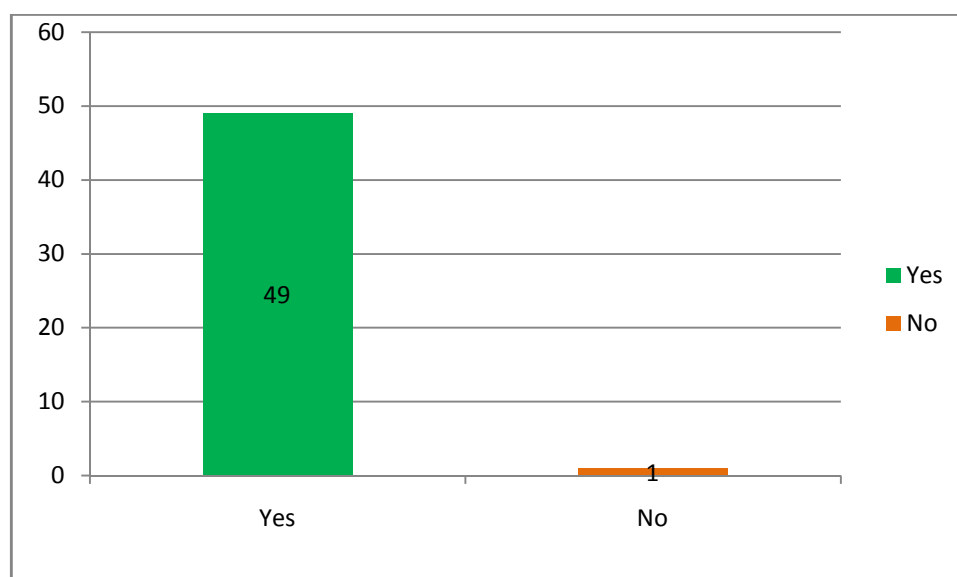


■ **Question n°19: “Will you be interested in using a computer to learn English?”**



Graph 34: result of question n°19 / questionnaire 2 (RAJAONARISOA, 2012)

When asked about their interest in using computer programs to learn English, almost all of the respondents (49 of them) answered “yes”. They are, then, strongly willing to give a try for this innovative method of language learning that is called Computer-Assisted Language Learning.

All in all, Questionnaire 2 helped us in collecting information from secondary school students. Indeed, the students’ current level is the only criterion determining whether the respondent meets the sample need. In other words, the survey sample is made of *lycée* students from *Seconde* to *Terminale*. The data gathered concern mainly what they have acquired from the teaching of question tags and their intonation, the problems they have met with the structure, their opinions and interests in the lesson and exercises, the sources of the inhibition that incite them not to use the structure in everyday life. In addition, the questionnaire meant for students also informed us about the participants’ computer literacy and their interests in the machine and its implementation in language learning.

Besides, the drafts of both questionnaires (the one meant for teachers and the one for students) have been pretested or piloted on a small sample of people so as to improve the questions and the layout. Then, the questionnaire final versions were eventually handed to the respondents. Questionnaire 2, being an interview-administered

questionnaire could bring clear and concise answers as any kind of ambiguity was immediately clarified. Questionnaire 1, the one meant for teachers of English, however, is of a self-administered type as the respondents were left to fill it in on their own. For this reason, and most of all in order to eliminate doubts, questionnaire 1 will subsequently be supplemented by some interviews.

2.3 INVESTIGATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS:

2.3.1 General objective:

The interviews are closely related to the first questionnaire. In fact, they are intended to provide clarifications and to disambiguate questions that have been asked to the respondents of questionnaire 1.

2.3.2 Context of the interviews:

The present research methodology based on interviews is firmly attached to the self-administered questionnaire, which was meant for teachers of English. As a matter of course, there have been some striking points in the answers of this first questionnaire that deserve to be cleared up by means of face-to-face interviews. Therefore, there is no pre-determined standard set of questions asked to the interviewees as the main point being discussed is different each time for each respondent. As in an interview survey the interviewer works directly with the respondent, the first one has the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions.

In all, three teachers could be reached and have, then, been interviewed. The identity of these participants will not, however, be revealed in this work. Besides, this personal interview survey has been conducted to explore or more specifically to disambiguate the responses these people have provided in Questionnaire 1 and to gather more and deeper information concerning their teaching of question tags at the *lycées*. In general, the interviews lasted 30 to 50 minutes each.

