

## Examining Classroom Features in English as a Foreign Language Teaching in Bunia Primary Schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

### [ Examen des caractéristiques de la classe dans l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère dans les écoles primaires de Bunia en République démocratique du Congo ]

*Malobi Pato Emmanuel*

Chef de Travaux, Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bunia, Province de l'Ituri, RD Congo

Copyright © 2023 ISSR Journals. This is an open access article distributed under the *Creative Commons Attribution License*, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to examine classroom features in English as a Foreign Language Teaching in Bunia primary schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It determines the way in which English is taught, the manner in which children learn the teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' errors. The research has been conducted using descriptive and exploratory designs. For data collection, survey method has been used whereby observation has served as instrument. Data have been coded and analyzed using the Descriptive Statistics such as frequencies and percentages with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Then, they have been presented using either bar graphs or pie charts. The results shows that English is taught without any appropriate methodology. Each teacher creates his/her own way of teaching, which is unfortunately, a major obstacle for the best learning. Then, children fail to develop linguistic skills. Results finally rates teachers' attitudes towards their learners' errors unsatisfactory. Therefore, teachers must improve their ways.

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher, Young learner, Methodology, Skill, Feature.

**RESUME:** Cette étude vise à examiner les caractéristiques de l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère dans les écoles primaires de Bunia en République Démocratique du Congo. Il détermine la manière dont l'anglais est enseigné et la façon dont les enfants apprennent ainsi que les attitudes des enseignants face aux erreurs des élèves. La recherche s'est focalisée sur les modèles descriptifs et exploratoires. Les données ont été collectées au moyen de la méthode d'enquête où l'observation a servi de technique. Les données ont été codifiées et analysées en utilisant la Statistique Descriptive à l'occurrence, le calcul de fréquences et pourcentages grâce au logiciel SPSS. Ensuite, elles ont été présentées sous forme des graphiques à barres ou diagrammes circulaires. Les résultats ont démontré que l'anglais est enseigné sans aucune méthodologie appropriée. Chaque enseignant crée sa propre façon d'enseigner, ce qui est malheureusement un obstacle majeur au meilleur apprentissage. Ensuite, les enfants ne parviennent pas à développer les compétences linguistiques. Les résultats ont finalement jugé insatisfaisante l'attitude des enseignants l'égard des erreurs de leurs apprenants. Ils doivent donc, améliorer leurs pratiques.

**MOTS-CLEFS:** Enseignant, Jeune apprenant, Méthodologie, Compétence, Caractéristique.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Today, no one escapes the importance of English in our daily lives. We need to speak English to develop ourselves when we travel to other countries and to work in a global environment, which requires us to consider it as our second language and start

learning it as early as possible. Many languages are spoken in the world today but no one speaks all of them. At least a number of them can be required to be mastered regarding their importance in a given area or country. In our case, English of course, not being one of our national languages is necessary to be learned due to its importance today in the world. The role of English in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is quite important as it is in many other developing countries since it is surrounded by English Speaking Countries. And, childhood is the best time to acquire the language. Children have a great capacity to absorb the language and imitation of sounds. They are extremely spontaneous, open-minded and have no sense of the language ridiculous to feel older, which makes them not feel inhibited when to speak and practice English.

Some previous researchers have expressed their views on teaching young learners. Indeed, According to [1], as an interdependent participant in the process, the teacher needs to actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching with the learners. The teacher should, therefore, create opportunities for learners to develop their communicative skills as well as their learning-how-to-learn skills.

In classroom activities, using Total Physical Response (TPR) by [2] is a great way to teach English especially for very young learners. That method keeps children active in learning process while it links the language with physical movement. Young learners are easily distracted and have very short attention span. It is better to keep in mind that 5 and 10 minutes' activities are best to engage them in learning. In the same line, [3] argue that there should be various activities having a balance among them. It is suggested that each task focuses on different skills while using individual, pair work, group work or whole class activities alternately. It is also wise to let children learn from each other by integrating pupil- pupil interaction into the activities in addition to teacher- pupil interaction.

According to [4], learners' language skills develop through the learners actively using and reflecting on the language inside and outside the classroom.

