PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO TEACH VOCABULARY THROUGH GAMES IN EFL BEGINNER CLASSES: THE CASE STUDY OF SOME SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ABOMEY REGION.

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Abstract:

One of the difficult aspects of learning a foreign language, particularly in an EFL context, is vocabulary teaching and learning .This research work investigates the difficulties faced by EFL teachers and their learners in the process of teaching and learning English language .It aims at exploring the motivating potential of games in improving the teaching andlearning vocabulary in EFL beginners' classes in Beninese secondary schools.

This research work is carried out in two secondary schools in located in the Abomey municipality where 50 teachers and 300 learners were selected. Two types of questionnaires were designed and addressed to both EFL learners and teachers. The data collected was presented in forms of frequency ,tables, and figures .The findings reveal that although students love games , a large majority of Beninese EFL teachers rarely resort to them as a teaching technique but for entertaining purposes and as a time filling activity.Games, when used appropriately in EFL beginner classes yield positive impacts on EFL beginners' listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. 75% of Beninese teachers recognize that playing game is an efficient means for fighting anxiety in their classes .As a result, the study recommends that teachers be trained on the practical strategies and techniques to use games to motivate their EFL learners to communicate fluently in English language and to create a less-stressful classroom atmosphere.

Key words: games, vocabulary, EFL beginners, teaching.

Introduction

Nowadays English is an important medium that helps people to interact .In teaching and learning settings, studentsare constantly motivated to master English language and its related skills in order to be able to benefit by the various opportunities offered by the globalization.Moreover,English is needed in many fields to support a number of activities in which people speaking a variety of languages are involved.

Due to its importance, French speaking countries such as Benin,introduced teaching of English as a Foreign Language in the national syllabus at primary, secondary and university levels.In spite of the Beninese government' effort to improve the teaching of EFL , teachers, school authorities and parents often complain about the EFL learners' poor achievement in different language skills. For instance,they report that learners show a limited ability to understand new words and that one of the major reasons behind such a limitation is their poor vocabulary reservoir and their lack of efficient strategies to understand new words or structures. Consequently, after attendingEFLlanguage classes for years and even passing written language exams, a lot of students can hardly string a sentence together in an oral communication.

Teaching English to French speaking students, especially EFL beginners (students of 6eme and 5ème of secondary schools) is not easy because English is not only their mother tongue but also it is a new language for them to learn. As a result, the interest of students in learning English is needed as the key to make it easierfor themto master how to speakit. Teachers should have effective and efficient techniques to

introduce English to them so that the beginner learners will be interested and motivated to learn English.

There are a lot of ways to introduce English to EFL beginners. One of these techniques is through games. As a matter of fact, Children like playing games, so by using games as a teaching method, beginner learners become more interested in learning English. Games are not only for fun but also for motivating students to communicate in English fast and easily. Learning by playing games is a good way to make students understand easily English language for in doing fun activities by themselves, they will find it easy to remember and learn about the materials taught by their teacher.

In addition, many textbooks and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time filling activities but have a great educational value. Lee (1979:2) holds that *"most of language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct form''*. According to him, "*games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching program*".

1. Statement of the Problem

Language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating for many reasons.Throughout the teaching and learning process of a language,constant effort is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target language.One of the most important and even difficult aspect of EFL teaching and learning is vocabulary. Despite its potentials in developing EFL beginner learners'communicative skills, vocabulary is often neglected in Beninese EFL classes.As a result,according to Hindéméet al.(2018), "*some beginner studentsare not fond of learning it. They escape vocabulary lessons and prefer to listento teachers' explanation and memorize a list of words of which pronunciation is unknown to them*.This situation results in the EFL students'poor performance in English language communication. As they face a lot of difficulties in getting their teachers'message, a great number of EFL students end up missing classes, which makes it difficult for both teachers and students to achieve the communicative goals assigned to EFL teaching and learning in the Republic of Benin.That is the reason why the present study is designed to equip Beninese EFL teachers with practical ways and means likely to help them enrich their beginner learners'vocabulary through games so that they could be able to express themselves efficiently in English language.

2.Purpose of the Study

The present study aims at examining the difficulties related to an effective teaching and learning of vocabulary in EFL beginnerclasses in beninese secondary schools.To this end,this research will help to study the steps of the vocabulary teaching and learning process in EFL beginner learners in order to explore ways and means improve it through games.

3.The Significance of the Study

The present study is significant for some major reasons. First,It can offer pedagogical applications for teachers, students as well as textbook developers. Second, the results of this study will help teachers develop a variety of game -based activities to improve vocabulary learning and acquisition.Third,this study can also be an ispiration for researchers who are interested in the introduction of audio visual aids in EFL classes.

4.Research Questions

Two research questions have guided present investigation .
1-What difficulties do EFL teachers face in teaching vocabulary ?

2-How to develop EFL beginner learners' vocabulary through games-based activities?

