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THE MAIN OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED BY MALAGASY
LEARNERS OF ENGLISH IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Introduction

According to UNESCO, Madagascar is a model of Education For All in Africa and the Malagasy experiment in this field is a success.¹ Despite this fact, we can still notice that education in Madagascar is facing a serious problem, this is partly due to the problem of poverty. Above all, the country is confronted with enormous problems of underdevelopment. In spite of the distribution of school kits in primary schools, the annual budget devoted to national education is not sufficient.

As far as students are concerned, many of them do not attend secondary schools. They drop out of school at an early age because their parents cannot finance their schooling. This means that financial problems really affect students' achievement in Madagascar.

Yet if we analyse the present situation, there is no denying that the Malagasy government is trying to promote and improve educational planning. As regards the primary education system for example, there have been a few changes such as the introduction of the English language as a separate subject in elementary schools. In fact, this initiation is intended to give Malagasy students the opportunity to learn and master at least two foreign languages (French and English).

But why is it so important to learn foreign languages and why is it considered as one of the main concerns of sociolinguistics ?

Foreign language learning is actually one of the subjects sociolinguists are concerned with. If we analyse the term « sociolinguistics » itself, we can notice that it is made up of two distinct words : language and society. Obviously, sociolinguistics is then the relationship between language and society.

From sociolinguistic point of view, language and society are closely related. When we talk about one community, we are likely to refer to the language spoken in that particular community. Language is then represented as the main feature that identifies one community; that is why language learning is an inevitable phenomenon in society life.

But what are the main reasons that allow us to say that language learning plays an important role in human society ?

¹ Education, Madagascar a model of EPT (Education For All) according to UNESCO
<<http://portal.unesco.org/education/fr/ev.php-URL-ID=21853&URL-DO=DO-PRINTPAGE&URL-SECTION=201.html>>

First of all, language is one the most specific features that makes man different from animal. It is true that animals have their own language, but human language sets man apart from the animal world because it enables him to think or behave according to a particular circumstance. Through the use of language, man is capable of doing many things that animals cannot. In any case, human language remains one of the most interesting assets that human beings possess.

Language is also considered as a social phenomenon. It is the main key that makes a society work. Even though people can communicate through gestures, signs, or drawings, this does not mean that language can be replaced. Sometimes, gestures or signs may not be so obvious that their use may cause misunderstanding. Thus, only language facilitates human communication, it makes social interaction easier.

As a whole, we can say that language has an essential role in society life; that is why it is a major topic of sociolinguistics.

On the other hand, foreign language learning is also one of the subjects of sociolinguistics. In this field, when we talk about foreign language learning, we are likely to mean learning about foreign culture and civilization. In this respect, foreign language acquisition implies contribution to foreign people civilization. It supposes the learning of the art, literature, music, customs of the foreign people. In a broad sense, the promotion of foreign language learning leads to an understanding of the values and culture of other people. Foreign language learning then aids in an individual's cultural development and helps to develop international understanding. Moreover, it is also useful in order to keep a friendly relationship going with other nations. It is a preparation for intercourse with foreign people. It may help us to resolve some of the problems and tensions that arise from human interaction.² It is then important to learn foreign languages for the simple reason that it enables us to get in touch and communicate with the outside world.

We also need to learn foreign languages because not only it promotes exchanges with other countries, but it also assures the development of socio-economical backgrounds. Indeed, people who speak foreign languages have some advantages compared to monolingual ones. Besides, in the modern world, foreign language learning is no longer considered as fashion or luxury. Today those who master foreign languages have the opportunity to succeed.

² Crystal, D. (1995) *The Encyclopedia of the English language*, New York, Cambridge University Press

Most of the time, when people only speak one language, they will be in trouble whenever they deal with foreign affairs. In addition to that, their linguistic inadequacy will make them feel embarrassed every time they talk to people whose mother tongue is different from their own. However, this is not the case of bilingual or multilingual people.

Apart from that, foreign language proficiency provides people more career opportunities. It is an asset that assures social advance.

In a word, the main objectives for learning a foreign language are to introduce students to the culture and civilization of foreign people, to assure mutual understanding between different countries, to avoid indifference or hostility expressed towards foreign people or their languages, but also to give people the opportunity to be in contact with the rest of the world and help them to succeed in life.

Earlier it has been repeated that foreign language learning is essential and that it enables us to have some knowledge of other people's culture. In this research work, when we refer to foreign languages, our analysis mainly concerns English. In fact, we have chosen this particular language because its role is becoming increasingly dominant. Besides, as a global language,³ English learning is now also very popular. It plays an important role in international matters.

In addition, English proficiency is more and more required in the modern world. This level of proficiency, however, provokes a lot of controversy, particularly in sociolinguistic field.

In the following parts, we will try to give the main reasons that may explain why Malagasy learners do not achieve English proficiency. To be more precise, our analysis will be based on « The main obstacles encountered by Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary schools ». This is the main topic that we are going to develop throughout this work. But before dealing with this topic it will be useful to mention the main objectives of this dissertation.

First of all, this research work is a serious analysis of the major problems of learners of English. It may be a useful piece of work because it tries to focus on one specific ground, that is, the case of Malagasy learners. Above all, its aim is to help students and teachers to be aware of the possible problems that they may face when they learn or teach English. At the

³ Crystal, D. (1997) *English as a global Language*, Cambridge University Press

same time, it also tries to show the most frequent obstacles and different ways to overcome them. Furthermore, this present work is also intended to contribute to the improvement of English teaching, it suggests how we can learn or teach English more effectively.

In short, the principal goals are to avoid the main obstacles that may prevent Malagasy learners from achieving proficiency, but also to suggest some solutions that may help them to master English.

Although this research work is supposed to develop and analyse the main obstacles encountered by Malagasy learners of English, we have here a more limited purpose. Therefore, in some cases there might be restriction of the information available. Nevertheless, the sources of information in this dissertation come from extensive reading, direct observation but also investigation and the use of questionnaires.

In order to study thoroughly the topic of this dissertation, this research work is divided into three main parts. The first part is devoted to generality, theoretical issues and methodological framework. The second part deals with pedagogical practices contrary to the norms. And the third part talks about laborious progress towards bilingualism as a factor of language development.

PART. I :

**GENERALITY, THEORETICAL
ISSUES AND METHODOLOGICAL
FRAMEWORK**

I.1 History of education in Madagascar

I.1.1 The pre-colonial period

Before 1820 Malagasy children were not sent to schools. It was the role of their family to be in charge of their education. At that time, education was rather traditional, it was based on moral or social activities. The elders were those who were particularly concerned with the education of the children. They taught children traditional values such as the art of speaking, riddles, proverbs, poems and so on. Indeed, these elders had a very important role in Malagasy society, thus people showed great respect towards them. It was then the period of gerontocracy or government by old people.

During the reign of Radama I (1817-1828) there were some changes with the arrival of British missionaries. In fact, the King was convinced that these missionaries could contribute to the country's development so that he allowed them to introduce Christianity and create schools at the same time. Thus, the London Missionary Society (LMS) taught children to read, write and count, but they also made them convert to Christianity. In 1820, education in Madagascar developed rapidly. Actually, the reign of Radama I was then particularly known for the promotion of education and Christianity.

When Queen Ranaivalona I came to the throne, she was not in favour of education nor Christianity. She decided to close schools and expel all the European missionaries. However, during his reign King Radama II who succeeded Ranaivalona I was very close to the Europeans. He gave more power to some French businessmen to have control of the country's economical matters.

During Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony's time all the European missionaries came back to Madagascar. At that period, education and Christianity became even more dominant. There were many schools but all of them were Christian ones. Catholic missionaries taught in French, whereas the Protestants used Malagasy as the medium of instruction.

Though education was promoted, many Malagasy people were reluctant to send their children to school. They did not trust the European missionaries. They thought that their mission was dishonest. Besides, they also believed that schools were a new form of chore and that it was better for them to do the housework or grow food instead of wasting their time going to school. Actually people showed resentment towards education. Moreover, the fact that schools were under the control of a coercive government also made people think that education was a new form of domination and oppression. Consequently many people were

convinced that schools were intended to reinforce the domination of the Europeans over the Malagasy people.⁴

On the other hand, the fact that education was compulsory also made Christianity very unpopular with the Malagasy. Many people were against Christianity since education at school was based on Christian doctrine. At that time, the curriculum was reduced, it contained few intellectual activities, the content was particularly concerned with catechism.

Consequently, fewer students attended schools, their parents preferred that they helped them in doing housework or growing food.

In short, during the pre-colonial period, education was closely associated with religion. Some Malagasy people considered that education was a means for the Europeans to take over their country. Education and Christianity therefore, were not viewed positively.

I.1.2 Madagascar under French rules (1896-1960)

In 1896, Madagascar was declared a French colony. The country then went under French rules. During the government of General Gallieni, the main purpose was to make French a dominant language used throughout the island. French became the most important language and Malagasy children were forced to learn it at school.

Though General Gallieni created schools which were known as *laïc*, Malagasy children did not benefit from the school programme. In fact, even though the programme did not focus on Christian doctrine as it had during the pre-colonial period, the Malagasy pupils did not have the opportunity to develop their knowledge. At that time, the curriculum was especially based on French history and civilization. It did not contain the other academic subjects that one would normally expect. Apparently, the aim was then, to make Malagasy citizens consider France as their own country so that they would have to learn more about its culture and history.

Although the government insisted on the promotion of French at school, Malagasy remained dominant, it was particularly in the countryside where pupils continued to use Malagasy. That situation also widened the gap between children from the countryside and from towns.

The domination of French entailed a feeling of resentment towards French. Some Malagasy people even advocated the suppression of that language in schools. That attitude led to the rise of Malagasy nationalism in 1915-1960. During that period, Malagasy citizens gradually

⁴ Koerner, (1999) *Histoire de l'enseignement privé et officiel à Madagascar (1880-1995)*, Les implications religieuses et politiques dans la formation d'un peuple, Paris, Montréal, L' Harmattan p. 51 – 52

expressed hostilities towards French, their language as well as their civilisation. They resented French and its influence on their country so that they looked for ways to get rid of them. There was even a plan to poison the Europeans, but the rebellion failed because the French colonizers captured students whom they suspected, and ultimately arrested them.

The situation in the country worsened, hatred towards the French colonizers prevailed. Many people, on the other hand, recommended atheistic education. They claimed that there should not be any « God » or « Master ».⁵ They also thought that learning French meant that they were close to the « Whites » so they eventually neglected learning it.

Because of the rebellion, the results of national exams in 1935 were disastrous. Very few students passed and teachers neglected education and preferred to make money.

From 1945 to 1960, the country was under De Vichy government. During that period, the French language remained dominant. Although the government decided to create more and more public schools such as a few lower and higher secondary schools, some parents sent their children to private ones. The gap between students in Antananarivo and those of the other provinces was still noticeable at that time.

I.1.3 Independence and the Malagasy Republic

Though Madagascar gained its independence in 1960, the French still held the political and economical control of the country. Throughout the first Republic, it was decided that French would remain an official language alongside Malagasy. These two languages were the official languages of Madagascar.

Apparently that choice of promoting bilingualism was intended to protect people in the provinces known as the « côtiers » (coastal dwellers). In fact, some people argued that it would be unfair to make the Merina variety as the Malagasy official language since it may be to the detriment of other varieties. And for that reason it would be preferable that French remained the dominant language.

Despite the fact that there were two official languages, the native language remained a dominant one in primary school. French was introduced progressively in the second year.

Once again one of the educational problems at that time was the difference of students' levels namely those from the towns and those from the countryside. Apart from that, as we said earlier, children who came from the capital had noticeable advantages compared with those from the other provinces.

⁵ Koerner (1999) op. cit. p. 205

Another point that marked educational field was the problems related to financial constraints. Since the majority of the Malagasy people were peasants, education was not given a lot of consideration. Many children dropped out of school after one or two years of instruction in order to help their parents. Children in the countryside were the most affected by that problem of financial constraints. They were obliged to leave school at an early age.

During the second Republic, the reform of education under Ratsiraka's government and its failure were considered as the most important events.

The problems began with the movements of students at the Faculty of Medicine which were followed by the complaint of students in both lower and higher secondary schools who insisted on the necessity of modifying the school programme. Those students argued that French was detrimental to Malagasy culture and civilization. And in order to solve that problem they required that the curriculum be modified.

On the other hand, the Malagasy government decided to commit itself to a socialist future. Obviously there was bound to be enormous political changes.

The main purpose of the government was to get rid of all forms of exploitation and constraints or prejudices that resulted from colonization. Indeed, the French influence was rejected. Instead, the government promoted the Malagasy language and culture.

As far as the education was concerned, it was decided that the objective of the Malagasy educational system would be to create a society where students had the opportunity to express themselves and to be conscious of their duty.

In 1972 Malagasization was imposed by the Malagasy government. It was agreed that Malagasy would be the medium of instruction used in public schools. As for the French language, it began to lose its position. That decision, however, entailed some negative impacts on Malagasy students. In fact, though Malagasy was said to be the language of instruction, many private schools continued to use French in their teaching. Thus, the levels of students in public and private schools were quite different, particularly concerning their level in French. Malagasization had then a negative impact on the education of Malagasy children. In 1989 for example, the exam results were disastrous, many schools had to close.

In order to solve these problems, President Ratsiraka decided to reinforce French at school. French became again the language used to teach scientific subjects, but it was not the medium of instruction.

During the third Republic, with the government of President Zafy Albert, French again became the medium of instruction. Until today it is used particularly in administrative matters. French then holds an important position in the Malagasy educational system.

I.1.4 Educational and language policy

Educational and language policy are likely to affect the quality of education in one country. Success or failure at school may indeed depend on them. According to Legrand, L.⁶ the definition of educational policy may be as follows :

Il y a politique de l'éducation à partir du moment où une organisation collective entre en jeu : un établissement scolaire peut avoir une politique. Mais de façon plus restrictive, on parle de politique de l'éducation au niveau d'ensembles institutionnels importants...L'essentiel d'une politique éducative réside dans le projet, sa détermination et sa mise en œuvre. L'éducation par excellence, est projet...Dans le domaine de l'éducation, comme en tout autre, la politique est liée au pouvoir. Une politique de l'éducation se traduit par des lois, des décrets, des règlements, des programmes et des instructions. Mais cet appareil juridique, expression du pouvoir, ne doit pas faire illusion. Les analyses de (CROZIER) valent ici plus que jamais. Le système ne fonctionne et ne se maintient que par l'assentiment des acteurs...

In this definition educational policy may be viewed as a plan which is intended to improve everything that is related to the educational field. Though the measures taken by governments may be written in laws, their implementation largely depends on the persons who are supposed to enforce them. This means that measures concerning educational policy may change according to the government in office.

As far as educational policy in Madagascar is concerned, it has been agreed that one of its main priorities is to improve the quality of education especially in primary schools by promoting basic competence. In addition to that, the Malagasy government has also emphasized on the right to education for all children. However, this remains a big challenge for the simple reason that the country is still confronted with huge problems of poverty.

With respect to language policy, in general it is meant to organize the use of different languages in a country, that is, the roles of particular languages as well as their status.

During the pre-colonial period, before the introduction of education and Christianity in the country, foreign languages had limited influence on the Malagasy educational system.

⁶ Legrand, L. (1988) *Les politiques d'éducation*, Paris, PUF, Que sais-je ? p. 5 – 7

There is educational policy from the moment a collective organisation intervenes : a school can have a policy. But in a more restrictive manner, we talk about educational policy at the level of important institutional unity... What is essential in an educational policy resides in the plan, its determination and its implementation. The aim is education above all else...In educational field, as in other, policy is related to authority. An educational policy is expressed by laws, decrees, regulations, programmes and instructions. But this legal system, expression of authority must not be deceptive. The analysis of CROZIER applies here more than ever. The system does not function nor remain unless by the consent of the actors. (My translation)

Besides, at that time education was not delivered at school.

With the arrival of the European missionaries, children began to attend school during the reign of Radama I. The languages of those missionaries were gradually introduced in the Malagasy educational system. Besides, in some cases Malagasy students had recourse to French or the English language particularly whenever they used scientific words which did not exist in their mother tongue. From that time on, foreign languages began to have a great influence on Malagasy society. At that period most of the teachers were foreigners, thus, students were obliged to understand foreign languages.

In 1896, once the French colonizers settled in Madagascar, the use of the Malagasy language became very restricted. As the French imposed their language Malagasy students had to learn and use it at school. Thus French became the dominant language and consequently, Malagasy lost its position.

However, it was noticed that for the majority of children in the countryside, their knowledge of the Malagasy language was better compared to their level of French. Very few Malagasy students had a good command of French though that language was widely used as the medium of instruction.

In a word, we can say that during the colonial period the Malagasy language policy empowered French. As far as Malagasy was concerned, it was considered as a second modern language after English.

Once Madagascar gained its independence, the Malagasy language policy was slightly modified. During the first Republic for example, President Tsiranana and his government adopted an official policy of bilingualism. French and Malagasy were the official languages used in the country. Though it was written in the constitution that both languages were official, one could notice that French remained dominant.

During the second Republic beginning in 1975, there was an important change in the Malagasy language policy. With the rise of Malagasy nationalism, President Ratsiraka decided to commit the country to a socialist future. For that reason the Malagasy government tried to promote the Malagasy language as well as its culture and civilization. Eventually the President announced that Malagasy would become the medium of instruction of Malagasy children. Thus, the inauguration of Ratsiraka and his promulgation of an official policy of Malagasization was one of the major event of that period. At that time Malagasy was the medium of instruction in public schools. As for the roles and values of French, they were reduced. Instead, the government reinforced the use of Malagasy so that ultimately Malagasization also included the more radical denunciation of French culture and influence

over the national economy and political system.⁷

For the case of the Malagasy language, obviously it is the first language of the Malagasy people. As far as its status is concerned, it is known as a national language but also as an official language. Besides, it is used by the Malagasy people in everyday conversation, for example to communicate with family, friends or neighbour. In a broad sense, it is mainly used in informal situation. Of course, there are some other languages used in different circumstances, one of them is probably French. This language plays an important role in Madagascar. It is the language used in academic circles. It has then a great influence on the Malagasy language policy. As the language of the former colonizer, its use remains very widespread. Moreover, it is also the medium of instruction of the Malagasy people.

On the other hand, this domination of the French language also characterizes the diglossic situation in Madagascar. Here what is meant by diglossic situation is the existence of two or more languages being used for different purposes each performing different functions. In this particular case, the two languages in question are Malagasy and French.

If we take the case of French, it may be said that it has a higher status compared to Malagasy. Though the Malagasy people have their native language, they do not use it as the medium of instruction, instead they use French. For that reason Malagasy students spend more time in learning French than they do with their own language. In addition to that, French can be considered as a more prestigious language because its roles are often viewed as more important, particularly in academic contexts.

So far we have been talking about the use of Malagasy and French as well as their status, but as the purpose of this work is to deal with English teaching and its problems in Madagascar, it is worth mentioning the role of English in the Malagasy educational system.

Before the year 2002, English was considered as a foreign language in Madagascar. It did not have a special status. At school it was taught like any other subject. Pupils started learning this language from the first year of lower secondary schools (6^{ème}). As far as the syllabus was concerned, the aim of English teaching was to enable learners to communicate in English and understand the written and spoken forms of that language. Apparently, knowledge of the English language was simply considered as a supplementary knowledge to the user. In brief we can say that English had a very limited role since it was simply known as

⁷ Madagascar/ Language (2004) < <http://w.w.w. photins.com / countries / madagascar / society – language.htm/>>

a modern language to be learnt at school.

But since 2002, the Malagasy government has tried to promote the role of the English language. Thus, it has been decided that English would be introduced as a subject to be taught in primary schools starting from the class of 8^{ème}. As a result, nowadays pupils in some schools start learning the English language in elementary. However, this new programme has not been generalized to all Malagasy schools. This may be due to lack of qualified teachers who can teach this subject. But despite this, English language learning is now becoming popular, and many people want to learn this language. Besides, there are many private schools or centres that give English courses. In Antananarivo for example, we can see centres like ELI (English Language Institute), CNELA (Centre National d'Enseignement de la Langue Anglaise), ACC (American Cultural Center) or also Topflight...

As regards the English status at school, we can say that though English remains a foreign language and is still considered a third language (L3) after Malagasy (L1) and French (L2), it holds an important position compared to some other foreign languages learnt at school. In fact, English is normally taught in Malagasy schools till the end of higher secondary school. As opposed to some modern languages taught at school such as German, Spanish, Russian which are most of the time optional, the English language is supposed to be a compulsory subject. However, it is worth mentioning that it is optional at the BEPC national examination at the end of lower secondary. This means that pupils in 3^{ème} may decide not to take English at the exam. This is probably one of the main reasons that leads some learners to neglect the language.

On the other hand, another recent event that marked the promotion of the English language in Madagascar is the fact that it has become one of the Malagasy three official languages. Indeed, after the result of the referendum on 4th April 2007, the English language has been recognized as an official language. Apparently the Ministry of education intends to implement a system in which English will be on the same level as French and Malagasy.⁸

I .1 .5 Physical environment of the research

In order to have some ideas of what are the reasons for Malagasy learners' failure while learning English, surveys have been conducted in classrooms and in offices. In this case, some of the information available in this work result from the analysis of these surveys.

⁸ Labbé, S. (2005) *Une étude de l'enseignement d'Anglais aux écoles de Madagascar*. (Mémoire Présidé par Roland Pritchett) p.10

I.1.5.1 Classrooms

To illustrate the problems of Malagasy students who learn English in lower secondary schools, two classes have been chosen. One is a private school while the other is public.

The survey was conducted in two classrooms which are both located in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. The first one is in the centre of town : CEG Antanimbarinandriana. And the second one is at Anosizato which is part of Antananarivo Atsimondrano, the school in question is known as Collège ESCA Anosizato.

With respect to the level of the students, we chose two similar classes (4^{ème}) to represent the case of Malagasy learners in lower secondary schools.

For the case of learners and teachers, the surveys then took place in classrooms.

I.1.5.2 Office

For the person in charge of pedagogy, the survey was conducted in an office, more precisely at the Teacher Resource Centre at Analakely which is part of the Regional Direction of National Education (DREN) or the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENRS).

I.1.6 Diachronic statistic data

In order to analyse the difficulties encountered by the learners of the two classes studied and to make a comparative study, let us refer to the previous situation of these classes in question.

	The learners' case					
	CEG Antanimbarinandriana Class : 4 ^{ème}			Collège ESCA Anosizato Class : 4 ^{ème}		
School year	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007
School population	43	46	51	62	47	32
Average marks of English out of 20	13,61	13,02	12,50	12,5	11	10,5

Table :1

Source : School archives

CEG : - The school population is stable and the average mark of English is rather satisfying.

ESCA : - The school population and the average mark of English are decreasing.

