

## USING PICTURES IN A SEL CLASSROOM FOR DEVELOPING LEARNERS' PRODUCTIVE SKILLS :

case of 10 schools selected in Ngaba and Lemba municipalities

par

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### Abstract

In the area globalization, English has increasingly become the medium in every domain of communication worldwide. There is no field of the live that does not resort to English. Unfortunately, learners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) still have problems to speak and write English effectively. Thus, this study is an attempt to identify the challenge that prevent learners of 4<sup>th</sup> form<sup>115</sup> to speak and write English, and thus suggests probable solutions to the effective teaching of productive skills. In fact, the investigation carried out in 10 schools general streams, demonstrates that a great deal of learners, 447 out of 957 or 49%, are able to listen to what their teachers say, and 342 or 37% can read the piece of texts provided by their teachers. But, only 63 out of 957 or 7% could hardly speak and write their own sentences, the majority of them studies in School 07. This ladies' school has 159 learners in fourth form. Although most learners could listen and read, only 42 or 10% were able to speak and write during the pre-test. This led to the use of pictures as techniques and strategies of teaching English while promoting social and emotional learning strategies during the investigation period held from 1<sup>st</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2023, the result of which demonstrates that 116 learners out of 159 or 72, 96% were able to speak English in an acceptable way while 107 learners out of 159 or 67, 30% could write with less errors.

**Key words:** Picture, Social-emotional learning, learners, productive skills, healing classroom.

### Résumé :

À cette heure de la mondialisation, l'Anglais s'impose de plus en plus dans tous les domaines de la communication à travers le monde. Il n'y a aucun secteur qui ne puisse faire recours à la langue Anglaise dans tous les domaines de la vie humaine. Malheureusement, les élèves en République Démocratique du Congo rencontrent d'énormes difficultés pour développer leurs compétences sur comment parler et écrire efficacement en Anglais. Ainsi, cet article essaie d'identifier les défis qui empêchent les élèves de 4<sup>ème</sup> année à parler et à écrire en Anglais, et suggère ainsi des solutions probables pour un enseignement efficace des compétences productives. En fait, l'enquête menée dans 10 écoles des options générales montre qu'un grand nombre d'élèves, 447 sur 957, soit 49 %, est capable d'écouter ce que disent leurs professeurs, et 342, soit 37 %, peuvent lire les textes fournis par leurs professeurs. Cependant, seuls 63 élèves sur 957, soit 7 %, peuvent à peine parler et écrire leurs propres phrases, la majorité d'entre eux étudie à l'école 07. Cette école de filles compte 159 élèves en quatrième année. Bien que tous les élèves soient capables d'écouter et de lire, seuls 42 d'entre eux, soit 10 %, étaient capables de parler et d'écrire lors du pré-test. Cela a conduit à l'utilisation d'images comme techniques et stratégies d'enseignement de l'Anglais tout en promouvant des stratégies d'apprentissage socio-émotionnel au cours de la période d'enquête qui s'est déroulée du 1<sup>er</sup> février au 4 Mai 2023. Les résultats montrent que 116 élèves sur 159, soit 72, 96 %, étaient capables de parler anglais de manière acceptable, tandis que 107 élèves sur 159, soit 67, 30 %, étaient capables d'écrire avec moins d'erreurs.

**Mots clés :** Image, apprentissage socio-émotionnel, apprenants, compétences productives, classe curative.

### INTRODUCTION

As a global medium of communication, the importance of English is increasingly spreading all over the world in the present social, political and economic contexts. With the advancements of technology in various spheres of society, English has become the language which is spoken almost everywhere in the world. In DRC educational system, English has long been taught as a core subject in some options, especially in the streams where English is taught five hours a week. Yet, it is very painful to observe that learners of secondary schools who start learning English from the first to the fourth form are not able to use it as a mean of communication.

According to my observation, a great deal of learners are able to listen to what their teachers say, they can also read a piece of text provided by their teachers. But they are unable to speak and write their own sentences.

