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Full Length Research

Developing Reading Skills through Cooperative Learning in EFL Beginner Classes: The Case of Beninese Technical Schools

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating the development of EFL students reading skills through cooperative learning in Beninese technical schools. The research was conducted to examine the difficulties faced by EFL teachers and their learners in the process of the reading teaching and learning; it determines the advantages and drawbacks of cooperative learning in the process of reading teaching and learning. The data were collected through two types of questionnaire addressed to 1235 EFL students and 150 teachers. Moreover, 20 teachers were observed during their classes. The results reveal that the implementation of Cooperative learning improve the students' reading skills; they easily learnt in groups ; they become more confident in reading texts and had opportunities to share their ideas with other students. This study recommends school authorities to train teachers so as to get all their students involved in teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Reading Skills-Cooperative Learning- Beginners-Technical.

Résumé: Cette étude vise à étudier le développement des compétences en lecture des apprenants de l'Anglais Langue Etrangère par l'apprentissage coopératif dans les lycées techniques au Bénin. La recherche a examiné les difficultés auxquelles font face ces enseignants et leurs apprenants afin de déterminer les avantages et les insuffisances de l'apprentissage coopératif dans le processus enseignement -apprentissage de l'Anglais. Les données ont été collectées à travers deux différents types de questionnaire adressés à 1250 élèves et à 150 enseignants. De plus, 20 autres enseignants ont été observés en situation de classe. Les données collectées indiquent que l'apprentissage coopératif améliore la capacité de lecture des apprenants car ils apprennent facilement en groupes Ils deviennent plus confiants en lisant et ils bénéficient des opportunités d'échange d'idées avec leurs camarades. Cette étude recommande aux autorités en charge de l'éducation de former les enseignants aux stratégies et techniques pour une implication active de leurs apprenants aux cours de lecture.

Mots-clés: Lecture-apprentissage coopératif-débutants-lycées techniques.

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1.0 Introduction of the Study

English is learned as a foreign language in Beninese schools. The growing importance of that language as a world lingua franca is widely acknowledged (Allen, 2002:45) since it is also used in the domain of academia, industry, and tourism. Based on these considerations, educational authorities in Benin had introduced the teaching and learning of English language in our secondary school since years. Learning English needs the mastery of the four fundamental skills namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing to master the language. As one of the four skills in English, reading plays an important role in enhancing student's English ability. More importantly, reading has become a tool for accessing information worldwide in all domains. At schools, the purpose of teaching reading in the context of English learning is comprehension. As stated Kirby (2007:69), "*reading comprehension is the process by which we understand the text we read. It is the purpose of reading, why we teach it, and why we care about it.*"

Although many efforts have been made in teaching reading to the students, a growing number of them are unable to understand texts given to them in their EFL Classes (Alexander, 1988). Thus cooperative learning is proposed as an alternative learning strategy to make learning reading easier because it can trigger the students to help each other. Slavin (1995) states that cooperative learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help each other learn academic contents. Unfortunately, it has been observed that such EFL learners cannot read appropriately and fluently though they have dealt with English activities since years. They neglect their responsibilities to get involved in the learning activities, to give positive contribution to the success of their group and they do not help one another to reach the learning goals (Almanza, 1994:36). In addition to this, EFL teachers do not devote much of time to reading session to help learners reach reading goals. Based on this reality, the present research has been initiated to examine the advantages and drawbacks of the cooperative learning as well as its impacts on EFL beginners' reading skills development.

1.1. Purpose of the study

This study aims at investigating the effective strategies and techniques for developing reading skills through cooperative learning in Beninese technical schools. More specifically, this research attempts to:

- 1) Explore the advantages and drawbacks of cooperative learning in EFL reading classes.
- 2) Find out the difficulties EFL teachers and learners faced in the process of the reading teaching and learning.
- 3) Suggest effective strategies and techniques for teaching reading skills through cooperative learning in EFL classes?.