For Brown [5], there is general agreement that classroom language acquisition is based on developing learners' communicative competence, which is realized through a set of classroom principles

For [6], teaching English to young learners has its own peculiarities based on psychophysiology of their age. Psychologists assert that preschoolers' perception, memory and attention are involuntary. [7] supports that children cannot regulate their perception and analyze an object. Schoolchildren's attention is drawn by bright objects. Their concentration lasts as long as they are interested in the activity. Learning a foreign language is a pleasant moment in a child's life. He climbs the stairs to a new level of knowledge.

Learning by doing [8] refers to a theory of education. It relates to a theory of education expanded on self-learning. John Dewey theorized that learning should be relevant and practical, not just passive and theoretical.

[9] emphasizes on Affective Filter Hypothesis arguing that a number of affective variables play a role in ELT. These are: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Learners will be able to acquire language in your classroom if they are in an environment where they feel accepted, where they are able to take risks and where they know that when they make mistakes they are not going to be ridiculed.

The topic falls within the context of the didactics of English. Indeed, the teaching of English in primary School is a worldwide phenomenon. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there is a Ministerial decree N° MINESPSP/CABMIN/180/2018 of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, allowing the introduction of the teaching of English language in primary school. But unfortunately, this decree is not accompanied by a special methodology relating thereto. Therefore, English is taught without proper methodology. In addition, P- school teachers i.e the ones possessing State Certificate in General Pedagogy, teach English on the basis of elementary notions learned in secondary school. Those possessing a university degree in ELT use the relevant methodology, only for teaching English in secondary school, but not adapted for primary school. The methods used are therefore, not suitable for young learners. They utilize wrong teaching methods. They teach badly. Therefore, children do not learn English. This aspect of things constitutes a problem that I decided to determine and solve absolutely examining classroom features in English as a Foreign Language Teaching.

Therefore, the article centers the following main question: How is English taught in primary school? The subsidiary questions are the followings: How do children learn? What are teachers' attitudes towards their learners 'errors'?

The main objective of the study is to detect the ways in which English is taught in primary school. The study also aims to encounter the manners children learn as well as teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' errors.

The hypotheses to be verified throughout the present work are the followings: There is no appropriate methodology of English in primary schools. Consequently, each teacher creates himself his ways of teaching. Then, children fail to develop linguistic skills. Also, most of teachers lack positive attitudes towards their children's errors.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Descriptive and exploratory designs were used in conducting the research. Descriptive survey designs are concerned with gathering information, from people with relevant experience, on current conditions, processes, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on the issue or phenomenon being investigated [10]. The exploratory survey dimension sought to get more in-depth understanding of the same. The research field comprised classrooms where features were closely examined.

### 2.2 TARGET POPULATION

From a methodological point of view, it should be noted that the population of this study includes all teachers of English from Bunia Primary schools. Primary school. Urban Educational Subdivision of Bunia City comprises 173 primary schools. However, English is only taught in 20 schools (all, from accredited private school network) which count a total of 49 teachers. Considering this small number, I resolved to work with all these 49 teachers. This is therefore, an exhaustive sampling.

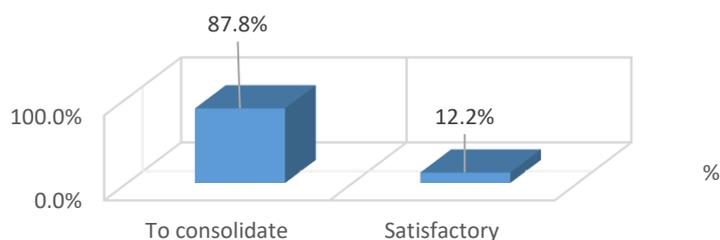
### 2.3 INSTRUMENTS

On the one hand, data collection relied on survey method where observation was used as technique. In the present case, observation relied on *Likert scale type observation tally sheet* using three scale levels namely, *to consolidate, satisfactory and excellent*. (See appendix)

On the other hand, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software technique served for data analysis on the basis of Descriptive Statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Coded and analyzed data were therefore, presented either in bar graphs or pie charts.

## 3 RESULTS

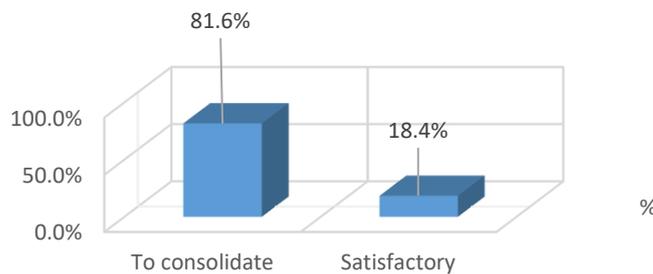
The data are presented in graphs or charts which show the pertinence of each element in terms of frequency converted in percentage. The analysis is based on the researcher's observation of classroom features in English as a Foreign Language Teaching in Bunia primary schools.