<sup>115</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> form is a final level class a learner in DRC attends before completing his/her secondary school studies, at the successful end of which, he/she receives a State Diploma that allows him/her to either get a job or continue his/her studies at university studies.

For a long time, communicative methods and techniques have been applied in order to develop the learners' four traditional language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Unfortunately, they still have problems to perform as expected. This weakness of learners' use of productive skills has attracted my attention, and led me to carry out this investigation.

In fact, in the communicative approach, there are four basic skills of learning a foreign language such as English: that is speaking and writing known as productive or active skills and reading and listening which are called receptive or passive skills. When it comes to talking about using English at any level of education in secondary school, it is required to teach the four skills of the language giving equal importance to each<sup>116</sup>. But it mostly happens that teachers of English do not put more emphasis on the productive skills. As result, many learners may listen and read what is produced by their teachers, but they are unable to produce a single sentence in writing or speaking, and they could not use English in their practical life successfully.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the challenges and suggest probable solution to effective teaching of productive skills. It aims to develop some techniques that may lead to boost the learners speaking and writing skills. Hence, this study explores approaches to the teaching of speaking and writing skills in secondary schools, especially in the 4<sup>th</sup> form, with the purpose of leading learners to be able to speak and write English in an acceptable or suitable way.

Hopefully, this study sought to answer few questions related to the implementation of those techniques in DR Congo secondary schools.

- what are the techniques and strategies that teachers of English use to encourage learners' productive skills?
- how can pictures be used in a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) classroom as strategies of providing learners' productive skills?

This study is conducted with the hypothesis that the efficient use of pictures while promoting social-emotional learning teaching techniques could allow DRC finalists of secondary school to overcome their speaking and writing challenges, and thus enhance their communicative competence.

## I. METHODS AND MATERIALS

In the Glossary of Key Terms in Educational Research, Abdullah (2021) states that methods are systematic approaches to the conduct of an operation or process. It includes steps of procedure, application of techniques, systems of reasoning or analysis, and the modes of inquiry employed by a discipline<sup>117</sup>.

Indeed, there is no scientific research that cannot involve the methods that lead to the findings and to the needed results, since the answer to a research question involves the collection of data and the hypothesis resulting from the analysis of the collected data that should be either qualitative or quantitative. This study agrees with Harwell M.R. (2011) that, 'in educational research, it is usually possible (and certainly popular) to characterize a research study's methodology as qualitative; as quantitative; or as involving both qualitative and quantitative methods'<sup>118</sup>. Furthermore, Eyisi D. (2016) argued that "Though qualitative and quantitative research methods lies on separate continuum, they all aimed at identifying educational problems using different approaches"<sup>119</sup>.

However, in this research study, both qualitative and quantitative data have been used as approaches that lead to collect data in 10 schools selected in two municipalities of Kinshasa town, the capital of the DRC. The lines below give the different circumstances that quantitative and qualitative data have been collected.

### 1.1. Quantitative data

According to Leedy P.D. (1993), quantitative research methods are research methods dealing with numbers and anything that is measurable in a systematic way of investigation of phenomena and their relationships. It is used to answer questions on relationships within measurable variables with an intention to explain, predict and control a phenomenon<sup>120</sup>. As far as this study is concerned, quantitative data have been

<sup>116</sup> Hossain, M. I. (2015). *Teaching Productive Skills to the Students: A Secondary Level Scenario*. Unpublished University thesis. Department of English and Humanities. Dhaka: BRAC University. Bangladesh 2014 – 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Abdullah, N. (2021). *Glossary of Key Terms in Educational Research*. ORCID, Kaboul University, Kaboul.

<sup>118</sup> Harwell, M. R. (2011). *Research Design: Qualitative/ Quantitative/ Mixed Methods*. The Sage handbook for research in education (second edition). University of Minnesota. Minnesota.

<sup>119</sup> Eyisi, D. (2016). The Usefulness of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Researching Problem-Solving Ability in Science Education Curriculum. *Journal of Education and Practice*. Vol.7, No.15. Queen's University Belfast, UK.

