % des élèves membres du club ont obtenu la moyenne de 10 sur 20, contre seulement 12,5 % des élèves non membres. Il apparaît que la participation des étudiants aux activités des clubs d'anglais est bénéfique non seulement pour améliorer leur anglais, mais aussi pour développer leur personnalité. Quant aux professeurs d'anglais, ils déclarent avoir gagné davantage en termes de stratégies d'enseignement innovantes et d'amélioration de leurs compétences orales en participant au club.

Mots clés : Club d'anglais, l'oral, l'écrit, apprentissage communicatif de l'anglais, Lycée Toffa 1^{er}

1. Introduction and literature review

Extracurricular activities are known to supplement instructional classroom activities as they provide learners with authentic opportunities to learn practically. Such an opportunity in EFL learning contexts is the English club, a space within or outside the school where individuals who have some interest in the English language meet on a voluntary basis to

practice the language and gain more fluency. English clubs are not only for students. Malu and Smedley (2016) advocate for « a community-based English club », when such clubs are defined as « informal gatherings of individuals who meet regularly and often voluntarily and who come from different parts of a community, town or village, for the express purpose of practicing English. Members may be professionals or students at secondary or university levels » (p 11).

In Benin, a French speaking country in West Africa, English as a foreign language is a mandatory subject at secondary school for all students. Yet, the teaching, learning and assessing of English in most Benin secondary schools emphasize more language correctness rather than competences like fluency, for example. Consequently, many students graduate from the school system are unable to practice English whether in writing or speaking, after a minimum of seven years of learning English (Mante 2022: 4). In order to cope with this situation and give students opportunities to practice the language, school-based English club initiatives emerge with the good will of some volunteer EFL teachers. In Lycée Toffa 1^{er}, an elite girls' school, such an initiative tried to make the difference with the other school's English club. How has this initiative of the English club at Lycée Toffa 1^{er} at Porto-Novo impacted student members' communicative performance in English? Do students who attend the club activities perform better at English in classes than non-members? Which club activities exert more positive impact on student members' communicative performance? The objective behind these research questions is to assess the effects of participating in extra-curricular activities such as English club activities on the communicative skills of student members.

2. Review of Literature: Strengths and weaknesses of English clubs

Learning EFL in regular classrooms bears some constraints for students. The curriculum, the textbooks as well as the time devoted to EFL classes in Benin often prevent both teachers and learners to take initiatives. It is, thus hard to move out of the box, the jargon of the learning situations and the classroom protocols. Developing communicative skills is, therefore, limited by these constraints. In addition, learners' lack of interest in learning English, their perceived complexity of English compared to French, and the fear of making mistakes compromise their practice of English, at least in speaking. In such a context, attending English clubs appears to be a stopgap measure to create, for a little while, English-speaking environment, especially in secondary schools. Regular and effective English club attendance

is known to help club members to improve their communicative skill, as they take advantage to break the classroom barriers that limit their abilities to learn and practise the language.

According to Malu and Smedely (2016, p.11), an English club is a group of people who meet regularly to practise the four basic language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. Thus, English clubs aim more than communicative language practice, to imply interpersonal relationship. Not only club participants gain individually by improving their communicative skills, they also share experiences and address community issues.

To set up an English club, it is very important to “make decision about who can join the club, where and when the club can meet, for how long the club can meet and what happen during the club session” (Malu and Smedely 2016:11-12). Such decisions embrace aspects pertaining to the leading board of the club, its organizational pattern regarding materials and finances, as well as the programmes to be implemented therein. In this vein, Malu and Smedely (2016, p.10) explain, “these members may be professionals or students at secondary and university levels.” This suggests that English club leaders and participants are, in general, available people, appointed among peers students and EFL teachers, ready to devote their time to the smooth running of the activities of the club. The leading board of an English club comprises a group director, a note-taker, a timekeeper, a vocabulary collector and a grammarian, a song analyst, etc. Such an organization influences students’ self-organization and discipline, and thereby guarantees a relaxing atmosphere at the club meetings. Possibly, each club member is assigned a task or role.