**Graph. 1. Oral and written instructions**

Source: Primary data

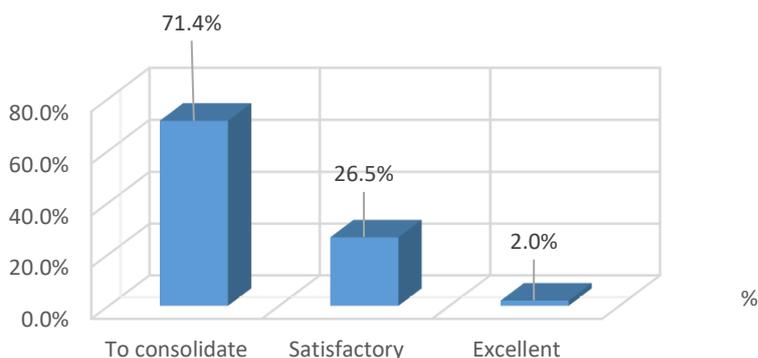
The graph shows in variable E1 43 (87,8%) teachers must consolidate in oral and written instructions; whereas 6 (12,2%) are found satisfactory after observation.



**Graph. 2. Extensive use of labelling**

Source: Primary data

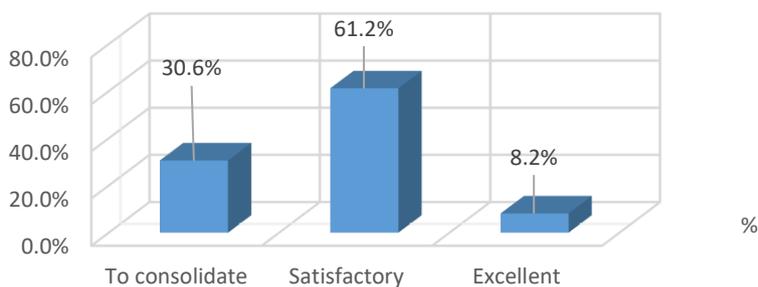
It results from the above graph that 40 consulted teachers (81,6%) must consolidate the extensive use of the labelling in the classrooms, 9 (18,4%) of them are satisfactory in using labels and signs in their classrooms.



**Graph. 3. Children sharing ownership in the classroom**

Source: Primary data

The above graph informs that 35 (71,4%) teachers must consolidate this technique, they have no interest in using children sharing ownership in the classroom, 13 (26,5%) of them are satisfactory after the investigation and only 1 (2,0%) teacher is excellent.

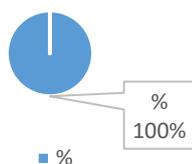


Graph. 4. Interactive displays

Source: Primary data

The above Graph shows that 30 (61.2%) teachers are satisfactory in using interactive displays, 15 (30.6) of them have to consolidate interactive displays in their teaching, and 4 (8.2%) teachers are excellent in using them.