2.3.3 Reports and analyses of the interviews:

2.3.3.1 Interview 1:

The result of the first question of questionnaire 1 has informed us that 2 out of the 44 *lycée* teacher respondents do not include question tags in their teaching, despite the fact that the structure is part and parcel of the official syllabuses. One of them could explain later on, in the same questionnaire, the reason for this exclusion, stating that time constraints do not allow the teaching of the “*little and unimportant grammar structures*” that are question tags. Yet, we could contact the other teacher and ask for an interview to find out his/her arguments.

Hence, the first selected interviewee is a teacher among the respondents of questionnaire 1. The aim of this first interview is to find out the reason why the respondent in question does not include question tags in his/her teaching. The questions that were asked during the interview were, then, all leading to this aim. These questions concern the classes that the interviewee is teaching, the timetable, and the teacher’s argument for not teaching question tags.

As a matter of fact, the outcome of this first interview has informed us that the interviewee does not teach *Seconde* students, but only *Première* and *Terminale* ones. This teacher works for 12 hours a week, having four classes and 3 hours a week for each class. This timetable correlates with what is suggested by the official syllabuses.

Moreover, even though question tags are part of the *Première lycée* syllabus, the interviewee does not teach the structure because of a special regulation existing in the educational establishment where he/she works. This regulation concerns the standard quarterly distributions of the *Première* syllabus that each teacher has to follow during the school year, and the interviewee agreed to give us a copy of it (See Appendix 10: Annual distribution of the *Première* syllabus / *Lycée X*). The title “question tags” could not be found anywhere in this document, that has been elaborated according to an agreement made by all the English teachers in the school known as “*Equipe pédagogique: Anglais*”⁶⁵. This conducts us to the conclusion that several *lycée* teachers think the reinforcement of “question tags” in *Première* is not imperative. This is mainly due to the fact that the syllabus is very long, and time constraints do not allow teachers

⁶⁵“*Equipe pédagogique*” is the name given to the team of all the teachers of a specific subject in a *lycée*.

to spend time on reinforcing some grammar points. Apart from that, the same teacher stated that *Terminale* students do not deal with question tags in this school as the *Terminale* syllabus does not stipulate that.

The questionnaire meant for teachers of English, especially its fourth question, has communicated to us that half of the teachers (21/42) resort to didactic materials to support their teaching of question tags. These materials are either of visual or audio or of audio-visual types. Only 2 out of the 21 teachers, however, have opted for audio-visual aids including television, computer, or internet. As a result, these teachers meet the specific criterion we require from the respondent of the following survey through interviews.

2.3.3.2 Interview 2:

The respondent of this second interview is a teacher of English who uses audio-visual aids in his/her teaching of question tags. The purpose of the interview is to find out the way in which the respondent proceeds with the teaching of question tags with audio-visual aids. The questions that were asked were, therefore, related to the respondent's teaching procedures.

The second interview has revealed that the interviewee resorts to a website known as "nonstopenglish.com" to practise every new grammar lesson introduced in class. As a matter of fact, the respondent explained to us that the school where s/he works has internet access that is available for teachers and students to use. Each class this respondent teaches benefits from one-hour internet connexion a week for doing online grammar exercises. The following paragraph will bring further information about the website.

Nonstopenglish.com is a free English as a Second language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) activity website (cf Appendix 11: Homepage of the website). It is an online interactive language course. In addition to that, English grammar and vocabulary skills can be practised with online interactive tests and exercises on this free website. There are many English grammar tests, and English vocabulary tests can help learners to build their vocabulary and their understanding of the English language. If the learner registers, he/she can receive free motivating email exercises and can see which exercises he/she has done and how well. All exercises are self-checked and the

alternative exercise levels include beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, lower intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced, proficiency, and unspecified level. Learners can test their knowledge and study everyday English with self-evaluation tests. New English grammar tests are added every week. Keys to self-check the learner's scores and to see what alternative answers, if any, are possible.

The respondent could enumerate the different steps s/he follows each time s/he deals with a grammatical structure, including question tags. First, s/he introduces the grammar lesson in class, afterwards during the one-hour session allotted to I.C.T.⁶⁶, asks the students to connect to the website in question (<http://www.nonstopenglish.com/>). As the teacher has chosen and prepared the exercises to be done in advance, s/he just instructs the students to select the drills on the homepage of the website (See Appendix 11). The interviewee explained that his/her role is, then, to monitor or guide the students.

The second interview has, by the way, presented the opportunity to ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of using computers in English language teaching. The respondent quoted for example that the students were very motivated when they are asked to work on computers. Moreover, the teacher added that: "*students will often do on a computer what they are reluctant to do in their exercise books*". Nonetheless, when networks or lines are busy due to many users, it may take time to access information. This can lead both the teacher and learners to frustration. Another problem the teacher has pointed out when implementing such a technology in teaching is that there are not enough machines in the institution. Indeed, there are 20 available computers, yet the number of students belonging to each class is 50 on average (1 computer for 2 or 3 students). As a result, individualised learning is not possible in such a case as the students have to cooperate when doing the drills.

