

**Teacher's apprehension versus learner's progress:
Impact of unplanned testing in EFL classes**

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to reveal unplanned testing impact on EFL learners and teachers in three secondary schools: CEG BAKA, CEG HKM, and CEG BANIKANNI in Parakou municipality (North Benin). The target population was composed of students of 4^{ème} and teachers randomly selected, to whom interviews and questionnaires were administered. Methods like class observation and group discussion forum were worked out for data collection. The results showed the effectiveness of unplanned testing practice in classes. All of the respondents have pointed out that unplanned testing contributes

to students' poor performance and thereby lead to negative apprehension of learners' progress by teachers. Many others impact linked to this practice were found out such as stress, unhappiness, sickness and illness because of the sudden effect it has on learners. Such observations did not fit with the CBA requirements. So, EFL teachers need to be aware of these consequences so as to allow the easy transmission of English language to young students.

Key words: Unplanned testing, EFL, learners, teachers.

RESUME

La présente étude visait à évaluer l'impact des évaluations non planifiées sur les apprenants et les enseignants de la langue anglaise dans trois collèges : CEG BAKA, CEG HKM, et CEG BANIKANNI dans la commune de Parakou (Nord du Bénin). L'échantillon de l'étude était composé des élèves des classes de 4^{ème} et d'enseignants choisis au hasard, auxquels des entretiens et des questionnaires ont été administrés. Des méthodes telles que la visite de classe et la discussion de groupe ont été organisées pour la collecte de données. L'analyse des résultats a révélé l'effectivité de la pratique des tests non planifiés dans les classes. Tous les répondants à l'enquête ont fait remarquer que les évaluations non planifiées contribuaient à la piètre performance des élèves et, de ce fait, conduisaient à une appréhension négative du progrès des apprenants par l'enseignant. De nombreux autres impacts liés à cette pratique ont été découverts tels que stress, mécontentement, malaise et maladie, en raison de son "effet-surprise" sur les apprenants. Ces observations ne concordent pas avec les recommandations de l'APC. Les enseignants de la langue anglaise doivent être informés des conséquences de cette pratique afin de permettre une transmission facile de la langue anglaise aux jeunes apprenants.

Mots clés : Evaluation non planifiée, Anglais, Apprenants, Enseignants.

1. Introduction

The rapid progress of science and technology has made the world 'a global village.' Consequently, there is a pressing and growing need for people of different nations to communicate with one another. This communication can be achieved more easily through a common language world widely spoken. In that respect, English appears to be a language that has conquered the world in every field (Mahu, 2012). Undoubtedly, the best scientific materials like books and articles are published in English. Such an important language must be taught in educational system of countries. In Benin, education is a constitutional prerogative of the State and takes a prominent place in the action plan of successive governments. So, since its independence period, from 1960 to the period of revolution (1972-1990), Benin educational authorities are constantly on the lookout for educational policy most appropriated to make the learners more competitive for international market. Thus, several strategies were adopted, including the «ruralization of education» from the Addis Abeba conference in 1961, the "New school" reform established by Decision No. 7530 of 23 June in 1975 and the «Big head - Dossou-Yovo" reform in 1971(Akogbeto & Moustapha Babalola, 2014). These reforms lead to the first school program

elaboration, the Objective-Based Approach (OBA). The implementation of such curriculum has brought some confusion among the teachers and the learners in the process of evaluating (Akogbeto & Moustapha Babalola, 2014). Because, according to it, learners' involvement is less important in teaching-learning process. Then, at the National Conference of the forces of the Nation in 1990, Benin has adopted a new educational policy called Competency Based Approach (CBA), which is student-centered teaching approach (Emaliana, 2017). Since then, teachers have forsaken unplanned testing of learners. Nevertheless, most of them still use such practice in contrary with the CBA requirements. In that respect, it is important to investigate the way EFL teachers used to evaluate students by emphasizing on 4ème classes.