5. Literature Review

5.1 Teaching and Learning

according to Brown(2001:7) The word teaching is *''showing or holding someone to learn how to do something,giving instruction, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge causing to know or understand''*. Similarly, Brown said that *''teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning''* (Brown, 2007:7). Based on the statement above, we can conclude that teaching cannot be separated from learning because they support each other. Brownexplains that *''learning is acquiring or getting knowledge of a subject or a skill from study, experience, and instructions. Learning is acquisition or getting, learning is retention of information skill, and learning involves some forms of practice, perhaps reinforced practice''* (Brown, 2000:7). Moreover, learning is a *''relatively permanent change in an individual's knowledge or behavior that results from previous experience''* (Hamilton and Ghatala, 1994:7). Teachingandlearningare the main role in education system. In teaching process, the teacher has important roles in guiding the students to learn materials. While in learning process the students receive and learn something from the teacher and they give feedback to the teacher as their response. The success of teaching and learning process refers on both the teacher and the students. They should have a good communication.

5.2 Teaching Vocabulary to Beginner Learners by Using Games

Learning is one of the primary activities of students in the classroom. Successful learning is only on the right way to lead the process. Good learning atmosphere and method can guide the students to learn more and meaningful. To accomplish such condition, teachers must create variety type and attractive methods for the class. What should a teacher do if theirstudents get bored?

Using a variety type of games can be an alternative solution to handle this problem. Through this work I want to share experiences about how to teach English vocabulary by using games. There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games.

Many experiences textbook and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time filling activities but have a great educational value. W. R. Lee holds that *''most of language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct form''* (1979:2). He also says that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching program.

A similar opinion is expressed by Richard -Amato, who believes games to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching. According to him *"Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely"* Richard-Amato,(1988: 147). *''They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings''*Hansen, (l994: 118). They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson.

Similarly, Harmer states:

> *Games are a vital part of a teacher's equipment, not only for language practicethey provide but also for the therapeutic effect they have. They canbe used at any stage of a class to provide an amusing and challenging respite from otherclassroom activity and are especially useful at the end of a long day to send students away feeling cheerful about their English class.*

Games can be the media to teach vocabularies to young learners for some reasons. According to Wright, Bitteridge, and Buckby*"games can be found to give practice in all the skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), and for many types of communications (e.g. encouraging, criticizing, agreeing, explaining".* (1997: 1). Games are used to make the children easier to understand and remember vocabularies in some topics. By using games, the children do not feel that they learn something through that acti

Through games the students become active learners.

Vocabulary should be mastered by the beginner learners so that they will be easy to understand the language. The way to help them in learning vocabulary is by having a good method in teaching. The teacher should have a creative way in giving the materials to the students; one of the ways is by doing some fun activities. *"Children play and children want to play. Children learn through playing. In playing together, children interact and in interacting they develop language"*Brumfit, (1995:142). Similarly, Virginia in her book *Techniques in Teaching vocabulary* said that *there is truth in the belief that experience is the best vocabulary teacher*

According to (Harmer, 1991:7), ''*at the same time children's span of attention or concentration is less than adults. Children need frequent changes of activity: they need activities which are exciting and stimulate their curiosity: they need to be involved in something active*(They will usually not sit and listen).

According to Khan (1991), ''*games are activities governed by rules, which set up clearly defined goals*". Games consist of fantasy, ritual, competition, and luck that are interesting for children. These things make gamesenjoyable. It means games reduce boredom. When games are used, the situations of classroom become alive and natural. Games create situations that make children's need and want to use English. Lee (1994) explainedthat it occurs because in games language is linked by action. Thus, games are appropriate to the principal of language accompanying action. As a technique of teaching games involve children actively.

Through games, all children can get the opportunity to succeed in learning. Children are very fond of games. If they learn through games, they will enjoy and relax in learning. As stated by Paul (2003:49), ''*they will take what they learn through games and use it in daily life*''. Besides that, games have comfortableenvironment, so that they will be able to take a risk and try something new.

Teachers need to use games that students like and they do not use too many or too few kinds of games. Too many kinds of game will make them focus on games, not English. Too few games will make the game too predictable so that the games are not challenging. Based on the statements above, we can say that in teaching vocabulary the teacher should be able to create some various fun activities. The aim of that way is to make the student easier in understanding the materials and easier in memorizing the new words. Through experiences with situations in which a language is used by the student, they will be easy to learn and used the language. Besides, we also know that young learners have a high curiosity in learning something new. But they will be able to get bored easily if there is the same method in teaching. So the various kinds of fun activities are needed to attract them and increase their attention in learning English.

By those opinions above, it can be concluded that games as "the teaching devices" are perceived as mere time-fillers, *"a break from the monotone of drilling"* or playful activities. I recognize that many teachers often overlook the fact that in a relax atmosphere, real learning takes place, and students use the language they have been exposed to and have practiced earlier.

5.3 What is Vocabulary?

"If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and flesh" (Harmer 1993:153).
According to Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary, Vocabulary means: list of words with their meanings. By definition, vocabulary is all the words of language. Vocabulary functions as a cornerstone without which any language could not exist.Speaking would be meaningless and perhaps impossible having only structure without vocabulary. The word vocabulary generally represents a summary of words or their combinations in a particular language. Vocabulary teaching is one of the most important components of any language class. . There has been increased focus on teaching vocabulary recently, partly as a result of *"the development of new approaches to language teaching, which are much more word-centered"*(Thombury 2004:vi)

5.5 Motivation in Vocabulary Acquisition

The word "motivation" is typically defined as the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behavior. It is some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of an action.