The teachers' case

Teachers		Sex	Years of Experience	Qualifications		Training	Number of written tests and Mock exams	
6 ^{ème}	CEG Antanimbarinandriana	F	31	Academic	Professional	Trained by CPE EPE	Written Tests	Mock exam
				Bacc	C A P CEG		2/bimester	1/term
	Collège ESCA Anosizato	M	04	Bacc	-	-	1/bimester	1/year
5 ^{ème}	CEG Antanimbarinandriana	F	09	Bachelor of Arts (English)	-	Trained by CPE EPE	2/bimester	1/term
	Collège ESCA Anosizato	M	05	Bacc	-	-	1/bimester	1/year
4 ^{ème}	CEG Antanimbarinandriana	F	10	Bachelor of Arts (English)	-	Trained by CPE EPE	2/bimester	1/term
	Collège ESCA Anosizato	M	03	Bachelor of Arts (English)	-	Trained by CPE	1/bimester	1/year

Table : 2

Source : School archives

GEG : - The teachers have more experience but have the same qualifications as those of Collège ESCA Anosizato.

ESCA : -The teachers get less professional training.

- The pupils have fewer written tests and mock exams.

In the following part, we are going to have a closer look at theories and principles related to the reasons why students do not master English.

I.2 Theoretical issues

1.2.1 Social aspects

1.2.1.1 Issues raised by financial constraints

Language is a social phenomenon and for that reason social influences are likely to affect its acquisition. Obviously there are numerous factors that influence success or failure at school. Many researchers agree that one of the most considerable factors is the social status of the students. According to Boudon⁹ for example, success or failure at school is dependent on economic status of the family.

Indeed, there is no doubt that financial constraints are in actual fact one of the main reasons that prevent children from achieving success. If we take the case of working class children, many of them are expected to help their parents after school and shoulder considerable domestic responsibilities at home. Because of the demands of such domestic labour, these children do not always have the time to do all their homework or learn their lessons, yet this may truly affect their performance at school.

On the other hand, students from poor families do not perform well in class because of the lack of suitable equipment. It has been suggested that working class children will always have some difficulties because they cannot afford all the basic educational needs required at school. Thus, they will not be able to go further, and for this reason they will not achieve academic proficiency. In addition to that, it has been argued that the relationship of these students with their parents is not often very good. Generally, it is assumed that children who come from poor families are usually faced with the problems of lack of caring. In most cases, the parents of those children do not feel the need to communicate with them because they are busy with their occupation. Consequently, they do not help their children or encourage them in their studies. This lack of caring may, however, prevent children from succeeding, since they are not encouraged by their family, they may not make special effort to learn.

Aside from this, the atmosphere at home may also decrease students' interests. In fact, as far as the relationship between parents and children is concerned, it is said that parents of children belonging to working class often treat their children with more authority. This means

⁹ Boudon (1973) *L'inégalité des chances*, Paris, A. Colin, p. 12-13

cf Bourdieu et Passeron *Les héritiers* (1964), *La Reproduction* (1970), Paris, Les Editions de minuit.

Boudon, R. (1979) *La logique du Social*, p.248 cited by Plaisance, E. et Vergnaud, G. (1993) *Les Sciences de l'éducation*, Paris, La découverte, p.90. « *Les ouvriers dont les ressources sont faibles ne prennent le risque d'engager l'enfant dans la voie des études secondaires que si les chances de réussite sont bonnes* ». « *Workers who have poor resources do not take the risk to encourage children to carry on with secondary studies unless there is a good chance of success* ») (My translation)

that these parents tend to entertain a coercive relationship with their children. And for this reason some children may feel oppressed, consequently they do not find pleasure in whatever they do. In the long run, they are not willing to learn.

In his book, *The Quality school* (1996)¹⁰ in the French version, William Glasser takes the case of working class children and the reasons for their failure at school. He explains by saying that : « *Pour les élèves moins favorisés, la ligne dure, aussi bien à la maison qu'à l'école, représente un double désastre...Ces élèves ont appris moins de comportements gratifiants, moins de façons différentes de satisfaire leurs besoins que les enfants de milieux aisés, ils viennent à l'école à la fois avec plus de réticence et moins de capacités de faire le travail. C'est pourquoi ils sont plus facilement frustrés. Ceci veut dire que presque dès le départ, ils ne réussissent pas aussi bien à l'école, même si fondamentalement ils sont tous aussi capables que les élèves favorisés, qui, eux, réussissent mieux.* ».

According to this explanation, middle class children have more chance to succeed compared with working class ones. But what are then the reasons for success of middle class children ? Generally we can say that students who are not faced with the problems of poverty are luckier. They are likely to succeed at school because they live in a collaborative atmosphere. Their parents often take care of them, encourage them in their studies. Besides, those students have the chance to go to better schools and because of such conditions they work better, hence their success.

Children from various social levels perform differently. As far as the cognitive development is concerned, researches have shown that the level of curiosity of the middle class child is higher than that of working class one.

According to B. Bernstein¹¹ for example, social class can be a sociological determinant of success. In his own words he explains that « *the working class child is concerned mainly with the present and his social structure, unlike that of the middle class... the working class child has a preference stimulus from the cognitive responses, and his response is an immediate one with only vague extensions in time and space, consequently his attention will be brief or difficult to sustain without punitive measure.* »

¹⁰ Glasser, W. (1996) *The Quality School*, French version : *L'Ecole Qualité*, Les Editions Logiques p. 78

For students who belong to the working class, at school as well as home, the tough road represents a double disaster... These students have learnt fewer gratifying behaviour fewer different ways of meeting their needs compared to children from well off environment, they are more reluctant to go to school and show less ability to do their work. That is why they are more easily frustrated. This means that almost from the beginning, they do not succeed at school, even if basically they are as capable as students from the upper classes, who are more successful. (My translation)

¹¹ Bernstein, B. in Fishman, J.A. (1968) *Readings in the sociology of language*, The Hague Paris, Mouton p.229 – 236

If we analyse the semantics of those statements, it can be said that the environment of the middle class children limits their cognitive development. Since they are often exposed to an environment which is less organised, their social relationship within their family does not enable them to enhance their self-esteem.

On the other hand, B. Bernstein also argues that « *the child in the middle class and associate levels grows up in an environment which is finely and extensively controlled, the space time and social relationships are explicitly regulate within and outside the family group* ». He then concludes that the level of curiosity of the middle class child is high.

However, it is worth reminding that such a theory may be applicable to some learners but it may not be logical to others.

Apart from issues raised by financial constraints, there are numerous factors that may affect the learning process. One of the factors that may influence language learners is the learning environment.

I.2.1.2 Problems related to learning environment

From all the evidence so far studied, it seems that many language learners of English do not have the opportunity to expose themselves to an English speaking environment. Therefore, most of them are not able to speak the language fluently. In order to deal with the environmental aspects of learning, it is necessary to take into account the problems that pertain directly to learning environments both inside and outside the classroom.

I.2.1.2.1 Learning environment inside the classroom

According to some researchers, educational environments are critical in order to attain accademic success, and provided school climates are supportive, students are likely to have the opportunity to succeed. Besides, it is argued that preventing school failure begins with the creation of school climates that foster academic success and empower students. (Cummins 1989)¹²

First of all, it essential to note that if one is to keep positive school environment, the relationship between teacher and students must be taken into account.

Peter Strevens (1980) argues that professions such as that of language teaching require professional progress, and from this point of view he comes to the conclusion that those who

¹² Cummins, J. (1994) *Knowledge power and identity in teaching English as a second language*, Cambridge Christry Press. p. 52

teach students can perform different roles though they have the same objectives. For him language teachers can be grouped in three categories : the instructor, the teacher, and the educator. In his explanation, the pedagogical role of the instructor is rather limited. In fact, the instructor « *being an informant and not much more. He has few functions in organizing and planning the full programme of learning ; he avoids responsibility for the progress of individuals and classes throughout a long period of learning.* »¹³

This means that the instructor does not consider the learners' needs, he only focuses on giving instruction. Yet this attitude is not to the advantage of the learners. Indeed, since those learners may tend to receive what the instructor gives them, they may not contribute to the learning process, thus they are liable to fail.

As for the role of the teacher, Peter Strevens argues that a teacher is « a good instructor », that is, the teacher's professional task is better than that of the instructor. However, this does not mean that the teacher has all the required qualities, on the contrary, the role of the teacher is still regarded as insufficient.

With respect to the role of the educator, the same author emphasizes that the educator is the one who is capable of promoting school success. Since he is concerned with the quality of relationship with the learner, it is easier for him to have his students' attention. Moreover, the educator also considers the learners' needs with the function of social change that is why his role is more important.

If we look back to these three pedagogical roles, we may conclude that if they want to foster positive school environments, language teachers should act as educators.

Friendly relationship between teachers and students plays an important role, it may boost students' self-confidence. If students have the feeling that their teachers do not pay attention to what they do or dislike them, they may lose interest. Eventually they may even dislike the subject.

Cummins is probably right when he says that « *if we felt that a teacher believed in us and cared for us then we put forth much more effort than if we felt that she or he did not like us or considered us not very capable.* »¹⁴

Here the coercive educational relationship is related to oppressive pedagogy.

¹³ Strevens, P. (1980) *Teaching English as a global language*, Pergamon Press p.4

¹⁴ Cummins, J. *Language, Power and Pedagogy*, Reprinted in 2001, Clevedon, Cambrian Printers p. 40

According to Paulo Freire¹⁵ « ... l'éducation est oppressive dans la mesure où l'éduqué est considéré comme un récipient vide qu'il faut remplir sans jamais lui donner les moyens d'une compréhension critique du monde. »

If we examine what has been mentioned above, we may conclude that oppressive pedagogy does not enable students to learn effectively. Yet some teachers still believe that in order to make their students work better, they must show more authority towards them. Some also think that using coercive measures is the best way to improve students' performance.

However, such attitudes may be to the disadvantage of the students, it may even decrease their self-esteem. In their book « *Kids don't learn from people they don't like* », David Apsy and Flora Roebuck¹⁶ demonstrate that interaction and communication between educators and students have some influence on intellectual development of the students. Throughout this book they concentrate on the importance of cooperative relationship between educators and students. According to them « *seuls les enseignants qui ont appris à se servir de mode de communication interpersonnelle efficace peuvent transmettre leurs connaissances ou leurs aptitudes à leurs élèves. Les enseignants qui ne savent pas communiquer efficacement avec leurs élèves ne neutralisent pas le développement de ceux-ci, mais le retardent.* »

I.2.1.2.2 Learning environment outside the classroom

For the majority of students, the first contact with the target language is at school. In most cases they do not practise or use the language outside the classroom. However, the instruction at school is not sufficient to develop learners' ability. It is argued that the more learners have contacts with an English speaking environment, the more they succeed.

First of all, let us consider the problems encountered by those learners at home.

Generally when language learners are at home they usually use their first language to communicate with their families. Some may use another language in special cases but many of them keep their mother tongue as a means of communication. Since learners do not practise the target language at home or in their everyday life, it may be difficult for them to be familiar with the language in question.

¹⁵ Freire, P. (1974) Pédagogie des opprimés. Petite collection Maspero p.197

« Education is oppressive in so far the educated is considered as an empty container that must be filled without giving him the chance to have a critical understanding of the world ». (My translation)
<<http://www.freire.de/sprachen/français/approchecr.html>>

¹⁶ Apsy, D. and Roebuck, F. (1990). *Kids don't learn from people they don't like*. French version (on apprend pas avec un prof qu'on aime pas) Montréal, Quebec, Human Resources Press Inc, p.20
« Only teachers who have learnt to use efficient interpersonal communication can convey their knowledge or aptitudes to their students. Teachers who do not know how to communicate effectively with their students do not neutralize their development but they actually delay it » (My translation)

The community is also an important context for language learning. Indeed, learners are members of society, therefore the language used in the community has some influences on their acquisition. Most of the time, learners of English have some trouble to maintain that language because it is not largely spoken in their community.

For the case of Malagasy learners of English for example, it is generally impossible for them to practise English since the majority of the people do not speak it.

Contact with English speaking people also helps learners to improve their skills. There is no doubt that regular correspondence is another way by which a learner may maintain his or her skills in the use of a foreign language. However, if we ask learners, very few of them say that they have contacts with native speakers of their target language. In our country for example very few Malagasy learners have penfriends whose mother tongue is English.

Apart from the previous problems, there are some other obstacles encountered by learners of English. Another point which is worth mentioning is the role of mass media in language learning. According to William F. Mackey¹⁷ for instance, « *Mass media – Radio, television, the cinema, recordings, newspapers, books and magazines are powerful media in the maintenance of bilingualism. Access to these media may be the main factor in maintaining one of the languages of a bilingual, especially if his other language is the only spoken in the area. Regular attendance at foreign film programmes and the daily reading of foreign books and magazines may be the only factors in maintaining a person's comprehension of a foreign language which he once knew* ».

Mass media is indeed, one of the main factors that enables learners to maintain a foreign language. Through the programmes broadcast on the radio for example, learners may improve their learning skills. Television is also an even more powerful contact for it enables learners to guess meanings by means of gesture. English texts published in magazines or newspapers may improve reading comprehension as well.

Most of the time, the problem with mass media is that, although there are some programmes broadcast in English, they may not be sufficient to improve learners' skills. In Madagascar for instance very few English programmes are broadcast.

Social influences are then probably one of the most important factors that may characterize

¹⁷ Mackey, W. in Fishman, J.A (1968) op. cit. p. 562

language learners' competence. But on the other hand, there is also a strong belief which claims that some knowledge of the foreign's people culture may be of great importance as well. Thus, it will be necessary to take into account the cultural aspects of language learning.

I.2.2 Cultural aspects

Language and culture are inseparable and therefore language learning also implies cultural instruction. For almost a century teaching culture has been considered a significant factor that may improve foreign language study. According to Jespersen (1904),¹⁸ learning about the culture of another country is the highest purpose of language teaching.

I.2.2.1 Attitude towards English culture

Attitude towards the target language and the people who speak it may have an impact on the process of learning. It is argued that those who are not interested in or ignore the values of the foreign culture will not be able to master the foreign language. And if learners do not show understanding and respect towards the foreign culture, they will not be able to master the target language.

In some ways it may seem difficult to understand and respect foreign culture. Since culture may differentiate one group of people from another, it may happen that what is considered as traditional values in one society may seem insignificant to others. At this stage learners are often faced with what is referred to as culture shock.

Another problem that impedes foreign culture instruction is learners' attitude towards the people who speak the target language.

Some learners may express hostilities towards foreign people as well as their culture for a variety of reasons. Some may think that it is useless to learn a foreign language and its culture because they already have their own.

Reluctance to make special effort to learn foreign languages may then be due to carelessness, but it may be because of preservation of identity. Indeed, there are some students who think that their language and culture are superior to that of others, thus there is no need to learn about other languages or culture.

¹⁸ Jespersen (1904) in Kitao, K. Teaching culture in Foreign Language instruction in the United States <http://www.cis.doshisha.ac.jp/k_kitao/brit8.htm-45k>

Rivers (1968)¹⁹ also explains «... *most students were culture bound, that is their entire view of the world was determined by the values of their own culture and they had difficulty in understanding or accepting people with points of view based on other views of the world.* »

In fact, here Rivers means that the problems of some learners concern directly their opinion and perspective about the foreign culture. Since those learners tend to concentrate on their own culture they often disregard that of the foreign people.

In short, we may say that those learners who focus on their own culture and values are not open to some other cultures so that they have some difficulties in understanding or respecting different cultures.

But on the other hand, it is also useful to pinpoint that difficulties stemming from cultural differences may be another problem faced by language learners.

I.2.2.2 Cultural differences

Before dealing with issues entailed by cultural differences, it will be relevant to consider a few theories and concepts which are directly related to culture. Indeed, many researchers are interested in the study of culture and its relation with human beings. One theory which is particularly concerned with cultural matters is cultural anthropology.

In fact, cultural anthropology contributes to the study of human culture. Its aim consists of understanding cultural phenomena and their relation with collective and individual behaviour.

Cultural anthropology is also inseparable from cultural studies since it puts an emphasis on social organisation and cultural experience of human groups.²⁰

Another theory which is connected with culture is relativism. According to this theory, everybody has their own culture and their own truth. This means that truth is not absolute, it may vary from one group of people to another. In addition to that, wrong or right may not always be the same but change according to the situation or society.

Apart from what is mentioned above, in a broad sense, anthropological relativism may tend to be in favour of understanding and respect of cultural differences. As a matter of fact, in this theory, though there are so many different cultures in the world, they can be represented in

¹⁹ Rivers (1968) in Kitao, K. op cit. p. 2

²⁰ Camilleri, C. (1985) *Anthropologie culturelle et éducation*. Paris, France, Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Éducation, la science et la culture, p. 8

different societies. This perspective can be directly related to what Dan Spenber²¹ says : «... *le relativisme anthropologique consiste à soutenir que les êtres humains peuvent, en fonction de leur culture et de leur expérience, arriver à des représentations du monde radicalement différentes et incompatibles entre elles.* »

On the other hand as far as diffusionism is concerned ; this theory maintains that real inventions are nowadays more and more reduced in human history and that they have been spread through cultural source. In a broad sense this theory implies that there is no convergence between different cultures and civilizations unless they have a common origin.²² This may also lead us to conclude that cultural differences may be source of disagreement between two societies which have different values and beliefs.

As far as language is concerned, cultural differences can be one of the great difficulties and challenges faced by foreign learners. Louise Dabène²³ argues that «...*les obstacles à l'apprentissage tiennent bien souvent à des écarts d'ordre culturel, les différences au niveau des pratiques relationnelles et des systèmes de valeur en vigueur dans les sociétés ou des traditions éducatives qui en découlent, par exemple, peuvent constituer, pour l'apprenant, autant de problèmes potentiels d'autant plus difficiles à résoudre qu'ils sont bien souvent peu conscients et encore insuffisamment décrits.* »

Cultural distance is then a major obstacle for learners. Since they are not aware of some practices or values of the foreign people, it will be difficult for them to know what is really expected from them.

Culture also influences the meaning of some words, and if learners do not understand the cultural meaning behind simple symbols or words, they may misinterpret them. Kenji Kitao²⁴ is then right when he says : « *when using drills based only on language that do not take semantic meanings into account, learners do not focus on meaning at all. They may continue to misunderstand vocabulary, grammar and meaning until they learn something of the culture of the target language. Without understanding cultural meanings, it is not possible to*

²¹ Spenber, D. in Odile Jacob. *Fondements naturels de l'éthique*, Paris 1993 p 319-334
<[http :www//.dan.spenber.com/ethique.htm](http://www.dan.spenber.com/ethique.htm)>

« *Anthropological relativism claims that human beings can, depending on their culture and experience have representations of the world that are totally different and incompatible with one another.* » (My translation)
cf for example Kilani, M. (1992) *Introduction à l'anthropologie*, Lausanne, Editions Payot. p. 21

²² Colleyn, J.P. (1998) *Elements d'anthropologie sociale et culturelle*, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, p. 53

²³ Dabène, L. (1994) *Repères sociolinguistiques pour l'enseignement des langues*, Paris, Hachette FLE p.35
« *Obstacles in learning concern more often cultural gaps and differences at the level of relational practices and systems of values of societies or resulting educational traditions for example, can potentially create problems for the learner that could be all the more difficult to solve as people are often not aware of them or they have not yet been sufficiently described.* » (My translation)

²⁴ Kitao, K. op. cit p. 2

understand language as its native speakers do, no matter how well they can manipulate the vocabulary and grammatical forms of the language. »

Apart from the social and cultural aspects of language learning, another point that must be taken into account is linguistic theory.

I.2.3. Linguistic aspects

I.2.3.1 Language differences

Some linguists agree that it is rather complicated to learn a language which is entirely different from the first language. And that it is easier to learn a foreign language which belongs to the same family as one's first language.

If we take the case of Malagasy and English, we may say that since these two languages do not belong to the same family, they do not share common features, thus they are quite different.

First of all Malagasy belongs to the Malayo – Polynesian branch of the Austronesian language family. Malagasy shares 90% of its basic vocabulary with Maanyan, a language from the region of the Bartio River in southern Borneo.²⁵

As far as English is concerned, it belongs to the western sub – branch of the Germanic branch, which is itself, a branch of the Indo – European family of languages.²⁶

Obviously Malagasy and English are quite different, they do not belong to one language family

I.2.3.1.1 Differences in phonetics

Pronunciation may be one of the most difficult parts of the English language. English language learners have some difficulties while speaking because English pronunciation is sometimes unpredictable, that is, words are not necessarily pronounced as they are spelt. A case in point is when English people pronounce the word « indict » they do not pronounce the « c » they simply omit this letter. Therefore the pronunciation of this word becomes / in`dait / instead of /in`dikt / or /in`daikt /.

English pronunciation may be a major obstacle for English language learners since once they

²⁵ Editing Malagasy language (section) From wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/index.php?title=Malagasy-language&action=edit§ion=1>>

cf Dahl, O. Chr. (1951) *Malgache et Maanyan*, Oslo, Egede Institute

²⁶ English language. From wikipedia, the free encyclopedia <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-language>>

do not pronounce a word correctly, they may change its meaning.

On the other hand, difficulties related to problems of pronunciation may have something to do with differences between the Malagasy and English alphabets. If we compare the English and Malagasy alphabets, they are not quite similar though many letters exist in both languages.

The Malagasy alphabet is made up of 21 letters, 5 vowels and 16 consonants. It lacks the letters : c, q, u, and w. As far as diphthongs are concerned, it only allows two combinations of vowel sounds. Here the 2 diphthongs are /ai/ as in « *may* » or /ay/ as in « *tsinay* » and /ao/ as in « *manao* ». ²⁷

With respect to English, the alphabet is made up of 26 letters. As far as sounds are concerned, we may say that very few languages have so many sounds as English. In fact, it has 44 sounds with 20 vowels and twenty 24 consonants. ²⁸

Differences between Malagasy and English phonetics may make learners confused. As we have already mentioned, English sounds are much more numerous compared to the Malagasy ones. There are, in fact, different sounds that do not exist in the Malagasy sound system. As an example let us take the English pairs /θ/ and /ð/.

Indeed, these pairs are very hard to pronounce. It is difficult to distinguish them not only for non native speakers but for English native speakers as well. ²⁹

As far as Malagasy learners of English are concerned, it will be probably difficult for them to master these two sounds. Since they do not exist in their native language, they are likely to replace them with more approximate sounds. Instead of /ð/ learners may pronounce /v/ and for /θ/ they may produce the sound /f/. For those who are influenced by French, they may pronounce the sound /z/ for /ð/ and /s/ for /θ/.

I.2.3.1.2 Differences in grammar

Differences between grammar may not facilitate the acquisition of a language. Learners are often exposed to a language which is entirely different from their first language. If we compare the structure of English and that of Malagasy for example, we notice that the two languages are very dissimilar. As far as word order is concerned, English generally begins a sentence with the subject followed by a verb and its object (S V O).

In Malagasy, the basic word order is verb, object, subject (VOS).