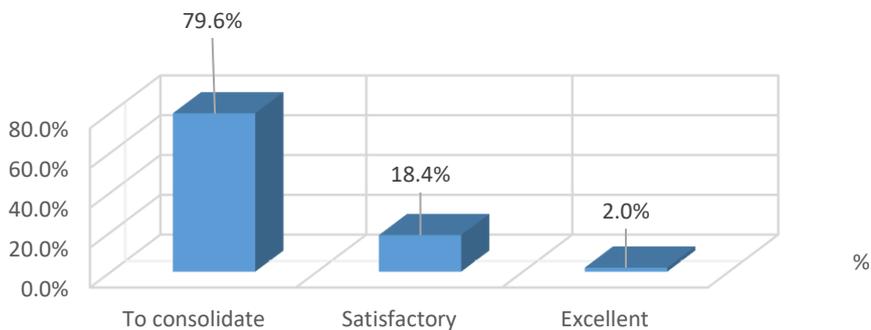
To consolidate



Graph. 5. ICT resources

Source: Primary data

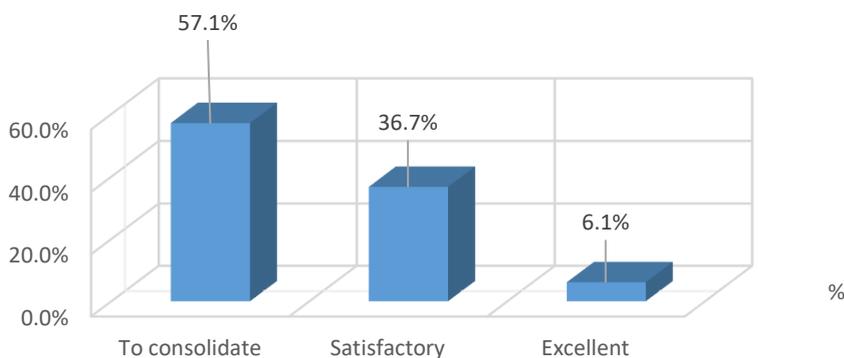
It results from the chart that 49 (100%) teachers have to consolidate ICT resources in their teaching.



Graph. 6. Listening area

Source: Primary data

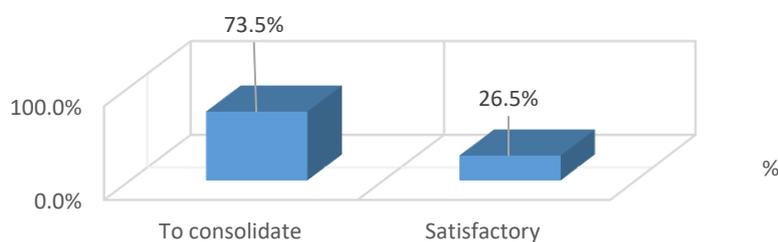
So far as the above graph is concerned, 39 (79.6%) teachers must consolidate listening area in their teaching, 9 (18.4) are satisfactory and only 1 (2.0%) is excellent in this area.



**Graph. 7. Speaking area**

Source: Primary data

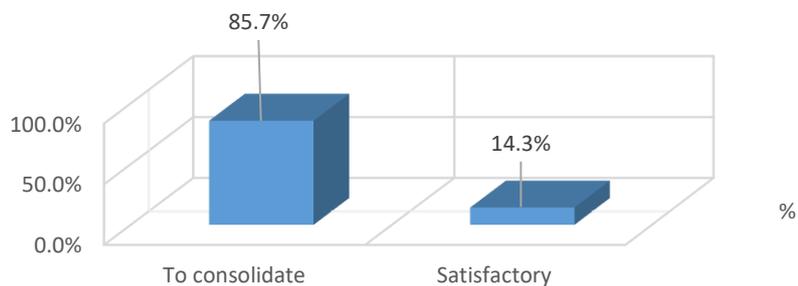
The above graph shows that 28 (57.1%) teachers have to consolidate speaking area, 18 (36.75%) are satisfactory and 3 (6.1%) teachers are excellent in speaking during their teaching.



**Graph. 8. Reading area**

Source: Primary data

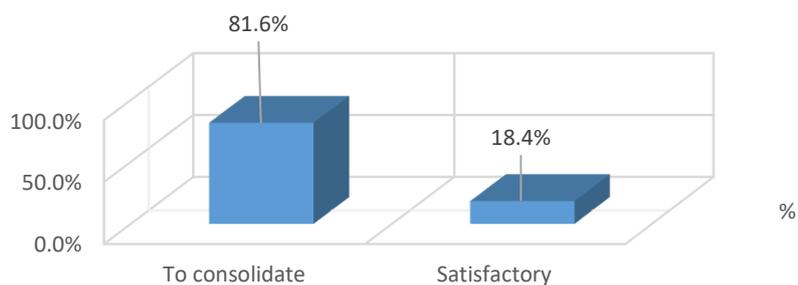
It results from the above graph that 36 (73.5%) teachers have to consolidate reading area in their teaching whereas 13 (26.5%) are satisfactory in this area.



**Graph. 9. Writing area**

Source: Primary data

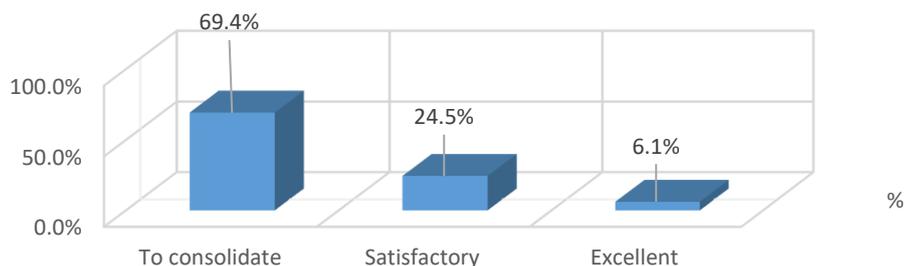
The above graph informs that 42 (85.7%) teachers must consolidate writing area in their teaching whereas 7 (14.3%) are satisfactory in writing area.