Effective achievement in English during the club sessions depends on certain conditions as has warned Malu and Smedely (2016):

Community-based English clubs are designed for groups of people to come together primarily to practise language. They are not classrooms with teachers and students. They are safe, nurturing, supportive environments where those who wish to immerse themselves in English for a few hours can do so. Again, it is important that the club leader assumes the role of a guide or facilitator and not of a teacher who focuses on error correction. English clubs offer creative opportunities for communities to experiment and play with language and to practise using English in an atmosphere that is supportive, encouraging, and respectful. Clubs also offer members the chance to use English and join a group of like-minded individuals interested in pursuing a common goal. Furthermore, English clubs offer possibilities for community action if members take ownership of their club. It is theirs, and

meetings are theirs for them to do with as they wish. Taking this approach offers members the opportunity to be as adventurous or playful and creative or serious as they wish. (p.23)

This quotation assumes that club members bear the great part of their learning responsibility, once they attend club sessions. The relaxed and conducive learning atmosphere allow them to build their own knowledge, it is a stress-free environment. As for EFL teachers in club sessions, they act as mentors and facilitators of learning who guide learners and nourish their motivation to learn, not as instructors. English clubs therefore learner-centred, provided that the club leaders monitor well the planned activities. Besides, Malu and Smedely (2016, p.11) states that “EFL teachers particularly those who are non-native speakers and lack opportunities to sustain their language proficiency also benefit from the clubs because they can practise English.”

Club activities target the development of the skills, respectively, in a pleasant English environment conducive to an efficient practice of the language. Thus, listening, which is the first step into English learning, is the root way to develop other English skills. In reality, listening is used far more than any other single language skill at English clubs, as it is in daily life. On average, Rivers (1980) and Weaver (1972) advise that we can expect to listen twice as much as we speak, four times more than we read and five times more than we write. Listening activities help club participants to improve effectively their level of understanding.

Furthermore, club activities significantly develop speaking and pronunciation. English clubs in school setting improve listening skills, especially when adequate materials like sound systems and authentic audio elements adapted to participants' level are used. Examples of listening activities usually performed at clubs include dialogue listening, song analysis for specific information (Nunan 2003, p.32), and secret messages (Thiagarajan, 1997).

As club members gain control of the listening skill, speaking becomes easier. As “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (Chaney and Burk, 1998, p.13), speaking proves to be more useful to club members. At the speaking stage, club leaders often tend to plan such activities as interaction or discussion, role-play, simulations, and storytelling which are spiced with aspects of memorization and characters imitation to improve their personal meaning making potential (Tharp and Gallimore 1998, Nunan, 2003:57, and Harmer 2007).

After listening and speaking which attract more attention from English club participants, reading is the third skill that learners also practice. Actually, reading is a skill that enriches learners' vocabulary and, by extension, guarantees the building of knowledge. Harmer (2007, p.99) argues, "reading is useful for language acquisition provided that students more or less understand what they read, the more they read, the better they get at it". Then, practicing reading at English clubs helps participants to improve pronunciation and produce good utterances so as to avoid miscommunication. Reading activities at English clubs include passages from various types of English books, texts, magazines, short stories, or understandable passages that they read and provide answers to the related questions.

Finally, English club attendance helps improve writing. This productive skill implies expressing the ideas, information, knowledge, or experience (White, 1986, p.10). During club sessions, participants are given short stories and newspapers or magazines to enhance their writing skills. They are sometimes asked to write down details and information of some events or ceremony that often take place in their area. They also participate in activities like book reading, newspaper reading, learning new words, and joke collection. Varieties of activities are carried out during club sessions to improve the writing skill of club members. Such activities include 'vocabulary story', to establish the wording as the basis of language (Mahmudah, 2004, p.3), and 'chain stories', to initiate a kind of collective writing of a single story on the board, as proposed by Bronagh (1993, p. 12), when he argues that "chain stories make writing enjoyable for students. If students are interested, they will be motivated and will not see writing as a boring activity" (*up cit.*, p.9). This funny activity not only exercises students' understanding of writing structures, but it also engages them in creative collaboration.