²⁷ Gerbinis, E. (1949) *La langue Malgache*. Paris, Chassany et Cie, Paris p.29

²⁸ Potter, S. (1950) *Our language*, Penguin Books p. 78

²⁹ Richards, J. (1974) *Error Analysis Perspectives on second language Acquisition*, Longman, p. 81

Apart from grammatical mistakes concerning word order, the problems of tense may be among the principal obstacles in English language learning.

If we refer to the Malagasy tense system, we may say that it is easier, compared to some other languages. In fact, there are three tenses in Malagasy : present, past and future. The differences between these tenses are obvious in a book written by Régis Rajemisa Raolison entitled : « *Grammaire Malgache* » (1966).³⁰

For the present tense, it differs from the initial letter of the prefix. Sometimes the initial letter of the same participle makes the present tense different. (eg : *asiana*). But generally the prefix m – signals the present tense (eg : *manasa*).

With respect to the past tense it is occasionally represented by the prefix n – or n(o). The use of these two prefixes depend on the participle.

Whenever a participle begins with a consonant, it is preceded by n(o)-, (eg : *nosoratana*) but when it begins with a vowel the prefix n – is used instead (eg : *nasaina*).

As regards the future, the prefix : h – or h(o) indicates this tense (eg : *hosoratana*, *hasaina*).

Unlike Malagasy, the English tense system is more complex. To refer to the present for example, English speakers may have three choices. Either they use the Simple Present tense, the Present Perfect or Present Continuous as well. The choice of one particular tense largely depends on the circumstance or on the moment of speaking.

One tense that may differentiate English is the Present Continuous also known as the progressive form. In English, the differences between Present Simple and Present Continuous are clear. Sentences like « I work » or « I am working » are not equivalent though both of them indicate the present tense. However, if we take the case of Malagasy, the equivalent for the progressive form in this language can only be used emphatically. Besides if speakers do not wish to be emphatic they will have to use the corresponding non progressive forms.³¹

I.2.3.2.3 Problems of interference

Experienced teachers point out that the first obstacle of the learner is the native language structure. In fact by analogy with the structure in his native language which he considers parallel to the target language he is practising,³² the learner may teach himself

³⁰ Raolison, R.R. (1966) *Grammaire Malgache* 5ème édition, Ambozontany Fianarantsoa, Artistico, Pédagogique du Centre de Formation Pédagogique p.78.

³¹ Randriamasimanana, C. (1987) Tense / Aspect and the concept of displacement Journal of Pragmatics 11 p 193 – 209. North Holland.

³² Rivers, Mr.W. (1964) *The Psychologist and the foreign language Teacher*. The University of Chicago p.152

erroneous extensions of the structure to which he is being introduced.

Actually it is the learners' native language structure, so much a part of their thoughts which is their first obstacle to learning a new language.³³

Here the problem with the native language is that, since it is deeply rooted in the learners' mind, their habits and thoughts will be closely related to that language.

For instance, it is possible for Malagasy students to produce the following type of construction.

Eg : Manao akanjo fotsy ilay zazavavy kely (Malagasy) ; translated into : The girl little wears a dress white (English) instead of : The little girl wears a white dress.

In fact, students who produce this type of construction are influenced by the structure of their first language. Indeed, in Malagasy an adjective is normally placed right after the noun which it identifies. For this reason it is possible that some learners use the same structure when they use a new language.

For learners who have a second language, it is possible that they interfere a new language with their second language.³⁴

If we take the case of Malagasy learners, we can notice that many of them do not make the differences between French structure and that of English.

However, though these two languages in question belong to the same family, they have their own particularities. As far as vocabulary is concerned, despite the fact that thousands of English words have been imported from French, some of them do not have the same meaning in both languages. This type of phenomenon is known as false cognates which refer to words that are similar in spelling but different in meaning. Indeed, there are some words that may deceive learners. For example, some Malagasy learners may think that the word «deception » means the same thing either it is in French or English. Yet its meaning is quite different in the two languages. In French it means disappointment but in English, the same word refers to the act of making someone believe something that is not true.

Since we have already discussed the theoretical framework of this study, it will be also essential to deal with methodological framework.

³³ Mackey, W. (1965) *Language Teaching Analysis*, Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, p. 107

cf Pujol, M et Veronique, D. (1991) *L'acquisition d'une langue étrangère : recherches et perspectives*, Genève, cahiers N°63, cahiers de la section des sciences de l'Education. Pratiques et Théories, p. 23

³⁴ Pujol, M. et Veronique, D. (1991), op. cit. p. 25

I.3 Methodological framework

I.3.1 Applied research

Research methods and procedures by which data are analysed aim to come up with answers to various issues related to English learning. It would be then useful to look at the type of research in this study.

This research work can be qualified as an applied one. First of all, its aim is to gain knowledge or understanding in order to determine the principal problems that Malagasy learners of English may face. Furthermore, this research is also intended to study the relationship or applicability of theories or principles to the solution of a specific problem.³⁵

Apart from what is mentioned above, we can also say that here, we are concerned with applied research, for the purpose is to produce results that may be applied to real situations and at the same time to direct and assure an intensive study that is directed toward the practical application of knowledge.³⁶

In this particular case, in order to deal with obstacles encountered by Malagasy learners of English the first step is to point out the reasons for failure and thereafter suggest some solutions that may help to cope with educational practices.

I.3.2 Evaluative research

Evaluative research consists of evaluating the effectiveness of a policy or an action plan which has been implemented previously.³⁷ This type of research is applied in this study for actually here the first step before expressing an opinion is to collect relevant information about what must be evaluated.

On the other hand, evaluative research also aims at describing the functioning of a programme, for this reason it can be related to one of the hypotheses which concerns programme evaluation as well as the impact of educational system on the learners' motivation. Indeed, as we noted earlier, the main interest of evaluative research is to assess the effect of a policy or a programme. Such an objective contributes to this study for here,

³⁵ Definition of applied research <[http://www.google.com/search?h=en&r=&defl=en&=define : applied + research&= X & or = glossary – definition & ct = title](http://www.google.com/search?h=en&r=&defl=en&=define%3Aapplied+research&=X&or=glossary-definition&ct=title)>

³⁶ Cattell (1966) cited by Blanchet, A, Ghiglione, R, Massonnat, J. and Trognon, A. (1987) *Les techniques d'enquête en sciences sociales*, Paris, Dunod p.40 – 41

³⁷ Hamon, JF (2003) *Eléments de méthodologie pour les recherches en sciences de l'éducation et en sciences humaines*, Université de la Réunion, F L S H et C I R C I p.15. <http://www.sociology.org.uk/p1mphn3d.htm-17k>

the evaluation of the educational policy as well as of the curriculum plays an important role

the determination of what exactly are the reasons for learners' failure.

As a whole evaluative research helps a lot in the analysis of certain hypotheses of this present work. Since it makes decision about the effectiveness of programmes and practices, it cannot be separated from the educational field.

I.3.3 Action research

Action research is a special type of applied research which can also be qualified as participant research that helps mobilization of potentials and abilities and make actors more dynamic (in this particular case actors refer to learners).

Apart from this, since action research requires intervention on the part of the researcher, this latter is supposed to intervene in a given social situation. At this point, this research allows us to carry out real experiments in social groups.³⁸

As far as education is concerned, the focus in action research is on examining the effects of practice in an individual classroom, a few classrooms or school. In this study, from the educational practices in the two classes studied we can draw a number of conclusions which can be related to learners' failure.

Practices in classroom actually play an important role because even though there have been some practices imposed and written in the educational policy, teachers do not necessarily follow them. However, success depends on practices which are dominant in individual classroom.

Action research is particularly concerned with this problem of practice. As we said previously, in this research the researcher commits himself as a full participant. He can be actively involved in planning and introducing some change of policy and practice in a particular setting (in this case the setting in question is the school).

I.3.4 Speculative research

Speculative research puts an emphasis on a new reflection, its aim is to formulate new hypotheses apart from what already exists. Though this research neither focuses on decision nor conclusion, it may help understand problems studied by emerging fundamental macro-hypotheses.³⁹

³⁸ *ibid.* p.17

³⁹ *ibid.* p.17

This type of research is another method that contributes to the analysis of the main obstacles encountered by learners of English. In fact, by focusing our attention on the real problems that those learners are facing, we must have recourse to speculative research because it enables us to think about what may happen in the classroom studied and then to understand problems which are to be studied. At the same time it allows us to formulate new hypotheses.

I.3.5 Descriptive research

Descriptive research aims to get precise and complete information about the field study. In order to describe what is being studied, gathering exact information must be the main interest of such research.

This type of research also attempts to deal with individual behaviour faced with a particular situation. It can be used on condition that what is studied is sufficiently clear and that information, problematic as well as variables are precise enough.

In this research, the generation of hypotheses is only secondary. More often it is preceded by exploratory research which helps to formulate hypotheses in order to know better studied parameters.⁴⁰

Descriptive research has been chosen in this present work because it enables us to describe the real problems discovered in class. Description and analysis of these problems help us to find out the reasons why learners fail in their acquisition.

I.3.6 Quota sampling

The use of this particular method is a reasonable choice,⁴¹ because here, the aim is to select average students who can represent the case of Malagasy learners of English in general. Indeed, students at Antanimbarinandriana and Anosizato can be qualified as representatives of Malagasy learners because first of all, they belong to working class family which is the case of the majority of Malagasy students. They also have the same age as most of children who are in the class of 4^{ème} in Madagascar. Besides, the numbers of the learners in these schools also correspond to the size of most Malagasy classrooms.

These are then the reasons that allow us to say that learners in these two schools can represent Malagasy learners in general.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.17

⁴¹ Bless, C. with Achola, P. (1990) *Fundamentals of social research methods*, Lusuka, Printed by the government Printer, p. 76

I.3.7 Quantitative analysis

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Boudon (1970)⁴² qualifies this type of analysis as follows :

« On peut définir les enquêtes quantitatives comme celles qui permettent de recueillir sur un ensemble d'éléments des informations comparables d'un élément à l'autre. C'est cette comparabilité des informations qui permet ensuite les dénombrements et, plus généralement, l'analyse quantitative des données. La condition nécessaire à l'application des méthodes quantitatives est donc que l'observation porte sur un ensemble d'éléments, d'une certaine manière comparables... »

This research can be qualified as a quantitative one. First of all it deals with a comparison of two similar classes, that is, to draw differences and similarities between the students in the two classes in question. The analysis of such study requires a statistic analysis which is characteristic of quantitative analysis. These remarks then lead us to conclude that here we are much more concerned with quantitative analysis.

Apart from that, we can also say that we have to do with quantitative analysis for the simple reason that our analysis is aimed at a larger population. Through the survey conducted with this large population, we can discover which phenomena are more common and which happen only by chance.

Though quantitative analysis has been conducted in this research, we must also add that qualitative approach also has something to contribute to corpus study.

According to previous researches these two types of analysis cannot be used separately. They may be complementary even though they have their own characteristics. As Schmied (1993)⁴³ notes : *«... a stage of qualitative research is often precursor for quantitative analysis, since before linguistic phenomena can be classified and counted, the categories for classification must be first identified.»*

I.3.8 Holistic and atomistic approach

As far as approach is concerned both holistic and atomistic approach can be used for the corpus analysis.

⁴² Boudon, R. (1970) *Les méthodes en sociologie* 2è édition Paris, PUF, Que sais-je, p. 31 « We can define quantitative surveys as those which enable to collect on a set of elements information that is comparable from one element to another. It is this comparability of information that then enables enumeration and, more generally a quantitative analysis of data. The condition which is required to the application of quantitative

methods is then that the observation concerns a set of elements, which are comparable in one way or another. »
(My translation)

⁴³ Schmied (1993) Qualitative vs quantitative analysis <[http://www. Bowland-files-lancs.ac.uk/monkey/ihe/linguistics/corpus 3/3 qual.htm](http://www.Bowland-files-lancs.ac.uk/monkey/ihe/linguistics/corpus%203/3%20qual.htm)>

As regards Malagasy learners of English in the two specific classes, a more global approach

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has been conducted to have a general overview of what main obstacles they may face in their acquisition. Here holistic approach is appropriate because it allows one to create an overall picture of the whole problems faced by Malagasy learners of English. This approach also permits to develop broad hypotheses which in turn allow the use of analogies. In fact, through analogies between two comparable elements we may find common principles which are shared by all the different elements. In this research work, the two comparable elements are the students from private schools on the one hand and from public ones on the other. We can also say that for the case of learners, we have to do with holistic approach because here, when we talk about comparison it does not concern individuals but rather two groups which are composed of different students.

Apart from holistic approach, atomistic approach is also used. For teachers this approach has been used because for them surveys have been conducted individually.

We decide on this type of approach because it has some positive characteristics. It gives supporting details and develops specific hypotheses. Through this approach teachers can express themselves through their own experience, they may introduce some new hypotheses that may help analyse the corpus.

I.3.9 Data collection techniques

I.3.9.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is « *a major strategy which aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals and their practices through an intensive involvement with people in their natural environment... Such research usually involves a range of methods : informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, analyses of the personal documents produced within the group, self-analysis and life histories.* »⁴⁴

Participant observation is also a method that has been applied to groups of students studied in this research. This method is required in this study because taking part in the observation of the groups being studied allows to get more detailed and more accurate information.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Participant observation From wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/participantobservation>>

⁴⁵ Bless C, with Achola, P (1990) op. cit. p 86

On the other hand, all along the observation though students were asked to express their opinions about their problems in English learning, they were also allowed to ask questions whenever they needed some more explanation. This implies that for these students the observation was not a simple observation since the observer also participated during the investigation.

I.3.9.2 Interviews

Since we are dealing with an applied research field experiment, interviews are required. In fact, these latter are inseparable from applied research for their results contribute to corpus analysis.⁴⁶ As far as interviews are concerned, they were carried out by means of written questionnaires. For teachers and students the filling of these questionnaires took about 1 hour and a half. With respect to questions asked, the type used for students was mostly closed ended questions. Either they answer by yes or no, but they also had multiple choice questions. Interviews with these students can be said to be structured interviews since their answers were directed by means of multiple choices which had been previously given. But for the teachers, the interviews were semi-structured ones because for them we chose open questions.

I.3.9.3 Testing

Testing is a technique which facilitates comparative studies because through it we can have an overview of the level of the students studied.⁴⁷

In this particular case the testing consists of a composition of self introduction. Students are asked to introduce themselves in about five lines. The two classes which have been studied (CEG Antananimbarinandriana and Collège Esca Anosizato) did the same test.

As a conclusion, the first part of this study deals with historical background of education in Madagascar. It also talks about general statements and the most frequent problems that learners of foreign language may face. At the same time, it reveals some theories related to language learning and treats the methodological framework of this research.

But in the next part, our analysis will be based on pedagogical practices of the two classes we have observed.

⁴⁶ ibid p.88-89

⁴⁷ Hamon, JF . (2003) op. cit. p.49-50

PART. II :
TOWARDS PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES
CONTRARY TO THE NORMS

II.1 Pedagogical perspectives

There are many methods of teaching foreign languages, yet many agree that there is no single best way of teaching them. Besides, according to many teachers, if they are to be successful, they will not limit themselves to only one method excluding all others.

In the following section, we are going to discuss language teaching methodology over the centuries, its impacts on the learning process as well as on learners' skills.

II.1.1 Traditional methods

II.1.1.1 The Direct method

The direct method is one of the traditional methods also known as reform method, natural method, phonetical method or also anti-grammatical method. By its definition the so called direct method « *is based on the rationale that interference from the native language is the archenemy of all language learning and that the foreign language can be learned easily and correctly only if the native language is bypassed altogether in the learning process. Typically direct method teachers involve the pupil in conversation and supply meaning by referring directly to objects and picture charts ; they act out the meaning of sentences in order to make themselves understood.* »⁴⁹

In the broad sense, the direct method does not advocate the use of mother tongue in any foreign language learning. According to this method the process with which learners acquire foreign languages must be similar to the way they acquire their native language. Since the use of mother tongue must be avoided, the learning of translation skills must be excluded.

In addition to this previous definition, the direct method is also based on the belief that language learning should advocate the primacy of spoken words. Thus, the direct method approach focuses on the importance of oral skills and at the same time it must delay the use of printed words until the learner has good grasp of speech.

First of all let us take the case of the two classes studied and the implication of direct method in these schools.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, the direct method approach was still used. According to the teacher of the class of 4^{ème} it is one method which is helpful particularly in the learning of vocabulary or some new words in the target language. She then confirmed that whenever

⁴⁹ Politzer, R.L. (1970) *Foreign language learning*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc, Englewood cliffs, p. 13

she referred to some new words in the target language, she often used body language in order to make herself understood. Most of time she also used eye contact, smiling, r₂ 36 her eyebrow or nodding to elicit responses from the students. Such gestures can be considered as a part of direct method feature because it does not imply the use of the mother tongue or of any other language.

As for the case of the teacher at Collège ESCA Anosizato, he did not use the direct method during his class. He argued that in his explanation, he did not use body language nor gestures to refer to meanings of words. For him it is easier for the students to understand if he translates new words in the target language into their mother tongue (Malagasy) or French. For example, while explaining lessons which contain words that are difficult to understand, he immediately translates his sentences into Malagasy. For instance, while dealing with the lesson about the horoscope, the teacher introduced some new words which were not very familiar. In order to give the meanings of such words the teacher resorted to translation method. Words or expressions like « predicting the future » or « superstition » were translated as « *faminaniana ny ho avy* » and « *finoanoampoana* ». For these foreign words, the teacher chose to translate them into Malagasy because their French equivalents are not clear, students may not understand them. This process refers to what we call elucidation function⁵⁰ in which the teacher tries to be more precise and clear so that his students know what he really means to say.

For expressions or words which are often used in everyday conversation, the teacher does not necessarily have to use the native language. For instance, when he explained the lesson about « giving advice » he translated it into French rather than Malagasy. Thus, he translated « advice » into « *conseil* » instead of using the Malagasy word « *torohevitra* ». He preferred using this French word because it is a very common word that Malagasy students use frequently. This type of translation is known as interlingual translation⁵¹ in which another language apart from the mother tongue is used to translate the target language.

The grammar translation method was then partly used in Collège Esca Anosizato. For the teacher the direct method is more complicated. It needs a lot of inspiration and imagination. In order to conduct their lesson, the direct method teachers need energy and at the same time they have to improvise. Apparently, it may be true that the direct method teachers are supposed to be more creative and resourceful and their tasks may be complicated.

⁵⁰ Lüdi, G (1987) *Aspects énonciatifs de la traduction* in *La traduction*, Cahiers du Département des Langues et des Sciences du langage N°5, 1987, Université de Lausanne, p. 64

⁵¹ op. cit. p. 71

Even though the direct method may have some positive characteristics, its disadvantages should not be underestimated. What are then the adverse effects of the direct method on the learners' ability ?

A major fallacy of the direct method is the belief that the acquisition of a foreign language must be similar to that of the native language.⁵²

Such belief is not logical because children will never acquire a foreign language in exactly the same way they acquire their mother tongue.

First of all, the children's motivation in learning their mother tongue is different from that of a foreign language. In fact, the knowledge of a mother tongue is primordial for children, it allows them to communicate and express their needs. It also enables them to understand the language used in their own community and the world they live in.

The learning of the mother tongue is also inevitable, it is part of the whole maturational process of the child. Generally, children have strong motivation for the acquisition of their native language for the simple reason that it enables them to interact with the members of their community. In other words, the mother tongue then performs an essential function which is that of socialization.⁵³

Another frequent mistake about the use of the direct method is the belief that the native language of the learners should be avoided. As we said in the previous definition of the direct method, teachers in favour of the direct method do not use any other language, they focus their attention only on the target language. Such process, however, may be harmful particularly at the early stage of learning. Indeed, if teachers use the target language throughout their explanation students will not be able to understand them for the simple reason that they do not have a good command of the target language. Here this problem has something to do with metalinguistic activity.⁵⁴

Indeed, unless students have a high level of command of the target language it is impossible for them to understand everything through the direct method only. In this case, it may not be logical to assume that a mother tongue or a second language should be excluded while learning a new language.

⁵² Direct method < <http://www.abr.ac.uk/~mf/www/seclang.ca/langteach.5.html>>

⁵³ Lévi - Strauss, C 1967 : 565 cited by Géraud, M.O, Leservoir , O. et Portier, R (1998) *Les notions clés de l'ethnologie*. Paris, A Colin p. 154

⁵⁴Coste, D. (1985) *Métalangage, métadiscours, métacommunication*, Drlav, Revue de Linguistique, n°32 Paris, p.63 – 92

II.I.I.2 The grammar translation method

First of all, the grammar translation method focuses on grammatical analysis. Its 38 features can be summarized as follows :

William Mackey⁵⁵ says, « *in this method easy classics are then translated. Vocabulary is divided into lists of words to be memorized ; but there is little relationship between the vocabulary of successive lessons. Pronunciation either is not taught, or is limited to a few introductory notes. Grammar rules are memorized as units, which often include illustrative sentences.* »

Another point which is also a major feature of the grammar translation method is the belief that the best way to say a sentence in a foreign language is to start with a sentence in the native language.⁵⁶

As a whole, the grammar translation approach is a combination of grammatical rules and translation activities. It puts an emphasis on the written forms of language. Words are considered as though they have their foreign equivalents and that it is possible to understand a target language by using word – for – word translation.

Even though the use of the grammar translation method is known as a traditional approach, this particular method still prevails in many classrooms.

For the two classes studied for example this method is mostly used during the English lesson, if not the most dominant one.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, the English teacher of the class of 4^{ème} frequently resorted to this method. When she explained the lesson or asked students to do some exercises, she often used another language in order to make herself understood. It was impossible for her to use only English throughout the lesson because students would not understand her. In this case, most of the time she used three languages in her explanation. She translated English sentences or words into Malagasy, sometimes she also used French. Such translation method can be related to contrastive analysis.⁵⁷ In fact, the use of different languages during the learning of a particular foreign language implies that the target language itself is associated with those different languages it may be even contrasted with them. And for these reasons we may say that the translation method can be linked with contrastive analysis.

⁵⁵ Mackey, W. (1965) op. cit, p 153

⁵⁶ Politzer, R.L. (1970) op. cit, p.12

⁵⁷ Galisson, R. and Coste, D. (1983) *Dictionnaire de didactique des langues*, Paris, Hachette, p.125-127

For the explanation of the lesson about « giving opinions » for example, the teacher used both French and Malagasy. For the teacher, the reason why she used these two languages is si 39 She probably thinks that students can understand the lesson better with the use of these two languages because they have already learned them. Thus expressions such as « as far as I am concerned » or « In my opinion » were translated into « *en ce qui me concerne* » or « *à mon avis* » or « *raha ny amiko manokana* ».

The translation method is also very frequent particularly in the explanation of exercises. Most of the time when the teacher gave some exercises, she usually translated the question into French or Malagasy in order to make sure that the students understand what was expected from them. Here again this translation is supposed to have special functions such as elucidation and precision.

For instance, question like « Rearrange the following sentences so as to get a coherent text » was translated as « *Alamino ireto fehezanteny manaraka ireto mba ahazoana lahatsoratra iray* ». For the teacher this translation into Malagasy was considered as essential because otherwise students would not know how to do the exercise.