1.2. Research Questions

The present study tries to answer three major questions:

- 1) What are the advantages and drawbacks of learning reading skills through cooperative learning?
- 2) What are the difficulties faced by EFL beginner learners and teachers in the process of teaching and learning reading skills through cooperative learning.
- 3) How can reading skills be fostered in EFL classes through cooperative learning?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Reading Comprehension

Previous studies by prominent scholars provide various definitions to reading. According to Lenz (2005:1), reading comprehension is the process of constructing meanings from the text. It means that the reading comprehension process involves the readers' ability to make a relationship between their background knowledge and their purpose of reading with the meaning of the text. Finally, its process results in a meaning of the text which is being understood by the readers. Furthermore, Klinger, Vaughn, and Boardman (2017:8) state that reading comprehension involves much more than readers' responses to texts. Reading comprehension is a multi-component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in text, understanding of text types). For Alexander (1988) comprehension is a special kind of thinking process whereby the reader comprehends by actively constructing meaning internally from interacting with the material that is read. There are two kinds of comprehension. First, the literal comprehension in which the reader is getting only literal meaning, that is, receiving and understanding only what the author has said. This kind of reading tends to be receptively and passively because there is no process of efforts to dig out the deeper meaning. Second, the implied comprehension, that is, reading beyond or between the lines when the reader is doing the action, he/she brings his knowledge and experience to the act of reading, draws inferences and applies reading to life situations. It means that he/she is reading actively where there is an interchange of ideas with the author. Good readers read mainly means that they do not look at all of every sentence for they can understand more than the sentences they read. Good readers can unite their purpose with the author's. Based on the explanation above, reading comprehension ability is the readers ability in understanding the text to find required information in accordance with the reader's purpose. In order to find that information, readers must be able to find the writer's ideas whether it is explicitly stated in the text by applying the most effective strategies of reading comprehension. Brown (2004:188-189) writes that a person who comprehends English language has the following capabilities.

- 1) He can identify the purpose in reading the text.
- 2) He can apply spelling rules and conventions for bottom-up decoding.
- 3) He can use lexical analysis (prefixes, roots, suffixes, etc) to determine meaning.
- 4) He guess at meaning (of words, idioms, etc) when he aren't certain.
- 5) He can skim the text for the gist and for the main ideas.
- 6) He can skip unnecessary information while skimming
- 7) He can scan the text for specific information (names, dates, key- words)
- 8) He is able to used silent reading technique for rapid processing.
- 9) He is able to use marginal, outlines, charts or semantic maps for understanding and retaining information.
- 10) He can distinguish between literal and implied meaning
- 11) He can capitalize on discourse makers to process relationship.

The theories above tell us that reading comprehension is a complex interactive process that involves what is being read and what readers already know in the real world. The readers who are good at comprehending can organize between their background knowledge and the message and decide which process is needed to meet their purpose of reading. The comprehension process which is focused on how the way of reading works fully guide the readers to comprehend a reading text systematically. Some steps in the comprehension process allow them to operate their thought systematically. It can be useful for readers to get the meaning of the text in an easier way. In other words, reading comprehension is a type of reading that focusses on getting the message of the texts.

2.2 Cooperative Learning

According to the definition of cooperative learning as mentioned earlier, the teaching of reading should fulfill some principles. The teacher should use appropriate techniques and create classroom activities engaging for students to actively involve themselves in the reading class in order to achieve common goal in learning. One of the principles is related to the technique that helps students to develop their reading skills and strategies to improve their comprehension by implementing appropriate reading techniques and creating reading activities that include micro-skills and strategies. In such a process, teachers will help students to read more effectively and easier to deal with various types of texts as well as make the teaching and learning process run effectively and motivating for students. Those techniques and activities that are required to improve student's reading comprehension can be found in the cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning is a kind of teaching strategies that is commonly used in the classroom. According to Brown (2001:47) cooperative learning is one strategy that involves students to work together in pairs or groups and they share information. Furthermore, Johnson and Smith (1991) states that cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. They are a team whose players must work together in order to achieve common goals in learning (Hylant, 1993; Harmer, 1998). According to these researchers, it involves both positive interdependence which requires all members to cooperate to complete the task individually or in group. It also promotes accountability in the sense that each member is accountable for the final outcome. By doing this, the classroom atmosphere will be enjoyable for students to learn in order to achieve the goal of the lesson as well as the goal of the team. In other words, cooperative learning is a learning strategy which covers individual and small group learning in a heterogeneous team. As a result, the learning activities are designed to improve students' cooperation and independence in comprehending materials. Moreover, students are trained to learning activities. However, this learning strategy emphasizes the role of individual participation to determine the group achievement in the learning process.