2.3.3.3 Interview 3:

The respondent of the third interview was among the teachers who answered the first questionnaire. This respondent affirmed that s/he implements audio-visual aids when teaching question tags to the students. Therefore, s/he has been selected among other teachers as this method of implementing the lesson fits the context of the present

⁶⁶ The acronym I.C.T. stands for Information and Communication Technology.

dissertation, that is the use of technology, more specifically computers or computing facilities, in schools. It is worth mentioning that the respondent of this Interview and that of the second interview both work in the same school. This third interview survey has then been conducted in order to explore the responses of the respondent and to gather more and deeper information about the ways s/he tackles question tag teaching.

The respondent of Interview 3 resorts to a computer program called “Hot Potatoes⁶⁷” in his/her teaching. Like the respondent of the second interview, this third respondent stated that s/he mostly uses this technology to assign exercises on lessons that have been delivered in class to the students. As the teacher explained to us, and according to what we have seen, the Hot Potatoes program is rather demanding from the teacher since it works following three steps:

- Step 1: The teacher has to enter data by typing in questions, answers and feedback that form the basis of the exercise.
- Step 2: The teacher adjusts the configuration that is a set of information used to compile the web pages. The configuration includes instructions for the students, captions for navigation buttons and other information which is not likely to change much between exercises.
- Step 3: The teacher creates his/her web pages. This is a simple matter of pressing the “Export to Web” button on the tool bar, choosing a file name and letting the program do the rest.

The Hot Potatoes software suite includes five applications that can create interactive multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises for the World Wide Web. Though it is freeware⁶⁸, it is not open-source⁶⁹. The applications are *JCloze*⁷⁰, *JCross*⁷¹, *JMatch*⁷²,

⁶⁷ “Hot Potatoes” was created by the Research and Development team at the University of Victoria Humanities Computing and Media Centre. Commercial aspects of the software are handled by Half-Baked Software Inc. Hot Potatoes has been freeware since October 2009.

⁶⁸ Freeware means that anyone may use it freely for any purpose via the web.

⁶⁹ Open-source implies that anyone using the program can modify its information/content as s/he likes.

⁷⁰ JCloze can create gap-fill exercises, and specific clues can be for each gap.

⁷¹ JCross can create crossword puzzles which can be completed online

⁷² JMatch consists in matching vocabulary to pictures or translations and ordering sentences to form a sequence or a conversation.

*JMix*⁷³ and *JQuiz*⁷⁴. There is also a sixth application called *The Masher*⁷⁵ that will compile all the Hot Potatoes exercises into one unit. These exercises use HTML and Java Script⁷⁶ to implement their interactivity, but the teacher explained that the user does not need to know anything about these languages in order to use the program. Hence, all that the teacher using the Hot Potatoes needs is to enter the data related to the exercises and to press a button to make the program work and freely available to anyone via the W.W.W. In short, a teacher who decides to apply for the Hot Potatoes program creates his/her own exercises first and then broadcasts them on the internet. This constitutes the main difference between the Hot Potatoes program and the Nonstopenglish.com website which can provide the users ready-made exercises. Nevertheless, the Hot Potatoes website (<http://www.hotpotatoes.net>) where ready-made exercises can be found is accessible for any user.

Up to this point in time, we have discussed the implementation of the Hot Potatoes software in general. The following paragraph, however, shall focus on the respondent's ways of teaching question tags by using the software.

According to what has been said previously, the third respondent we have interviewed teaches the lesson, more specifically the rules related to question tag forms and uses in class first, then brings the students to the I.C.T. room for practices. The teacher had designed his/her own exercises based on the JClose and JQuiz programs, these exercises include gap-filling and multiple choices. The students were then asked to open the Hot Potatoes software and do the exercises related to question tags as a follow-up activity of the given lesson.

In short, the interview survey that we have conducted was meant for a specific target population. As matter of fact, the interviews involved some of the respondents of the first questionnaire administered for teachers of English. These interviewees were selected among others because of the answers they gave when completing the first questionnaire. Indeed, the investigation through interviews allowed us to elicit greater details and disambiguate questions about teachers' methods of implementing question tags. Besides, it helped us in examining the extent to which technology was integrated into the curriculum by Malagasy teachers of English.

⁷³ JMix program can create jumbled-sentence exercises.

⁷⁴ JQuiz program can create question-based quizzes (multiple choices or short answers).

⁷⁵ The Masher is designed to create complete units of material in one simple operation.