Such practice may however have an adverse effect on the learners' skills because through the use of three languages students may not pay attention to the target language, they may prefer listening to the language with which they are familiar. At this point listening practice in the target language will not be sufficient. With the use of the translation method students may not be exposed to the target language as they should be. This phenomenon is linked to the idea of linguistic immersion.

If we take the case of students at Collège ESCA Anosizato the same approach was applied. In fact, the teacher used the grammar translation method especially when students did not understand the meanings of some words. For this particular teacher, this method facilitates the explanation of difficult words. In this case, he used more than one language to explain new English words. He also confirmed that the level of the students did not allow him to use English entirely during the lesson. For that reason, when he said a sentence in English, he had to translate it right after so that everybody understood what he really meant, for example «I apologize» was translated into « *Je vous prie de m'excuser* »; and « I'm sorry » into « *Je suis désolé* ». Here the problem with such process is similar to the previous one. As students did

not listen to enough quantity of English words, they were more likely to forget what they hear.

When the two teachers of the two classes studied were asked to give the reasons⁴⁰ they used the grammar translation method, their answers were quite the same. Firstly, it is easier to use translation because students know exactly the equivalents of such foreign words in their mother tongue or French. This approach is not complicated, there are no particular skills required on the part of the teacher, all he has to do is to provide meanings from a known language so that students understand what he refers to better. If we analyse the grammar translation approach we may agree that this method is not complicated. It is easier for teachers to use it since it does not require any special techniques.⁵⁸ For example when teaching grammar some teachers tend to use this method particularly if there is an equivalent pattern in another language that students are more familiar with. For instance, while explaining English language structure some teachers tend to compare it with that of French. At this point, all along the explanation the teachers translate their sentences into French. For instance, the English word order « subject verb and object » will be translated into « *Sujet Verbe Complément* ». Such translation is not difficult since teachers only give the equivalent meanings without giving the reason why this is so. Most of the time less qualified teachers use the translation method for the simple reason, it does not require perfect knowledge of the foreign language.

In the long run, it is also possible that the grammar translation approach does not allow students to find out for themselves the meanings of words in the target language as well as their use in a given situation. Thus, it may happen that whenever students use words in the target language, these words may not be contextualized. They may produce wrong sentences in which words are obviously used as though they were isolated. In any case, the translation method may mislead learners because unless they translate words or sentences correctly, they may end up producing the wrong translation. Besides, the fact that there might be different possibilities for the translation of some words or sentences is also another problem. Another problem related to this method is linguistic insecurity. Actually, if teachers are not qualified enough, when they deal with more complicated words they may make mistakes. In some cases, they may not be sure of themselves because they do not know exactly how to translate some expressions. As a result, students may be confused and therefore will not be able to master the target language at all.

⁵⁸ Grammar translation (Indirect) Method < [http:// www.aber. acuk / rmflwww / seelangcq/ langteach 3. html](http://www.aber.ac.uk/rmflwww/seelangcq/langteach3.html)>

Apart from these issues related to the grammar translation method, there are some other disadvantages which are inherent to this approach. This method gives pupils the v 41 idea of what language is by supporting the idea that language is seen as a collection of words which are isolated and independent and that there must be an equivalent word in the native tongue for each foreign word. Though there are corresponding words in the mother tongue, some foreign words may not have equivalents. At this point word - for - word translation is not advisable because in some cases equivalent words do not necessarily refer to the same thing. Sometimes there are some idiomatic expressions which are particular to one language and which cannot be translated word - for - word.

Another bad effect of the grammar translation method is its impact on students' motivation. This method may discourage some students. When they cannot find the corresponding words in the target language, they may find translation neither rewarding nor satisfying as an activity.

For all these reasons, Roulet, E. (1995)⁵⁹, isn't he right to propose us an integrated approach mother tongue – foreign language when he says :

« ...l'apprenant peut s'appuyer sur une observation réflexive des structures et opérations dans sa langue ou variété de langue maternelle, afin de saisir les principes commandant le fonctionnement du langage dans l'interaction, pour pouvoir ensuite à l'aide de ceux ci, observer et comprendre les formes qui sont employées dans une autre variété de sa langue maternelle ou dans une langue seconde... »

II.1.2 Transformative pedagogy

II.1.2.1 The communicative approach

Many contemporary teachers agree that the communicative approach can be one of the methods that suits best foreign language learners.

According to its definition, it can be one of the most effective teaching methods particularly in foreign language learning. In this method, the main objective is to focus on

⁵⁹ Roulet, E. (1995) « Peut-on intégrer l'enseignement apprentissage décalé de plusieurs langues ? » E.L.A., Paris,

Didier – Edition, n°98, Avril – Juin, p.113-118 cited by Puren, C, Bertocchini, P and Costanzo, E. (1998) *Se former en didactique des langues*, Paris, Ellipses, p.76-77

« ... the learner can rely on a reflexive observation of structures and operations in his language or mother tongue variety, in order to understand the principles behind the working of the language in the interaction, in order to be able to observe and understand forms which have been used in another variety of his mother tongue or in a second language... » (My translation)

communicative ability. From the early stage of learning, oral skills play an important role.

This does not mean that it does not consider other skills such as listening, reading or writing 42

These skills are also learned but they are not as dominant as oral skills.

In the communicative approach communicative functions are essential. Learners are supposed to take into account the moment of speaking or the place where they are before uttering sentences in the target language. Here then communicative functions are related to real situations, they are bound up with situational context.⁶⁰

Since the communicative approach is based on oral skills, it does not manipulate language structure. Though this approach does not consider the grammar method as an effective teaching technique it does not reject everything that concerns grammatical forms of language.

On the other hand, the aim is not to produce sentences without grammatical mistakes but to convey meanings effectively. As for William Littlewood for example, « *the most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structures. It is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation involving himself and his hearer, taking account of what knowledge is already shared between them (eg. from the situation or from preceding conversation), and selecting items which will communicate his message effectively.* »⁶¹

From this point of view, the goal of this approach is to use language as a main tool of communication and to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situation. Skills in manipulating linguistic system must be delayed.

For instance, when holding a conversation with someone else, a learner of a foreign language using the communicative approach must be able to express himself clearly so that his hearer understands his message. Let us take an example to illustrate what are expected from learners while performing useful communicative acts.

This following dialogue between two persons is taken from a lesson in which learners are supposed to give opinions using communicative skills.

A : Shall we go to the cinema this afternoon ?

B : Oh no, I'm sorry. I don't feel like going out, I'm too tired.

A : How about watching films at home ?

B : Oh yes, that's a good idea.

In this dialogue, we can say that the speaker and the hearer are performing communicative

⁶⁰ Littlewood, W. (1984) *Communicative Language Teaching*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

⁶¹ op. cit. p.4

skills. From their sentences we can draw ways of making suggestions and replying to them

The communicative approach is also learner centered. It involves interaction between students and teachers. Both students and teachers are responsible for the learning process. As for the learner, he must try to do his best to be a full participant in classroom interactions. He is supposed to express his own individuality and personality. His contribution can be extended through independent learning which is also viewed as a very helpful support.

For their part, teachers also have their own roles. They have to avoid taking control of all the activities. They are supposed to guide learners, and at the same time they are expected to create interpersonal relationships in order to avoid tensions or inhibitions.

In brief teachers act out as facilitators rather than directors. They allow learners to make mistakes.⁶² Instead of blaming learners because of their errors, teachers try to correct them and explain why they were wrong. First, the learner who made a mistake does some auto-correction. After that, if this learner does not find the exact answer, it will be corrected by the other learners, this process is known as hetero-correction. Finally, it is the teacher through the maieutic of Socrate (ask questions which are more and more close ended so that the disciple, here, the learner finds out the exact answer) who is going to do the correction.

Apart from what is said above, another important role of the teacher is to take into account learners' needs and interests. In the communicative approach, teachers are supposed to act out according to students' interests and basic needs.

Before dealing with the use of the communicative approach in the two classes studied, it is worth reminding that this type of approach has been viewed as the one which should be implemented in Malagasy schools. But beforehand, objective pedagogy was considered as the method to be used at school. However, even though teachers are now asked to use the communicative approach, apparently very few of them manage to implement it.

First of all let us take case of C.E.G. Antanimabarinandriana. In that school, it was not easy for teachers to use the communicative approach. According to them, the first problem that did not allow them to do so was the large numbers of students in classrooms. As we have already mentioned earlier, in that school there were about 40 to 50 students in one classroom. During

an English lesson for example, the teacher admitted that she was not able to get all the students to participate. Only 5 students or at most 10 had the opportunity to speak.

⁶² Communicative approach < [http : // www.aber.ac. uk.rmflww/seclangcaq/langteach2html/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/rmflww/seclangcaq/langteach2.html/)>

Another problem that prevents teachers from conducting the communicative approach is planning. Usually teachers deal with grammar exercises, most of the time speaking activities are neglected for lack of time. 44

For the teacher at C.E.G. Antanimbarinandriana for example, she gave about 5 or 6 grammar exercises in one bimester against 1 or 2 dialogues or reading comprehension. What is also worth reminding is that oral activities or oral tests are not part of the exam. Thus, students often concentrated on written exercises. Many of them got into some trouble when dealing with oral exercises because they were not accustomed to these types of exercises. Though the Ministry of Education encourages teachers to implement the communicative approach it is rarely used in class. It is only used during language function activities or lessons. Yet in the class of 4^{ème} at C.E.G. Antanimbarinandriana, students argued that language function was not as dominant as grammar during English course. When asked about this problem, the teacher said that even if in the curriculum, grammar lessons were numerous compared to language functions or topics, so it is not surprising that there were many grammar exercises.

In order to know in what circumstance the communicative approach was used, let us take one example in which the teacher conducted this type of approach. For instance, while dealing with the lesson « Asking the way » the teacher at C.E.G Antanimbarinandriana used communicative skills. She asked her students to show her the way that led to a particular place by using oral skills. In this lesson students were encouraged to use the language communicatively since they were asked to cope with conversational skills. Expressions such as « go straight », « turn left », or « cross the road » were then used.

Such exercises were, however, rather rare since as we said above, language function lessons were not very frequent.

At Collège ESCA Anosizato, as previously mentioned, the most dominant method in the class of 4^{ème} was the grammar translation method.

In that class, oral activities were not very frequent. In this case students were used to written exercises, they were not able to express themselves in the target language. Besides, their lack

of practice did not enable them to use the language spontaneously. Here then, the problem is related to lack of oral exercises.

On the other hand, if we look at the way the teacher conducted his course, we may say that the communicative approach was rarely used. In fact, traditional method is still prevalent in many classrooms. For the class 4^{ème} at Collège ESCA Anosizato for example, traditional questions were numerous, such as « Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate grammatical items » or « Turn the following sentences into reported speech ». These types of questions⁴⁵ were very frequent in the students' exercise books. Of course, there were exercises that concern language function or a special topic but they were not many. During the first bimester for example, the teacher gave 6 grammar exercises against one text and comprehension and repetition of very few dialogues about socializing.

As a whole, we can conclude that the problem with the communicative approach is that it only remains a theory, in reality it is not implemented in class.

II.1.2.2 The competency based approach

Many researchers agree that the competency based approach is one the most effective teaching methods which helps students to succeed. Yet its implementation remains a big problem for different reasons.

First of all, let us explain what is expected from both students and teachers using this particular approach.

The competency based approach aims at a global training of the learner. It consists in conveying knowledge and using this knowledge at the appropriate time and place. In foreign language learning, the main objective is to focus on communicative function of language, it is based on language competence rather than the knowledge of the structure and formal properties of language.⁶³

Since the competency based approach emphasizes communicative skills, it enables learners to deal with more complex situation. In this approach, learners are also trained to be closer to real life situations and the job market. They are encouraged to use the target language in a more spontaneous fashion. But in order to achieve this, some efforts are required on the part of the learners.

First of all, the competency based approach also includes maximum involvement. With this approach students are encouraged to take part as much as possible so that they can construct their competence themselves. But they also need to do a lot of individual learning.

Students are expected to be totally involved in the learning process. Furthermore, they must be responsible for their own learning and have to make personal effort so that they can adapt

⁶³ Approche par compétences Pratiques pédagogiques favorisant le développement des compétences < <http://www.apsq.org/sautquantique/Nindex.html>>

themselves to different situations. In brief, the competency based approach emphasizes the role of the learner.⁶⁴

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But one point we must mention is that the competency based approach also shares some common features with the communicative approach. As a matter of fact, both of these approaches focus on communicative skills. They aim at gaining knowledge through independent learning.

As in the communicative approach, in the competency based approach teaching must be based on learners' needs rather than contents to be conveyed. Apart from that, teachers are viewed as the ones who guide learners. In order to create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom they must avoid ridiculing students' answers.

In the field of language teaching, the main interest of the competency based approach lies on competence to communicate. With this approach learners must be able to express their ideas easily and clearly. This corresponds to Grice's maxim of manner which insists on the fact that learners' contributions must be clear.

Apart from that, the competency based approach also gives learners the ability to communicate messages in different situations. Because their knowledge is not limited to one particular ground, they can use the target language in everyday life situations. Indeed, what really matters is that learners are capable of communicating messages effectively. Thus, grammatical features of communication are not considered as an urgent need.

For various reasons, the competency based approach is rarely implemented in Malagasy schools. At C.E.G Antanimbarinandriana, even though the teacher argued that during her in service training she learned how to use that approach and how it works, she still said that it was difficult for her to implement it. However, this does not mean that she never used it. Most of the time she tried this approach especially when she explained lessons about language function.

Here the problems that prevent the teacher from implementing this approach are quite the same as those we encounter in the communicative approach.

First of all, the major obstacle is also related to the size of the class. Since the competency based approach requires active participation on the learners' part, the teacher has some

⁶⁴ Brumfit, J.C. (1982) *Problems and Principles in English Teaching* Pergamon Institute, Printed in Great Britain and Co Ltd Exeter p.115

difficulties organizing her time so that all the students can speak and participate. In addition to that, the fact that the curriculum does not really correspond to the requirements c 47 competency based approach is also another serious problem.

As for the teacher at Collège ESCA Anosizato, the competency based approach was not at all used as he never attended any training in APC (Approche Par les Compétences). As we have already mentioned, traditional methods still prevail in that school, especially the grammar translation method.

One of the most obvious obstacles that prevented the implementation of the competency based approach in the class of 4^{ème} at Anosizato was the way the teacher conducted his lesson.

As we said earlier, in order to use this approach teachers must act as a guide, they must let their students express their own personality and at the same time let them construct their knowledge. However, if we look at the way the teacher of 4^{ème} at Anosizato conducted his lesson, we may say that he can be qualified as a director rather than a guide. Most of the time he dictated or wrote what students should memorize. Thus, his students only received without participating fully in the learning process. Generally, the teacher spoke throughout the English lesson, in other words, he used the affirmative method⁶⁵ in which students only spoke when he asked them to repeat or read, or when they did not understand what he said. Here the main problem is that the students did not have the opportunity to construct their competence themselves because their teacher gave them everything that they should know. Most of the time they rarely participated during the lesson. And if one or some students spoke, they did not even use English, they used Malagasy or French when they asked questions. Besides, when they were asked whether they used English during the class, the majority of them answered that they didn't because they were not fluent enough to be able to use it.

Another problem that prevented the teacher from using the competency based approach is lack of training. Even though he received some training previously, his

knowledge about this approach is not sufficient. Thus, even if he agrees that this approach can really help students, he admits that it will be difficult for him to use it because he is not very familiar with it.

⁶⁵ Galisson, R and Coste, D (1983) op. cit p. 341

Here is a summary table of the main obstacles encountered by both teachers and learners with the different types of teaching methods :

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	CEG Antanimbarinandriana		Collège ESCA Anosizato	
Teaching Methods	Problems encountered by the teacher	Problems encountered by the learners	Problems encountered by the teacher	Problems encountered by the learners

The Direct Method - No interference from the native or second language - No use of translation - Reference to objects, pictures to supply meaning	• Lack of improvisation and energy • Inability to convey meanings effectively without translation • Lack of suitable equipment, eg : pictures, objects	• Inability to guess meanings without referring directly to objects or pictures • Misunderstanding of certain gesture	• No use of the direct method • Translation of difficult words into Malagasy or French. eg : predicting the future : (<i>faminaniana ny ho avy</i>); superstition : (<i>finoanoampoana</i>)	• Failure to guess meanings • Reluctance to use their minds because of translation given by the teacher • Tendency to receive what the teacher says without asking questions.
The Grammar Translation Method - Teaching of grammatical rules - Use of translation to supply meaning	• Focus on grammar and translation • Neglect of communicative skills • Frequent translation of difficult words or sentences into Malagasy or French eg : as far as I am concerned (<i>en ce qui me concerne</i>); in my opinion (<i>à mon avis</i>) ; Do you mind if I smoke ? (<i>Tsy mampaninona anao ve raha mifoka sigara aho?</i>) ; Would you please take a seat ? (<i>Voulez vous vous asseoir s'il vous plaît ?</i>)	• Lack of linguistic immersion • Inability to use communicative skills in different situations • Comparison of the English structure with that of Malagasy or French • Problems of interference from the two previous languages • Recourse to translation every time new words are introduced	• Use of translation as a dominant method. Example of words and sentences translated : Can you help me ? (<i>Peux-tu m'aider ?</i>) ; Can you open the door ? (<i>Est-ce que tu peux ouvrir la fenêtre ?</i>) ; I'm sorry (<i>Je suis désolé</i>) ; I apologize (<i>Je vous prie de m'excuser</i>); Verb : to spend time (<i>passer du temps</i>). • Neglect of the target language	• Unfamiliarity with the target language. • Insufficient speaking activities • Tendency to translate everything before understanding • Use of word – for - word translation • Misunderstanding because of words which are not contextualized.

Table: 3

Source: Our observations and personal analyses

			Collège ESCA Anosizato 49	
PROBLEMS	the teacher	by the learners	Problems encountered by the teacher	Problems encountered by the learners

The Communicative approach -Focus on communicative ability -Consideration of situational contexts -Learner-centered approach	• Large numbers of students • Little time devoted to English learning. • Focus on grammar exercises ; eg :1 or 2 dialogues against 5 or 6 grammar exercises in one bimester. • Use of the communicative approach only in language function lessons eg : Lessons about asking the way , introducing people, describing places. • Absence of speaking and listening activities at the exam.	• Lack of opportunities to practise the target language → Difficulty to reach fluency. • Neglect of oral skills, reluctance when dealing with speaking activities • Underdevelopment of speaking skills • Inability to engage conversation in English without asking the meanings of some words. • Asking questions in Malagasy without using the target language.	• Focus on the written forms of English (grammar) • Dominant use of traditional questions to the detriment of exercises that concern the communicative approach as : eg :Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate grammatical items ; or find out grammatical mistakes in the following sentences... • Use of the communicative approach only in language function lessons such as : giving directions, likes and dislikes ; • Addition of translation with difficult words eg : cross the road (traverser la rue) ; He is fond of swimming (<i>il adore nager</i>)	• Neglect of speaking activities • Inability to deal with communicative skills • Knowledge based on grammatical rules • Incapacity to cope with different situations and contexts • Lack of practice does not enable learners to use English in a more spontaneous fashion • Insufficient time committed to language function
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Table : 4

Source : Our observations and personal analyses

	CEG Antanimbarinandriana		Collège ESCA Anosizato	
Teaching Methods	Problems encountered by the teacher	Problems encountered by the learners	Problems encountered by the teacher	Problems encountered by the learners

The Competency based approach : - Based on language competence and communicative ability - Focus on learners' involvement (independent learning, construction of the knowledge individually)	• Large class • Difficulties getting all the students to participate • The gap between the content of the curriculum and the requirements of the competency based approach	• Very few are participating during exercises (less participation) • Loss of interests • Inability to use communicative competence at the appropriate time and place	• Use of the affirmative method (does not allow the learners to bring their own personality) • Neglect of individual work • Lack of training	• Lack of independent learning • Lack of involvement in the learning process → Reluctance to take the main initiative • Passive learning environment
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Table : 5

Source : Our observations and personal analyses

II.2 Specific aspects of bilingual education

II.2.1 What is meant by language proficiency ?

Language proficiency refers to a high standard of ability and skill with one particular language. Students who have reached proficiency level are able to deal with the more complex forms of language either oral or written. Proficiency is often opposed to fluency. The latter is more concerned with oral skills whereas the former includes a good command of the language.

II.2.1.1 Acquisition and Learning

Stephen Krashen makes a clear distinction between these two terms. He has carried out research that demonstrates that acquisition and learning do not refer to the same thing. Although in this present work these two terms are used interchangeably, it is worth mentioning the differences between them.

According to Krashen⁶⁶ « *acquisition is a subconscious process that is identical to the process used in first language acquisition in all important ways. While acquisition is taking place, the acquirer is not always aware of it, and he or she is not usually aware of its results ...* »

From the above definition, language acquisition is a natural process in which the acquirer partakes in natural communicative situation. It is also a process similar to the way children acquire their first language, acquirers of a foreign language are not usually aware that they are acquiring a language. Moreover, Krashen defines language acquisition as implicit knowledge of language which refers to command of a language as if it were one's native language.

On the other hand, language learning is a formal instruction received at school, learners are conscious of the fact that they are learning a language. Generally when we talk about language learning we are more concerned with the study of grammar rules isolated from natural language. Learners gain conscious knowledge of the language, they are able to handle grammar rules.⁶⁷ Krashen also refers to this type of knowledge as explicit knowledge which comprises mostly competence in dealing with grammatical forms of language.

For Krashen learning is less important than acquisition. He argues that « *Acquisition now appears to play a far more central role than learning in second language performance. Our ability to use second language comes mostly from what we have acquired, not from what we have learned.* »⁶⁸

Theories that concern language acquisition and learning can be related to teaching methods implemented in classroom situations. As for language acquisition, we may say that it is linked with the competency based approach and the communicative approach. As we have already stated earlier, in these two approaches students are more likely to acquire and use the target language spontaneously. They should normally have a good command of oral skills.

In language acquisition, the result is more or less the same. Acquirers of foreign language do not focus so much on the grammatical forms of language but rather on communicative skills.

Language learning, on the other hand, is more directly related to the grammar method. Since it deals with grammatical functions of language, it does not give too much importance to communicative competence. As in the grammar method, students do not produce any language, they are only listening or responding with non-verbal gestures or actions. This pattern of teacher and student interaction creates a passive language learning environment.

⁶⁶ Krashen, S. D. (1985) *Inquiries and Insights, Second Language Teaching Immersion and Bilingual Education Literacy*, Printed in the USA, WCP Printing, Inc. p.8

⁶⁷ Krashen, Learning Vs Acquisition < [http : // www.sk.com-br/sk-krashen.html](http://www.sk.com-br/sk-krashen.html)

⁶⁸ Krashen, op. cit. p.8

As regards the learners in the two classes studied, we can say that they are 52 concerned with language learning than language acquisition. In fact, they were taught more about grammatical functions of English, they did not acquire communicative competence.