Actually, it is often use to describe certain sorts of behavior. We set an attractive goal, and we do whatever is necessary to reach that goal. Goal may be short-term or long-term.A strongly motivated student with long-term goal is easier to teach than one with short-term goal.

There are two main types of motivation: Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.Intrinsic motivation is concerned with factors that take place in the classroom.In addition, a student who studies hard and tries for grades may be described as being "highly motivated", while his/her friend may say that he is "finding it hard to get motivation". Such statements imply that motivation has a major influence on our behavior.Another way to say this is that motivation is goal-directed behavior.

There is no short cut to EFL learning. Acquiring a new language requires a lot of time and effort, without motivation, EFL learners will not have any interest in spending the time and effort required. Motivation is a fundamental aspect to the success of every language learning program.The first step in tackling the problem of motivation is that the teachers need to understand and appreciate the role and importance of motivation in any learning. In the context of Foreign Language learning, William Litlewoods (1987:53) observe:

> *In second languagelearning as in every other field of Humanlearning, motivation is the critical force which demands whethera learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes toit,and how long he perseveres. It is a complexphenomenon andincludes many components: the individual's drive, need for achie-vementand success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience, and soon. These factors play a role in every kind of learning situation.*

The teacher has to activate these motivational components in the student but that is the precise problem. How can it be done in every class every day? Teachers of English as a secondary Language know how important vocabulary is; they know students must learn thousands of words that speakers and writers of English use in order to communicate. Fortunately, the need for vocabulary is one point on which teachers and students agree.

est to the student's environment.

5.4 The Use of Games in EFL classes

A game is structured playing, usually undertaken for enjoyment and sometimes used as an educational tool. Games are distinct from word, which is usually carried out for remuneration, and from art, which is more often an expression of esthetical or ideological elements.

''Games are a form of teaching which may be used in circumstances where ordinary approaches are not well tolerated; when attention is hard to get and harder to keep''(Nicolson and Williams, (1975:1)

Many experienced tests books and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. W. R. Lee holds that must language games make learners use the language instead of shopping about learning the correct forms (1979:2). He also said that games should be treated as a central not peripheral to the force of the foreign teaching program.There are many advantages of using games."*Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely*" (Richard-Amato 1988:147). They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy student more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings (Hansen 1994:1 18). They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson. Furthermore, to quote Richard-Amato, they, *"add diversion to the regular classroom activities"*, break the ice, "but also they are used to introduce new ideas" (1988: 147). In the easy, relaxer atmosphere which is created by using games, student remember things faster and better (Wierus and Wielus 1994:218). S. M. Silvers says many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as "a teaching device" yet they often perceive games as more time-fillers, "a break from the monotony of drilling" or frivolous activities. He also claims that many teachers often overlook the fact that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and student use the languages have been exposed too and have practiced earlier (1982:2).*"Games encourage, entertain, teach, and promote fluency"*. lf not for any of these reasons, they should be used just because they help student see beauty in a foreignlanguage and not just problems that at times seem overwhelming.

6.Research Methodology
6.1 Participants and Data Collection Instruments

The sampling of this population is made up with two Secondary Schools of Abomey municipality chosen at random. CEG Agbokpa, and CEG Abomey1 where 50 teachers and 300 students received questionnaire sheets.Moreover, 5 EFL teachers were interviewed and 2 EFL teachers and their students were observed during a class on vocabulary lesson .The questionnaire addressed to the EFL teachers attempts to provide answers to the following issues:

-secondary school EFL teachers' qualification

-EFL teachers' experience
-the status of the EFL teachers
-EFL students' level of interest whenlearning through games
-frequency of using games to teach vocabulary in EFL classes.
-EFL teachers' difficulties in teaching vocabulary through games
-factors related to the EFL students' poor performance in vocabulary learning
-EFL teachers' suggestions to improve the teaching of vocabulary in EFL classes.
The questionnaire to EFL beginner students addressed the following aspects of teaching/learning process:
-Student' love for English

-learners' reason for enjoying English
-EFL students' awareness to improve vocabulary through games
-Methods learners use to learn vocabulary

-problems faced by EFL learners to learn vocabulary through games.

-the materials available in schools to learn vocabulary efficiently.

-EFL Students' motivation in learning vocabulary through games

-students' needs to learn vocabulary.

The interview and the class observations were designed to collect additional data to answer the result questions. These two data collection instruments mainly focus on the difficulties encountered by EFL teachers and learners in the process of teaching and learning vocabulary as well as the practical strategies to enrich EFL students' lexical background in order to help them communicate fluently in English language .

7.Results

7.1 Answers related to Questionnaire Addressed to EFL Teachers
Table 1: Secondary School Teachers' Qualification

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
CAPES	03	05
Maîtrise	10	20
BAPES	5	10
Licence	32	65
Total	**50**	**100**

Table above shows that only 15% of the EFL teachers involved in the study are trained professionally; 85% of the remaining teachershave an academic degree (Licence and maîtrise). This indicates that Beninese secondary schools lackprofessionally qualified EFL teachers.