**Graph. 10. Word discussion with pupils**

Source: Primary data

The above graph shows that 40 (81.6%) teachers must consolidate word discussion with pupils in their teaching whereas 9 (18.4%) are satisfactory in word discussion.

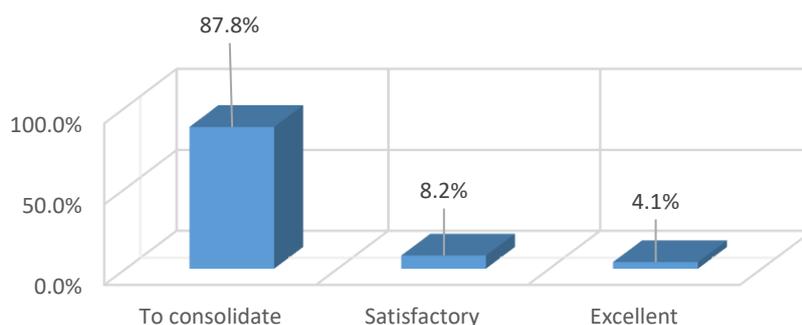


**Graph. 11. Teacher's Attitude towards Pupils' errors**

Source: Primary data

It results from the above graph that 34 (69.4%) teachers must consolidate their attitudes towards pupils' errors, 12 (24.5%) of them are satisfactory in this area and 3 (6.1%) teachers are excellent.

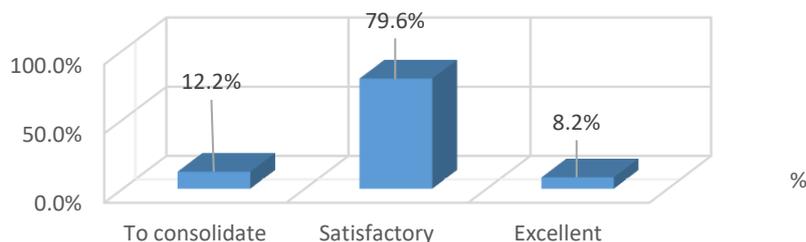
**Adaptation of teaching style and teacher's role to different circumstances**



**Graph. 12. Adaptation of teaching style and teacher's role to different circumstances**

Source: Primary data

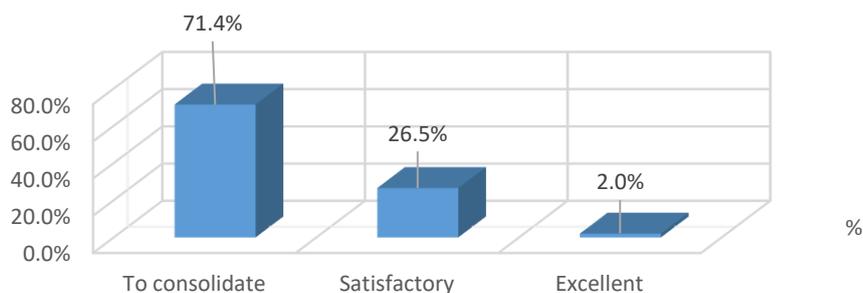
The above graph informs that 43 (87.8%) teachers have to consolidate the adaptation of teaching style and teacher's role to different circumstances in their teaching, 4 (8.2%) of them are satisfactory in this area and 2 (4.1%) are excellent in the adaptation of teaching style and teacher's role to different circumstances in their teaching.