This means that they did not acquire English according to the process of acquisition which Krashen refers to. Instead, they learnt by focusing on grammatical forms which were based on rules. Thus, we can conclude that learners at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège Esca Anosizato did not acquire English, they rather learnt it and these are the reasons that explain why they did not reach fluency.

II.2.1.2 Differences between BICS and CALP

These two terms are used by Cummins to refer to students' abilities in language acquisition. Here BICS refers to Basic Interpersonal Communicative skills. With BICS language activities are acquired through daily living.⁶⁹ Students who have BICS are good at conversational skills. In fact, their abilities to communicate concern everyday life conversation and informal situations. They are incapable of handling more complicated skills in the target language.

As for CALP, it stands for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. As its name implies, CALP is more concerned with a good command of the target language. Students having CALP learn in an academic setting. Knowledge of the language is gained through formal instruction. But once they have CALP students are able to deal with more complex situations. They can handle more sophisticated subjects in the target language. Their knowledge goes beyond oral skills. Besides, CALP also includes context embedded activities, it is cognitively demanding.

With respect to the learners' levels at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège Esca Anosizato, we can say that in these schools, learners are not concerned with neither BICS nor CALP.

First, these learners were not able to use English to engage in simple conversation in that language. Besides, their teachers did not concentrate on oral skills. Consequently they were not fluent at all, which means that they did not have BICS. Moreover, they could not adapt themselves to different situations. They were incapable of dealing with complex aspects of English such as writing correct essays or narrating events in that language. In other words,

⁶⁹ BICS and CALP in a nutshell < [http : // www.azusaud. K12.0ca.us/bilingual/clad2bicscalps2.html](http://www.azusaud.k12.ca.us/bilingual/clad2bicscalps2.html)>

Cf Dabène, L. op. cit. p.134-135

they did not achieve proficiency, and for that reason we cannot say that they have CALP

In short, we cannot use BICS and CALP to refer to the levels of the learners in the two classes studied. Since in these classrooms learners do not reach a certain level of fluency or

proficiency, we cannot use BICS and CALP to measure the level of the learners' performance.

II .2.2 Inaccessibility to effective bilingual education

Bilingual education programme has been implemented in many countries around the world. Although it has been considered an efficient programme that permits students to master foreign languages, some people do not agree that it is the solution to learner's underachievement.

Indeed, there are different types of bilingual education. Among the ones which are viewed as the most appropriate programmes are immersion education and transitional bilingual education.

Are these types of bilingual education really implemented in classroom situations and are they necessarily required in order to achieve proficiency in foreign language acquisition ?

II.2.2.1 Does English proficiency require the implementation of immersion education ?

Calvet (1991)⁷⁰ noticed, *« on dit qu'un étudiant est en immersion quand au moins la moitié de ses cours, durant la première année de son programme de français, sont données dans cette langue [...] Même si, comme c'est habituellement le cas, la proportion de cours donnée en français diminue à mesure que l'étudiant avance dans ses études, on dira toujours que l'étudiant est en immersion, pourvu qu'il se soit inscrit à ce programme de façon ininterrompue. »*

With immersion education teachers use the native language of the children at the early stage of learning. At least half of the school programme is taught in that language. But later on, the target language becomes the medium of instruction. Immersion teachers do not exclude the first language of the students. Their aim is the mastery of the target language which for reasons of pedagogical efficiency is selected as the language of instruction.

There are various forms of immersion education. In total immersion teachers use the target

⁷⁰ Calvet (1991) in Dabène, L. (1994) op. cit. p.115

« It is said that a student is in immersion when at least half of his lessons, during the first year of his French programme, are given in that language [...] Even if it is usually the case, the proportion of the lessons given in French reduces as the student advances in his studies, it will always be said that the student is in immersion, provided that he is registered in that programme continuously » (My translation)

language throughout the school year. As for partial immersion, most of the lessons are taught

in the target language. Students may also alternate languages from one day to the next or one week to the next. And in dual languages programmes, also known as two way bilingual immersion programmes, foreign languages are taught simultaneously.⁷¹

These various gradations of immersion education have some things in common. All of them are intended to expose learners to the target language as much as possible.

Immersion programme is opposed to submersion. With this latter, teachers use the target language as the medium of instruction without having recourse to the students' native language at any time. There is only one language of instruction which is the target language, any other languages are excluded.

One may be convinced that immersion may actually lead children to success, what are then the benefits of that programme ?

It is assumed that the modern immersion approach to teaching foreign languages maximizes the time students get practice in the language they are learning without being obliged to translate what they hear and speak.

It also develops fluency in two languages. Since it does not take away the first language of the learners, it may strengthen positive attitudes towards the target language and the people who speak it. This particular type of bilingual education may also promote true bilingualism and biculturalism. It cultivates an appreciation and understanding of other cultures. Because it is an additive bilingual programme,⁷² children learn the foreign language without compromising their first language.

From all the arguments cited above, immersion education may be an efficient programme but here the problem is that is it possible to implement it in Malagasy schools ?

First of all, although English has been recognized as an official language recently, it is not as dominant as French. At school it is considered as a modern language and French remains the language of instruction. However, immersion education mainly concerns second language teaching. If the target language is not used as the medium of instruction at school, we cannot talk about immersion education. Yet, this is not the case of English teaching in

⁷¹ *ibid.* p.115

⁷² Hamers, J. F. et Blanc, M. (1983) *Bilingualité et Bilinguisme*, Bruxelles, Pierre Mardaga
Madagascar. This language is taught as a separate subject, it is not the language of teaching

In this case, it is impossible to say that English teachers in Madagascar can implement immersion programme for the simple reason that it is not the medium of instruction. Perhaps, for advanced learners it may be possible for teachers to use the target language as a dominant one, but in lower secondary schools such a programme will not work.

For the two classes studied for example, the two teachers confirm that it is not possible to use English as the language of teaching even during the English lesson. Yet in immersion education, the target language becomes the medium of instruction for all subjects after the students have reached a level that could be described as acceptable. Such situation still proves that immersion education is not accessible for learners of English at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato. Since English is not used as the medium of instruction in these schools, it will be difficult to implement this programme. This inaccessibility to effective bilingual programme may be one of the reasons why learners fail to master English.

As long as English remains a mere subject to be learnt at school, it will be difficult for the teachers to conduct immersion education programmes. This is simply because the implementation of such a programme requires more time and resources. Yet this is not what we find in Malagasy secondary schools.

Moreover, the fact that French is used as the language of instruction also prevents the implementation of immersion education in Malagasy schools as far as English teaching is concerned. Indeed, Malagasy learners already have French as a major language, therefore English does not have a very important place compared to it. In other words, English is not as dominant as French, that is why it cannot be used as the medium of instruction. Yet, if teachers are to implement immersion education, they will have to use English more when they teach. It is, however, impossible to do this in the two classes studied because of the learners' levels.

Apart from immersion, transitional bilingual education is also viewed as an additive programme. Here the question is whether it may help learners achieve proficiency or not.

Transitional bilingual education is the theory that « *reading in one's native language facilitates reading in a second language... And that children's achievement in a second language depends on their mastery of their native language* » (Porter 3)⁷³

If we analyse this previous definition the main theory of transitional bilingual education is to maintain the use of the native language of children while teaching foreign languages. According to this type of bilingual programme, it would be useful to involve education in a child's native language, typically for no more than three years to ensure that students already have a good command of their mother tongue before learning another language. In fact, a child has to learn his first language before a second or a foreign language is taught. Besides, with that programme it is assumed that the knowledge of the mother tongue can be transmitted or transferred to the target language of the children and that a solid foundation in the children's native language best prepares them for learning a new one.

According to Cummins (1991)⁷⁴, this type of bilingual education can be successful. He also argues that it entails cognitive advantages from learners' parts, and the development of the target language mainly depends on the development of the first one and that a positive relationship exists between the two languages. Krashen also supports Cummins's theory by adding that « *the knowledge that children get through their first language helps make English... more comprehensible. Literacy is developed when the primary language transfers to the second language.* »⁷⁵

Transitional programme is also related to maintenance model in which teachers do not take away children's mother tongue. It implies an interdependence between children's first language and the foreign language they are acquiring. With this programme teachers are not supposed to exclude the mother tongue of the students, on the contrary it is argued that the knowledge of the first language makes the acquisition of a target language easier.

Even though some researchers do not agree that transitional bilingual education works, many countries have implemented this programme.

Here the question is : does transitional programme work in Malagasy schools ?

⁷³ Bohannon, T. (Feb 2001) Bilingual Education. An inquiry into Transtional Bilingual Education p.1
<[http://www.abortionessay.com/essay/files/bilingual inquire/.lk.](http://www.abortionessay.com/essay/files/bilingual%20inquire/.lk.)>

⁷⁴ Cummins (1991) op. cit. p.1

⁷⁵ Krashen op. cit . p.1

We have already said that most Malagasy schools maintain the mother tongue when teaching foreign languages. Yet, this does not mean that teachers in these schools resort to transitional bilingual education. As noticed above, although this former programme does not exclude the children's first language, the target language becomes the most dominant language of teaching after a few years of learning. However, in many classes in Madagascar, though students are not at the early stage of learning anymore, teachers still tend to use the first language on the same level as the target language. This is what we observed in the two classes studied.

Although the two teachers at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato used Malagasy during their explanation, it was not similar to the way transitional bilingual education works. In these two classes, Malagasy was used in order to translate new words. In other words, the mother tongue is mainly used for translation purposes. At this stage, we can say that knowledge of the first language cannot be transferred to the target language for the simple reason that teachers used the first language only for translation.

Moreover, the use of the native language during foreign language classes does not necessarily mean that transitional bilingual education is implemented. In this programme, the native language of the students is maintained, but teachers are not supposed to focus on it, they are only told not to exclude it at the early stage of learning and in case students need it.

In this case, does that programme match the reality in Malagasy classrooms and is it even possible to carry it out ?

In lower secondary schools, it will be difficult to implement this programme. Though some students have already learned English since primary schools, many of them only started in lower secondary schools, usually in 6^{ème}. Their knowledge of the language and their capacity to understand it prevent teachers from using the target language as the dominant one. Furthermore, transitional bilingual education is mostly concerned with second language teaching. Yet in our country, at the moment English is not given a lot of importance, in the class of 3^{ème} it is not even compulsory at the national exam. Due to all of these previous problems, Malagasy students do not and cannot have access to effective bilingual education. Transitional and immersion programmes are difficult to implement because even though the Malagasy language policy intends to give more importance to English, in reality this is not what is happening.

Apart from these issues related to bilingual education, there are other problems which prevent learners from reaching proficiency.

II.3 Learners' difficulties

II.3.1 Psychological issues

Students have their own point of view about language learning and they also have their own reasons for wanting to acquire a foreign language. Here what interests us is to know whether students' motivations have any impact on their acquisition or not.

II.3.1.1 Motivation

Strong motivation can be one of the main reasons that leads students to succeed. According to Brown⁷⁶ for example, there are two types of motivation. What he calls as intrinsic motivation refers to learning for self accomplishment and personal interests. And on the other hand, he defines extrinsic motivation as learning under external compulsion or to attain institutional reward.

In this case, we can say that motivation can be multiple, contradictory and changing, but in order to succeed students need the right motivation. According to researches carried out by Rivers (1964)⁷⁷ for instance, teachers should aim at developing intrinsic motivation for the earliest stages of foreign language study. With this type of motivation, students are integratively oriented. They desire to learn the language. And since they do not have the feeling that they are compelled to learn the new language, they come to understand the people who speak their target language as well as their culture.

On the other side, extrinsic motivation is most of the time considered as less important. Since its purposes are instrumental ones, it is not the right motivation that may help learners to succeed. Indeed, with this type of motivation the main objective is to learn a foreign language for professional purposes as getting a job or occupational advancement. The desire to learn and integrate with people who speak the target language is not very important.

For the case of Malagasy learners of English, are they integratively oriented or are they learning English for utilitarian purposes ?

If we compare students' motivation in the two classes studied, they are more or less similar. When students at CEG Antanimbarinandriana were asked why they learnt English,

⁷⁶ Brown in *Tesol quarterly Building a global community*, Volume 40. Number 1. March 2006, Teachers of English to speakers of other languages. Inc p.14

⁷⁷ Rivers (1964) op. cit. p.90

60% of them answered that it was helpful in order to find a job. Very few of them answered that they liked that subject and wanted to use and speak it as native speakers do. In this case, their motivation is mostly extrinsic. However, this type of motivation is not the right motivation that students need if they want to succeed. Even though it is actually true that English knowledge is required in job markets, success in that language will stem from individuals' desire to learn rather than pressures from the outside. Without willingness to learn students will fail.

Extrinsic motivation is not sufficient if students want to master English, in order to succeed they must be eager to learn, otherwise their efforts will give poor results.

As for Collège ESCA Anosizato, almost 80% of the students also said that they learnt English for professional purposes. Among these students who said that they learnt English for economic reasons, about 50% also added that they liked this subject. And none of them answered that they were obliged to learn it because it happened to be in the curriculum.

In that school we may say that students' motivations are more or less intrinsic for almost half of them stated that they studied English because they liked it and wanted to speak it. Such motivation can be helpful because if ever students lack any real motivation, they will be unwilling to learn. Yet we all know that people learn best if they love what they learn.

Apart from motivation there are some other elements that contribute to success or failure in foreign language study. Is it true to say that children's age also has an impact on their acquisition ?

II.3.2 Problem of age

Age may contribute to success or failure in foreign language study. It is popularly assumed that the younger a person starts a second or a foreign language the better.

In the two classes studied the problem of age is another factor that impedes learners' proficiency. In those classes, most of the students have started learning English at lower secondary. Generally, they start learning this language as a subject at the age of 12 or 13. At Collège ESCA Anosizato for example only 10 out of 27 students who were present during the filling of the questionnaires said they had learned English since elementary school. As for CEG Antanimbarinandriana, only 12 out of the 45 present started learning English in primary school.

These figures prove that although the implementation of English in elementary schools has been encouraged recently, some schools do not teach this subject.

II.3.3 Problems of language skills

Language proficiency implies a good command of the four basic language skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing. This is the exact order in which learners acquire their mother tongue as a child and later on, the way they acquire a foreign language.

The aim of language learning is to master these four basic skills. We cannot say that learners are proficient unless they master these skills.

Here the question is : can Malagasy learners of English handle these four basic skills ?

Let us refer to the learners' language skills in the two classrooms we observed.

As we already said, at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and at Collège ESCA, writing was the most dominant activity. There was no listening comprehension. The two teachers did not use tape recorders, besides, audio-visual equipment were not available. As far as speaking exercises were concerned, they were very seldom and very few students were willing to read when teachers asked them to do so.

Even though listening and speaking are the primary activities in learning a foreign language, most of the time these two skills are the most neglected ones. Generally, the problem is that teachers begin with the written forms of the language, yet their students do not have a wide and firm command of the target language. Such situation may be harmful since normally it would be advisable to start with the oral before the written skills.

The problem of reading is also another important obstacle that needs to be mentioned. Certainly, reading is a helpful support in foreign language acquisition but do Malagasy students read English books in order to develop their skills ?

In the two classes studied most students answered that they liked reading. Yet when they were asked how many English books they read in a month very few of them said that they read more than one. Some even said that they did not read at all.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, students have access to a library at school. However, when they were asked what kind of books they read and in what language, many of them answered that they read strip cartoons or magazines in French. Less than half of them said that they had read one or two English books.

Collège ESCA Anosizato does not have a library. But despite the fact that students in 4^{ème} are not library members of other English club, dozens of them answered that they read one or two English books in a month. But the rest confessed that they did not read at all.

About the writing exercises, we can say that even though they remain the most dominant ones, it does not mean that students are competent in this particular skill. Besides, students are usually asked to do written grammar exercises but very few of them manage to produce a sentence without any mistakes. The majority are not even able to manipulate the most basic patterns of an English sentence. This proves that although writing is more prevalent during the English lesson, students in Malagasy lower secondary schools do not yet master this skill at this level.

II.3.4 Lack of opportunity for practice

The amount of time spent in learning a foreign language is one reason that impedes language practice in classrooms.⁷⁸ For English teaching in Madagascar for example, teachers only have three hours per week divided into two sessions. Because of this restricted timetable students do not get enough practice.

During English lessons, in the two classes we observed for example, learners rarely practised English. They only received or listened to what their teachers said, here again we refer to the affirmative method as well as directive style. Very few students then practise the language or participate in oral activities. This is simply because they are not able to express themselves correctly. Sometimes those who are trying to use the target language also hesitate because they are afraid that their friends make fun of them if they mispronounce some words or make mistakes. This fear of being laughed at then prevents them from using English.

Outside the classroom, students do not normally use English. When they were asked whether they used English at home or if they had some relatives or penfriends with whom they can practise English, very few of them gave positive answers. In fact, less than half of the students interviewed said that they used English outside the classroom. Apart from that, we also found out that though students said that they enjoyed listening to English programmes, not all of them did so.

Oral and listening practices are then very limited. Yet it is essential to note that the ability to

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.116

speak fluently is not acquired in the classroom but through much additional practice from the outside.

So far we have been talking about learners' difficulties in their acquisition but in the following section our emphasis will be on the teaching conditions in Malagasy schools and its impact on students' achievement.

II.4 Deficiencies in the teaching conditions

II.4.1. Problems of qualification

Sometimes teachers' tasks not only require qualification but also experience and effective techniques. Only teachers who have these qualities are able to transmit their knowledge.

Let us take the case of Malagasy teachers in lower secondary schools and their qualifications. Malagasy teachers are allowed to teach in lower secondary schools once they have got their Baccalauréat.

Many teachers in public schools hold a Baccalaureate degree, but not many of them have a Bachelor of Arts in English.

In private schools however, many teachers have studied the subject they are teaching. These schools usually require that the teachers are qualified to teach the subject they are applying for.

At Collège ESCA Anosizato for example, the English teacher of the class of 4^{ème} has got his Bachelor of Arts in English, and most of the teachers in that school learned their own subjects even if not many of them studied them in depth.

As for the English teacher at CEG Antanimbarinandriana, she has also got her Bachelor of Arts in English, but in that school only 20% of teachers have the same degree.

The majority of Malagasy teachers have not got the appropriate qualification required for teaching their subjects. Moreover, they have no real experience. This situation has a negative impact on the quality of teaching. Since teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of their own subjects, it is not surprising that they find it difficult to be more efficient in their job.

II.4.2 Lack of better trained language teachers

There still exists a number of English language teachers who have not received any in service training. This shortage of suitably trained teachers is another issue that contributes to students' failure.⁷⁹

Obviously, those teachers who have never received professional training may not be aware of the expected national standards of foreign language performance. They may be accustomed to their own way of teaching and consequently unwilling to change their methods of teaching. Generally very few teachers in private schools receive training. As for the teacher at Collège ESCA, the English teacher says that there is professional training for teachers once a school year.

In public schools training is more frequent. The teacher at CEG Antanimbarinandriana confirms that they receive training about three times a year. This may explain why she is able to use a communicative approach, unlike the teacher at Collège ESCA Anosizato.

II.4.3 Problems related to working conditions

II.4.3.1 Poor physical conditions

Many Malagasy schools do not meet standards. As far as classrooms are concerned most of them are cramped. Students do not have enough space. There are about 3 to 5 students sitting on a small bench. Such poor conditions may however affect students' attention. Since they do not feel comfortable, they do not listen to what their teachers say. Cramped classrooms then entail physical discomforts, with such poor conditions students may not be willing to learn.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, the classroom is big enough but there, the problem is that there are many students and there is little space that separates them from one another. As a result, they tend to make a lot of noise and therefore they do not concentrate on what the teacher says or explains.

As regards Collège ESCA, the classroom is a small one. Students do not feel free because they have little space. As for the teacher, he does not often walk in the classroom because the room is overcrowded. This condition is deplorable, and because of it, the teacher sometimes does not have control of his classroom.

⁷⁹ Fishman (1986) op. cit. p. 696

Poor physical conditions and organisational impediments then have negative effects on the learning process.⁸⁰ Students learn better if the classroom is more adequate and if they feel more comfortable.

II.4.3.2 Lack of suitable equipment

The causes of failure appear to be multiple, poor teaching often results from a shortage of adequate pedagogical tools. Many teachers do not have suitable teaching materials that may facilitate their tasks. Here materials refer to reference books, textbooks, workbooks, flashcards, recording, songs, all the equipment teachers and learners make use of.

First of all, let us talk about another approach which is currently used in secondary schools that is the audio-lingual method.

This method involves great memorization on the part of the student. It consists mainly of dialogues that pupil can act out. As in the direct method this approach does not use translation. And grammatical exercises are not generally used during the initial phases of instruction.⁸¹

This approach needs the use of textbooks or recordings to help students memorize dialogues, spellings and pronunciations.

The audio-lingual method is not used in many Malagasy schools for the simple reason that teachers do not have the pedagogical tools required to implement this particular approach. Some teachers may have books but most of them do not contain dialogues that may develop learners' speaking skills.

Apart from that, students cannot practise listening comprehension in class because of lack of materials, therefore they do not have enough opportunities to watch English films or listen to English as it is produced by native speakers. Yet this contributes to the development of their listening skills.

This lack of access to audio-lingual materials may be a serious problem. If teachers do not alternate their teaching techniques throughout the school year, their course may be monotonous and students will find it boring.

As regards pedagogical tools available in the two classes studied, the two teachers said that they were not sufficient at all. The teacher at C.E.G Antanimbarinandriana for

⁸⁰ Brumfit, C.J. (1982) op. cit. p.15

⁸¹ Politzer, R.L. (1970) op. cit. p. 13

example, said that she only had books but apart from that, she did not have other materials. As for the teacher at Collège ESCA Anosizato, he also said that his teaching materials were not sufficient and all he had were just a few books.

Generally then, teachers have practically no materials for use in class. There are those who have books but they are not enough. And there are many teachers who do not even have books. Yet those teachers who do not have additional teaching materials may experience difficulties.

Even though, the Teacher Resource Centre (TRC) can provide English teachers with materials that will facilitate their tasks, the problem is that many teachers do not go there simply because they do not have time or they do not want to change their teaching methods. Moreover, there are not so many of these centres; as for the teacher at Collège ESCA Anosizato, he does not even know that it exists.

II.4.3.3 Large numbers of students

The most basic methodological problem is the size of the class. Most classes have more than 30 pupils with one teacher. Yet, we all agree that language is learnt by practice and in order to succeed teachers have to create a situation in which they can produce active participation in the class. This is however rather difficult with large classes.

As far as the size of class is concerned, most of the time public schools have more than 40 students in one class. At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, the class of 4^e has a plethoric school population. There were 51 students during the school year 2006 – 2007.

In private schools, they sometimes limit the numbers of the students but others do not. At Collège ESCA Anosizato, there were 32 students in the class of 4^{ème} during the same school year. These numbers do not imply that there the school population is reduced because during the two previous school years, there were more than 40 pupils in the same school.