The general objective of the study is to bounce school actors the impacts of unplanned evaluation in EFL teaching-learning process. Especially, the study aimed first, to show the effects of unplanned testing practice on 4ème classes EFL learners and their performances; secondly to reveal its influence on EFL teachers' apprehension of learner' progress and finally to suggest teacher's pedagogical manners and techniques to test students.

2. Statement of the problem

Before the advent of CBA approach, teachers did not warn learners before assessments, especially the quizzes are concerned. In fact, Objective Based Approach (OBA), also called teacher-centered learning, focuses on teacher who was known as the powerful. In such paradigm, teachers play important roles in the learning process (Emaliana, 2017). Teachers are information providers or evaluators to monitor students to get the right answers. In the teaching of EFL, the main focus is getting the students to perform well on state-mandated tests rather than catering to students' need (Zohrabi, et *al.*, 2012). So, students are seen as a container where teacher disgorges his knowledge. Consequently, students are constrained to mind the lessons taught so as to spill them for examinations purpose without being informed previously. Over time, this approach has been overtaken and replaced by a new educational strategy, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA). In this approach, learners are considered as the main actor in knowledge building process. Here, teacher's contributions are weaker. Teachers consider the needs of the students, as a group and as individuals, and encourage them to participate in the learning process all the time. The teachers' roles are more that of facilitators than instructors. So, students acquire strong notions and by so, become more skillful. Thereby, inspectors and educational consultants suggest

all teachers to plan evaluations for the achievement of function assigned to them. However, teachers think that warning students before testing is a sort of cultivating facility for learners. So, most teachers of all matters in different classes practise the unplanned testing to evaluate students. Nevertheless, English is a foreign language (EFL) which knowing needs method and skills from teachers. Indeed, 4ème class is the third year of English learning until last year when English teaching has not been introduced in public primary school in Benin. Thus, students are too young and need more time to capitalize the notions. So, EFL teachers have to catch them through pedagogical way of teaching and evaluating. So, it seems important to focus research on the way EFL learners are evaluated by emphasizing on unplanned testing effects on 4ème classes students. Because, the test after being the prominent mean of measuring of the performances in school, can also serve to draw the learners' motivation to the lesson (Heaton, 1975). Madsen (1983) thinks that testing is an important part of every teaching and learning experience.

3. Significance of the study

Today, nobody can deny that, Benin educational system is in a need of a comprehensive or a radical reform that can activate it to respond, positively and properly, to the requirements of the

development process. Both teachers and parents complain of the weakness of students' level and their incompetency for business demands. Until now, students find that the most important task to do at school is just learning or memorizing the factual content of the teaching programs for the purpose of passing the exams set (Abdelshafy, 1994). So, they are more attached to theoretical knowledge given in classroom than its understanding. Consequently, laziness and passivity are noted in students. They don't read their lessons unless the exams are near or they are informed previously. Therefore, there is a huge challenge, which is how to encourage and enable students to engage themselves in the learning process. Because, students who actively engage with what they are studying tend to understand more, and thereby learn more and remember more easily the lessons than those who receive passively what is taught (Park, 2003). Student participates only in what counts for his or her performance evaluation. They don't usually read their lessons or read only if the teacher has warned about the test. Thus, as strategy, some teachers use the non-recommended method of evaluating: unplanned testing. Here, the significance of the research is to point out the impacts of unplanned testing on both EFL teachers and learners. Clearly said, it is to show students and teachers the influences of

unplanned quizzes on EFL learning process and their effects on effective teacher's apprehension of learners' progress.

4. Literature review

4.1. Testing

Designed as evaluation or test, the testing is tool set by teacher to measure students' performance. It is any procedure used for measuring how much a student has learned about a particular course or program of instruction (Richards, 1993). It is a careful prepared measuring instrument, which has been tried out on a sample of people, similar to those who will be assessed by it, which has been corrected and made as efficient and accurate as possible, using the whole panoply of statistical techniques appropriate to educational measurement (Broughton et. al., 1978). It helps teacher to have feedback about a taught instruction. Effective test should be based on a task, which may be any activity designed to help achieve a particular learning goal.