2.3 The Implementation of Cooperative Learning

The implementation of cooperative learning in the teaching and learning process of reading requires that many preparations should be understood by the teacher and students as the main elements who are directly involved in the classroom (Kirby, 2007). However, Brown (2000:157) proposes seven rules in implementing a group technique in cooperative learning. They are: introducing the techniques, designing the use of small group for technique, modeling the technique, giving clear and detailed instructions, dividing class into group, checking for explanation, and setting the task in action. These rules give clear description of the things which must be organized before implementing a group technique. It is useful to create cooperative group in the teaching and learning process. In addition, cooperative structure can enhance many familiar English learning activities which encourage all students to be more actively involved as well as improve their reading comprehension (King, 2021). There are some activities in cooperative learning that can be conducted in the classroom. Some of the activities are explained as follows:

Pair read: The purpose of this activity is to increase students' reading comprehension by using shared reading. Students are grouped in pairs then silently read a paragraph or each section. After that, in pairs take turns describing the content to their partner. When each pair finishes they can discuss the entire passage. After that, teacher can ask question to each group in the class.

Think-pair-share: This type of cooperative learning involves a three-steps-cooperative structure. During the first step individuals think silently about a question asked by the teacher. Then, individuals pair up during the second step and exchange thoughts. In the third step, the pairs share their responses with other pairs, other teams, or the entire groups.

Numbered heads together: Teams of four are established. Each member is given numbers of 1, 2, 3, and 4. Questions are asked to the group. Groups work together to answer the questions so that all can verbally answer the questions.

Round table brain storming: In this activity, the class is divided into small group (4 to 6) with one person appointed as the recorder. A question is posed with many answers and students are given time to think about answers. After "think time", members of the team share responses with one another round robin single. The recorder writes down the answers of the group members. The person next to the recorder starts and each person in the group in order to give an answer until time is called.

Group discussion and quizzes: The students work together to learn and are responsible for their teammates learning as well as their own. It is emphasizes having team goals and success dependent on the learning of all group members. The teacher begins by presenting the lesson to the students for one or two periods of instruction keeping the focus of the lesson directly linked to group assignments and individual quizzes. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that a teacher who uses cooperative learning has a number of responsibilities such as planning the lesson, activities, and evaluation, grouping students, arranging physical placements of students, monitoring group activities and helping when necessary. Besides, he/she gives positive contributions to the success of the student groups so that they could help each other to reach the learning goals. However, the implementation of those activities is not always the same in all learning process and it tends to be flexible; it means that the activities can be suited with certain materials or purpose of learning.

3.0 Methodology of the study

This section presents the methodology used to collect data in the course of this investigation. The study hinges around the following points:

3.1. Research sampling

This is the group of people of the larger population. They are representative of the target population.

Table1: Presentation of sampled schools, sampled teachers and students

Number of participating Technical Schools	Sampled EFL Teachers	Sampled EFL Students
18	150	1235

3.2 Research instruments

The main hypothesis of this study is that cooperative learning helps learners enjoy English reading lesson and motivate them. Then, to test this hypothesis, questionnaires, interview and classroom observations are helpful to collect the necessary information from a large number of responses. The main goal of these instruments is to gather data from both teachers and learners so as to have trustful

evidence on the issue. The teachers gave information about teaching reading skills, key-determinants of cooperative learning as well as effective strategies to foster reading skills in the context of cooperative learning method. As for students, they gave the information about their difficulties in performing reading tasks and effects of cooperative learning on their reading skills development. So, the data were collected through two types of questionnaire addressed to 1235 EFL students and 150 teachers. However, 1100 EFL teachers filled in the questionnaire sheets sent them back to the research team through their instructors.