**Graph. 13. Attraction and display of didactic materials**

Source: Primary data

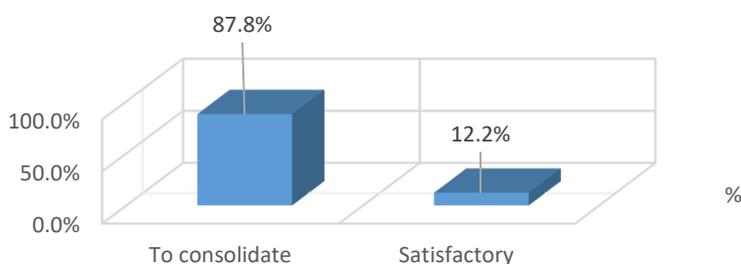
The above graph shows that 39 (79.6%) teachers are satisfactory in the attraction and display of didactic materials, 6 (12.2%) have to consolidate them, and 4 (8.2%) teachers are excellent in the attraction and display of didactic materials in their teaching.



**Graph. 14. Participation of pupils**

Source: Primary data

It results from the above graph that 35 (71.4%) teachers must consolidate pupils' participation in their teaching, 13 (26.5%) are satisfactory in it and only 1 (2.0%) teacher is excellent in participation of pupils in his teaching.

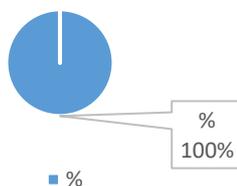


**Graph. 15. Pupils' pair work**

Source: Primary data

The above graph shows that 43 (87.8%) teachers have to consolidate pupils’ pair work in their teaching whereas 6 (12.2%) are satisfactory in them.

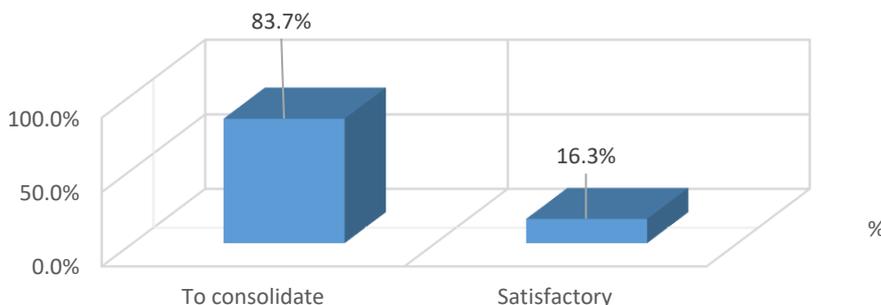
To consolidate



Graph. 16. Group work

Source: Primary data

It results from the chart that 49 (100%) teachers have to consolidate group work in their teaching.



Graph. 17. Coherence between the goal of the lesson, the content and the methodology

Source: Primary data

It results from the above graph that 41 (83.7%) teachers must consolidate coherence between the goal of the lesson, the content and the methodology whereas 8 (16.3%) are satisfactory in them.

To sum up, the results have demonstrated that English is taught without any appropriate methodology. Each teacher creates his/her own way of teaching, which is unfortunately, a major obstacle for the best learning. As a result, children do not develop skills/competencies in English. Then, Children do not learn properly. Findings finally have rated teachers’ attitudes towards their learners’ errors unsatisfactory. Therefore, they have to improve their ways.

#### 4 DISCUSSION

The research issues and the results to be discussed address essentially, the methodology, i.e the way English is taught. Also, the manners in which children learn and teachers’ attitudes.

How is English taught? Throughout classroom observation it has been noticed that teachers do not use any specific methodology and the reason is that they have not received a specific training for teaching English at primary schools. Besides, because children are activity-sensitive, the most appropriate teaching approaches would be Total Physical Response (TPR) for younger children and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and/or Task-Based Learning (TBL) for older children. It is for this reason that teachers of primary school must be well-trained to develop eclecticism as an option.

In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), language is taught the way it is spoken in real life situations with emphasis on language functions such as: greeting, inviting, requesting and negotiating, apologizing, refusing, etc, in relatively smaller classes or group works. Communicative language teaching considers language as a system for the expression of meaning and not a system of rule-governed structures hierarchically arranged. Because CLT is definitely a learner-centered approach, learners are actively involved in their own learning process [4]. Being an interdependent participant in the process, the teacher should, therefore, create opportunities for learners to develop their communicative skills as well as their learning-how-to-learn skills [1]. In task-based approach, content of the teaching is a series of interesting and purposeful tasks that children want or need to perform with the language they are learning. These tasks are presented as activities with a purpose other than language learning, but, as in a content-based syllabus, the performance of the tasks is approached in a way that is intended to develop a number of essential skills that children need to grow up with as citizens and independent users of the language. The focus of the teaching is on the completion of a task which in itself is interesting to the learners. Examples of tasks would include, depending on the level of the class, reading a selected passage, searching the Internet, listening to taped material, telling a story from a picture, selecting important vocabulary to teach other students, drawing, etc. Teachers should be prepared with various activities and be flexible to move from one another to prevent boredom, considering children's short attention span. Furthermore, in the same context, [7] emphasize on the use of Games in the educational process.