Table 2:Teachers' Experience.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
a) 1-3years	25	50
b) 3-6years	18	37.5
c) 6-10years	7	12.5
Total	**50**	**100**

 Table 2 informs that 12.5% of the teachers investigated have a teaching experience of 10 years;37.5% of them have anexperience of 6 years and 50% of these EFL teachers have just 3 years of experience in the teaching profession. This table underlines the lack of experienced teachers in teaching English language.

Table 3: The Status of Teachers

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Full time teachers	15	30
Part time teachers	35	70
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 3indicates that only 30% of the teachers teach English as full time EFL teachers; the remaining 70% serve as part time teachers, which means that those teachers devote their time to other jobs in order to better survive.

Table 4: Students' level of Interest when Teaching Through Games

	Teachers' Number	Percentage(%)
Motivated	37	74
Unhappy	00	00
Distracted	13	26
Total	**50**	**100**

This table 4 displays students' level of interest when they are taught EFL through games.Indeed, 74% of teachers agree that students are motivated when they usegames to teach vocabulary whereas 26% of them think that their EFL learners become distracted .Interestingly enough, no student is unhappy when their teacher resorts to games to teach vocabulary.In actual fact, most of students are interested in games.
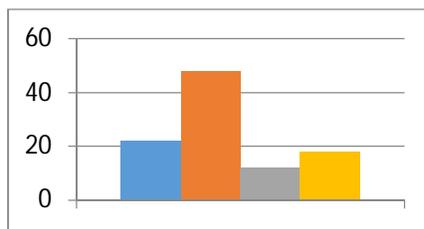

Figure 1:**Teachers'Difficulties in Teaching Vocabulary through Games.**

█ Misunderstanding of the instructions by students
█ Noise and distraction of the students
█ Fear of failure in competition
█ Use of mother tongue

According to this figure, an important number of EFL teachers (48%) are confronted with difficulties related to their learners'noise and distraction when game-based activities are used to present new words. In

addition , 22% of the investigated teachers state that their students misunderstand instructions related to game-based activities. Another problem faced by these teachers is the fact that a number of students (18%) usetheir mother tongue when they are involved in game-based activities.Among the difficulties pointed out by teachers istheir EFL students' fear of failure in competition, which may reduce their motivation to learn new words through games.

Table 5: Factors Related to the EFL Students' Poor Performance in Vocabulary Learning

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Large class size	09	18
teachers'Incompetence	21	42
Educational System	13	26
Teachers strike	07	14
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 5 reveals that 42 % of the teachers support that their learners' poor performance in vocabulary is due to their own incompetence in teaching EFL. In addition, 26 %of them attribute their learners'difficulties in vocabulary learning to the educational system which fails in providing a favorable environment for   an effective vocabulary teaching and learning .Furthermore,overcrowdedEFL classes have also been identified by 18% EFL teachers as a major obstacle for   students' poor performance in vocabulary learning. In addition,14%of the teachers declare that strikes in secondary schools seriously impede effective teaching and learning of vocabulary, which negatively affects students'speaking skills.

Table 6: Frequency of Using Games to Teach Vocabulary in EFL classes.

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Never	30	60
Sometimes	10	20
Regularly	10	20
Total	**50**	**100**

An analysis of the tableabove shows , that 60% of the EFL teachers involved in the present study never use games to teach vocabulary in their EFL classes;20% of them recognize that theysometimes teach vocabulary through games; 20% of them say that they regularly introduce game -based activities to teach vocabulary in their EFL classes. These resultsexpose the fact thatthese EFL teachers are not aware of the importance of using games in teaching vocabulary.
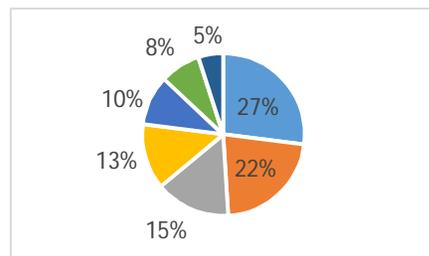

Figure 2: EFL Teachers' Suggestions to Improve the Teaching of Vocabulary intheir Classes.

■ Train properly all teachers in classroom situation as regular as possible

■ Provide teachers with appropriate teaching materials

■ Motivate students to speak English

■ Set up English clubs in each school

■ Provide a good library in every school

■ Create school journals, magazines or bulletins in each school

■ Organize a pen-friend network coached by head-teachers

In the figure above ,27% of the investigated EFL teachers suggested regular-trainings of all EFL teachers be organized to help them improve the teaching of writing and speaking skills in EFL classes; 10 % of them suggested the provision for a good library in every school; 13% of them recommended the setting up of English club in each school to improve the teaching of vocabulary and speaking skills in EFL classes; 05% of them suggested the organization of a pen-friend network coached by head teachers to help student develop communicative skills; 15 percent of cent of the investigated teachers suggested that student should be regularly motivated to speak English language whereas 08% of these teachers suggested the creation of school journals, magazines or bulletins in each school ; finally 22% of the respondent teachers suggested that EFL teachers should be provided with appropriate teaching materials likely to help them improve the teaching of vocabulary, writing and speaking skills in their EFL classes. Based on these suggestions, the availability of teaching and learning materials appeared as one of the important recommendations made teachers to improve vocabulary learning through game. More interestingly,the analysis of the EFL teachers'answers seem to establish a relationship between writing /speaking skills teaching and the teaching/learning of vocabulary through games .In other words, the development of beginners' communicative skills seems to enhance EFL learners' lexical background and vice versa.