To sum up, the second part of this research concentrates on the comparison between the two classes that we have observed. And from our analysis and observation, we notice that pedagogical practices in these two classes do not correspond to the norms. This is partly because traditional methods still prevail and the teachers are faced with deficiencies in the teaching conditions.

In the following part, our main interests lie in defining the field of the learners but also suggesting some solutions that may help both teachers and learners.

PART. III :

**LABORIOUS PROGRESS TOWARDS
BILINGUALISM AS A FACTOR OF
LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

III.1. Specific territory of the learner

Py, B. (1993)⁸² defines this territory as the linguistic context in which the process of acquisition of a foreign language develops... the construction of a linguistic knowledge system... the adjustment to the norms of the target language and the performance of specific tasks. He also adds that learners must position themselves according to these three poles and therefore must be confronted with options which contribute to define their profile.

Obviously, the linguistic context can influence learners' competence. Success in the acquisition of a foreign language is closely related to social environment and social context. If learners are exposed to an environment where their target language is rarely used, it will be difficult for them to improve their skills in that language.

Linguistic context then plays an important role in foreign language acquisition. In fact, the process of acquisition is not limited to instruction at school. It is largely dependent on learners' language practice either at home or in the community where they live. This means that linguistic competence and social interaction are closely related. According to the interactionist approach for example, language competence is developed through social interaction. In other words, this implies that learners' social relations are constituent of sociocognitive process.

Language development is then dependent on linguistic and social contexts. Learners will not be able to develop their competence and use it in different situations unless their target language is largely spoken in their community. Yet, this is not the case of English in Madagascar. In fact, the majority of the learners belong to working class families where the major language used remains Malagasy. Besides, these learners cannot improve their knowledge through social interaction for the simple reason that very few Malagasy people communicate in English.

Here the question is : do linguistic context and social interaction really affect linguistic competence of Malagasy learners, particularly that of the two classes studied ?

Indeed, learners' social environment and linguistic context are likely to affect the learning process. As previously remarked, instruction at school is not sufficient to develop learners' skills. Social and linguistic contexts influence the language practice of the learners.

⁸² Py, B. (1993) « *L'apprenant et son territoire : système, norme et tâche* » Aile, 2, p. 9 - 24

For instance, we noticed that in the two classes studied, social interaction had an impact on learners' performance at school. Therefore, those who said that they practised and spoke English outside the classroom performed better.

However, at CEG Antanimbarinandriana for example, learners did not use English in their everyday life. They did not speak that language when they communicated with their family, friends and neighbours. What is worse is that only 3 of them said that they had contacts with people who speak English either through writing letter or personal face to face interactions.

We can say that the learners in that school had homogeneous social networks. Their social relations did not allow them to develop their communicative competence. On the other hand, the three learners who said that they had contacts with English speaking people can be said to have heterogeneous social networks compared to the rest of the class. Since they used English outside the classroom and interacted with people who spoke it, they became more familiar with that language.

Besides, when we looked at the short writings produced by these 3 students, we also noticed that they were more or less acceptable compared to those who said that they never used English outside the classroom.

A few students also produced acceptable writings, but we notice that they are children whose ^{parents} attended secondary schools or work as civil servants.

As far as Collège ESCA is concerned, the majority of the learners had the same sociolinguistic background. In fact, 19 out of 27 said that they did not have relatives or friends who speak English. Moreover, only 2 learners said that they had contacts with English speaking people. In this case, we can say that learners in that school used English very rarely, most did not have the opportunity to interact with people who speak that language. Here then the inappropriate learning environment and linguistic context can explain the reason why they did not have a good command of the language.

Interaction with people who speak the target language is then necessary in foreign language learning. The groups of person with whom learners continually use a language have some effect on the manner and skills with which they use it. Opportunities to speak a language largely depend on the number of the persons with whom learners come in contact.

The more learners have contacts with people speaking their target language, the more they may use it.⁸³ At this point, we can say that learners who have strong social networks are likely to develop and improve their knowledge. Social interaction helps them practise the language more often.

It is then important to provide learners with opportunities to interact with fluent English speaking peers. This will promote spontaneous performance which is the main key to language fluency.

Those who have weak social networks then will have some difficulties in developing their competence. Since they do not experience social interaction they may not reach sociolinguistic competence. Also, it may be difficult for them to master appropriate use and understanding of the target language in different sociolinguistic contexts.

As a whole, activities which involve the ability to use the target language for communication are experienced in social environment. The knowledge of language forms and functions is also acquired through interaction with others. In other words, this means that learners' competence can be dependent on their learning environment and social relations.

III.1.1 Limited pluricultural and plurilingual competence

Pluricultural and plurilingual competence is a concept which has been developed by Coste, D., Moore, D., and Zarate (1997).⁸⁴ In this concept, the idea is that competences that are to be acquired are not only measurable in terms of oral and writing comprehension and expression (the four traditional competences, oral expression and writing, listening and reading comprehension). But they can be built up in modular and partial manners...

Coste (2002 b) also reminds the relationship between plurilingual and pluricultural competence and communicative competence.

According to Hymes (1994), plurilingual competence is indeed synonymous with the competence to communicate that is based on knowledge and diversified abilities.

However, Coste insists that there are displacements between the two notions that need to be highlighted. Particularly, if the notion of communicative competence is characterized by the juxtaposition of its components, that of plurilingual competence puts forward their integration and their connection, possibly differentiated, potentially mixed and interpenetrable

⁸³ Mackey, W. (1965) op. cit. p112

⁸⁴ Moore, D. (2006) *Plurilinguisme et Ecole*, Paris, Edition Didier, LAL, p.212-213

within a competence conceived as global (and englobing), dynamic (susceptible of being reconfigured and capable of evolution depending on a particular course of life), singular (different for each individual), and carry symbolic and identifying values.

As a whole, cultural knowledge then facilitates communication in a foreign language. It helps learners' competence in oral expression or reading comprehension.

Yet if we take the case of the two classes studied, it was observed that the learners lacked pluricultural and plurilingual competence. They did not have the ability to communicate effectively because their knowledge was rather restricted. Moreover, they were not given enough cultural information about English.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, most students said that they did not know much about English culture. And 10 of them even said that they did not know anything about it. Besides, when they were asked whether they have ever been to an English speaking country, nobody answered they had.

Their teacher on the other hand, has already visited an English speaking country (New York, in 2005). She affirmed that she had some knowledge of English culture. And even though she did not know everything about it, she tried to transmit what she knew during her class.

As regards Collège ESCA, only 9 students said that they knew a little about English culture. And 18 answered that they did not have any idea what it was about. In addition, none of them had ever travelled to an English speaking country.

III.1.2 Weak metalinguistic practice

Metalinguistic practice is the capacity and habit to reformulate and rework on a data or linguistic obstacle, to define, to expound and to comment.

Learners at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato can be said to have weak metalinguistic practice. First of all, their teachers did not give them exercises that required metalinguistic knowledge, that is, spontaneous performance in English. As a result, the learners did not have extensive metalinguistic awareness that would enable them to identify syllables, words or sounds in English.⁸⁵ In addition, the fact that they did not have any degree of metalinguistic knowledge as was reflected in their performance prevented them from acquiring an acceptable level of aptitude in their target language.

⁸⁵ Metalinguistics <<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=lang-fr&defl=en&q=define;Metalinguistics>>

Apart from that, we can also say that these learners had weak metalinguistic practice because of their inability to think, to make a judgment based on the different components of English and on its different modes of expression and comprehension.

The fact that they were unable to give definition or make comments in English implies that they probably would not cope in more complex situations if they find themselves in different contexts. Here, their poor performance is partly due to lack of practice. Because Malagasy remains the language used at home and in their community, they only use English at school.

Yet as we said, it is not possible for learners to achieve proficiency through practice at school only. Moreover in the classroom, as Peter Strevens says, the language used will always be « *arbitrary, selective and unspontaneous, simply because classrooms are places organized for ends beyond themselves.* »⁸⁶

If we analyse what is stated above, we can conclude that the language used in the classroom is not real language. It is far removed from the language needed in the outside world since it is often arbitrary. Yet when we asked students at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA, none of them answered that they used English at home.

This means that their practice did not enhance their acquisition of spoken English. It does not have a positive influence on their grammatical knowledge neither.

III.1.3 Subtractive bilingualism

When learners acquire a foreign language their aim is to be bilingual that is to be able to speak and master two languages. However, bilingualism has at least two main characteristics, it is either additive or subtractive.

For the two classes studied, the learners were exposed to subtractive bilingualism. However, it is worth reminding that here, when we talk about subtractive bilingualism, we are not saying that the acquisition of English is to the detriment of Malagasy. On the contrary, what we mean is that, the dominant use of Malagasy during the English course is an obstacle to English learning. Because the learners mostly heard and used Malagasy words, they were not really exposed to the English language. And this is the reason why we can conclude that the learners at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato did not have access to additive bilingualism. They were more monolingual than bilingual. Furthermore, we cannot

⁸⁶ Strevens, P. (1980) op. cit. p.125

say that these learners were multilingual. Because they did not have a good command of any particular foreign language, they remained monolingual.

The problem with subtractive bilingualism is that learners lose one language, but here it is the target language that is lost. Here, «lost» means that the learners have never had sufficient knowledge of English, not they have already got it but eventually lost it.

As a conclusion, after having compared all the evidence, we can say that there is not that much difference between the students at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA. Their levels were more or less the same. Since none of them did not have a good command of English, we can conclude that they were experiencing subtractive bilingualism.

III.1.4 Underdevelopment of interlanguage

Limited pluricultural and plurilingual competence, weak metalinguistic practice, as well as subtractive bilingualism, result in underdevelopment of interlanguage.

Normally, interlanguage is dynamic, continually evolving as learners receive more input and revise their hypotheses about the target language.⁷⁹ It is neither static, stationary nor regressive.

As far as the interlanguage system is concerned, the learners' knowledge of the target language may have some characteristics of the native or second language, or some characteristics which seem to be general. In fact, the target language is not fully acquired and the learners' knowledge is not developed.

This means that the learners only approximate the target language and preserve some features of another language in speaking or writing it.

In the two classes studied, because of the underdevelopment of interlanguage, there was definitely a certain amount of language loss. In fact, the learners in these classes are mostly exposed to language transfer which is reflected in rules based on their L1 (Malagasy) or L2 (French), consequently they do not learn much about English structure and forms. Their knowledge is then based on overgeneralization, that is, they maintain some characteristics of more familiar languages while learning English. In this case we can say that interlanguage is not dynamic, it does not have a positive impact on learners' competence. It is not fully developed, it is rather stationary and does not really evolve very much.

⁷⁹ Interlanguage <<http://www.ub.es/div5/departam/dll/recursos/prov71.htm>>

Wouldn't we run the risk of ending up with the following conclusion : interlanguage would be defined as a productive linguistic system by reference to two other linguistic systems which constitute the learner's mother tongue and the foreign language, and susceptible to fossilize.⁸⁷ Because of the underdevelopment of interlanguage then, learners at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA are faced with language loss. As they do not improve their English through dynamic interlanguage, they will not be able to maintain that language. On the contrary they are likely to lose it. And these are the reasons that may explain their failure at school.

III.2 Educational system and mitigated representation of the target language

The system is among the basic factors that contribute to learners' achievement or failure at school. Success depends very largely on how suitable the system is for both the teacher and the learner.

As for the educational system in Madagascar, there is no doubt that it has some influence on learners' motivation.

If we take the case of CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato, the educational system has some influence on learners' performance.

As we have already mentioned in the second part of this work, most of the students interviewed are not integratively oriented, many of them learned English only for social advancement. Here the educational system has something to do with the learners' attitude towards English. Since it does not promote the use of English at school, learners are not interested in that language.

When students in the two classes studied were asked to give the reasons why they did not master English, many of them answered that they did not learn English because it is not widely used in their community. Besides, dozens of students at Collège ESCA said they were not familiar with English because it is not a very popular language, particularly compared to French. This mitigated conception of English is among the main obstacles that prevent learners from being proficient. Because they do not consider that language as an important means of communication, they are not really enthusiastic about learning it.

Apart from that, the status of the English language at school is also another problem that affects learners' performance. Although English has been recognized as an official language

⁸⁷ Rosen, E. et Porquier, R. (2004) *Présentation. L'actualité des notions d'interlangue et d'interlangue exolingue* in LINX, n°49/2003, sous la direction dir. de Porquier, R. et Rosen, E, p 7 – 17, p 9

alongside Malagasy and French, this language does not really have a good standing in the community. Generally, French is granted the priority over English, it holds an important position at school. Despite the fact that French and English are known as official languages, French is widely used whereas English is not given a lot of consideration. Yet it is argued that learning and teaching an unpopular language is a difficult task. By contrast, when the foreign language enjoys a high status or more prestigious, achievement tends to be high.⁸⁸

On the other hand, if we look at the main objectives of the Malagasy educational system and its main priorities, we may think that they are not contrary to the norms, and that the government has been trying to follow international standards by asking teachers to implement the competency and communicative approaches. But here the problem with the system is that its objectives have generally not been reached so far. It is difficult for teachers to implement them for a variety of reasons.

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana, by saying that grammar exercises and lessons are much more numerous compared to those of language function, students helped us come to the conclusion that their teacher rarely used the communicative approach. Here the problem of the communicative approach and its implementation in the classroom can be related to the educational system. Since the Malagasy educational system gives a very restricted timetable to English teachers, it will not enable learners to master English. By giving insufficient lesson time, it frustrates the efforts of the teacher and learners. It does not permit or encourage them to reach their highest level of achievement in their respective roles. In that case, learning performance tends to be low. The time devoted to learning is however very important. Even though the system seems to contain everything that learners need in order to succeed, it does not work unless enough time is given to teachers. Yet this is not happening with English teaching in our country. English teachers of lower secondary schools have three hours a week for all levels. It is nothing compared to the amount of time students use their first language.

Another obstacle related to the educational system and its priorities is that, in a developing country like Madagascar, the main purpose of the government is usually to promote basic education. The main priorities then mostly concern primary education so that the problems encountered in secondary schools are often considered less urgent.

⁸⁸ Brumfit, J.C. (1982) op. cit. p. 26

At CEG Antanimbarinandriana for instance, the school is faced with problems of financial resources. It does not receive enough financial support for the improvement of its equipment. Many of the pedagogical tools available in that school are very old. Teachers use old books which do not correspond to the requirements of the communicative approach.

As regards Collège ESCA, we have the same problem in the class of 4^{ème}. Students are often reluctant to learn because they do not have the appropriate equipment. Almost 90 % of them said that they did not have English books, cassettes or films . What is worse is that their school does not have a library, whereas all of the students belong to the working class family where parents cannot afford to buy books or other materials.

The previous problems can be related to the educational system because in most cases, the implementation of certain demands in the system is so expensive that it is sometimes impossible to cover the costs.

III.3 Towards a quasi integrated didactic and the weakness of the zone of proximal development

The integrated didactic of languages aims at establishing close relationships between the limited number of taught languages which are planned in the syllabus, the targeted competences for each language can remain different. (inspired from Roulet,1995).⁸⁹

As far as didactic is concerned, we can say that at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato, it is quasi integrated. This is simply because, the Malagasy teacher (L1), the French teacher (L2), and the English teacher (L3) cannot help one another.

Apparently, this means that there is no interdependence between the knowledge of L1, L2, and L3. The three languages are learnt separately. As a result, the knowledge of the one does not facilitate the understanding of the other.

However, normally the mastery of the L1 must facilitate the learning or teaching of the L2 even if a contrastive approach (Py) has to be adopted. There should be a cognitive linguistic transfer from L1 to L2 and so on. As Louise Dabène said, we do not learn twice any more when we learn L2 and L3...

⁸⁹ Roulet, 1995 in Moore, D. (2006) op. cit. 224

Because of these reasons, the English teachers of the two classes studied rarely managed to implement the mechanism of the zone of proximal development (Vigotsky). This is because some learners do not manage to progress or develop, hence the necessity of their principal educative partner's help and support, here it is the English teacher.

Yet, unfortunately this is not usually what happens. In fact, the two English teachers did not help learners improve their competence because they were incapable of establishing positive relationships between the three languages learnt at school. In other words, the learners' knowledge of their L1 and L2 does not make the learning of English easier. This is the main reason that allows us to say that here, we are more concerned with a quasi integrated didactic.

So far we have been talking about data analysis as well as their results, but in the following paragraphs our main interests is to give the main strengths and weaknesses of this research work.

III.4 The main advantages of the research

First of all, one of the main advantages of this research work is that the information available in it result from survey analysis, direct observation but also previous research and experience in the field of language teaching.

Thanks to survey sampling, there is a great deal of flexibility in terms of representation of pre-chosen students within the population.

The use of quota sampling also made it easier to gather information about the population. And the information that were collected could be generalized to the entire population under-consideration who study more or less in the same condition. (Here Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary school are the population in question). The use of questionnaires also helped a lot. It allowed the respondents to give information that pertain directly to the main obstacles of English language learning. Questionnaires are also easy to analyse as in this way the respondents are not influenced by verbal or visual clues.⁹⁰

This research also contributes to the analysis of the main problems encountered in the field of education. It mainly concerns the sociology of education. Since it is an attempt to solve the major problems related to foreign language learning and teaching, it will be of interest to language teachers and learners of English.

⁹⁰ Advantages and limits of written questionnaires <<http://www.search?hl=en&q=limits+of+use+questionnaire&lr=lang..fr>>

This present work can provide teachers with an analytic view of language teaching as well. It is intended to make them review or check their teaching techniques.

On the other hand, we can say that this research can be of interest to any language learner. Although it mainly concerns English teaching, theories and principles in this work can be generalized to any foreign language. Besides, one important feature of this research is that it takes into account both theoretical and the practical sides of learning.

As far as the theory is concerned, it is linked with previous research work carried out by some linguists, sociolinguists, psychologists, psycholinguists but also experienced teachers. Previous literature written by these researchers on the subject helped us to find out the most frequent obstacles encountered by foreign language learners all over the world. Thanks to those writings, we have been able to draw some important conclusions and talk in generalities about the most obvious problems of language learners in most situations.

As regards the practical side of learning, it is a common characteristic of everyday interaction in society. Having chosen two classes to represent the case of Malagasy learners of English, we can see the reality in individual classrooms. Through more refined hypotheses drawn from practices in these individual classrooms, it will be easier to look for more appropriate solutions.

III.5 Limitations of the research

Although this research is intended to give more details about the problems encountered by Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary school, it has some limits in the sense that in some cases the information available are somehow restricted. Indeed, it has not been easy to collect information about this topic. Generally time constraints and lack of financial resources were among the main obstacles that prevented us from giving more detailed information. Despite the fact that we have tried to be more precise and give accurate information, they are probably not sufficient, and in all likelihood some important points have been missed. But nevertheless, what is important is that the most relevant information about this topic have hopefully not been overlooked.

One problem that we experienced in this research is the use of sampling models. Though the two classes studied were intended to represent the case of Malagasy learners of English, it is possible that their cases do not necessarily correspond to the entire population we were targeting. At this point, it is probably true that though a sample is expected to mirror the population from which it comes, there is no guarantee that any sample will be precisely

representative of the population it comes from. Here then, the problem is the reliability of the sampling models. Thus, the validity of the survey results can be considered as one of the weaknesses of this research. Earlier we said that conducting a survey helps us get relevant information, but on the other hand, it is possible that some information resulting from a survey give us a wrong impression of the real obstacles encountered.

Indeed, sometimes surveys do not allow us to develop an absolutely accurate understanding of the population studied. With the use of written questionnaires for example, there is no guarantee that all the respondents answer correctly. Some may give incorrect responses, others may answer just in order to impress. The problem with written questionnaires is then the inability to probe responses. The fact that these questionnaires give multiple choices also allows little flexibility to the respondents as regards the format. For all these reasons, we can say that surveys with written questionnaires are not always reliable. Direct observation is a more efficient method to get accurate information. But the problem with such observation is that it takes a long time to do.

III.5.1 Validity of the hypotheses

It is difficult to determine the validity of a theory or hypothesis. According to Progrow (1992)⁹¹ « *while no individual research finding can ‘prove’ a theory or ‘confirm’ a hypothesis, any research finding can disconfirm or refute a theory or hypothesis. Thus the criterion of validity for any hypothesis is extremely stringent : it must be consistent with all of the research data or at least be able to account for inconsistencies... the examination of the consistency between the hypothesis and the data in a wide variety of sociolinguistic conditions constitutes a form of randomization that only extremely robust theoretical constructs can survive* ».

Indeed, there is no guarantee that a theory or hypothesis is true in any absolute sense. Some theories may be valid to some people but others may not.

For instance, the theory about social class and its relationship with performance at school may be convincing. But there are always exceptions because for some students their success does not depend on their financial position⁹² but rather on their motivation and willingness to learn.⁹³ Consequently, the theory which claims that success at school is dependent on the student's social status is not always valid.

⁹¹ Pogrow (1992) in Cummins (2001) op.cit. p 205

⁹² Bourdieu et Passeron (1964) op. cit. p. 63

⁹³ Thesis defended by Rochex, Y. (1995) *Le sens de l'expérience scolaire*, Paris, PUF l'éducation

As regards cultural differences and the belief that they are among the main obstacles of foreign language learners, we cannot say that such a hypothesis is necessarily confirmed.

Nowadays, globalization is one way to establish a worldwide civilization, because of this phenomenon, cultural problems are not always regarded as a major obstacle. Besides, thanks to the advance in technology, many people have the opportunity to get in touch with foreign people. These people are as a result less likely to be prejudiced against foreign culture because they know and understand the way of life of the foreign people. At this point, cultural differences are not an obstacle.

With respect to the linguistic aspects, although problems related to language are unavoidable in the field of language learning, a linguistic theory alone cannot solve all the problems. It may have its limits. Furthermore, due to the fact that nowadays the aim of language learning is the promotion of communicative abilities, linguistic problems are probably not going to be the main focus of language teachers.

III.6 Ways of dealing with issues in English learning and teaching

III.6.1 Solutions for the learners

In every teaching situation the learner is probably the one who is responsible for his own success. From a sociological point a view, here it concerns methodological individualism. From a pedagogical perspective, as we said earlier, here we are talking about pedocentrism, where the focus is on the learner, as is common with most supporters and practitioners of the so called « New Schools », and about autodirected learning.⁹⁴

III.6.1.1 Varieties of incentive expressions

Willingness to learn is a great asset. Only learners who have strong motivation may achieve success. But here what do we mean by strong motivation and what should be done to make learners more motivated ?

As we have previously mentioned, learners need the right motivation if they are to succeed. This means, they should be integratively oriented. Thanks to integrative motivation, they do not force themselves to learn. They are willing to learn because they like what is being taught and that they find interests in it. Thus they do not learn under external compulsion.

⁹⁴ Trebbin, T. (2000) *L'apprentissage autodirigé entre Erasme et la nouvelle technologie in Le Français dans le monde* (Juillet 2000), *Une didactique des langues pour demain*, Vanves, Edicef, p. 113 -133

Since they desire to learn without being influenced by social pressure, they are likely to succeed.