It is a short scale activity briefly set to lead to specific goal in teaching-learning procedure. It is commonly called quiz in secondary education area.

Language testing and evaluation:

In addition to identifying practices that are more suited to language classrooms, it is also important to ensure that the goals of language programs are assessed through monitoring and evaluation of classroom practices and student achievement. The monitoring and evaluation of language proficiency within the classroom must be carefully aligned with the goals of the original ELT program.

Policymakers and practitioners must also be aware of the power of testing and understand the ethical issues involved (Shohamy,2001).

In many context, written tests are only in a form of evaluation that students receive in relation to language competence, and these evaluations prescriptively test grammar rather than testing students' control of genre and discourse strategies.

4.2. Categories of testing

The classroom education assessment goes through evaluation and testing. Deep changes are brought to the testing by CBA approach both in its format and the way it's conducted. Thus, contrarily to the OBA belief, students must be warned before each test or evaluation. Although this significant improvement, three classical categories of evaluation are commonly known in

learning process: diagnostic evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation. The major difference between them resides in the note that marks the summative evaluation.

The formative assessment is seen as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It encompasses classroom interactions, questioning, structured classroom activities, and feedback aimed at helping students to close learning gaps. Students are also actively involved in the assessment process through self- and peer-assessment. It refers to the frequent, interactive assessment of student progress to identify learning needs and shape teaching (OECD, 2005). The formative assessment regroups classroom activities, homework, exposes etc. The crucial distinction is that the assessment is formative if and only if it shapes subsequent learning (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2006). Pedagogically, the formative evaluation aims to make learners ready or to prepare them to tackle summative evaluation which can lead to pass to higher level or to get certificate like: Elementary certificate (CEPE), O-level certificate (BEPC) and A-level certificate (Baccalauréat).

The summative assessment is a high-stake type of evaluation for the purpose of making final judgments about student achievement and instructional effectiveness. Summative

assessment is an end point that sums up the performance or learning level of achievement. The summative evaluation includes quizzes, semester exams, national test and recruitment test. The evaluation of summative assessments provides a look at student performance as well as an opportunity to evaluate instructional practices.

The diagnostic assessment is a distinct form of measurement that purpose is to ascertain, prior to instruction, each student's strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills. Establishing these permits the instructor to remediate students and adjust the curriculum to meet each learner's unique needs. This kind of evaluation is often done at the beginning of the academic year to detect the capability of the new students.

5. Methodology

The research methodology used in during this research work has focused on the method of collection, the different approaches simulation, and the measurement of language improvement tools. Also, the survey data organization and their origination based on the purposes for decision taking.

5.1 The study area

The research was conducted in the secondary schools of BAKA, HKM and BANIKANNI in the municipality of Parakou. Parakou municipality belongs to Borgou Department in the North of Benin. It is comprised between 9° 21' of latitude North and 2°36' of longitude East (Afrique Conseil, 2006).

Those three schools were chosen according to their size and also based on their large influence in the community of Parakou and around. This choice is motivated because of the high number of teachers of English with a huge experience in the implementation of the CBA approach at work in Benin Republic. I also identify those schools in sense that are all representative in Parakou area and constitute reference public secondary schools during national exams in terms of their performances.

5.2 The target population

Three secondary schools were concerned by this study: CEG BAKA, CEG H.K.M. and CEG BANIKANNI. The target population was composed of 4ème classes EFL teachers and learners. Students were selected through stratified random method. Then, 35 students, 54 students and 11 students were respectively selected from CEG HKM, CEG BANIKANNI and CEG BAKA. As far as teachers were concerned, all the 4ème

classes' EFL teachers were chosen from the three schools. In sum, one hundred (100) EFL students and thirteen (13) EFL teachers were investigated for this research work.

5.3 The data collection instruments

Various techniques and methods such as: Interviews, Class observations and group discussion forum were used to collect the data.