So far, the advantages of English clubs have been listed. Club sessions, beyond improving the basic four skills for EFL learners, favour mutual relationship and facilitate community life. EFL teachers who attend club sessions also benefit in language proficiency. Yet, there are a few weaknesses that undermine English clubs.

Mante (2022, p.12), assessing the strengths and weaknesses of English clubs in Benin, has discovered a series of pitfalls pertaining to club attendance, club activities and club leadership. As club attendance is on a voluntary basis, members are often irregular, which disturbs the occurrence of the planned activities. In addition, the fact that English clubs meet only once a week for two hours maximum prevents members to reach effective

communicative goals. Moreover, the variety of levels of club attendants is problematic. It is hard for club facilitators to manage such a diverse group of EFL learners composed of beginners, post beginners, intermediate learners, and sometimes-advanced learners. Outstanding and over motivated attendants thus disturb role distribution and participation, while the less proficient participants keep quiet all the time. In the same vein, attendance is sometimes out of control so that club activities are disturbed by disruptive behaviours and noise.

Regarding club activities, the same study has discovered that club leaders give priority to teacher-centred activities in most sessions, which is less engaging for participants. Indoor activities all the time make club sessions boring.

The most important difficulties encountered by English clubs are related to club leadership. As club leaders are unavailable, participants' motivation decreases and the feeling of wasting their time prevails. Moreover, the fact that club monitoring is a non-profit dedication, many EFL teachers are not interested, which demotivate participants who eventually give up if leaders are frequently missing. School administrations hardly support the initiative and no budget is booked for equipping the school club in materials.

3. Methodology

This research proceeded by a test-control design. The sampling scheme consisted in purposefully selecting sixteen students from form four in Lycée Toffa 1^{er} Girls School, of whom half were club members. All sixteen selected students were submitted to a test which consisted of a ten minutes conversation and writing in English. The students' oral productions have been recorded and graded along a scale of 20 points, which highlights language fluency, correctness, pronunciation, speech flow, appropriate vocabulary, and French interferences. As for the writing test, it consisted in producing a one-page coherent text in English, in the form of an essay, describing a birthday party that they had attended. The grading criteria consisted of language correctness, appropriate vocabulary, punctuation and the respect of the type of text.

After differentiating between club members and non-members, the research design proceeded by a comparison of the test results. Using the club members as the test population and the non-members as the control population, the design also probed some opinions by interviewing all four EFL teachers in grade 10, in order to supplement the data generated by this test/control technique.

Lycée Toffa 1^{er} in Porto-Novo municipality has served as the field of investigation in the current research. It is a long established girl secondary school that dated back to 1950 in colonial times (Yessoufou 2023, p.436). This elite school for girls was initially a boarding school, one of the six girl schools re-established by the Government of Benin in the late 1990s to promote girls' education. But recently, the school had to open for day girl students, so as to face some financial charges. *Les Gazelles English Club* of Lycée de Jeunes Filles Toffa 1^{er} is one of the students' associations of the school where students, teachers, as well as other participants meet on a weekly basis to improve their English proficiency. Of the 15 club members, all eight students in grade 10 and their two EFL teachers have been sampled for the research. Likewise, eight other students in grade 10 and two EFL teachers who were not club members took part in the research.

All four EFL teachers were interviewed on a one-on-one basis. While the interview allowed appraising their relationship with their students, it also helped to probe their proficiency in communicative English. With the consent of the teachers, the interviews too were recorded for further analysis. The research also proceeded by participant observation, as the research team has attended club sessions on three different occasions. The objective was to observe club members in session, assess the organization in place, compare the planning of activities to the reality of their performance and appraise the learning atmosphere during the sessions. A written report of each session was drafted on the spot to check for commonalities. Field data collection took place from April 19 to May 14, 2021. Secondary data such as reports and documents related to the club organisation, management, and relevant activities were also collected