7.2 Answers of Questionnaire Addressed to EFL Students..

The data collected through the questionnaire addressed to the EFL students are arranged in tables and figures followed by their analysis.

Table 7: Students' Love for English

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	190	96.67
No	10	3.33
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 7 shows that 96.67% of t the EFL students involved in this study are fond of English whereas 3.33% of them declare that they don't like English. So the majority of students like English language. This means that most of these EFL students are highly motivated to learn English.
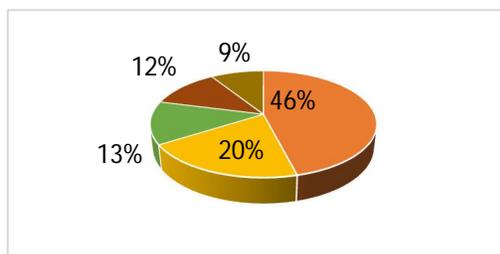
Figure3: Learners' Reasons for Enjoying English

☐ I like to speak English
☐ I need English language for my future professional life
☐ I like to write English
☐ English is an international language
☐ Not knowing English today is a sign of illiteracy.

The data in figure above show that 46 % of the investigated learners enjoy English because they like to speak it;13% of learners who love English do so because they want to write it; 9% of them are fond of it because is an international language; according to 12 % of them, not knowing English today is a sign of illiteracy; 20 % of these students say that they need to learn English language for their future professional life. Therefore, there is a need to sensitize EFLlearners on the importance of learning English in order to communicate with others either orally or through writings.

T*able 8:* **Students' awareness to improve vocabulary through games**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	72	24
yes	228	76
Total	**300**	**100**

From the table8 above, 24% of the EFL students are not aware of the benefits of game-based activities in learning new words in their EFL classes; 76% of them recognize the importance of games as an effective means for helping them to improve their vocabulary whereas . So the majority of students know the valueof games in learning Vocabulary although their EFL teachers rarely resort to them to teach vocabulary.

Table 9: Methods Used by Learners to Learn Vocabulary

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
From the teacher	240	80
Indoor games	20	6.67
Dictionary	40	13.33
Total	**300**	**100**

From this table we notice that 80% of the EFL learners investigated learn new words through classroom activities conducted by their teachers;6.67% of themlearn vocabulary through games played at home and 13.33% of these beginner learners use their dictionary to discover and learn new words or expressions. This means that the majority of students learn vocabulary from their EFL teachers.
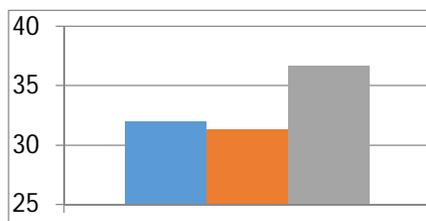
*Figure4:*Problems faced by EFL Learners to Learn Vocabulary through Games.

■ Lack of materials to learn
■ Unclear instructions of their teacher
■ Use of the same games

This figure shows that 36.67% of theselearners are familiar with the same games, which does not motivate themto learn; 32% of them complain about the availability of learning materials as one of their major difficulties encountered in their EFL classes. 31.33% of them state that their EFL teachers' instructions are notclearly given ,which prevents them from interacting effectively in classroom activities especially those dealing with vocabulary and games.

Table 10: The TeachingMaterials Available to Learn Efficiently in EFL Classes.

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Audio materials	10	3.33
Video	00	00
Laboratory	00	00
None	290	96.67
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 10above highlightsthe fact that the majority of thestudents are not taught with modern materials.Hence 96.67% of students have never been taught with neither audio-visual materials nor in a laboratory .

Table 11: EFL Students' Motivation in Learning Vocabulary through Games

	Frequency	**Percentage (%)**
Motivated	290	96.66
Not motivated	10	03.33
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 11 above shows that96.66% of students are motivated to attend EFL classes where their teachers use games to make them learn or acquire new vocabulary.Nevertheless, 3.33% of the students declare that they are not motivated to discover new vocabulary through games for different reasons.
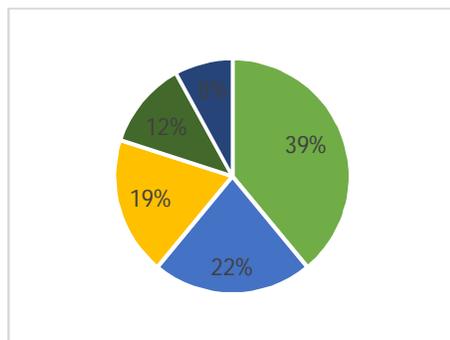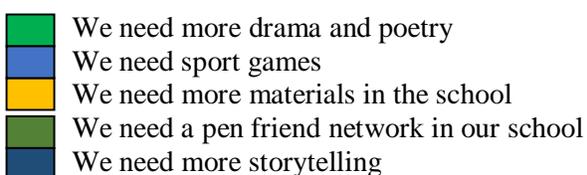
*Figure5:***Students' needs for learning Vocabulary:**

- 🟩 We need more drama and poetry
- 🟦 We need sport games
- 🟨 We need more materials in the school
- 🟫 We need a pen friend network in our school
- 🟦 We need more storytelling

According to this figure, 39% of the students like drama and poetry;22%of them are fond of sport games; 8% of the EFL learners investigated recommend that their teachers resort to storytelling to make them discover new words;12% of the learners would also need to belong to a pen-friend network in their schools as a means for helping them develop their lexical background and enhance their communicative skills as a result.