Learners with integrative motivation also tend to learn more about the other cultural community. Once they are interested in English, they may show respect and understanding towards the people who speak it. Such an attitude helps learners because in fact, achievement is dependent on a sympathetic orientation towards the foreign people.

Apart from that, generally integratively motivated children will be most successful. Since they are eager to learn, they will not limit themselves to instruction received at school. They may practise their target language whenever they have opportunities to speak it.

On the other hand, those learners who are instrumentally oriented or learn for professional purposes will tend to profit more from school instruction. Because they are not willing to learn or simply they are not really enthusiastic, they may not practise or have experience with their target language outside the classroom.

For these reasons, learners with purely instrumental motivation do particularly well in connection with formal conjugation, translation or other materials emphasized by older methods.⁹⁵ In most cases, they cannot develop their communicative abilities.

There is no denying that learners with integrative motivation learn better compared with those who learn only for economic necessity. If this is so, what should be done so that learners are strongly motivated ?

In order to avoid that learners get demotivated and lose interest in learning, teachers must do their best to hold their attention.

First of all, they should explain to their learners the reasons why it is important to learn a foreign language. They must lead them to see different goals as rewarding and desirable for acquiring a positive reason for learning will help them learn the language. As Otto Jespersen says⁹⁶ « *the pupils really learn most when they continually have a feeling that it is all something useful and valuable, and that it is not too far elevated above the actual life which they either know or beginning to get some notion of it.* »

Indeed, the aim of teachers is to make learners feel interested in English. But in order to achieve this, what should they do ?

⁹⁵ Valdman, A. (1966) *Trends in language teaching* Indiana University p.128

⁹⁶ Jespersen, O. (1956) *How to teach a foreign language* , London, George Allen &Unwin Ltd, p.9

First of all, when teachers ask learners to deal with some exercises or any type of activities, they should acknowledge or otherwise reward learners' responses. This will have a positive impact on learners' motivations. Apart from that, in order to improve learners' writing skills teachers should encourage them to correspond in English. They should also ask them to join English clubs where they can share their knowledge with other learners. This will help them become more fluent. In addition, it is important for teachers to encourage learners to take part in any competition that requires English language knowledge. Getting rewards through competitions will probably increase learners' motivation.

Another way to keep learners' interests is to make class activities interesting. Lessons or exercises must not be boring. To avoid that learners lose interests in the learning process, teachers should change or vary class activities from time to time. If they feel that their learners do not pay attention to the class any more, they must change their strategies. This, then, means that they must be aware of their learners' needs and they must be sympathetic to their underlying causes. If teachers know how to meet learners' needs, class activities can also be a lot of fun. Indeed, by using humour and pleasantries as a feature of the lesson, they can also raise learners' motivation. Making the classroom a fun and dynamic place then captures learners' interests. It may promote intrinsic motivation at the same time.

III.6.1.2 Participation

Teachers should seek as far as possible the participation of every student in the classroom. That is why Gaston Mialaret⁹⁷ said, faced with the act of learning, the teacher can place the learner, either in a reception – consumption system of knowledge by creating learning situations in which the learner is a consumer and acquires knowledge through instruction by listening, observing, giving an answer, reacting to instructions, repeating an answer, giving an explanation, justifying his answer, implementing, doing an exercise, performing, taking down notes, using the given information, not answering, keeping quiet..., or in an expression – production system by setting up learning situations where the learner is a producer and appropriates knowledge through action by searching, trying and making mistakes, exploring, spontaneously asking a question, spontaneously suggesting a solution, giving ideas, taking initiatives, solving problems, confronting, exchanging with other learners, asking for help, giving opinion, making a hypothesis, arguing, judging, assessing...

⁹⁷ Mialaret, G. (1994) *La psycho-pédagogie*, 3^{ème} édition, Paris, PUF, Que sais je ? p. 47

On the other hand, to make sure that everybody is participating actively, teachers must stimulate, guide and initiate school activities. In return, the participation of every student must be natural, spontaneous and voluntary. Sometimes it is necessary to take advantage of volunteer responses to speed up or enliven the activity. But it is also advisable to call for choral responses from time to time to secure attention and participation of the entire class.

Apart from that, teachers should make room for self activity and encourage independent learning. If students find something themselves, it is easier for them to remember it. Besides, by working individually they will put more efforts to understand and discover things. However, this does not mean that group work must be avoided. On the contrary, it is better to switch back and forth from individual and group work because it will vary the type of activities in the classroom.

When students are participating, teachers should encourage them to ask questions in English. They must also give them enough time to think about what they are going to say. As far as incorrect responses are concerned, teachers should handle them in a positive manner. They must not blame students when they make mistakes. Instead, they should give positive feedback because by doing so, they may encourage and relax shy students to speak or participate.

III.6.1.3 Attentiveness

Learners should maintain an attitude of interest and attention. Interests on what is being done should prevail on their part. But in order to keep them attentive, teachers should show an attitude of helpfulness and encourage them to ask questions.

In case some students do not pay attention to what is being taught, teachers should not let them disturb the others. They must not let disruptive behaviours go unnoticed. For example, if learners make excessive noise or do something else, they should go on with the classroom activity but they should also show their disapproval of disruptive behaviour by facial expression or gesture.⁹⁸ In this case, it will be more appropriate to avoid ridiculing learners' behaviour so that the offending learner is not overly embarrassed. Moreover, it is worth reminding that, teachers should be patient and understanding, otherwise it will be difficult for them to know why their learners misbehave and what they should do to stop them from acting so.

⁹⁸ Politzer, R. op. cit. p.64

Motivation, participation and attentiveness are among the main keys to learners' success. But on the other hand what are the qualities of a good teacher ?

III.6.2 What do learners expect from their teacher ?

First and most important of all, English teachers should have a thorough knowledge of English. If they do not know their subject thoroughly, they cannot interest learners and inspire them to learn the elements of the subject and the complex aspects of it.⁹⁹ Teachers of English then have to know English very well, otherwise they will not be able to deal with difficult parts of this language.

Teachers must also like their subject and talk so interestingly about it that their students are willing to learn. This is the reason why Trochmé – Fabre talks about three types of anchoring:

- anchoring in the present : talks about things, facts that are related to current events, the present time during pedagogical activities ;
- anchoring in the experience : refers to the world of beliefs and learners' experience (Sophia Moirand) ;
- anchoring in the project : prepares learners' future social life – Durkheim even talks about socialization through education, and we shall add formal and informal.

If it is important that teachers like their subject, it is also essential that they like their learners and understand them. But what kind of relationships should teachers and learners entertain in order to create a friendly atmosphere at school ?

III.6.2.1 Cooperative relationships between teachers and learners

Human relationships are at the heart of schooling. Teachers should create a healthful environment if they want to be effective. But what can they do in order to avoid conflicts or tensions at school ?

Above all, teachers should set a good example to the class so that their students respect them. They must be kind but firm, sympathetic but exacting, and friendly but reserved. They should connect with their students and be able to help them in some way. As a whole, they need to maintain a spirit of good fellowship with the pupils without however, descending to undue familiarity or cheap humour.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Hugnet, G. (1969) *The Art of teaching*, New York (USA), Ladder edition, p. 13

¹⁰⁰ Huebener, T. (1959) *How to teach foreign language effectively*, New York University Press, p. 231

On the other hand, a friendly relationship with teachers enhances learners' self-confidence. With collaborative relation of power, learners participate confidently as their sense of identity is being affirmed. A healthful environment in the classroom then amplifies rather than silences self expression.

Another way to maintain cooperation between the teacher and the learners is to reinforce mutual respect. In order to achieve this, teachers must be tolerant. They should try to make their learners love English, but they should rarely use force to get them to learn. In this case, having recourse to coercive measures will not be the best solution to make students learn. It will not exert a beneficial influence on their emotional health. On the contrary, it can seriously injure them. Yet it is essential that students are emotionally stable. If this is not the case, they will not benefit from the learning process.

In brief, support from teachers makes it easier for students to gain the feeling of security and adequacy they need. Human relations in the school are then very important. Skills in human relations distinguish the outstanding teacher and if bitterness, frustration or envy intrude into the relationship between teachers and learners, the basic conditions of effective human growth are destroyed.¹⁰¹

Apart from creating a friendly atmosphere and a positive school environment, teachers have specific roles which help them transmit their knowledge in a more effective way.

III.6.2.2 The teacher's roles

First of all, teachers should act as a guide or leader rather than a director. They must be a facilitator of learning who try to stimulate without taking the main initiative. Their major aim is to develop self direction. This will allow their students to become responsible and not dependent on them. The teachers' roles must be less dominant. Their function is to serve as a resource person. They should not tell students anything that they can find out for themselves. They must put more emphasis on students' contribution through independent learning.

On the other hand, teachers should be open with colleagues and students. They should always be willing to give everything they know about teaching to those who need the benefit of their experience or expertise. Moreover, they should be constantly open to suggestions. Since knowledge is a constant process of discovery and change, they must continue learning.

¹⁰¹ Foff, A. and Grambs, J.D. (1956) *Reading in education*, New York (USA) Harper & Brothers, p. 353

Furthermore, there will always be information to be read in most subjects and it is their duty to know all the important discoveries and arguments that affect their subject.

Apart from what is said above, teachers should be open minded. They should favour constructive supervision and criticism. They should welcome visitors to the classroom and consider their opinions about their teaching. This means that they should view suggestions or criticism in a positive manner.

In a word, we can conclude that the teachers of English will not merely be teachers of English, they must be true educators. But in order to be more effective, they must also know how to conduct their classes and select lessons or activities that correspond to students' interests. This leads us to refer to an adapted version of Chevallard's didactic transposition.

III.6.3 The content of the lesson

Learners' abilities are dependent on lessons they learn or exercises they do at school. It is very important for teachers to know how to select them and to decide which should be presented to the class.

III.6.3.1 The importance of plan and organisation

Before starting the class, it is necessary for teachers to check what they are going to do or give. They must prepare themselves and arrange everything so that the lessons or activities are well planned. It is then essential to give students a planned lesson or activity because it prepares them to what is going to happen. Besides, if teachers plan their work well, they communicate knowledge to their students much more effectively. This also helps them save time and make things clear.

The plan should include the aims, the scope and the classroom activities. With a well planned lesson or exercises, students may feel the need for and be interested in all that follows. In addition to that, they may understand everything more easily. A well organized activity also arouses the interest of learners. If teachers do not manage to organize school activities, their learners will not be motivated, hence their unwillingness to learn.

Teachers are responsible for planning the actual programme and abilities that are appropriate for their students. But what should they do in order to provide learners with a well planned and organized class ?

With respect to organization, it mainly concerns the organization of time. As we have already said, English teachers' timetable is very limited, therefore they must make the most of it in order to give what is essential and make themselves understood in the time available.

When dealing with exercises for example, they must set a time limit for students to complete the task. But in order to make sure that every student finishes work at the right time, teachers should walk around the classroom and check whether everybody is actually doing what should be done. This will also prevent neglect and loss of interests on the students' part.

Apart from that, there are different ways to organize school activities. For example, when teachers ask students to correct exercises, they must try to organize everything so that everybody takes part. There is no doubt that doing this will be difficult due to the little time committed to learning, but good teachers will always try to find ways to make their students participate.

A well organized class also requires that teachers switch from lesson to exercises from time to time. Indeed, it is not advisable to deal with very long lessons continuously or ask students to do exercises that do not meet their needs.

III.3.2 Curriculum development

The content of the curriculum needs to be reviewed in order to improve the quality of teaching. It is necessary to introduce new elements that correspond to learners' interests. Culture and literature instructions probably contribute to curriculum development, particularly, since they have been removed from the syllabus in public schools in 1980.

III.6.3.2.1 Integration of culture and literature instructions

Language is not self dependent, it cannot be wholly understood without reference to culture and literature. It is also the most typical, the most representative, and the most central element in any culture.¹⁰²

Cultural aspects of the foreign language studied should be taught to language learners. To make the foreign culture real and remind learners that language is a real activity, it is better to include cultural information in the curriculum. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to make learners understand the foreign culture. As we have already noticed, learners' attitude

¹⁰² Brooks, N. (1994) *Language and language learning* (Theory and practice) USA, Brace & world Inc p.85

has an influence on their motivations and their capacity to learn. In this case, communicating successfully in English requires understanding and respect towards English people and their culture.

Here the question is simple : how can teachers include cultural instruction in their teaching ?

It may be difficult for some teachers to teach culture for they are not even familiar with English culture themselves.

However, they can use different ways that may help their learners to have a few ideas about English culture. For example, they can use visual aids ¹⁰³ such as posters, pictures, drawings or magazines in English to illustrate the culture of English people. Such materials may provide meaning or convey the idea that they are representing. But as much as possible, it will be necessary that these visual aids have some kind of connection to the classroom activities. They must be clearly visible and easily perceived by the entire class. However, teachers must be careful in choosing the kind of materials they make use of. If they use visual aids which are completely unambiguous, they cannot be used to support language activities. Thus, visual aids should be of high quality and effectiveness, otherwise they will not supply meaning.

Apart from using realia which illustrate English culture, teachers can also teach culture by relating it directly to classroom activities. For instance, they can choose texts which talk about the way of life of English people. They can also ask learners to discuss about the culture of other people or simply devote time to learn more about it.

Cultural instruction is then necessary in English learning. It expands learners' horizon. But on the other hand, it is also important that English teaching provides the foundation for all language learning including the study of literature.

Normally the curriculum should encourage teachers to use a variety of resources and explore a range of literature. Besides, it is important to keep in mind that literature is a means to get the reader to appreciate the artistic component of the language. It also promotes full understanding and appreciation of language as art. Since literature is wholly and inevitably rooted in language, ¹⁰⁴ its instruction will be of great importance.

¹⁰³ Politzer, R. op. cit. p. 97

¹⁰⁴ Brooks, N. (1964) op. cit. p. 100

Teachers then should select literature and act on social realities that are most relevant to learners' lives. But once again, the problem with literature instruction is how to teach English literature to students who are still beginners and who do not have a good command of the language ?

For young learners, English teachers should explain any literary expressions from a novel or other books that may be difficult for the learners to understand at their level. That is how they will help learners appreciate literary works.

Choosing easy poems to be recited is also another way to make learners appreciate English literature. It will enable them to see different aspects of the English language as well as its main characteristics.

Curriculum development affects the quality of teaching. But apart from culture and literature instructions, there are other methods that can be explored in order to teach effectively.

III.7 Review of teaching methods

First and foremost teachers should test the procedures employed by asking themselves whether they are adequate or not. At the same time they should find some ways of increasing learners' interests.

In order to be effective, the first thing that teachers can do is to engage learners with stimulating themes and issues that are meaningful to them. Indeed, issues and theme based courses help students learn English as they speak, listen, read or view issues. Using interesting themes as a framework of discussion and inquiry also enables them to use English purposefully and effectively as they process information. It helps them think both creatively and critically.

Indeed, teachers should find topics that engage learners' interests and connect them with their experience and issues that concern them. Only by doing this will they meet learners' needs.

Another method that holds learners attention is questioning. In order to keep them busy, questions should be put to the class more often. By letting learners express themselves and answer questions freely, teachers encourage them to be active. What is more, the continuous answering of questions also prevents day dreaming or missing important points that have been made.

But what kind of questions should be asked so that learners answer without reluctance ?

Teachers' questions should be clearly formulated. They may be frequently written on the board. And if possible, they should be widely distributed so that all have an opportunity to answer or recite.¹⁰⁵

However, it is not advisable that teachers are the only ones who ask questions. On their part, learners should be encouraged to ask questions. This will arouse their curiosity and interests. But when they ask questions, they should use English as much as possible. It will reduce the number of illegitimate or irrelevant questions.

There are various methods that may help learners succeed in their acquisition. No single method could be the best method in every teaching situation. The criterion for a successful method is that if it works, it should be used, but if this is not the case, teachers should have recourse to other more effective techniques. Anyway, good teachers do not teach for a long time with methods which are totally useless for the students. They must vary their methods by using : affirmative, interrogative, active, audio – visual, audiolingual methods, and so on.

Among the most current teaching methods which begin to be widely used, particularly in European countries is the Portfolio system.

III.7.1 The Portfolio System

In the field of education, the portfolio system is first of all concerned with learners' evaluation and contribution in the learning process. It focuses on learners' ability to know their strength and weaknesses.

This particular system also involves learners in their acquisition. It enables them to think over their proceedings, strategies and accomplishment in order to improve themselves and do some auto-correction.¹⁰⁶

Apart from that, it encourages interactive approach between the learner, the teacher and parents. It helps learners to identify their needs, to know themselves better. At the same time, it also contributes to their personal development.

¹⁰⁵ Huebener, T. (1959) op. cit. p.228

¹⁰⁶ Concept traditionnel du Portofolio <<http://www.sofad.qu.ca/portfolio-numérique.pdf>>

In brief, we can conclude that the main objectives of the Portfolio system are self assessment, demonstration of competence, self presentation, learning, personal development but also expression of self identity.¹⁰⁷

If we look at the main objectives of the Portfolio system, we may agree that this system has some advantages.

Firstly, it focuses on the learners' roles and their involvement in the process of acquisition. It then encourages independent learning which is considered as the main key to learners' competence. It helps and encourages self assessment and individual approach.

This system also serves to appreciate learners' developing competence and testifies their progress. Because of these reasons, we can say that the Portfolio system can help both teachers and learners to be more successful, that is why, it should be considered as among the most dominant teaching methods that are implemented in the classroom.

Apart from the Portfolio system, the communicative approach is also viewed as an effective teaching method, especially in language acquisition.

III.7.2 The use of the communicative approach

According to this approach, what is important is the ability to use the target language effectively in the real world. Teachers should focus on communicative skills, go beyond structures and take into account social meanings and social situations in which communication is taking place.

As for learners, the aim is to convey meanings or express themselves effectively so that the hearers understand the message that is intended. With this approach, they gradually become more creative with the language they have acquired. Through improvisation of role playing, they are also allowed to explore and exploit their communicative repertoire in any way they wish.

If the communicative approach is more effective compared to traditional teaching methods, what should English teachers do to use this approach in classrooms ?

Above all, English should be the language of the classroom as far as possible. It should be employed for all routine classroom commands, and brief comments right from the start. When teachers ask learners something that they use repeatedly, they should use

¹⁰⁷ The Portfolio system < <http://www.simongrant.org/pubs/2005/maintex.htm> >

English. For example, the language of the classroom such as « go to the board », « close / open/ your copybooks / the door / the window... », or « raise your hand before speaking » should be in English. This helps learners memorize usual expressions used in the classroom.

Apart from that, one effective way to apply communicative methodology in large classes is to introduce pair and group work.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, to get all the students to take part in school activities, teachers should encourage pair and group work. This may increase learners' involvement and encourage participation. But in order to have control of the classroom activities and keep the level of noise down, teachers should circulate during pair and group work and tell students that they do not have to shout when they work in pair or group. And once students have got used to working together on controlled activities, it will be necessary to move on to less controlled activities, such as dialogue building or role playing.

Indeed, to improve learners' speaking skills, teachers should ask learners to construct dialogues themselves.

The main advantage of using dialogues is that when learners act them out, they are supposed to live what they say. It will be easier for them to remember expressions used in dialogues because they repeat them so many times. In addition, dialogues building and repetition also help learners speak spontaneously. With this type of activity, they are likely to be fluent if they try to remember and use the most usual expressions that they need in their everyday conversation.

But what kind of dialogues should be used in class ?

First of all, the content of the dialogues should be related to learners' needs. The language used should be colloquial right from the start. Dialogues should contain expressions which are usually used in everyday life. They must be samples of real language spoken outside the classroom so that learners find interests in them. There must not be many difficult words in a dialogue. The best principle at all stage is as few new words as possible.

From the very beginning there should be gradual progress from easy to difficult. The language used in dialogues should not be too difficult, it must not be beyond the learners' competence. But later, on the other hand, the language or the subject matter ought not to be too light. It is better, as soon as possible, to prepare learners with more serious situations.

On the other hand, listening activities also promote the implementation of the communicative approach. Many English teachers probably do not use listening due to lack

¹⁰⁸ Nolasco, R. and Lois, A. (1988) *Large classes*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

of suitable equipment. However, if teachers do not have materials they can use other techniques.

For example, to improve listening skills, teachers can read a text or piece of writing in English. They can repeat it three times or more so that learners understand what they are talking about. After that, they ask them questions which concern what they have just read. The information that learners obtain can also serve as a basis for discussion, oral or written reports. In this respect, listening activity may lead to a different kind of language activity. It will not only improve listening skills but it will also enable learners to develop their speaking and writing skills.

Although teachers' pronunciation may not be equal to that of English native speakers, it is preferable to have listening sessions from time to time. But in order to give listening comprehension without compromising learners' hearing habit, teachers' English should be correct, precise, well chosen and pleasing.¹⁰⁹ It should be a model for the class.

Teachers' voice should be clear as well. It must be of sufficient volume and of pleasant tone. Stress, intonation and rhythm must be respected. The aim is to speak as English native speakers do.

From what is stated above, we can conclude that it is possible to be communicative in any class either large or small. But in order to use this approach, teachers should increase the amount of time devoted to speaking and listening skills which are most of the time neglected. If the communicative approach contributes to learners' achievement, does it mean that traditional methods such as grammar and translation should be excluded ?

III.7.3 The teaching of grammar

It is now agreed that language teaching should be communicative, based on language functions. Consequently grammar instruction should be less dominant. In modern methods then, the grammar approach has been replaced by communicative competence in which learners are asked to link the utterance with situations in which that utterance takes place.¹¹⁰ However, it is essential to remind that grammar instruction remains the most usual form of language teaching that is to be found in classrooms. Despite the promotion of the communicative approach, language teachers still focus on grammatical rules. Most of the time

¹⁰⁹ Huebener, T. (1959) op. cit. p.231

¹¹⁰ Halliday, M., Meltonsh, A., Strevens, P. (1964) *The linguistic sciences and language teaching*. Longman Group Limited p. 264

there is no oral work or teaching of pronunciation that can improve learners' communicative skills.

But how could English teachers teach grammar that corresponds to the requirements of the communicative approach ?

Teaching the rules of grammar on their own is inadequate. English teachers should not teach grammar separately. They must relate it to social meanings in living situations. Furthermore, words or rules should not be isolated because if they are taught separately, it will be difficult for learners to know in which circumstance they should use them.

In short, we agree with Petersen (1870)¹¹¹ when he argues that learners should not be filled with grammar rules or paradigms which have no connection with each other or with anything else in the world. Words or rules occur occasionally and some never at all. Therefore, teachers should not cram them into learners piece by piece. They must use them in situation.

In order to avoid that the grammar approach becomes the most dominant method used in classrooms, English teachers should focus on language functions. And in case grammar instruction is needed to correct grammatical mistakes, they should try to relate it to social meanings and situation, this is what we call grammar in use.