3.4 The class observation

A class observation can be defined as a formal or informal observation of teaching while it is taking place in classroom or other learning environment. It is an eye-witness of the way language teaching and learning is conducted in classroom situation. The first step consisted in getting the consent of the authorities of the schools where the class visits were to take place. The EFL teachers who willingly accepted to be visited were contacted. 20 teachers were observed during their classes. During the class observations, the research team sat at the bottom of the classroom and recorded the instructor's teaching practices as well as students' reactions. Each class observation lasted 1(one) hour. At the end of the class observation, the research team and the instructor discussed some aspects of the observed teaching and learning process.

4.0 Presentation and discussion of findings

After collecting the data, they are analyzed for their consistency. They are presented in tables, in pie charts and graphs. Frequencies and percentages were worked out.

4.1. Presentation of the findings

4.1.1. Findings related to the questionnaire addressed to EFL teachers

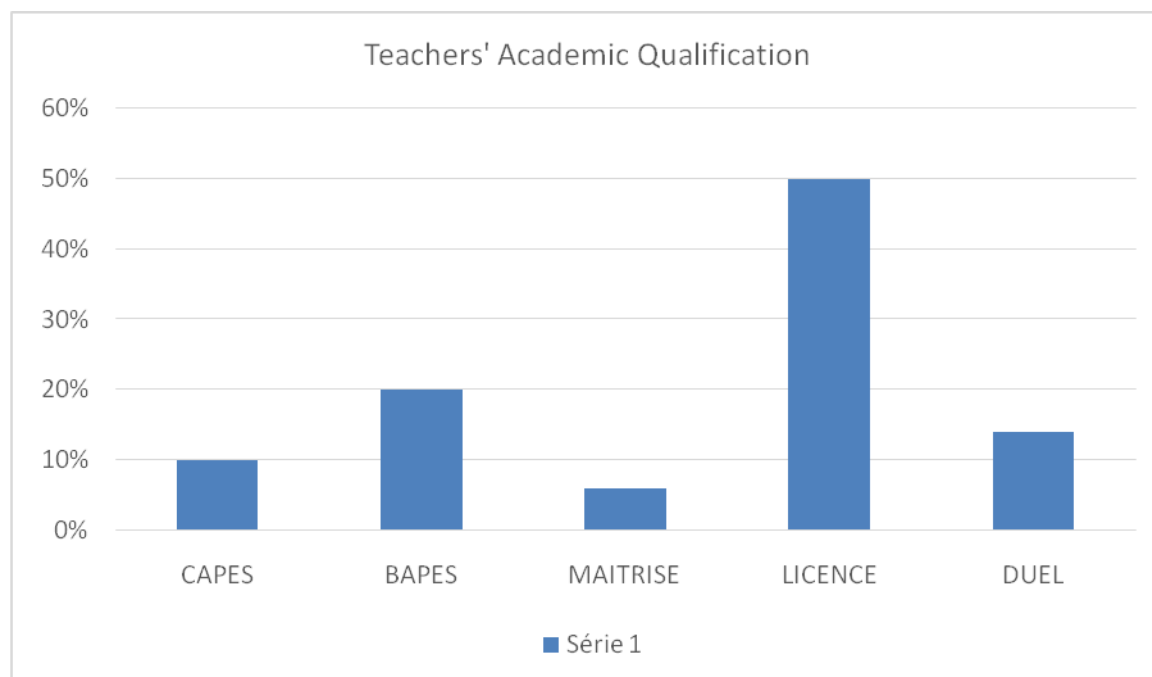


Figure1: Teachers' academic qualification

The Results in figure 1 show that 50% of EFL teachers are teaching with Licence degree, 14% of them with DUEL degree and 6% with Maitrise degree. They also reveal that 20% of the teachers are doing the job with BAPES degree whereas 10% of them have

CAPES degree. Those results show that the majority (70%) of EFL teachers are not professionally qualified. So they lack the appropriate teaching methods and strategies to improve learners' reading and communicative skills.

Table 2: Frequency of teaching reading comprehension skills

Frequency of teaching reading comprehension skills	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) never	50	33
b) sometimes	80	53
C) regularly	20	13
Total	150	100

This table indicates that 33% of teachers never teach reading comprehension skills; 53% sometimes teach it and only 13% regularly teach reading skills. These data reveal that the majority of teacher participants are not used to teaching reading comprehension skills to their EFL beginner students. This situation may be justified by their lack of professional training and poor academic knowledge.