7.2Discussion of the Study

8.2Difficulties Related to Teaching and LearningVocabulary through Games.

      Interviews with EFL teachers and table I stressed that teachers lack training on the Competency-Based Approach(CBA) of teaching which is currently in use in the Republic of Benin . Only a minority of teachers (18.46%) indicate that they have been trained in teacher training school on the CBA. Not only have those who got a professional qualification have been trained but some of those who got an academic degree also. They attended trainingorganised by private institutions. The teaching staff of these private institutions is most of the time made up of experienced teachers and inspectors who gather themselves to organise training seminars on the CBA and any teacher, who wishes to attend can register .Overcrowded classrooms was also reported by teachers as one of the major difficulties they face in their EFL classes. This situation increased the work load for teachers and prevent them from focusing on each learner. The CBA rewards the demonstration of competency. To be able to demonstrate competencies, learners should be involved in the learning process.Under such circumstances,it is difficult for teachers to integrate games in their vocabulary lessons for 60% of the investigated EFL teachers confirmed that they never use games to teach vocabulary and 20% said they sometimes play games with their EFL learners (table 6).Some additional difficulties faced by the EFL teachers and which are reported by them as being accountable for the EFL learners poor performance in vocabulary learning are (table5): lack of teaching and learning materials and resources such as audio-visual equipment, computers, libraries,(32%) and the use of the same games to teach any aspect of the language teaching (36.67%).As a matter of fact,teachers(100%) reported that learners lack materials (document d'accompagnement). A teacher during an interview said: "*The majority of learners have not the course support (document d'accompagnement), and it is even impossible for them to have some pages photocopied.* ".

The lack of materials and resources hindered the effective implementation of the CBA in secondary schools and it affects the quality of education as well. Ally M. (2017:280) after her investigations came to the conclusion that "*the availability of appropriate teaching and learning facilities could help students to participate actively in the learning process*".These realities make it difficult for both EFL teachers and students to benefit by the high potentials offered by games in EFL teaching process. Another problem worth mentioning is the burning issue related to the secondary school EFL **learners' Lack of Motivation.**Infact,learners' lack of motivation was reported in interview responses by 53.84% of the teachers, as a factor that hindered the effective vocabulary learning. In the learning process, even if learners are provided with comprehensible input, and they are not open to this input, learning will not take place. "*For the learning to take place, affective factors, for instance motivation, are important issues to be considered*",(Krashen, 1982). Motivation promotes and boosts learning. It has to do with learner's desire to participate in the learning process. It is thus an important factor to consider for an effective teaching and learning. A 'motivated learner' as defined by Ur, Peny (1996:274) is "*one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress*".

8.2. Practical Strategies for Improving Vocabulary Teaching and learning through Games

If vocabulary learning became more active with activities like games, students would not face any difficulties. However, reflections from my own experience, observations of other teachers' classes and interviews reveal that sometimes games create problems for both students and teachers. Games cannot be successful if the teacher does not explain the tasks and roles of students clearly in playing games and provide a quick and total comprehension of what students have to do in order to avoid confusion. 22% of those who resort to games to teach vocabularyregularly complain that their students take much time to understand the instructions and their roles. Sometimes, instead of guessing, teacher is obliged to give the full instructions.At the same time 31.33%students ask for clear instructions by the teacher.A volunteer teacher working at CEGI Abomey once told me that "*sometimes she failed to make her students understand the games' rules*". Her students felt embarrassed because they did not know how the games went and what procedures they had to follow.

Fortunately, some of her students were able to find out what they had to do in the games and re-explained to their classmates. Since then, the games went smoothly.

Allen (2016) said that'' *there is truth in the belief that experience is the best vocabulary teacher*". LearningEnglishina French speakingcountrywheredialectsormothertonguearedominantisahardwork. *''Practice makes perfect''*. So, 36.67% of students suffer from the problem of social environment. They have not opportunities to speak withEnglish native speakers. 14% of theteachers confirm the same idea.
Lee (1979:2) holds that "*most of language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning*". According to him, "*games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching program*".A similar opinion is expressed by Richard -Amato, who believesthat "*games are to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching*".The teachers need to use the games that student like and do not use too many or too few kinds of games. Too many kinds of game will make them focus on games, not English. Too few games will make the game too predictable so that the games are not challenging. Based on the statements above, we can say that in teaching vocabulary the teacher should be able to create some various fun activities. Some teachers confess that using games makes students noisy, distracted and lazy. To accomplish such condition, teachers must create variety type and attractive methods for the class. What should a teacher do if theirstudents get bored?Using a variety type of games can be an alternative solution to handle this problem. Games, as a matter of fact, can help and encourage many students to sustain their interest and work.According to Harmer,*(2014) "atthe same time children's span of attention or concentration is less than adults.Children need frequent changes of activity: They needactivities which are exciting and and which stimulate their curiosity: They needto be involved in something active*.(They will usually not sit and listen) .