<sup>120</sup> Leedy, P. D. (1993). *Practical research: planning and design*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

collected and analyzed in order to understand the teachers' attitudes in their classrooms as regards the use of social-emotional strategies during their English classes.

In fact, as illustration, a structural interview guide containing 10 questions (Annex 1) was given to 20 teachers of the 10 selected schools as a survey that leads to collect the needed data.

Then, the teachers' answers were carefully analyzed through an excel file and the result is presented in terms of percentage.

## 1.2. Qualitative data

According to Ary et al (2010: 431) observation is a basic method for obtaining data in qualitative research and the purpose is to understand complex interaction in natural setting<sup>121</sup>. However, Berg and Howard (2012) characterize qualitative research as meanings, a concept, a definition, metaphors, symbols and a description of things. This means clearly that qualitative research contains all necessary instruments that can lead to problem-solving. In fact, observation is among the instruments used to collect qualitative data.

In this study however, observation has been used in and outside the classrooms in order to understand whether answers given by both teachers and learners during their interview were right or not with regards to the use of pictures, and thus observe if teachers of English resort to social-emotional learning in their classrooms. As Schonert-Reichl (2017) mentioned "classrooms with warm teacher-child relationships promote deep learning among students: children who feel comfortable with their teachers and peers are more willing to grapple with challenging material and persist at difficult learning tasks." In contrast, when teachers poorly manage the social and emotional demands of the teaching-learning process, students demonstrate lower performance which strongly influence their behavior.

For the sake of illustrating qualitative data collection, three kinds of observation have been used as techniques of data collection in this study: a free observation, a face-to-face observation and classroom observation. Free observation consisted of going to the selected schools as a visitor and observe how teachers in general and school officials in particular apply the healing classroom norms and whether both learners and teachers were living in a safe and protected environment. The main purpose of such observation led to understand whether the school provides a safe environment which prevented violence, and worked toward improving learners' feelings of safety while they were in school. I believe that when learners felt safe and secure, if they were more comfortable in their schools, they would be able to learn and succeed in their lessons, and would therefore have better opportunities to grow academically, emotionally, and socially. A safe school environment is essential for promoting learners' success.

A face-to-face observation was also used through an interview guide intended for learners. I had a friendly talk with some fourth form learners, in order to collect their points of view about their teachers' behavior as regards social-emotional learning strategies in their English lessons. And classroom observations consisted of getting into the classroom and attend the lesson in order to observe how the teacher handled the classroom, that is, the methods, techniques and strategies used to promote learners' understanding of the lessons, as well as the teacher's attitudes towards his or her learners.

## II. INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Research instruments are scientific and systematic tools which are designed in order to help the researcher collect data on his/her topic of interest, for instance, questionnaire, interview, focus group or any device used by the researcher to collect the information in measuring a given phenomenon can be considered as a research instrument ([www.cram.com/essay/research-instrument](http://www.cram.com/essay/research-instrument) [retrieved on 05 May 2024 16:39]).

When conducting a research, however, a researcher uses some instruments that help to collect the data. For this research study, apart from the consideration of social emotional learning strategies in the language teaching-learning process, I have resorted to structured interview intended for teachers of English, and in-depth interview conducted with learners of fourth forms general streams. The former was particularly used as instruments designed for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data whereas, in-depth interview, free observation, face-to-face observation, and classroom observation were used as an instrument designed for collecting qualitative data.

In addition, pictures were used as an instrument for testing the learners' use of language skills and teachers' attitudes as regards the use of the learner-centered approach in a SEL classroom. Learners were also observed through the use of pictures for testing their use of productive skills.

<sup>121</sup> Ary. D et al. (2010). Introduction to Research in Education. Canada: Thompson Wadsworth.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURAL INTERVIEW USED IN THE STUDY AND THE RESULTS

To the first question *“Are your learners interested in learning English as a mean of communication in their everyday life?”* aimed to know the level of the learners’ interest in learning English as means of communication, only 1 teacher or 5% out of 20 said ‘yes’, 16 teachers or 80% said ‘No’, and 3 teachers or 15% said ‘only some’.