4. Findings

a. *Les Gazelles English Club* of Lycée de Jeunes Filles Toffa 1^{er}

Though part of the students' associations in the school, the English club is less documented. It looks more like an informal organisation rather than a well-structured students' initiative. According to the account related by three EFL teachers who were among the club leaders, the club dated back to the school year ending in 2006 when an EFL teacher used to gather a few students who were motivated to learn English on Friday evenings for extracurricular activities. Membership is free of charge. But, after this teacher had left the school, the club shut down until 2018 when new volunteers reinitiated the club under the name of *Les Gazelles English Club*. This new leadership composed of both EFL teachers and

four students revitalized the club with regular activities, which won the club a prize in the national contest of English clubs organized by the United States of America Embassy in Benin in 2019 at Dassa Zoumé. The prize consisted of a paid visit to the USA for two, and a few learning materials. However, the Corona virus pandemics in 2020 forced the club to stop its activities until 2021, when a new leadership emerged after the former one had left the school. The most important achievements of the club were their participation in the 2018 contest at Parakou and that of 2019 at Dassa Zoumé. Among the club's achievements, the club leaders reported the pride of student club members who have graduated from the school to take up English studies at university, the prize won at the national contest in 2019, and the increased motivation to practice English, following the club's motto which is 'Practice makes perfect!'

b. The Effects of Participation in the English Club on Students' Performance in English

The following tables present the results of both tests.

Table 1. Test results in oral communication for club member 10th graders

Identity	Fluency	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Grade
A	6/8	4/6	5/6	15/20
B	5/8	4/6	5/6	15/20
C	7/8	5/6	5/6	17/20
D	4/8	4/6	3/6	11/20
E	6/8	3/6	3 /6	12/20
F	3/8	2/6	2/6	07/20
G	4/8	4/6	3/6	11/20
H	2/8	3/6	2/6	07/20

Of all the eight students who are members of the English club, only two missed the average grade in the oral communication test. In terms of percentage, 75% have developed their listening and speaking skills quite well against 25%.

Table 2. Test results in writing for club member 10th graders

Identity	Correctness	Punctuation	Vocabulary	Text type	Grade
A	3/5	5/5	4/5	5/5	17/20
B	3/5	4/5	3/5	4/5	14/20

C	2/5	3/5	4/5	3/5	12/20
D	2/5	3/5	2/5	03/5	10/20
E	2/5	2/5	3/5	2/5	09/20
F	1/5	2/5	2/5	3/5	08/20
G	4/5	5/5	4/5	5/5	18/20
H	2/5	3/5	2/5	2/5	09/20

As for the writing production test, five of the eight students who were club members got the average grade, which is 75% of this category. This means that 25% of them missed the average grade.

Table 3. Test results in oral communication for non-club member 10th graders

Identity	Fluency	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Grade
I	3/8	2/6	2/6	07/20
J	2/8	1/6	2/6	05/20
K	3/8	2/6	1/6	06/20
L	4/8	3/6	3/6	10/20
M	1/8	1/6	2/6	04/20
N	3/8	2/6	2/6	07/20
O	1/8	1/6	2/6	04/20
P	5/8	4/6	4/6	13/20

When it comes to the non-club members who took the same test, the results show that six of them that is 75% missed the average grade, meaning that only two, that is 25% obtained the average grade.

Table 4. Test results in writing for club member 10th graders

Identity	Correctness	Punctuation	Vocabulary	Text type	Grade
I	1/5	2/5	2/5	2/5	07/20
J	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	04/20
K	1/5	1/5	2/5	1/5	05/20
L	2/5	2/5	2/5	01/5	07/20
M	0/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	03/20

N	1/5	1/5	2/5	1/5	05/20
O	0/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	03/20
P	3/5	3/5	4/5	2/5	12/20

The lower performance trend gets worse when it come to the results in the writing test. Only one student got the average grade out of the eight. In terms of percentage, it is 12.5% of this category of non-club members who obtained the average grade in writing, meaning that the large majority (87.5%) of the sample from regular tenth graders have not developed sufficient capacities in the listening, speaking and writing skills so as to communicate in English.

5. Discussion

The effect of attending ‘*Les Gazelles English club*’ sessions is manifest, in regards with the results from the two tests taken by both categories of tenth graders in Lycée de Jeunes Filles Toffa 1^{er}. However manifest the effect of participation in club activities is for attendant students, the results from this investigation are appealing on three major aspects worth discussing.