Besides, emphasis should be put on group work. Indeed, group work gives a fantastic opportunity to teachers to monitor and observe as pupils collaborate. It also allows pupils to be exposed to a wide variety of perspectives and ideas. There is much to gain by having pupils work in groups in the classroom. Studies have shown that, students who participate in group work demonstrate greater achievement than those who work alone. Therefore, it is important that teachers understand the benefits of group work and the best way to use it in their classrooms. "More hands make for lighter work." Group work can help students develop a host of skills that are increasingly important in the professional world [11], [12].

When pupils are tasked a group work, it flows logically that learners interact with themselves or perform an activity together. Accordingly, [8] he believes that school must present life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on at home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground. The teachers have to present real life problems to the learners and then guide them to solve the problem by providing learners with a hands-on activity to learn the solution.

How do children learn? During classroom feature observation I rated Children's learning of English as unsatisfactory and the reason the ignorance of the right methods for kids. Indeed, Primary school children would learn best through activities which follow a similar pattern. They are generally very enthusiastic about songs, especially if they can sing along, and be involved in active games. They are still open-minded. They need to involve in hands-on experiences for effective learning. As young learners have a lot of energy but minimum concentration, it is better to engage them in physical activities within concrete environment. As [3] asserts that immediate world around them always prevails and it is their hands and eyes and ears that they use to understand this world. Furthermore, if children create their own visuals and *realia*, they will probably be engaged and interested in the activities and take more responsibility for the materials [13].

They should learn by doing. [3] believes that school must present life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on at home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground. The teachers have to present real life problems to the learners and then guide them to solve the problem by providing learners with a hands-on activity to learn the solution.

Learning by doing theory shows not only the nature and the source of the difficulties pupils can face during teaching and learning processes, but also how the processes that can function without many problems.

Knowing which children are stronger or weaker in any given activity will help plan appropriate activities for the sake of individualization of teaching, not for an exam orientation. Many of the children would start off slowly, but later on develop rapidly. Faced with this undeniable reality, teachers of English should avoid judging one child as slower than the others or unable to learn! The fact is that although teaching is global, learning is individual. Each child is unique and learns according to individual pace and potential. The attitude of the teacher has a role in this process. Teachers should therefore be patient and give more time and attention to those who need it. Aware of this feature, teachers are requested to provide lots of encouragement and positive feedback in order to create a safe and stress-free environment that everyone can enjoy learning in. Unfortunately, my investigation has revealed that some teachers do not encourage children during the lesson, particularly when they make mistakes either because they run after the timing or because they ignore the right way of correcting learners errors. For [9], *the errors that the student makes are a natural part of the learning process*. He implies that there is very little that we can do other than encourage the learner to form his own hypotheses and to continue along the 'natural pathway' to mastery - or at least to the level of master which satisfies him. However, other observers have noted that classroom teaching may help the learner go through each stage in the process rather more quickly, even if it cannot enable him to beat the system. To make children learn better, affective filter hypothesis theory would be taken into account [9].

But in the teaching- learning process, what should be teacher's attitudes towards learners' errors? As far as the discussion on teachers' attitudes towards learners' errors are concerned, focus is put on the concept 'error correction'. Indeed, Errors are unavoidable when learning a language and developing communicative competence. [5] defines an error as "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker that reflects the competence of the learner". Error reflects the level of L2 learners' proficiency. How these errors are to be handled in ESL classrooms has generated numerous viewpoints.

Learners' errors may be caused by many factors: L1 interference, inadequate L2 knowledge, complexity of the L2, fossilization, overgeneralization, and various psycholinguistic, cognitive and affective variables [5]. Learners' attention is usually drawn to their errors by teachers or peers during interaction otherwise, their intended messages will not be conveyed.

Nevertheless, teachers do not have to harm pupils who make errors. They should have positive attitudes towards children's errors as stipulated in [9]. Errors are, in fact, regarded as part of the L2 natural learning process, so they are allowed as a positive sign of hypothesis-formation [14], [5]. Error correction is to be kept to a minimum and priority should be given to errors that hamper communication, as the aim is to develop learners' communicative fluency. Incidental and planned focus-on-form instruction aim to help L2 learners correct their errors in a feedback process during communicative activities and tasks.