5.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with EFL teachers and learners of 4ème classes of the three secondary schools on the basis of questionnaires. This technique was filled to collect the qualitative data such as the point of views and the individual perception of each participant about the target subject. The questionnaires were administered individually to the respondents. These interviews have provided information and answers on the questionnaires about the influences of unplanned testing basing on the experiences they have. The questionnaire for learners was designed so as to collect their perceptions about English language learning and especially to know the impacts that EFL unplanned testing has on their performance. The one addressed to teachers aimed to know the way they evaluate students and the

apprehension they have after unplanned testing about their progress.

5.3.2 Class observations

Visual observation is a major method of research in language science and was done in each school. It helped to get non-verbal behaviors of participants. So, this instrument of investigation has aimed to:

- Identify the way the EFL teachers conduct a class activity
- Verify if the students' seats are in groups during class activities.
- Know the reactions of learners if the testing is planned or unplanned
- Compare the students' performance and progress if the testing is planned with that which is unplanned
- Check how teachers appreciate after each king of testing.

5.3.3 Focus Group discussion

This technique has consisted in forming focus group composed of both learners and teachers. The main objective of such a technique was to get various responses about a given question so

as to be ensured of the veracity of information. Then, eight (08) students and two (02) teachers randomly selected were gathered to compose each group. Three (03) different groups were made and investigated. Through interactive discussions, learners' answers were confronted to those of teachers about the unplanned testing and the CBA implementation in each secondary school.

5.4. The statistical analysis

After spoiling the data collected, it was proceeded to the statistical analysis with Excel 2007 software with which the descriptive statistics (frequency, table, and graphs) have been calculated.

6. Findings and discussion

6.1. Impact of unplanned testing on EFL learners

The analysis of EFL Learners answers can be done in two ways: firstly, the English language teaching process, and secondly the perception of learners about the unplanned testing.

The students, sampled for the study were composed of young boys and girls from eleven (11) to eighteen (18) years old. Half of them are small less than fifteen (15) years old. All of the

respondents like learning English language and only few (06%) disagree with the ways English teachers conduct the EFL classroom instructions. Thus, most of them are often present to English class because they like the way the lessons are conducted by teachers who facilitate the knowledge transmission and the classroom activities. Such observations were done by Lorenzo Bergillos (1997), who identified that 15, 16, and 17-year-old Secondary Education students exhibit a stronger instrumental motivation for EFL learning.

These results have showed that 4ème classes' learners, even small are giving more importance to English language learning. Similar results were carried out by Rubio Gómez (1997) who had concluded that the dominant factors in the students' motivation are the importance of languages in present-day society and classroom tasks. He added that parental influence and integrative motivation are much weaker.

Also, it was revealed that the EFL teachers in CEG BAKA, CEG HKM and CEG BANIKANNI attempt to fit with CBA approach requirements that consider teacher as a “facilitator” instead of being a “problem-solver” in teaching-learning process. Yet, they, especially the part time teacher, need reinforcement in order to increase their pedagogical competency. Such

observations confirm those of Nyandwi, (2014) who found that inadequate teaching method and inadequate number of teachers determine negatively the poor academic performance of learners.

As far as the English language evaluation is concerned, all of the questioned students have replied that they were often tested by their teachers. In addition, they found its undeniable necessity for their education. These results corroborate those obtained by Jabbarifar, (2009) who has considered evaluation as a fundamental tool to improve students' knowledge and learning.

In all the three schools, students have said that between two (02) and four (04) quizzes are filled per semester by teachers. This is important especially since only one quiz cannot be taken into account for half-yearly calculations. This remark has reflected the teachers' great effort to comply with the educational standards.

According to eighty-two (82) students, that is 82%, the teachers always warm them before each evaluation. Only ten (10) learners, that is 10%, have declared that they are never informed; against eight (08), that is 08%, who thought that their EFL teachers sometimes do not warm before evaluating them.