First, it is noticed from Tables 1 and 2 that a few participants (students E, F and H) in club activities could not perform well even though they are club member; they missed the average grade in both tests, meaning that are lacking in language resources to communicate in English. Their weak performance though participating in club activities suggests that English club attendance does not automatically yield the effect of communicating in English. For this to happen, participation requires some prerequisites such as regularity in attendance, personal experience of English practice and the control of the basic language resources. In fact, club activities never consist in systematic teaching of language resources. It just creates opportunity to practice. Yet, in order to practice, one has to learn beforehand some basics of the language such as the sound patterns, language structure and usual vocabulary. The lack of good performance in English by these students despite their attendance also illustrates a major problem facing English clubs: the variety of the participants’ levels. In fact, a club session gathers students who are beginners and those who are of intermediate level. In the course of the activities, it happens that some participants just observe without taking initiatives. These are referred to as passive club members whose benefit from the club is not immediate.

The second aspect looks paradoxical, when one student who is not a member of the club succeeds in performing well in both tests. In fact Tables 3 and 4. show that student P obtained fairly good grades in both tests, suggesting that participation in club activities is not the only way of improving one's practice of the language in an EFL context where the language learning is artificial. This isolated case can be explained by the fact that this student is quite talented in English, has built a personal experience with the language and already possessed the basic resources to communicate. It is an evidence that the regular classroom experience of learning English is likely to yield something positive.

The third aspect in this discussion has to do with the side effect of participation in club activities. In fact, the benefit for attendants goes beyond their better performance in English, to encompass the development of personality qualities such as increased motivation, wellness, self-esteem and confidence, as mentioned an EFL teacher during an interview: "The girls feel valued, especially when you assign them tasks. They carry out research, prepare presentations and perform during the debate sessions" (interview on May 20th, 2021). Creativity is another side effect benefit for participants. Whether in drama performance, poetry declamation, games, role-play or other club activities, participants have the opportunity to develop creativity in terms of defining interesting discussion topics, finding resources, preparing and presenting the activities in a relaxed atmosphere free of stress. In a formal classroom setting, these abilities have less chance to prosper due to the constraints of classroom protocols. In fact, "English clubs offer creative opportunities for communities to experiment and play with language and practice using English in an atmosphere that is supportive, encouraging and respectful" (Malu and Smedley 2016, p.21).

While students' participation in "*Les Gazelles English Club*" has proven to be beneficial for improving their practice of English, what about EFL teachers' participation? The two EFL teachers interviewed in this research feel proud to have achieved something for their students. In fact, this extra-curricular activity enables them to improve their English proficiency, because by taking leadership roles in the club, they experiment new teaching strategies, practice the language in an almost natural context. According to them, there is an add-on for taking part in the club activities: "entertainment, organisation, leadership and service". The other EFL teachers who are non-members acknowledge the benefit associated with club attendance. Their reasons for not participating though include lack of time, lack of incentives, and possible student indiscipline. They know that they missed the opportunity to practice

English after regular class sessions, meaning that the significance of the club is obvious for them.

Conclusion

The current research has investigated the effects of English club attendance on the communication performance of students in English. Following a test/control research design implemented with tenth graders in Lycée de jeunes Filles Toffa 1^{er} at Porto-Novo, it was discovered that club members perform better in both tests than non-members. The majority of them obtained the average grade whereas few non-member students (i.e., 12.5%) could obtain the average grade. Beyond developing the listening, speaking and writing skills of the students, participation in the club activities yields beneficial side effects that shape the personality of these learners. Likewise, the EFL teachers who participated in the research acknowledge the instrumental role of the English club in improving their language proficiency. The research also discovered two paradoxical cases worth examining. The paradox is that few students who were club members failed to obtain the average grade, whereas some non-members got the average. The analysis of both paradoxical cases reveals that for English club activities to improve participants' language skills, there are some prerequisites such as self-motivation, control of the language basics, personal experience and talents.

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