Table 3: Problems faced by EFL teachers in the process of teaching reading skills

Problem faced by teachers	Teacher's number	Percentage (%)
a) Insufficiency of time	70	46
b) Teaching approaches	30	20
c) Learners' misunderstanding	50	33
Total	150	100

This table highlights that 46% of teachers are not allocated a sufficient time to teach reading skills whereas 20% of them are confronted with teaching reading problems; 33% are facing difficulties related to student misunderstanding.

Table 4: Students' attitude towards reading.

Students' Attitude toward Reading	Number	Percentage (%)
Positive	80	57
Negative	70	50
Total	150	100

From these results, 57% of teachers declare that their learners display a positive attitude towards learning reading whereas 50% are reluctant to it. So all of the learners do not display a positive attitude towards learning reading skills.

Table 5: Teaching reading skills through cooperative learning

Teaching reading skills through cooperative learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
rarely	90	64
Never	60	43
Always	00	00
Total	150	100

The table shows that 64% of teachers teach rarely reading skills through cooperative learning, 43% of them never teach it through cooperative learning and 00% do not teach reading through cooperative learning.

Table 6: Giving opportunity for reading through cooperative learning.

Giving opportunity for reading through cooperative learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) rarely	10	71
b) never	04	28
c) always	01	07
Total	15	100

The results show that 71% of teachers rarely teach reading skills through cooperative learning, 28% of them never teach it through cooperative learning and 7% always teach reading skills through cooperative learning. This table underlines the lack of cooperative learning in the teaching and learning of reading skills in EFL beginner classes.

Table7: Learners' appreciation of reading activities through cooperative learning.

Learners' appreciation of reading activities through cooperative learning	Number	Percentage (%)
All of them	40	28
None of them	10	07
Most of them	90	64
Total	150	100

The table shows that 28% of teachers claim that all of their learners enjoy reading activities through cooperative learning; 07% say that none of them and 64% claim that most of their learners enjoy doing reading activities through cooperative learning. Although most learners enjoy learning reading skills through cooperative learning, a very few EFL teachers use this teaching technique. This situation may be justified by either the lack of teacher professional qualification or the insufficient time allotted to the teaching of reading skills in Beninese technical schools.

Table 8: Advantages of cooperative learning

Advantages of cooperative learning	Number	Percentage (%)
It increases learners' interest in reading	60	42
It increases learners' motivation to read	50	35
It increases learners 'ability to read	40	28
Total	150	100

The results show that 42% of teachers declare that cooperative learning enhances learners 'interests in reading; 35% of them claim that cooperative learning boosts learners' motivation to read and 28% maintain that cooperative learning increases learners ability to read.

