

English reading comprehension: Difficulty of teaching and some remedial teaching techniques in fourth form at schools Vanga

Cathy KUMANZI MUKAKIMBINGI

(Reçu le 23 Mars 2018, validé le 22 Juin 2018)

(Received March 23th, 2018, validated June 22th, 2018)

Abstract

After several observations, the author of this article has realized that reading understanding of English is not well taught at secondary school. This can be explained by the sub-classification of some English teachers yet qualified.

This study used the survey method supported by technical documentation and systematic observation. Data were collected from teachers of English in the fourth year of four schools in the city of Vanga hinterland. After the identification and presentation of the difficulties faced by teachers, researchers propose some techniques to effectively teach the lesson of comprehensive reading in English.

Keywords: Reading understanding of English, Reading understanding Techniques of English, Teaching English.

Résumé

Après plusieurs observations, l'auteur de cet article s'est rendu compte que la lecture compréhensive d'Anglais n'est pas bien enseignée au secondaire. Cette situation peut être expliquée par la sous-qualification de certains enseignants d'anglais pourtant qualifiés.

Cette étude a utilisé la méthode d'enquête appuyée par la technique documentaire et l'observation systématique. Les données ont été récoltées auprès des enseignants d'Anglais de quatrième année de quatre écoles de Vanga et de la périphérie. Après l'identification et la présentation des difficultés éprouvées par les enseignants, la chercheuse propose certaines techniques pour bien enseigner la leçon de la lecture compréhensive en Anglais.

Mots clés : Lecture compréhensive d'Anglais, Techniques de lecture compréhensive d'Anglais, Enseignement de l'Anglais.

I. Introduction

As trainers, we have noticed that the English teachers of Vanga and hinterland lack appropriate techniques to teach reading comprehension in sixth form. This is the reason why we have found necessary to suggest some techniques to be utilized by unqualified and qualified teachers.

Mastery of the reading comprehension of the English side in the fourth year is important and necessary for students because it helps them to acquire a range of concepts in English and engage in a conversation with out difficulty. In this century where the English language has become a requirement and a key for success in almost all areas, students who are already using the secondary level proficiency in English are more likely to succeed where we may require.

However, the mastery of the English language by students requires downstream competence and involvement of teachers in the process of training. Hence the importance of highlighting in the context of this work, the methodological difficulties that these teachers and provide some techniques for improving the teaching of reading comprehension in English. Because, as pointed educators, understanding a lesson or discipline by learners is based procedures and instructional strategies used and implemented by the teacher.

II. Understanding of keys concepts

2.1. Reading comprehension (Reading understanding)

Anderson and Arquhart (1984) define Reading as “the ability to make a tie between sounds and symbols which represent them in written forms. Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary (1984) views comprehension as “the action of grasping with the intellect understanding, the capacity for understanding fully.” In the same vein for Longman Dictionary of English (1983), Reading Comprehension is “the faculty or capacity of including comprehensiveness.” Thus Reading Comprehension is the act of reading with the purpose of understanding the passage. Reading comprehension aims at encouraging pupils to an understanding process requiring through and getting into contact with knowledge of the author’s mind.

2.2. Teaching

The word teaching comes from the verb to teach. Tshibanda et al. (2010) define teaching as “the transmission of knowledge from teacher to students”. To teach according to Gove (1999), is to direct as in classroom lecture or discussion. Put otherwise, to reach is the act, practice of instructing or the profession of teaching. It requires intelligence, maturity and devotion.

In our context, instruction and somebody respectively refer to reading comprehension and the learner. So teaching reading comprehension differs from teaching grammar or vocabulary, for example. And to teach it at the beginning level, the teacher should be skillful and get enough knowledge on the content of material and on the methodology to use, methods and techniques being parts of methodology.

An unqualified teacher has no idea about the methods or techniques to be used in a lesson especially in teaching reading comprehension. Such precision allows us to write on techniques in language teaching and learning.

2.3. Technique

In language teaching, the term technique is defined as “a particular trick, strategy and all contrivance, used to complex and immediate objective.” When speaking of the techniques of lessons, Katesi et al (1990) observe that:

A technique makes lessons easy and interesting, illustrating them and providing pupils with motivating force and reminding powers; regardless of the method chosen, teachers are appreciated according to the techniques which they use. It is the technique which condition the success or the failure of a lesson for they are in reality the supports of method.