As to the question related to the unplanned testing impacts on learners' performances, eighty-four (84) students, that was 84%,

had declared that their performances were good when the evaluation was planned, against four (04) students that was 04% for unplanned testing. Seventy-two (72) students that is 72% had bad performances if the quizzes are unforeseen, against 24% for planned testing. Also, 24% of respondents for planned evaluation and 34% for unplanned testing, had declared that their performances were mean. Ninety (90) learners, it is 90% had replied that they dislike unplanned exams because most of them (44%) did not learn everyday their English lessons, and consequently get bad mark during exams. However, ten (10) students, that is 10%, were not afraid of the unplanned testing because they learn always their lessons. These results had proved that learners need more time to prepare the English tests; because the English language is a foreign language. Also, they have showed that students, today, have neglected studies and are becoming lazier and lazier. Such a remark was found by Kinash and Brand, (2014) who pointed out the social media contribution to learners' laziness.

So, in order to fit with the CBA recommendations, teachers must warm students before exams. This helps them to learn seriously the lessons and to sit successfully for English examinations.

Moreover, many others influences of unplanned evaluation are listed by learners. These are unhappiness, stress and sickness respectively expressed by 56%, 26% and 08% of the sample. This aspect is particularly important and must be taken into account for a better teaching of the English language in our secondary schools. Language learning needs happiness and psychological well-being so as to achieve the expectations assigned to it. In addition, just ten (10) students, that is 10%, were happy of unplanned testing and only the best ones, that is (04%), had good marks or performances after an unplanned evaluation. All these impacts lead to poor school performance (Siqueira and Gurge-Giannetti, 2010).

Furthermore, the results had revealed that Benin educational system is getting less and less efficient. The EFL teachers do not have all the assets necessary for better implementation of CBA recommendations. So, reinforcement is needed so as to make them more skilled. Also, few learners are workers, and they learn their courses only when exams are approaching.

6.2. Impact on teacher's apprehension

The analysis of teachers' responses has showed that in all the secondary schools investigated, third form EFL learners are

taught by both the full time and part time teachers. Be it in BAKA, BANIKANNI or HKM secondary school, the number of the part time teachers was more than the one of the permanent ones. One (01), two (02) and two (02) permanent teachers respectively for CEG BAKA, CEG HKM and CEG BANIKANNI conducted third form EFL section against one (01), three (03) and (03) part times teachers respectively. These results have proved the lack of trained teachers, which is common to most colleges in northern Benin.

Only four (04) teachers (permanents) were English teachers before the advent of the CBA approach. Thereby, they have experimented the Objective Based-Approach (OBA), and consequently can objectively make the distinction between these programs and implement very well the CBA curriculum. These results corroborated Nyandwi, (2014) who thought that the lack of EFL competence, inadequate teaching and learning materials, inadequate number of teachers and unavailability of library facilities are principal factors of student poor academic performance.

Moreover, they have declared that since the advent of CBA curriculum, they always attend teachers' training session, in order to improve their skills in CBA implementation.

To measure students' knowing, two categories of evaluations were frequently carried out by EFL teachers per half year: two semester exams and from two (02) to four (04) quizzes. As far as semester exams are concerned, all of the teachers have replied that the learners are warned at the beginning of the academic year. All of the teachers have agreed that only the semester exams are warned and planned by official letter; but for quizzes are concerned, students cannot be warned previously. Only the permanent teachers have replied that they evaluate periodically learners. In contrary, such was not the case of the part time teachers, who assessed learners in a random way.

The results have also revealed that all the teachers were conscious of the CBA approach requirements that recommend teachers to plan all tests. Nevertheless, the part time teachers practise the unplanned testing in contrary with the permanent ones. According to them, the unplanned evaluation has some advantages which consist in forcing students to learn the lessons always. Although this asset, both the part-time teachers and the permanent teachers have notified that the practice decreases significantly the students' performances. Beyond, unplanned testing has other psychological impacts on learners. These impacts are stress, disappointment and discourage that feel

students. Both the part-time teachers and the permanent teachers have replied that they have had apprehension of learners' progress after each unplanned testing because of the bad marks students have (graph 1).