4.1.2 Students' responses to the questionnaire

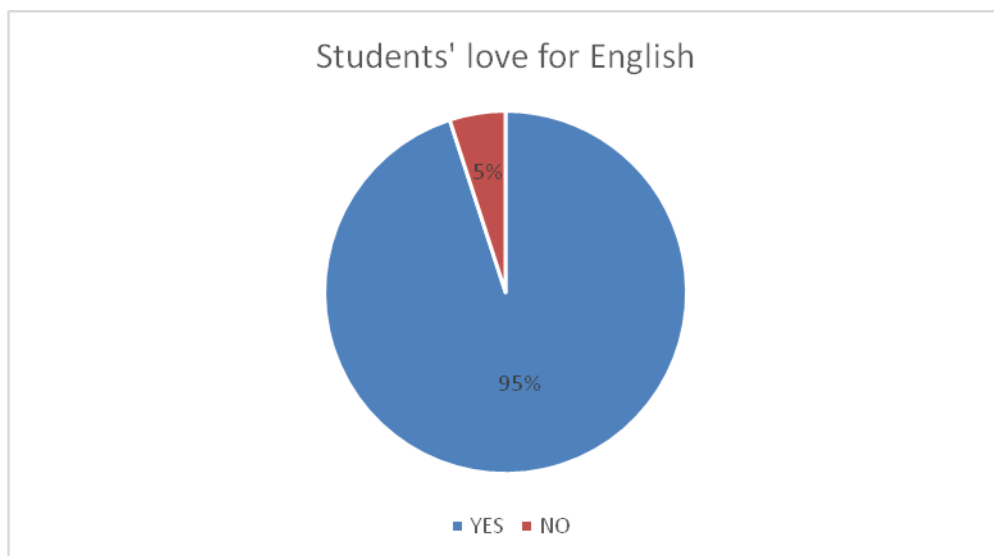


Figure 2: Learners' feelings about English language

According to the results shown in this pie-chart , 95% of EFL learners like English whereas only 05% of them do not like it.

Table 9: Opportunity to read texts in EFL classes

Opportunity to read in class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) Never	100	09
b) Always	100	09
c) Sometimes	900	81
Total	1100	100

Table 9 shows that 9% of learners say that they never have opportunity to read texts in their EFL classes ; 09% claim that they always read and 81% say that they have sometimes opportunity to read. This table underlines the lack of reading activities performed in EFL beginner classes.

Table 10: Difficulties faced by EFL learners in learning to read.

Difficulty faced by EFL learners in learning to read.	Number	Percentage (%)
a) Reading anxiety	350	31.81
b) Difficulty of pronunciation	500	45.45
c) understanding meaning of words	250	22.72
Total	1100	100

This table shows that 31.81% of learners have difficulty concerning reading anxiety; 45.45 % of them have pronunciation difficulties and 22.72 % have difficulty concerning the meaning of words. This table underlines that the majority of learners have pronunciation problem during reading activity.

Table11: what limits learners' understanding of English texts according to teachers

What limits learners to understand English texts	Number	Percentage (%)
Difficulty of understanding word meaning	700	63.63

Teachers' pronunciation	250	22.72
Teachers' ability to read	150	13.63
Total	1100	100

The results from this table show that 63.63 % of learners have difficulty to get word meaning when their teachers read English texts; 22.72 % of them have difficulty concerning their teacher's pronunciation and 13.63 % have difficulty concerning their teacher's ability to read.

Table 12: Frequency of learning reading skills through cooperative learning

Frequency of learning reading skills through cooperative learning	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never	500	45.45
sometimes	450	40.90
always	150	13.63
Total	1100	100

The table highlights that 45.45 % of learners say that they never learn reading skills through cooperative learning; 40.90 % claim that they learn it sometimes through cooperative learning and 13.63 % say that they always learn reading skills through cooperative learning. These results indicate that beginner students are not regularly trained to read texts through cooperative learning.

Table 13: what learners benefits from cooperative learning when learning reading skills

What learners benefit from cooperative learning when learning reading skills	Number	Percentage (%)
It increases students' motivation to read	500	45.45
It improves students' ability to read	100	09.09
It increases students' knowledge from classmates	500	45.45
Total	1100	100

The table above shows that 45.45 % of learners' motivation to read increases when they learn in a group ; 09.09 % say that cooperative learning improves their ability to read and 45% claim that they get knowledge from friends when they learn in group.. It reveals that cooperative learning helps learners to get motivation to read and knowledge from classmates

Table 14: How do learners get knowledge in cooperative learning

How do learners get knowledge in cooperative learning	Number	Percentage (%)
Asking questions	300	27.27
Learn from mates' answers	350	31.82
Exchange ideas	450	40.91
Total	1100	100

The analysis of this table indicates that 27.27 % of learners ask questions in order to get knowledge through cooperative learning; 31.82 % of them learn from their mates' answers and 40.91% exchange ideas in order to get knowledge.

4.1.2. Data related to class observation

The class visits conducted helped to find out the following difficulties which represent a permanent obstacle to an effective teaching and learning of reading skills to EFL beginner students.

4.1.2.1. Insufficient of time allotted to the English subject

During the interview, teachers insisted on the time allotted to the subject. They complained about the fact that the time is not sufficient for them to cover the activities they planned whatever the skills to teach mainly the reading comprehension.