There is a common perception that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and that if one is having fun and there is hilarity and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception.Filling in the question about the use of games, 46% of those teachers thought that games can really be used to teach

vocabulary to secondary school beginners. Only 13 % of the teachers thought that this strategy will drive student lazy and make the class noisy. 20% obstinately said that the most important thing for the teaching is the competence of teacher and that if he or she has his competences, everything will go well in his or her classes. They seemed to give importance to the official curriculum without minding in which ways it should be carried out for a real success in English language.NdigaSylla *(2010:5)* claimsthat *"it is so problematic when teachers are hired and sent to schools without basic training"*

Untrained and unexperienced teacher should have difficulties to play his or her role and do the tasks successfully. We notice that only 15% of teachers have professional graduation and 75% teach with academic graduation such as Licence and Maîtrise with short experiences.

Using games in the classroom sometimes fails due to lack of cooperation among members of the class. Games require all students' involvement and they promote friendly competition, therefore, it is very important that students have a cooperative attitude. 12% of teachers said that some students feared of failure in competition so that they do not like involve in games

Another issue related to using games for language teaching is while playing games, students usually speak in their mother tongue to discuss instead of the language they are learning. From my own experience and teachers' comments, 18% of teachers claim that it is hard to control the use of first language (L1) in classrooms when we use games as a tool to have students practice more their communicative skills in a foreign language.In playing games, students know the answer but not in English. So, they give it in their mother tongue. One unavoidable thing in utilizing games in English classrooms is that students, especially those who speak thesame language, prefer using their first language to English. Even advanced students in our classes, said a teacher, still discussed with each other in L1.

8.2.1Ways EFL Vocabulary Games Should be Used Effectively

Vocabulary should be mastered by the beginner learners so that it could be easier for them to understand English language. One of the efficient way to help them to learn vocabulary is having a good method in teaching. The teacher should have a creative way in giving the materials to the students; one of the ways is by doing some fun activities.Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson. Yet, as Lee observes, a game *"should not be regarded as a marginal activity telling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do"*(1979:3). Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. According tofigure 5, 39 % of students like their EFL teachers use drama, poetry to teach vocabulary whereas **22**% of the investigated EFL students are fond of sports games and they would like their teachers develop more learning activities based on sports games to help them acquire new words. Moreover, 8% of the students are for storytelling and 12% praise storytelling as an efficient technique for vocabulary teaching and learning in EFL classes.These findings are in line with the conclusion made by Rixon (2013) who suggests that *games must be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they are suitable and carefully chosen. Games also lend themselves well to revision exercises helping learners recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way.Games can be used by video, audio, riddles, proverbs, drama, poem, poetry, storytelling and sports*.It is in that perspective that the Association for Supervisors and Curriculum Development in USA outlined seven characteristics of what they call better teaching namely: 1- Fostering security and satisfaction; 2- Promoting cooperative learning; 3- Helping learners develop self-direction, 4- Fostering creativity, 5- Helping learners develop values. For this association,The process of' teaching vocabulary by using games consists of some stepssuch as: the motivation stage which consist of the greeting, the reviewing, the warming up,the presentation stage in which teacher explains the material by some skills that must be mastered by students; the Practice stage where teacher gives some exercises to measure the students' ability; the assessment stage where teacher check the students' progress in learning the material and homework. These are some ways:

a) **Competition**

Most people have a competitive side to their personality. If students are put into teams for any quiz or test then they will be likely to work together to try to beat other teams. Even a simple quiz becomes much more fun this way.

b) **Variety**

Game should not be used all the time. We should try to find some different games to use to stop our

students (and ourselves!) becoming bored. Most of learners complain about this situation according to the table7.

c) Mix Quiet Games and noisy Games

An example of a quiet game, which works with individuals or in pairs or groups, is word transformation. We ask students to give us a four-letter word that we will write on the board. Then we ask for another four-letter word and write this underneath the first, leaving space between them. In addition, we ask our students to change the words, one letter at a time, each time creating a new word. The object is to reach the second word with the least possible number of moves.

d) Games with Movement

Games with movement are good to break up a long class (that is to say to put short activities in between longer ones). According to figure 5, 22% of students are fond of sports. We could stick words and definitions (or translations) around the room and have a race to see which individual, pair, or group can match the most pairs. Or we could give the students the words and definitions (or translations) around the room and have a race to see which individual, pair, or group can match the most pairs. Or we could give the students the words and definitions and get them to find the person who matches with them. This is also a good technique to get students to work in different pairs.

e) MemoryGames

Memory games work well with vocabulary. We could have some objects on the table and give students 5 minutes to find out the words for them together (ii they don't already know) and to remember as many as they can. We can also use pictures for this, getting students to look at the picture then describe it, or answer questions about it.

f) Storytelling

Figure shows that 8% of students like storytelling. "*Storytelling is a great classroom favorite of mine and one of classroom* ", an EFL students observed during my interview with them. The teacher get a bunch of unconnected words, including nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and conjunctions. He then get students in groups or pairs, to write a story using as many of the words as they can. Sometimes the teacher awards points for each word and turn it into a competition. He has also had the students work in pairs, with one reading the story and one acting it out.