To the second question *“How many learners of your class perfectly perform the following skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening?”* which aims to know the number of learners in each classroom who were able to use the four language skills. Only one Teacher or 5% said ‘all’; 6 teachers or 30% said ‘None’, and 13 teachers or 65% said ‘only some’.

To question number three *“Which lessons are taught to help your learners improve their speaking and writing skills?”* aiming to understand the lessons through which teachers of English endeavor to favor productive skills, 14 teachers said they teach speaking and writing in the grammar lesson; 5 teachers develop their learners speaking and writing skills during the vocabulary lesson; 13 teachers argued that their learners use reading skills only during the reading aloud; 10 teachers make their learners practice speaking and writing skills during the reading comprehension lesson. 11 teachers argued that they make their learners write during the dictation lesson; 3 teachers make their learners speak during the conversation lesson; 14 teachers state that they make use of writing skills in the composition lesson; Only 1 teacher agrees that he develop his learners’ speaking and writing skills when teaching almost all lessons;

To the fourth question *“What are the teaching-learning techniques that you use to help your learners improve their productive competence?”* which aims to examine the techniques and strategies actually used by teachers of English to enhance the learners’ speaking and writing skills, 14 teachers said that they use question – answer technique; 6 teachers state that they use pair-work; 5 teachers selected group work as their favorite technique; 1 teacher argued that he uses brainstorming; 1 teacher usually uses the direct methods; 4 teachers said they use observation as technique of developing their learners productive skills; 2 teachers argued that they usually use visual aids; and no one selected pictures as means of developing their learners speaking and writing skills.

To the fifth question *“Can pictures help learners to improve their speaking and writing skills?”* which aimed to know whether pictures could help improve learners’ communicative competence, especially speaking and writing skills, 12 teachers out of 20 said ‘Yes’, while 8 teachers said ‘No’.

To question number six that asks teachers who said ‘yes’ to illustrate the instance through which pictures could be used in an English class as a strategy in language teaching, they wrote the lesson during which pictures could be used, as follows: 8 teachers said that pictures may be used during the grammar lesson; 5 teachers stated that pictures could be used during the vocabulary lesson; 13 teachers argued it could be used during the reading aloud; 10 teachers argued that reading comprehension lesson would be the best step of using pictures. 11 teachers argued that pictures would be better during the dictation lesson; 3 teachers suggested the use of picture during the conversation lesson; 14 teachers state that it should be good to make use of pictures during the composition lesson; Only 1 teacher suggested that it could be possible to make use of picture in all steps of the English class.

The seventh question *“Have you ever heard about the healing classroom or social-emotional learning as teaching strategies in an English lessons?”* aimed to know if teachers of the schools selected knew something related to healing classroom or social emotional learning, no one said ‘yes’ to this question. All teachers of the schools selected said they had never heard the word in the teaching and learning context.

The eighth question *“Can warm teacher-learner relationship provide learners’ communicative competence?”* aimed to know teachers’ views related to positive teacher-learner relationship, whether it could help learners to improve their English communicative competence, 18 teachers or 90% said ‘yes’, only 2 teachers or 10% were doubting and said ‘perhaps’.

The ninth question *“List five teaching techniques that a teacher of English can use to promote the learners’ well-being in the classroom.”* aimed to know the teaching techniques teachers of English could use for promoting the learners’ well-being during the English lessons, 20 teachers out of 20 or 100% said that they usually resorted to visual aids; 8 teachers or 40% stated that they mostly used brainstorming; 20 teachers or 100% said that they always used question –and-answer, pair and group works; and 18 teachers or 80% said that they sometimes resorted to observations, and 6 teachers or 30% were fond of direct method.