Yet, it was revealed that teachers in CEG BAKA, CEG HKM and CEG BANIKANNI EFL teachers were all conscious of the negative influences of unplanned testing on 4ème EFL learners. Because it makes teacher “a dictator” instead of being a “helper” for learners. Such a practice does not allow the transmission of knowledge, and therefore might handicap the implementation of the CBA approach.

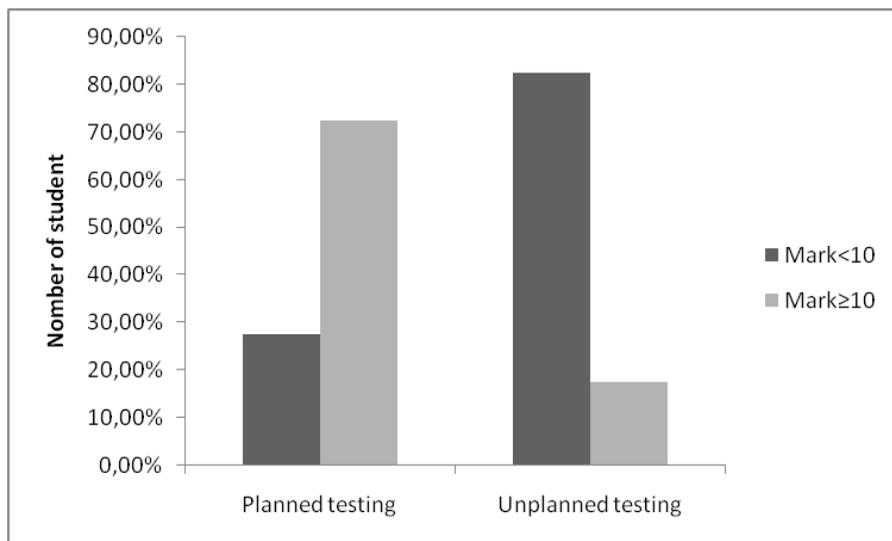
6.3. Summary of classroom observation

Classroom observation revealed on one hand the practice of class management didactically, and on the other hand the way third form EFL learners are evaluated by teachers. In all the schools observed, during classroom activities learners' seats were in groups composed of six (06) girl and boy members. This organization fits with the CBA approach requirements. These results corroborate Nagaraju (2013), who found that group activity doing is very important in class proficiency. According to him, these activities bring some advantages to students such as

when students are working together in English they talk more, share their ideas, learn from each other, feel more secure and less anxious, and use English in a meaningful way.

Also, during this section, a planned and an unplanned test were filled and marked in a 4ème class. Through the students' reactions, it was noted that most of them were astonished and did not agree. After marking the copies and comparing the results with that learners were warmed, it was noted that generally, the learners' performances were bad for the unplanned test.

The **graph 1** compares the learners' performances for planned and unplanned testing.



Graph 1: Learners' performance after planned and unplanned evaluation.

Source: Enquiry data, 2017

7. Conclusion

The study has pointed out firstly the unplanned testing impacts on third form EFL learners, and the teacher's apprehension of learners' progress. Through these researches, the unplanned testing practice is actual in some Parakou secondary schools especially in 4ème classes. Such a practice has negative impacts on learners and weakness deeply their achievement. Also, in 4ème classes students are too young and are conscious of the undeniable necessity of English language in nowadays life. All of them like English subject and attend EFL classes. Thereby, delicate methods are needed to teach them in order to inculcate them the three basic competences undeniable for English language mastering "the writing, the reading and the listening". Nevertheless, the unplanned evaluation has various effects on both the teachers and the learners. For learners, it causes displeasure, unhappiness, stress and confusion, and leads to bad performances. On the other hand, it causes sickness and illness to learners.

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