4.1.2.2. Social environment

The teaching of English language is influenced by some social environmental factors like dialects spoken in Benin. EFL Teachers complain that students do not use English language in EFL classes. They said our “*learners prefer to speak French even translate tasks in their dialect before...*”. *How can we learn a foreign language without being exposed to that language?*, one of the teacher participant said: “*It will be very difficult if we have no contact with native or near- native speakers.*”

4.1.2.3 The Inexistence of language laboratories

Language laboratory in both secondary and technical schools of Benin will help improve significantly the teaching and learning of English language to EFL students.

4.1.2.4. The wrong English language pronunciation

As almost all the English teachers are French speakers, they meet many difficulties to pronounce words. And it will be the same when they teach students with the wrong pronunciation. The learners will acquire these mispronunciations and this will continue from generation to generation. So, the government should provide teachers with the authentic materials and training to correct what is going wrong in the national educational system.

4.2 Discussion of the findings

The discussion of the findings is based on the answers to the three (03) research questions and the conclusions of previous studies related to the present study.

4.2.1 The advantages and drawbacks of learning reading skills through cooperative learning

The table 7, 8, 13 and 14 are about research question 1. (Advantages of cooperative and drawbacks of learning reading skills through cooperative learning). Most of teachers (64%) claim that their learners enjoy learning reading skills through cooperative learning; 42% say that their learners are interested in it; 35% claim that cooperative learning motivates them to read and 28% declare that it reinforces their ability to read. As far as learners are concerned, 45% of them argue that through cooperative learning, they get motivation to read and 45% say that they get knowledge from their classmates questions; 31% claim that they learn from their mates' answers and 40% say that in exchanging ideas, they get knowledge. So cooperative learning strategy improves students' achievement by helping them develop comprehension of learning materials. Teachers will encourage all students to be more actively involved in reading classes in order to improve their reading comprehension skills. These findings are in accordance with Henson (2003) when he stated that “*cooperative learning has a high potential for developing students language skills since it helps the learners to benefit from each other*”. For Kirby (2007) “*By applying cooperative method, student became more motivated to read; they are encouraged to help friends by sharing their ideas, teaching one's knowledge to other and motivate the students became motivated, confident and active in class*”. Besides, the analysis of the data collection from class observation and questionnaires has led to establish that cooperative learning provides many advantages for EFL learners in the process of reading skills learning.

4.2.2. The difficulties faced by EFL beginner learners and teachers in the process of teaching and learning reading skills through cooperative learning

From the results in figure 1 and 2; table 2 and 9, the majority of Beninese technical schools teachers (70%) are not professionally trained; they lack the appropriate teaching methods and strategies to improve learners' reading skills. Under such condition, how can learners effectively develop the required language skills when most of their teachers have not undergone any appropriate training? These findings are in line with Strevens (1982:23) who declared that "*Although standards of entry to teaching are improved and standards of teachers training are improving even more rapidly, there still exist numbers of language teacher whose management of their pupils learning remains incompetent*". For this reason, Beninese educational authorities should provide secondary and technical schools with well- trained and experienced teachers. Furthermore, it is noticed that most students like English language (95%). So teachers should try to motivate learners and try their teaching match their learners' interests.

Table 2, 3, 4, and 11 are about research question 2. The results in these tables highlight that most EFL teachers teach rarely reading skills. That is the primary problem encountered by EFL teachers and learners so that they can't reach the teaching goals. Moreover, when willing to teach reading skills, 46% of teachers complain of not having enough time to teach reading skills; 20% of them mentioned problems related to reading skills teaching approaches and 33% have students misunderstanding problem. These findings corroborate the conclusions of Rivers (1981:259) when he claims that "*Reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and pleasurable activity, but also a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language*", which means that when students are not ready to gain much from a reading activity, they develop some bad attitudes. In the same vein, (Hylant, 1993; Liao, 2009; Lin, 2014) found out that in the real world, however, reading is a means to end and not an end in itself. It is always a purposeful activity and our job as teachers is to help students identify these different purposes and to master the strategies best suits to achieving them. In other words, we must use reading lessons to develop student' reading proficiency rather than improving linguistic competence. In the same line of thoughts, Collier and Slater (1987: 6) say " if the text is meaningful and enjoyable, reading is more likely to have a lasting and beneficial effects upon the learners' linguistic and cultural knowledge. It is important that teachers choose books, therefore, which are relevant to the life experience, emotion, or dream of the learners" (Strevens, 1982; Collier 1987; Nuttal, 2011).