The last question *“What do you usually do when a learner misbehaves in your class? (at least two ideas)”* aimed to know the teachers’ attitudes towards learners’ misbehaviors, 16 teachers out of 20 or 80% said they used to send them to the discipline office; 12 teachers or 60% argued that they used to punish them; 8 teachers or 40% usually sent them out; 6 teachers or 30% said that they usually asked them to kneel in front of the classroom; and 4 teachers or 20% argued that they give them zero for correcting them.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

After having analyzed the teachers' answers to the above questions, and taking into account the result of observations made in the 10 schools as regards the learners' use of the language skills, the following points are to be presented as findings in this study:

##### 4.1. Learners' use of language skills per school during the pretest

N°	Schools	Learners	Speaking	Writing	Reading	Listening
1.	School 01	120	0	0	6	11
2.	School 02	21	2	2	15	21
3.	School 03	27	1	1	9	12
4.	School 04	173	0	0	10	21
5.	School 05	84	10	10	61	84
6.	School 06	88	8	8	51	88
7.	School 07	159	42	42	159	159
8.	School 08	112	0	0	17	37
9.	School 09	133	0	0	7	7
10.	School 10	40	0	0	7	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>957</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>447</b>

##### 4.2. Interpretation of the findings

1° the table above demonstrates that at School 07 all the 159 learners can listen and read an English text but only 42 are able to speak and write.

2° very few learners at School 05 (10/84), School 06 (8/88), School 02 (2/21) and School 03 (1/27) make use of productive skills.

3° No learners is interested to productive skills in schools such as School 01, School 04, School 08, School 09 and School 10.

In fact, when considering the first question which aimed to know the level of the learners' interest in learning English as means of communication, and the result of the second question which aims to know the number of learners in each classroom who were able to use the four language skills, it is clear that productive skills are not efficiently used in the English class.

In addition, the result of the questions number 5 and 6 related to the use of pictures during the English class demonstrates that many teachers do not know the importance of using pictures. Some use pictures only as visual aids. But they do not use pictures as techniques and strategy to help learners develop their productive skills. In addition, the analysis of questions number 7 to 10 demonstrates that teachers of English have no ideas on the use of social-emotional strategies, consequently, they do not apply the healing classroom during their English lessons. Besides, when examining teachers' answers related to the use of productive skills, and when taking into account what was noticed during the observations made during the investigations, it has been noticed that learners in these schools study English for getting marks and pass the class, rather than using it as a means of communication.

#### V. PRETEST IN SCHOOL 07

School 07 is the only institution where I decided to deepen my investigations. The choice of this ladies' school was motivated by the fact that it has the required learners' level to make such a research. This school had 81 learners in Commerce and 78 in scientific streams. The 159 students were given a test which consist of evaluating the learners' level in productive skills.

The pretest in this school consisted of giving learners of fourth form a text and asking them to read and summarize it according to their understanding. The same text was given to both Commercial and Scientific streams. The result of the test demonstrates that only 42 learners out of 159 in both streams were able to give a comprehensive idea of the text, but the 117 couldn't do so. Indeed, it was observed that all the fourth form learners of School 07 were good at reading and listening, but only a few can speak and write.

## VI. USE OF PICTURES IN SCHOOL 07

The teachers of English in School 07 have made a collection of texts taken from books such as *Go for English*, *English for Africa*, and *Practical Guide*, without any picture. For the sake of testing the use of pictures as techniques to develop learners' productive skill, I resorted to the text "Customs and tradition" taken from "Go for English 1, Michael Montgomery and others, pp 49. I made the copies of the images related to the text and gave to each learner.

During the presentation, learners were asked to divide the paper of their exercise-book into three columns. Then, they were requested to observe the picture silently and write in the first column what they had observed in their own words. Learners were allowed to use their French-English dictionary in order to check the spelling of words they found difficult. 10 minutes were given to each learners to write what she could. This step helps learners to do self-observation, and to get an idea of what she will suggest in the group-work.

After this step, learners were asked to make groups of 5 – 6 learners. Each group had to choose a president and a reporter. The president's role was to lead the discussion, and the reporter should write down the group's agreed ideas in the second column. All the remaining learners participated as members of the group, and 2 or 3 minutes were given to each learner to explain the result of her observation orally to others. This step takes at least 15 minutes.