This quotation shows us that techniques are ingredients, supports of methods which condition the success or the failure of any lesson. The teacher as a technician has to know the reasons of teaching reading comprehension in sixth form as a useful exercise, a teaching technique. Before presenting them, we have to present and analyze data made up of some lessons taught in the fourth form of secondary schools in Vanga city and hinterland.

III. Methodology

For this study, we used the survey method. In this study, the survey consisted of field work in our school inspection through schools Vanga city and hinterland. This school was conducting inspection visits classes and evaluation of lessons taught by teachers of English.

The survey methodology was supported by the technical literature and systematic observation. The technique consisted of documentary analysis preparation sheets and logs class English teachers, and other educational materials related thereto. Systematic observation was to focus our attention on the partners who are committed, including teachers and students; and analyze the interdependence of their behavior. Systematic observation is a technique which allowed us to collect and organize data on the course lessons reading comprehension in English so as to reveal a network of meaning. Record inspection class allowed us to note and bring essential data from our observation. Analysis of preparation sheets and newspapers classes as well as recorded and translated the record inspection data have revealed the difficulties faced by teachers. This led us to propose new teaching techniques of reading comprehension in English.

The Population of our study was the English teachers of fourth year of secondary school in the town of Vanga city and hinterland. This population is estimated at 14 teachers. In this population, we selected a simple random sample of four teachers in four schools in the city of Vanga and in hinterland namely, the Institute commercial of Vanga, the Ngunza Institute, the Mumbusi Institute and the Dr Bloom College.

IV. Results

4.1. Difficulties experienced by teachers

4.1.1. Activity One

School: Institute Commercial of Vanga

Class: 4th form Commercial

Lesson: Reading Comprehension: There's a good film in this evening

Hour: 10:00 – 10:50

Aim: At the end of my lesson, I will make pupils able to understand and answer correctly the questions from the text.

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book* p.16

1. Review

Teacher: Make sentences with the words: meet, thieves and film.

Pupil 1: I will meet my English teacher at school.

Pupil 2. There are thieves in our quarter.

Pupil 3. There is a good film this evening.

Teacher: Ok class! We have Reading comprehension lesson today.

2. Presentation

Teacher: This text is about some young men who decided to go to the film but when they arrived there, one of their friends was absent. They discussed to go to the film even without him. Then he allows the pupils to make a silent reading.

3. Production: Questions

1. Where did Bola tell the girls to meet him?
2. Did Bola come on time?
3. Did Bola come by scooter?
4. What film did they see that evening?
5. Did Elizabeth enjoy the film?

The teacher allows pupils to correct one by one all the asked questions.

1. He told them to be there at half past eight.
2. No, he didn't. He had to wait for the doctor.
3. No, he came by bus.
4. They had seen a Western.
5. She liked the music, but the fight at the end was horrible.

4. Comment

In the presentation, the result revealed that the teacher told a short story about the text. The teacher asked questions from the text. But during the practice many pupils didn't participate as such since many of them had problem of Reading questions and that of answering them.

4.1.2. Activity Two

School: Institute Ngunza

Hour: 07:50 – 08:40

Class: 4th form Commercial

Lesson: Reading Comprehension: Bola's Grandfather in Lagos.

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book* **Aim:**

p.8 At the end of my lesson, pupils will be able to answer questions related to the text.

1. Review

Teacher: The teacher allows the pupils to read the text from Bola's grandfather up to decided to go.

2. Presentation Teacher: The teacher tells briefly a story about Bola's letter to his grandfather living in a small village near Lagos. He invites him to come to the first baby cousin's naming-ceremony. But his grandfather didn't want to go to Lagos.

His family told him not to be afraid and decided to go ...

Teacher: Who wrote grandfather's letter? Pupil

1. Who wrote it?

Teacher: Who told Bola's grandfather not to be afraid? Pupil2.

His family did.

3. Production

Teacher: Take your text and read it silently and answer to these questions. 1.

Where does Bola's grandfather live?

2. Did Bola go and see his grandfather?

3. Does Bola's grandfather go to Lagos? 4. Why did Bola's grandfather go to Lagos? **Answers**

1. Bola's grandfather lives in a small village near Lagos?

2. No, he didn't.

3. Yes, he does.

4. He wants to Lagos because of the naming ceremony.

4. Comment

In the presentation, the data showed that the teacher told a short story about the text. The teacher referred to WH or Yes or No questions. Some pupils didn't answer the questions. He also used questions from the text and followed the chronological order in order to help learners find easily the answers.