III.7.4 The use of translation

It is not translation we are aiming at in teaching foreign languages. Above all, it ought in many cases to be a last resort. It should be chosen for the sake of economy rather than the first choice. Thus, English teachers should not have recourse to translation every time they want to explain difficult words. Besides, translation is not the only and best means to convey meanings. It ought to be used sparingly and at all events, it is not necessary to translate whole connected pieces, but merely a word or at the very most in any one sentence. Therefore, translation should be omitted as soon as there is no danger of misunderstanding.

On the other hand, it is not true to say that translation is the best and easiest way to make learners remember the meaning of a particular word or sentence. On the contrary, translation can be an extremely complicated and difficult task. It is far from being simple for in general, it requires the selection of one response of the very many which might be possible, depending

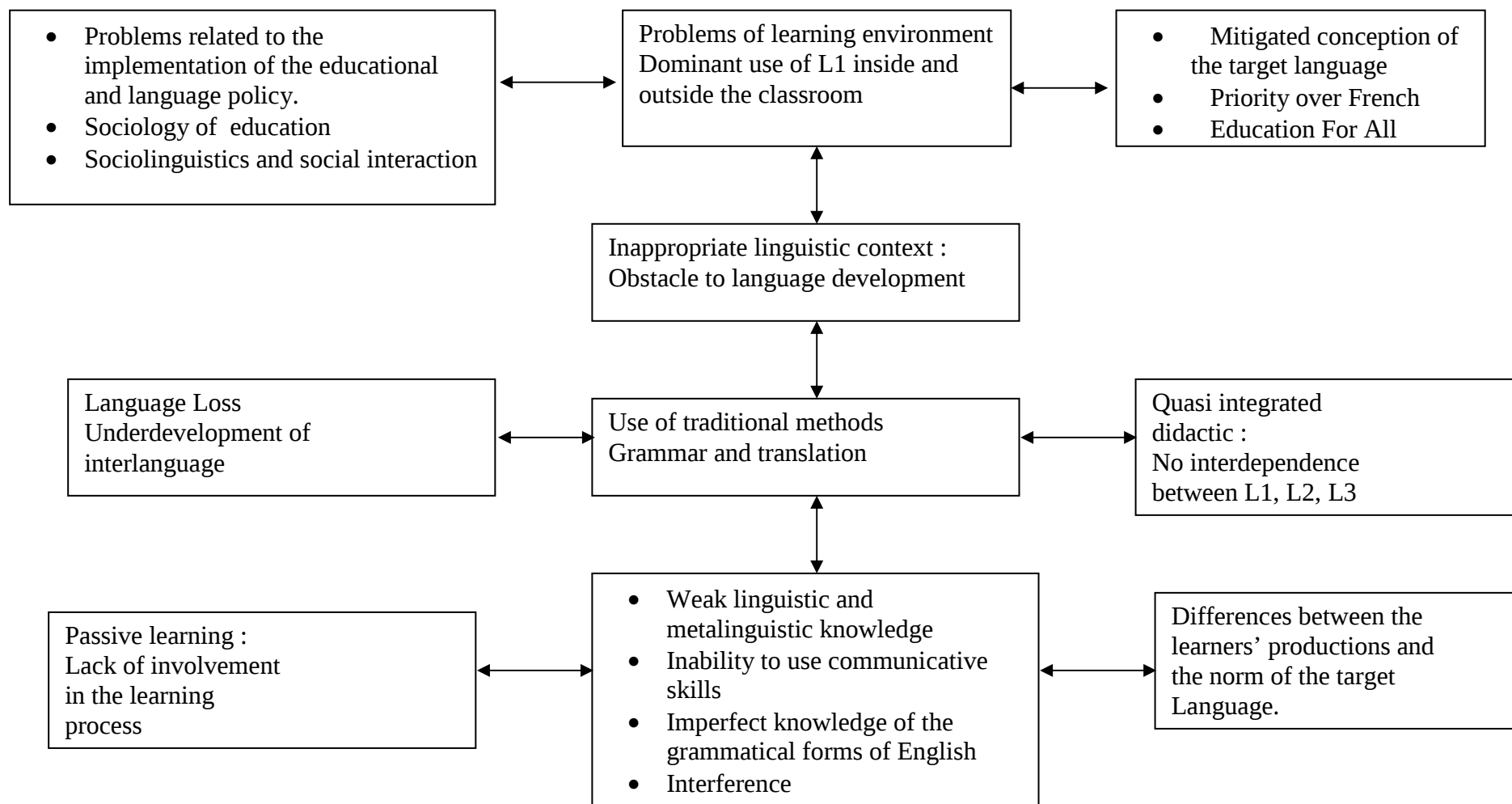
¹¹¹ Peter, N. M. in Jespersen, O. (1956) op. cit. p 110

on factors of context which learners do not know.¹¹²

To conclude, we can say that the third part is concerned with the specific field of the learners. It also confirms the belief that social environment as well as linguistic context have some influence on learners' abilities to communicate. But apart from that, we come to the conclusion that educational system can be viewed as one major factor that really affects learners' competence.

On the other hand, we would also like to suggest some solutions. But these solutions may not solve all the problems related to English language learning and teaching, some may not be new. However, it is important to repeat them so that teachers will always have them in mind and use them when they are confronted with similar problems.

¹¹² op.cit. p 225



Modelling attempt of the learning process in the two classes studied
(CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato)

Conclusion

There are various factors that may cause failure in English learning in Malagasy lower secondary schools. In the first part of this study, we only talk about the general problems encountered by foreign language learners. We also reveal some theories related to the field of language learning and deal with the methodological framework of this research work.

One of the main theories that we develop is the relationship between the learners' social status and their performance at school. This theory leads us to conclude that students from middle class families perform better, which is not generally the case of working class children.

Apart from that we also notice that cultural problems have some impacts on learners' ability. And the more learners have some knowledge of the foreign culture, the more they are able to communicate in their target language.

Another theory that we analyse is related to linguistic aspects. Indeed, the most common linguistic obstacle to language learners is the problem of interference. In most cases, when learners have already acquired a particular language, it is either the first or the second language, they are likely to use it as a frame of reference when they acquire a new one.

In the second part of this research, we deal with a comparative study between two similar classes (4^{ème}) at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA Anosizato. First of all, we discuss the teaching methods implemented in these schools. And from our observation and personal analysis, we noticed that the teachers in the two classes studied mostly used traditional methods which were mainly based on the teaching of grammatical forms of English. In this case, communicative skills were neglected.

This problem of inadequate teaching methods is also worsened by the inaccessibility to effective bilingual programme. Indeed, the learners at CEG Antanimbarinandriana and Collège ESCA were not exposed to additive bilingualism. Immersion programme and transitional bilingual education were not implemented in their classrooms. As a result, they did not achieve neither fluency nor proficiency.

As far as the learners' difficulties are concerned, they are related to the problem of motivation, participation in class, but also lack of opportunities for practice. And as regards the main obstacles encountered by the teachers, they are associated with the problem of qualification, training and working conditions.

In the third part of this study, our analysis concerns the linguistic context and sociolinguistic background of the learners. Indeed, we noted that learning environment has some influence on the language practice of the learners in the two classes studied. As we said earlier, these

learners had weak social networks that is why they were unable to improve their knowledge through social interaction. Besides, they had limited pluricultural and plurilingual competence. They also had weak metalinguistic practice and for all these reasons, they were faced with the problem of underdevelopment of interlanguage.

As far as the Malagasy educational system is concerned, the problem is that, even though it tries to promote the role of English by making it an official language, this does not really change the reality in the classroom. The English language is not as dominant as French.

On the other hand we also suggest some ways of dealing with the issues related to English learning and teaching.

As regards the solutions that concern learners, they should be strongly motivated and willing to construct their knowledge themselves. In this respect, individual learning must be encouraged.

As for teachers, they should be devoted and able to create a friendly atmosphere so that they can help their learners improve their knowledge without being forced to learn.

With respect to the teaching methods implemented in the classroom, they should be adequate, and most important of all, they should fit learners' needs and interests. Apart from that, because language is first of all oral, teachers should adapt a more communicative approach to promote communicative competence.

As for the problem related to the Malagasy educational system, the government should provide teachers with necessary resources so that they can implement the major objectives of this system.

As a whole, we can conclude that maximum rates of achievement in the learning and teaching of a foreign language are typically produced when motivated and willing learners are encouraged by skilled and devoted teachers, but also a well maintained system.

The other underlying message in this study is that foreign language teaching is not only a theoretical activity. It should be in relation to both theoretical disciplines and practical demands. In other words, this means that it is more appropriate to consider theories provided that they will not lose the interests of practical demands.

In addition, foreign language teaching should be concerned with the reality in the classroom, language teachers should be able to consider the reality of the learners as they also exist outside and inside the classroom. Indeed, the aim is to convey the most relevant

practical use of language so that learners can establish the target language as a frame of reference which facilitates contacts with one another.

However, it will not be easy to deal with the reality of communication. In most cases, it is so complex that nobody will be able to understand it. Thus, this leads us to conclude that it will be difficult to produce a definitive teaching methodology, therefore it is up to teachers to decide which suits best their learners at a particular moment and place.

Obviously, this study is then no more than a small chapter in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. Because languages are constantly changing and evolving, what we think and believe today will not be necessarily valid later. There will be probably some changes, and they will mostly depend on learners' needs but also language change. In this case, the problems that concern the present topic will have no end. Besides, here, the chief concern is not to solve all the problems related to foreign language learning and teaching, it would be almost impossible to achieve such a goal. Instead, our aim is to enable learners and language teachers to derive some practical use from this study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE LEARNERS

Name :
Class :
School :
Address :
Age :
Sex :
Father' s job :
Mother' s job :

Questions for Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary school

1. When did you start learning English ?

- ☐ In primary school
- ☐ In secondary school

2. What are your reasons for learning English ?

- ☐ I like it
- ☐ I am obliged to learn it
- ☐ I want to speak foreign languages
- ☐ It helps me to find a job

3. During the English course what is dominant ?

- ☐ grammar
- ☐ topics
- ☐ language function

4. Do you participate or give your opinion during the English course ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5.Do you try to speak English during the course ?

☐ occasionally

☐ always

☐ never

6.Do you like reading books in English ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7.Are you a member of the library at school ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8.How many books in English do you read in a month ?

☐ none

☐ one

☐ two

☐ more

9.What kind of books do you read ?

☐ magazines

☐ strip cartoons

☐ novels

10.Do you have listening practice in class ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

11.In your opinion what are the difficult parts of English ? (eg. : vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, speaking...)

.....

Social aspects

1. Do you have pedagogical tools at home ? (eg. : English books, K7 in English, films...)

- ☐ no
- ☐ a few
- ☐ enough

2. Do you speak English at home ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. Do your parents, sisters, brothers or friends speak English ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Do you practise English outside the classroom ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. Do you listen to English programmes ?

- ☐ never
- ☐ not much
- ☐ occasionally

6. Do you have penfriends who speak English ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Do you get in touch with English native speakers ?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Have you ever been to an English speaking country ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. Are you a member of an English club ? (eg. : ELI, CNELA...)

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. What do you know about English culture ?

☐ Nothing

☐ A few

☐ Many things

11. Introduce yourself about 5 lines (eg: your family members : number of sisters and brothers, parents' names...)

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE TEACHERS

Name :

Sex :

English teacher at :

Class (es) :

1. Why did you decide to become an English teacher ?
2. When did you begin teaching ?
3. Do you think teaching is an interesting job ?
4. What do you think of teachers' salary ?
5. Is there any vocational training for teachers in your school ?
6. According to you is the availability of time to teach English sufficient ?
7. What kind of relationship do you entertain with your students ?
8. Do your students pay attention to the course ?
9. Do you ask questions which students can answer successfully ?
10. Do you leave time for students to think ?
11. Do you use body language to encourage responses (eg : eye contact, smiling, raising the eyebrow, nodding....)
12. Do you always praise or otherwise acknowledge correct responses ?
13. Do you avoid ridiculing students' answers ?
14. If no answer comes, are you able to ask a question that leads to the answer to the original question ?
15. Do you ask questions short and clear, using straightforward language ?
16. Are you able to distribute questions widely around the class ?
17. Do you think the number of students may be an obstacle for language teaching ?
18. According to you is there an excellent method for English teaching and what kind of methods are you using in class ?
19. Do you have suitable equipment for English teaching at your disposal ?
20. As far as you are concerned, what are the biggest obstacles that students may face when they learn English ?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW

English teacher trainer : Mrs Ravelonahary Micheline

Place : Teacher Resource Centre (TRC) at Analakely, Antananarivo

Date : September 08th 2006

Questions :

According to you what are the main obstacles encountered by Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary schools ?

And what would you suggest to improve the quality of English teaching and learning in Madagascar ?

APPENDIX III

Samples of learners' short writings about self introduction: 5 lines

CEG ANTANIMBARINANDRIANA

⇒ Princy : My name is Princy
 I' m not brother
 I' m one sister
 My mathere's name Rajaonah Gloria
 My father' s name Andrianosy Charlie
 (Confusion between the verb to be and to have)

⇒ Dina : My name is Dina. I am 13 years old.
 My father is caissier and my mother is couturière.
 I live Anosizato and my school a Mahamasina.
 I'm goig to have musics. I love Jazz and slow.
 My favourite is « play game »
 (Use of French words)

⇒ Faniry : My name is Faniry. I'm fourteen years old.
 I have two brothers but no sisters.
 I live at Mahamasina.
 My friend at school is Jessica.
 My hobby is dancing and basket ball.
 (She said that she practised English outside the classroom)

COLLEGE ESCA ANOSIZATO

⇒ Moise : My name is Moise. I live in Ankazotoho, I am thirteen, I am 1m 15 cm. My
 characters is gentle and courageous. I am short and fat. I study in ESCA school
 I am two sisters and no brother. My father's name Ravonjy. He is fourty years
 My sister study in Mampitasoa Anosibe. (Problem of conjugation of verbs)

⇒ Njakatiana : Your family members is six.

My father is name Bongia and my mother is name Mireille. I'm two brothers.
My brothers is name Toky and Jimmy. I'm one sisters, is name Veronique.
You live in Anosizato and my brothers Toky live in Mahjanga. My
grandparents, my uncles and my aunts live in Mahajanga.

(Problem of structure and the use of verbs)

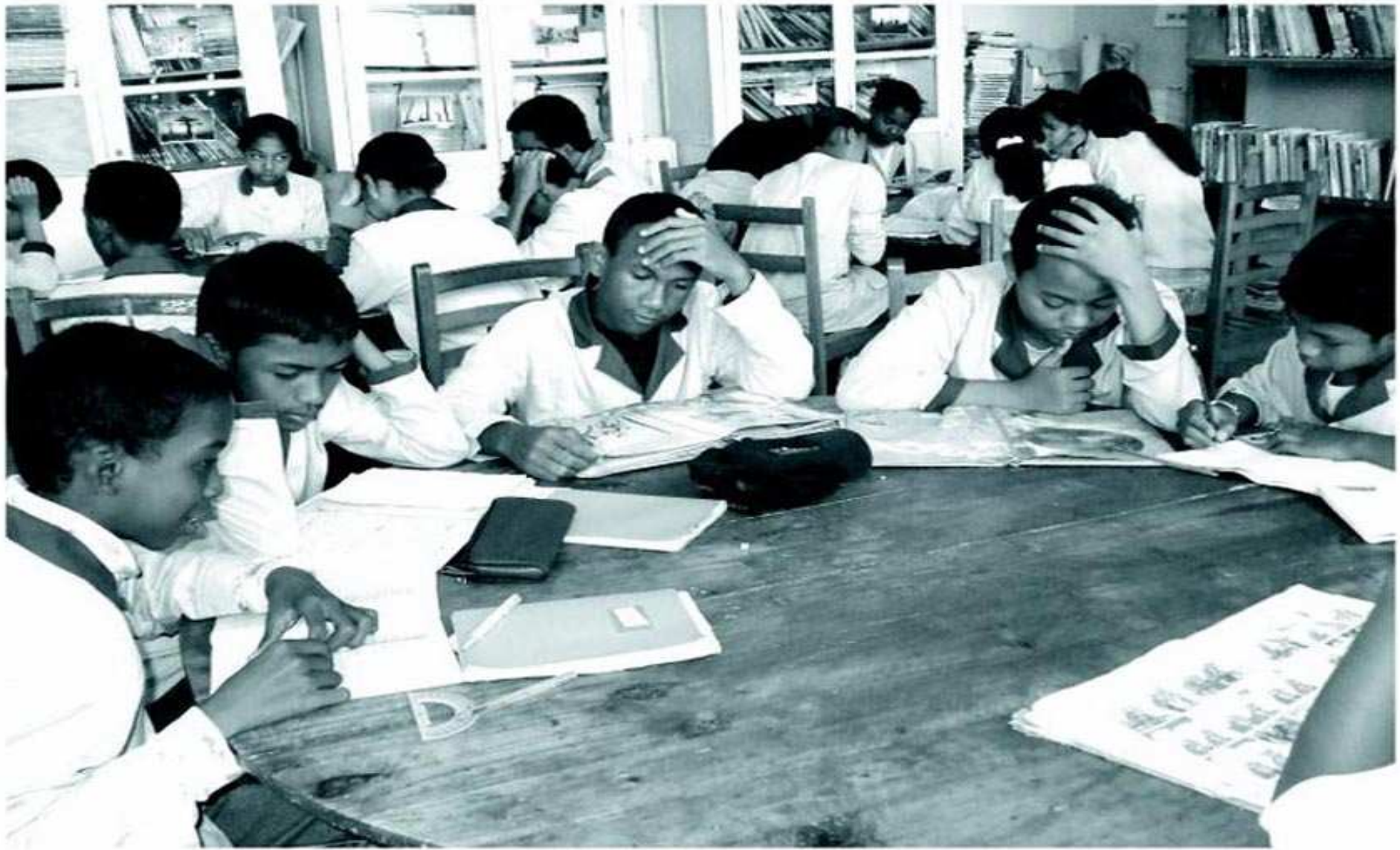
⇒ Anita : My name is Anita. I live in Anosipatrana. I am fifteen years old. My mother' s
name is Manitra, my father' s name is Naina. I have no sister and two brothers.
I am happy person, my characters is friendly and gentle. I like play the basket
and dislike my character friend and hypocritical.

(a daughter of a civil servant who attended secondary school)

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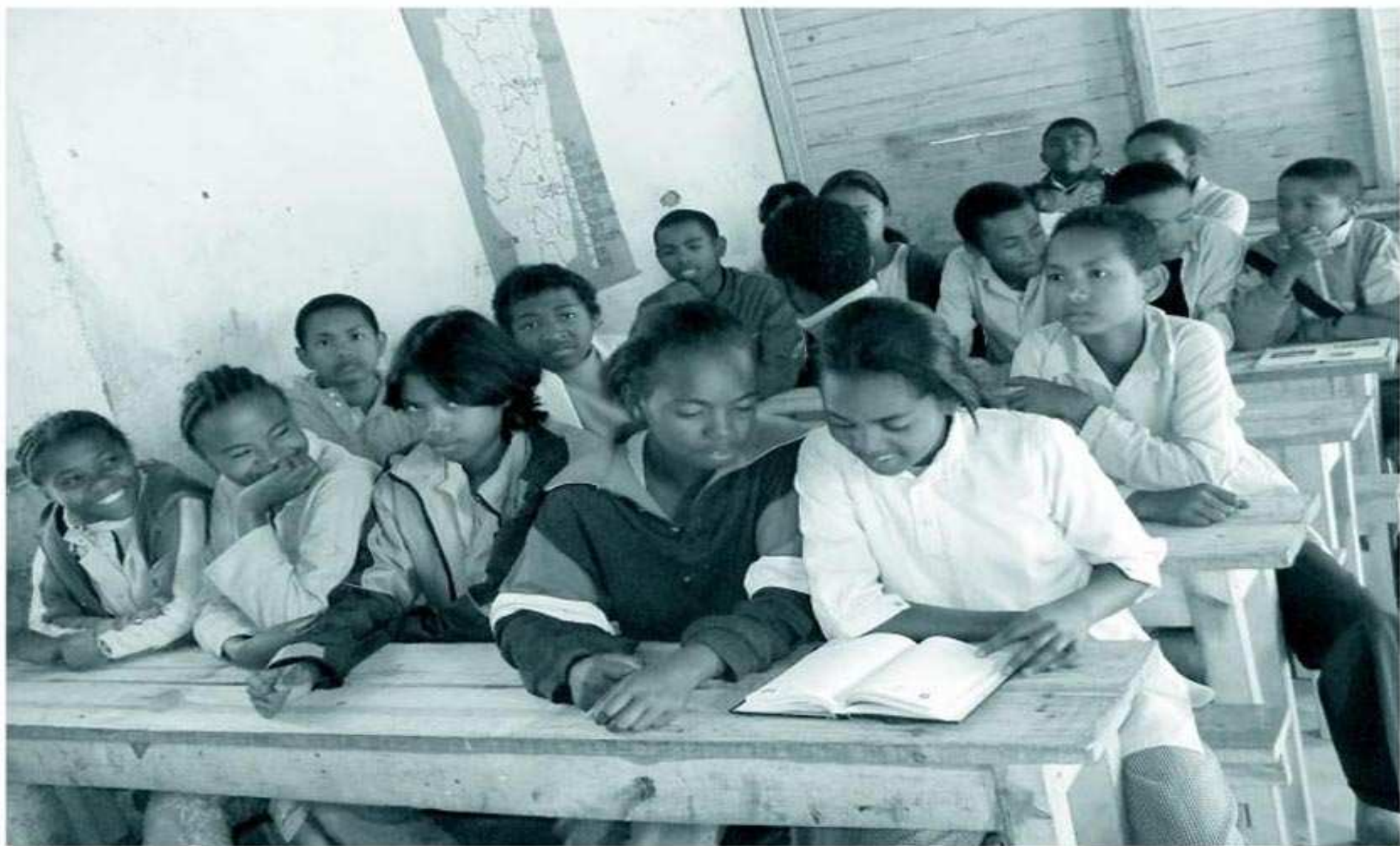


The learners at GEG Antanimbarinandriana (the class of 4 ème)



The library at GEG Antanimbarinandriana





The learners at College ESCA Anosizato

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Key words : Acquisition , Learning, First language , Second language, Target language, Teaching methods, Communicative approach, Competence, Proficiency, Performance, Fluency, Bilingualism, Language practice, Language development, Learning environment, Social interaction.

Field Research : Sociolinguistics, Sociology of education, Didactic, Pedagogy, Educational and language policy, Educational system.

Summary :

The following dissertation deals with an analysis of the main obstacles encountered by Malagasy learners of English in lower secondary schools. Having chosen two similar classes in both private and public schools, we have conducted a comparative study and applied a systemic approach which enabled us to find out the most frequent problems that Malagasy learners and teachers may face when they learn or teach English. These issues are mostly related to learners and teachers themselves, their involvement in the learning process, their social environment as well as the fluctuation of the Malagasy educational system. At the end of this research work, we have also tried to suggest a few solutions which, we hope, may contribute to the improvement of English teaching and learning in Madagascar.