8.2.2 Points to consider when using Games

✓ Learningvalue**:** Games are used in an English lesson because they have a learning value. The learning value is flexible and can be chosen or built by the teacher, taking into consideration the target students. The most common learning values are closely related to reviewing or reinforcing vocabulary, listening to and using thematic vocabulary;

✓ Careful preparation

NdigaSylla *(2010:5)* claimsthat *"it is so problematic when teachers are hired and sent to schools without basic training"*

Every game must be well prepared in order for the student to understand each rule and each step to follow until the end of the game.

✓ Level

As shown before, each game must be adapted to the English level of the class and the age of the students.

✓ Clear Instructions

Most of students, thirty one point thirty three per cent (31.33%) complain about the unclear instruction of the teacher. Provide a quick and total comprehension of what students have to do avoid confusion. The teacher must be prepared to offer an example if necessary.

✓ Timing

Most teachers insisted on the insufficient time allotted to English subject. We should also take into account that vocabulary must be set at the beginning of the activity and it shouldn't be very long (especially for beginner learners, which tend to get bored quickly).

✓ Size of class

This is very important when we need teams/groups;

✓ Physical space

Physical space must be taken into consideration when the activity implies moving around or performing;

✓ Materials or Equipment

78 % of the EFL teachers agree that the lack of materials explains the poor performance of student in vocabulary,which was supported by 32% of the EFL students involved in the study(figure 4)If a game requires any materials, the teacher must be prepared with everything he/she needs in order for the game not to be interrupted.

9. Implications

Based on the finding of study, government and all the educational authorities should organize training inside or outside of the country. Beninese schools need to have a sufficient number of well- trainedteachers. Training cost must berevised to give access to many teachers to be trained.The time allotted to the English subject should be revised to help teachers to respect the strategies and to use the materials. Blackboard, piece of chalk, duster, textbooks are not just only teachers' materials to be used. Materials like radio, video, cards and any other fun activities like storytelling, proverbs, songs, poetryand sketch are tools enable to foster English vocabulary level of EFL learners.

Apart from the classroom, learners do not have other places where they can express or interact in English. Then, it is important to create a kind of environment where the learners will have the opportunity to develop and put in practice what they are learning. Therefore, like cultural and sportive activities, it is necessary to set up English clubs in primary and secondary schools. All things cannot be learnt at school because of the shortage of time. So outside the school learners can cultivate themselves by participating to activities organized by local English clubs and listen to radio programs and watching television programs like news, talk show, games show and documentaries in English language

10.Conclusion

In Benin, learning vocabulary has been considered as a boring subject for a long time and the traditional way of learning vocabulary by mere copying and remembering has shown to be less than effective. It is believed by a large majority of EFL teachers in Benin Republic that games are just used for fun and they have very little effect in teaching and learning. However, an important number of researchwork shows that games can be used to improve EFL learner vocabulary. The goal of this study is to point out the difficulties faced by EFL teachers and their learners in vocabulary teaching and learning process so as to find out the practical strategies for using games to improve EFL learners 'lexicalbackground.

The review of literature indicated positive effects of games on EFL beginners' vocabulary and practical strategies for developing vocabulary through games.Some pioneers' works were explored to know more about the teaching of vocabularythrough games in EFL classrooms.This research work is carried out in two secondary schools in Abomey municipality. To get accurate information,fifty teachers (50) and three hundred (300) learners have randomly been selected . Questionnaires, classroom observation and interviews were also used. The findings of the study reveal that although Beninese EFL learners love English language and playing games ,they teachers rarely resort to them as a teaching technique to improve their vocabulary.In addition, most of them complain about unclear instructions of the teachers and feel bored in using the same games.The large majority of the EFL teachers involved in the studyare aware of the fact that games can enable learners to acquire new lexical experiences with English language,which are not possible during a typical lesson. Moreover,60% of these teachers never use games to teach vocabulary. Most of teachers have difficulties about the insufficiency of time, the distraction and noise of students.

Whenever a game is to be conducted, the number of EFL students and their proficiency level, cultural context, timing, and the classroom setting are factors that should be taken into account.The process of' teaching vocabulary by using games consists of somestepssuch as: the motivation stage; the presentation stage; the practice stage; the assessment stage and homework. Games can work well if teachers follow the principles of using games and consider factors that affect games.

To overcome the problemsindentified in the course of the present investigation, government are

recommended to provide a well training for EFL teachers, provide the appropriate modern teaching and learning materials for schools, revise the time allotted to the English teaching, recruit teachers and set upEnglish clubs in primary and secondary schools. Teachers shouldinnovate and create different fun activities in order to make their classes more interesting and enjoyable.

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