4.1.3. Activity Three

School: Mumbusi Institute

Hour: 07:00 – 07:50

Class: 4th form Commercial

Lesson: Reading Comprehension: Showing Grandfather Round Lagos.

p.12

At the end of this lesson, I want my pupils understand the text.

1. Review

Teacher: Make sentences with the words: shop, parcel and boss.

Pupil 1: We buy goods in the shop.

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book Aim:*

Pupil 2: Last month my father sent me a parcel.

Pupil 3: My uncle is a boss at Kahemba.

2. Presentation

Teacher: Today we have a reading comprehension lesson on the text Showing grandfather round Lagos. Do write the title in your school diaries.

After this, the teacher tells the pupils about 3 characters: Bola, Maboudi and grandfather. Then he writes such questions: Who are there?

Where are they going?

3. Production

Teacher: Read silently the text and answer to these questions:

What did Bola do on Saturday morning?

Did they go to Lagos on foot? How did they go?

Where did they stop?

Why did they have to stop there? **Answers**

He decided to show his grandfather round Lagos.

No, he didn't, he went by taxi. They stop at the cross-road.

Because the traffic lights were red.

4. Comment

In the presentation, the teacher told a short story of the text with listening comprehension questions. But has used Yes/No, Open-ended questions. The pupils made the individual and chorus reading comprehension but in disorder full way.

4.1.4. Activity Four

School: Dr Bloom College

Hour: 10:00 – 10:50

Class: 4th form Scientific

Lesson: Reading Comprehension: At the Airport

p.4

At the end of my lesson pupils will be able to understand the text.

1. Review

The teacher allows the pupils to read from the beginning up to To be late.

After the pupils' reading, he allows them to write the title in their school diaries.

2. Presentation

Teacher: Today we are going to have reading comprehension on the text At the Airport. Write this title in your school diaries. Take your text; read silently meanwhile I'm writing the questions on the board.

3. Questions

1. How many persons are there in the text?
2. How long have Bola and Maboudi been waiting for a taxi?
3. Why are they looking for a taxi?

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book Aim:*

4. How long has the taxi-driver been driving taxis in Lagos?

4. Production

Teacher: Now class, answer first orally and then you write on the board.

Pupil 1: There are five persons: Bola, Maboudi, Sikiru, Elizabet and the Taxidriver

Pupil 2. They are waiting for half an hour.

Pupil 3. Because they want to arrive at the airport.

Pupil 4. He has been driving taxis in Lagos for ten years.

5. Comment

In the above text, the teacher didn't tell a short story and he didn't explain the text because the preceding lesson was reading aloud. Then he used Yes/No questions and pupils had problems to answer those questions.

4.2. Some Useful Techniques

4.2.1. General considerations

A clear observation on what precedes allows us to notice that teaching reading comprehension in third and fourth forms is not a simple task. This means that teaching those classes requires skillful and devoted teachers to use prepared and controlled reading comprehension techniques.

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book Aim:*

4.2.2. Dittoed Sheets Technique

Dittoed Sheets Technique is also called sentence completion technique. Here, the teacher distributes sheets or writes sentences which require a Wh-questions or words even group of words to be completed. The pupils will fill-in the blanks after the teacher's reading of the passage by what, who, where, or when. All the answers given by pupils will constitute a reading comprehension passage. Here is an example of a dittoed sheets reading comprehension text: An Article in the Newspaper taken from *English for Africa 4e: Teacher's Guide* p.62.

Teacher: Write this title in your school diaries and from these sentences below put out a wh-question.

Text:

- Poor Sikiru was very sad.
- Sikiru met all the guests in the church for wedding.
- But the most important woman was not there. Sikuru got more and more nervous.

Answers

- Who was very sad?
- Where did Sikiru meet all the guests?
- Who was not there?
- Who got more and more nervous?

Comment

After using this technique most of pupils were at ease. This shows that the technique was not complicated since the studied text was learned. A teacher may proceed by wh-question in order to get an original passage or use the passage in order to let pupils put our wh-questions.