The next step consisted of reporting the group's answers to the whole class. First, the teacher has to divide the chalkboard into 5 columns. The number of columns depends on the numbers of formed groups plus one, to allow the delegate of each group to have enough space to write the group's ideas simultaneously. And the last column is devoted to the teacher's summary. Indeed, from the learners' answers, the teacher tries to use the question – answer techniques in order to create a correct and well spelled text that learners will write in the last column and in their notebooks. This step takes at least 20 minutes.

At the end of this lesson, the following surprising results were observed :

- 1°. Many learners, even those who were not speaking and writing could now speak and write in English.
- 2°. Many vocabularies of the text were known by learners themselves after their own research in the English-French dictionary or from their classmates' explanations;
- 3°. Learners found some grammatical structures themselves;
- 4°. Learners were very happy to notice that they have created an English text from the observed pictures;
- 5° Learners could develop their speech even outside the classroom;
- 6°. The teacher noticed that we did not speak too much and appreciated the method because it helped the teacher to save his energy;
- 7°. The teacher noticed that we just served as a guidance or a facilitator, making turns here and there, from one group to another, and thus, intervene only where there is a problem, just for guiding.
- 8°. The teacher observed that I developed an attitude that encouraged learners to feel at ease in the classroom.
- 9°. The learners' errors were mostly corrected by their classmates without any harassment or violence. I could intervene only if it was noticed that no learner was able to provide an acceptable answer.
- 10°. Learners were not afraid to express their ideas and explain what they found important to their classmates or ask questions to the teacher.

It is worth saying that, the use of pictures was also experienced during a grammar lesson. I should teach the use of preposition on, in, under, at, near, in front of and after. In the drawings, you can see an orange on the table, a banana near the orange, both were in the bowl. There was a dog under the table and a woman standing at the door in front of a man. I just gave the drawings to the learners and asked them to observe and describe the pictures. Frankly, I was astonished to observe that learners wrote all the prepositions and explained them rightly.

From this investigation indeed, many lessons were taught through the use of pictures. Both learners and teachers of English of School 07 ladies' school had very much appreciated this techniques that enhance learners' language skills. They ensured of resorting to this technique as their favorite strategy of developing the learners' communicative competence.

## VII. POST-TEST IN SCHOOL 07

A post-test test was organized in May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 during which, 116 learners or 73% out of 159 were able to speak in English and to give the pictures' main idea efficiently while 107 learners or 67,3% out 159 could now write with less errors.

## CONCLUSION

This study has focused on the use of Pictures in a SEL classroom for developing learners' productive skills. The main reason for choosing this study has been motivated by the fact that learners of secondary schools who start learning English from first to fourth forms are not able to use English as a means of communication.

The investigation carried out in 10 schools general streams demonstrates that a great deal of learners, 447 out of 957 or 49%, are able to listen to what their teachers say, and 342 or 37% can read the piece of texts provided by their teachers. Unfortunately, only 63 out of 957 or 7% can speak and write their own sentences.

In fact, it was difficult to apply the use of pictures in all the 10 schools because learners have not got the required language level skills as recommended in the national curriculum. That is why, I was obliged to carry out the study on School 07 only where I could find the needed learners for such a research study. This ladies' school has 159 learners in fourth forms commerce and science. Although all the learners could listen and read, only 42 or 10% were able to speak and write during the pre-test organized in February 2023. This pushed me to resort to the use of pictures as techniques and strategies of teaching English in these classes while applying SEL norms as remedies to improve the learners' productive skills. This combination of the use of pictures in a social-emotional classroom has raised the learners' result during the posttest organized on 4<sup>th</sup>, May 2023. The later demonstrates that 116 learners out of 159 or 72, 96% were able to speak English in an acceptable way while 107 learners out of 159 or 67, 30% were able to write with less errors.

Hence, the result of this research study confirm the hypothesis that the efficient use of pictures in a social-emotional learning classroom could allow DRC finalists of secondary school to overcome the speaking and writing problems, and thus enhance their productive skills.

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