4.2.3. Effective strategies and methods for teaching reading skills in EFL classes through cooperative learning

The information from questionnaire addressed to both EFL teachers and students on one hand and the class visits on the other hand show that EFL teachers rarely teach reading skills through cooperative learning approach. The table 5; 6 and 12 are concerned with research question 3. They reveal that 64% of teachers claim that they use rarely cooperative learning to teach reading skill; 43% never use cooperative learning. Moreover, 71% of teachers give rarely their students the opportunity to read through cooperative learning. Moreover, the majority of learners answer that their teachers use rarely cooperative learning to teach them reading skills. Since cooperative learning methods (table 8, table 9) were successfully used in improving students' confidence to read texts, teachers must use it to foster their students' reading comprehension skills. This teaching method has an important influence on the students' attitude towards learning reading. These findings are validated by previous studies (Heaton, 2018; Hugues, 2019; O'Malley; 2016). These authors demonstrated that as some students become more enthusiastic and interested in reading, teachers must integrate it

through their whole teaching. Also, these findings reflect the discovery of Slavin (1995) who recommends that “*cooperative learning is a variety of teaching methods in which students work in a small group to help each other learn academic content*. According to him, through cooperative learning, students are expected to help each other, discuss and argue with one another, assess each other's current knowledge and fill in each other's understanding.

5. Some recommendations to the government and suggestions to English Teachers

5.1. Recommendations to the Government

The failure of English teaching in general and reading teaching in particular can be remedied if the government takes into account some recommendations. Based on the findings of this study, government must recruit and train EFL teachers who are academically and professionally apt for the teaching job. Knowing that in Benin secondary schools teachers are still suffering from a lack of initial training and in-service training, newly-recruited teachers must be trained before they start teaching young students. The lack of in-service training is one of the major cause of students ‘poor performance in reading for it prevents teachers from doing their job professionally. This study highly insists on teachers’ training to be held very often in our country so that the non-qualified teachers can become effective teachers. Furthermore, school authorities at various levels of education should work at reducing significantly the number of students in EFL classes since this plethora in classrooms causes several problems for teachers who experience great difficulty in completing their job correctly. That’s why I suggest thirty-to-thirty-five students per class must be recommended. Obviously, this reduction in number of students per class requires the building of new schools that bring students closer to their schools. Then, a policy of massive recruitment of teachers should be implemented for a full coverage of these schools in EFL instructors. So, it is necessary to build libraries and cyber cafés in schools so as to offer students opportunities to read.

5.2. Suggestion to EFL Teachers

As far as English teachers are concerned, it is important for them to take some actions to respond to the findings of this research. There is a need for enriching themselves with the knowledge of creating interesting activities so that the students can enjoy learning EFL. It is also beneficial for teachers to develop their students reading skills through small group activities. Furthermore, they must positively impact their students.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

This study is undertaken to design effective methods for developing EFL beginner reading skills through cooperative learning in Beninese secondary and technical schools. It also tries to equip teachers with strategies or techniques for teaching reading skills through cooperative learning. To reach these goals, two types of questionnaire have been designed and distributed to 150 EFL teachers and 1250 students. In addition, class observations have been conducted in 10 technical schools in order to collect useful data about the teaching of reading skills and the practice of cooperative learning in Beninese secondary and technical schools. The analysis of the collected data has enabled to apprehend the difficulties faced by both EFL teachers and their students in the process of teaching reading skills as well as effective methods for teaching reading skills through cooperative learning. The results of the study have shown that although most students enjoy learning English language through cooperative learning method, their teachers still prefer to make them work individually. Moreover, the students are not really motivated by their teachers to learn it. In addition, the use of cooperative learning in reading comprehension classes can lead to reduced students’ reading anxiety and increased students’

reading performance. Cooperative learning, provides a comfortable non- stressful atmosphere and give opportunities to the students to support, encourage, and praise each other through discussion, creating and thinking in a group rather than in a whole class context.

6.0 Reference of the Study

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