## 5 CONCLUSION

This article has examined classroom features in English as a Foreign Language Teaching in Bunia primary schools. The study opened with an introduction followed by the sections of research methodology. The coming section presented the results of the research, which has been discussed in the last section. A conclusion put an end to the production of the article.

The study aimed to detect and remedy the ways in which English is taught in primary school. The study also aimed to encounter the manners children learn as well as teachers' attitudes towards their pupils' errors.

To reach the objective, the study was conducted using descriptive and exploratory designs. For data collection, the main concern was fieldwork method whereby observation served as technique. In the present case, observation relied on *Likert scale type observation tally sheet* using three scale levels namely, *to consolidate, satisfactory and excellent*. Besides, documentary technique was found relevant for deskwork. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software technique served for data analysis on the basis of Descriptive Statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Coded and analyzed data were therefore, presented either in bar graphs or pie charts.

The hypotheses have been attested, therefore the results have demonstrated that English is taught without any appropriate methodology. Each teacher creates his/her own way of teaching, which is unfortunately, a major obstacle for the best learning. Then, Children do not learn. Findings finally have rated teachers' attitudes towards their learners' errors unsatisfactory. Therefore, they have to improve their ways.

Regarding the above results I suggest the followings:

- Elaboration of textbooks and proposal of a didactics as tools for primary school;
- Training of teachers in EFL for primary school;
- Sensitization of the school stakeholders about their role and implication in EFLT.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Breen, M.P. & Candlin, C. 2001. The Essentials of a Communicative Curriculum in Language Teaching. In D.R.Hall & A. Hewings, (eds.) *Innovation in English Language Teaching*. London: Routledge. 9-26.
- [2] Asher, J.R. 1985. *Learning Another Language through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook*. Los Gatos, Calif., Sky Oaks Production.
- [3] Scott, Wendy A. – Ytreberg, Lisbeth H. (1990). *Teaching English to Children*. Harlow: Longman. CUP.
- [4] Nunan, D. 2011. *Teaching English to Young Learners*. Los Angeles, California: Anaheim University Press.
- [5] Brown, H. D. 2001. *Teaching by Principles: an Interactive View of Language Pedagogy*. San Francisco: Addison Wesley Longman.
- [6] Harley T. 1997. *The Psychology of Language*. Psychology Press.
- [7] Elena Stakanova, E. & Tolstikhina, E. 2014. «Different Approaches to Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Young Learners» *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 146 (2014) 456 – 460.
- [8] Dewey, T. 1887. *Learning-by-doing Theory*. USA: California press.
- [9] Krashen, S.D. 2003. *Explorations in Language Acquisition and Use*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- [10] Kothari, C.R. 2011. *Research Methodology. Methods and Techniques (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. New Delhi: New Age International Limited Publishers.
- [11] Caruso, H. M., & Williams Woolley, A. 2008. Harnessing the power of emergent interdependence to promote diverse team collaboration *Diversity and groups* (pp. 245-266): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- [12] Mannix, E., & Neale, M. A. 2005. What differences make a difference? The promise and reality of diverse teams in organizations. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 6 (2), 31-55.
- [13] Moon, J. 2000. *Children Learning English*. London: Heineman Macmillan.
- [14] Richards, C. J. and Rodgers, S. T. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**APPENDIX: OBSERVATION TALLY SHEET**

Scale 1= To consolidate

Scale 2= Satisfactory

Scale 3= Excellent

Nº	Expertise level	To consolidate	Satisfactory	Excellent
I	Instructions are provided in writing as well as orally			
II	Extensive use of labelling is made so that children can find things independently			
III	Children are encouraged to share ownership of the classroom			
IV	Displays are interactive			
V	ICT resources are readily available and well used			
VI	Listening area is provided			
VII	Speaking area is provided			
VIII	Reading area is provided			
IX	Writing area is provided			
X	Words are discussed with the children			
XI	Teachers' attitudes towards pupils errors			
XII	Teaching style and the teacher's role are adapted to different circumstances			
XIII	Didactic materials are attractive and well displayed			
XIV	There is active participation of pupils			
XV	Pupils work in pair			
XVI	Group works are well organized			
XVII	There exists coherence between the goal of the lesson, the content and the methodology chosen for its teaching			