4.2.3. Scrambled Sentences Technique

This technique consists of having sentences from the text with words presented in random order. It is a kind of reconstruction technique in which the teacher is going to read a given studied text at a natural speed a couple of times. Then he gives time to the pupils to find any difficult words and spell them. Next, he asks them to listen to another reading. After that, he allows them to use the fragments he writes on the chalkboard to reconstruct the whole reading comprehension text in their own meaningful way. Here is an example of a scrambled sentences reading comprehension text: A car crash, taken from *English for Africa 4e, Teacher's Guide*, p. 41. **A car crash**

I suddenly saw a big lorry last week. I was driving to Bunia when I saw it, but tried to slow down. But my car skidded and crashed into a ditch. The road was very bumpy.

Correction

Last week I was driving to Bunia when I suddenly saw a big lorry. It was coming round about very fast. The road was very bumpy. When I saw it, I tried to slow down but my car skidded and crashed into a ditch.

Comment

After having used this technique most of the pupils were happy. This proves that the technique we have used was not complicated. Most of the teachers may try in their different schools or areas.

Ref.: English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book Aim:

4.2.4. Picture Reading Comprehension Technique

It consists of having a close observation on a picture or on a image or a drawing. It is applied obviously after having taught vocabulary or conversation lesson based on the text. In the classroom a picture, a drawing or an image in a common base that leads to a variety of language activities. With a picture/image/drawing, however, all the students after a close observation of the material or situation will immediately need their appropriate sentence to write freely on what they see. The teacher by some guided and oriented questions will allow the pupils to write freely a passage of their own. Then he will allow the pupils to write freely a passage of their own. Then he will be looking at the pupil's words and sentences construction since each pupil has to make his own passage. As technicians and artists, it is required for the teachers to make a certain effort to help pupils reproduce a reading comprehension passage.

Here is a picture reading comprehension text from English for Africa 3e, Pupils' Book, p. 4.

Teacher: Ok, class, we have a reading comprehension lesson today.

Instruction: Look at the picture n°1, 2, 3 and 4. Write freely on what you see. **Questions:**

1. How many pupils are there on picture 1?
2. How many boys are there in the second picture?
3. Is Mr. Kasongo present or absent on picture 1 and 2?
4. Is Mr. Kasongo in front or at the bottom of the class?

Answers:

1. There are two pupils on picture 1.
2. There are two boys on the second picture, Banda and Mutombo.
3. No, Mr. Kasongo is absent.
4. Mr. Kasongo is in front of the class.

The teacher may ask pupils to write freely a small passage on what they see. The answers from pupils will constitute a reading comprehension passage. **Comment:**

We must point out that such kind of questions should come by the end of the year for the third form pupils. It is better to do it in the fourth form.

V. Conclusion

This study focused on the analysis of some methodological difficulties faced by teachers in the teaching of reading interaction in understanding English in the fourth grade and the proposal of new techniques that could be used to this effect. To conduct this study, we used the survey method supported by the literature and systematic observation. This study was conducted among English teachers in fourth grade school year in four schools in the city of Vanga and hinterland.

To be a teacher is not something to become at random. This means that teaching English in fourth form needs skillful persons. This requires a certain qualification, knowing some methodology and use of some appropriate techniques to make the third and fourth form pupils write freely, or answer the asked questions for a reading comprehension lesson.

The use of some techniques presented in this text could be improved so little understanding of the teaching of English reading in the fourth grade and also allow good teachers that students master the basic concepts of these lessons and wait for ideal.

Ref.: *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book* **Aim:**

References

- [1] Ander, & al. (1984). Taking down as much as they can. *English Teaching Forum: A Journal for the Teaching outside the Unite.* XXVIII
- [2] Gove, P.B. (1983). *Webster's Third International Dictionary.* New York: Meriam Webster Inc.
- [3] Mills et al. (1984). *English for Africa 4e, Pupils' Book.* Paris: Armand Collin. [4] Mills et al. (1978). *English for Africa 3e, Pupils' Book.* Kinshasa: Ed. Bobiso. [5] Mills et al. (1990). *Principles and Practice of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL).* Unpublished. ISP. Kikwit.
- [6] Ministry of the national education of DRC. (1981). *National Syllabus of English.* Kinshasa: Edideps
- [7] Tshibanda, T. (2004). *Principles and Practice of the Teaching of English.* Unpublished. ISP. Kikwit.

Cathy KUMANZI MUKAKIMBINGI

Assistante à l'Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Dula, province du Kwilu,
République Démocratique du
Congo.