⁷⁶ HTML and Java Script are languages of computer programming. They are used to write computer programs.

As this study through interviews consisted of face-to-face interactions between interviewer and teacher respondents, the given reports and analyses were based on our records of the interviews. In other words, the interview reports and analyses account for the questions asked to the respondents and the responses and explanations provided by them. However, in order to capture a more comprehensive picture of what really goes on in classrooms and for the sake of yielding better quality data; some classroom observations will pursue the previous surveys through questionnaires and interviews.

2.4 CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS:

2.4.1 General objectives:

On the one hand, the main purpose of conducting classroom observations is to highlight the significant aspects of the current teaching of question tags and their intonation at the Malagasy *lycées*. These aspects concern mainly:

- ❖ The lesson presentation (development of the lesson and exercises on “question tags”),
- ❖ The classroom management (group/pair work, seating arrangement or layout of the tables and chairs, use of teaching materials)
- ❖ The classroom atmosphere (motivation, interest and behavior of the students during the English class; and the student-student, the student-teacher and the teacher-student interactions).

On the other hand, the different classroom observations aim at finding out the main problems when teaching question tags in *lycées* in order not to assess *lycée* teachers knowledge or/and ability but rather to propose some solutions to them.

2.4.2 Context of the classroom observations:

As we have asked for the respondents’ address in the first questionnaire, it was not difficult to contact them by means of phone calls. The reason for these calls was to plan class observations while dealing with question tags. Indeed, at the moment we planned our classroom observations, some teachers were unreachable; some of them had already

dealt with question tags and so there was no need to observe them; whereas a few others enthusiastically agreed to receive us in their classes.

A specific observation grid (cf Appendix 12) has been designed so as to describe the sequence of events taking place during the class session. This grid was meant to depict the teachers' relevance of choices as far as teaching question tags is concerned and the learning outcomes. In addition to that, notes on meaningful fragments have been recorded on papers. These notes allowed us to refrain from judgement, too. The detailed plans of the lesson are presented in the appendices.

In all, four classes taught by four different teachers of English at four different schools have been observed. We will account for these observations in the following section.

2.4.3 Reports and analyses of the classroom observations:

The four classroom observation will be arranged in chronological order.

2.4.3.1 Class observation 1 (See Appendix 13):

This observation of a *Première* A class was made on 11th November, 2011, and it lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes. There were 48 students in the class. During the observation, the teacher taught “question tags” and the language used in class was but English.

As a warming-up activity, the teacher questioned the students about the last lesson (language functions about “Socializing”). In fact, this review was meant to introduce the new lesson on question tags. Once the teacher had written the sentence given by the students (It’s a nice day, isn’t it?) on the blackboard, the students could immediately identify it as a question tag. It was not very surprising as the students had already done this structure in *Seconde* in fact. As a matter of course, the lesson was in general viewed as a reinforcement of what the students already knew, and no specific didactic material was used to support the teaching.

During the presentation stage, the teacher asked the students to complete her sentences with tags, first. Then, she gradually asked them to produce their own sentences. The examples being exploited are each time written on the blackboard. The teacher used different colours for the statement and the tag. One noticeable fact was that the teacher did not fail to ask her students whether the given answers were correct or

wrong. In case of mistakes, the students themselves were asked to give the right answers. The students reacted spontaneously each time the teacher asked them something. It was felt that the majority of the students were concentrated and very motivated during the lesson presentation. Maybe this was due to the fact that the teacher often solicited their participation and asked them to infer the rules by themselves.

As for the content of the lesson, the teacher introduced an exceptional case of question tag to the student (I am aren't I?). This proves that the teacher was aware of the fact that the structure is not really new to the students, and therefore she could introduce a certain level of difficulty. As opposed to that, the teacher did not make allusions to the fact that "to have" is at the same time an auxiliary and an ordinary verb. For instance, "to have" is an ordinary verb⁷⁷ in the expressions like "to have lunch" or "to have a good time", where "to have" does not mean "to possess". Besides, the teacher qualified the tag ending as "question tag"⁷⁸, and referred to the statement and tag as "first part" and "second part" respectively. In addition to that, pronunciation and uses of question tags were not included in the lesson.

While the students were doing the exercise, the teacher was moving around the classroom to monitor them. Some students asked for explanations, and others preferred to work with their classmates. It is worth mentioning that the students' interventions were related to a lack of understanding of vocabulary. Among the encountered problems was that some students do not master the negative forms of sentences as in "*went not" or "*doesn't smokes" or "*willn't". Apart from that, time constraint did not allow to finish the correction of the exercise.

2.4.3.2 Class observation 2 (See Appendix 14):

This observation of a *Seconde* class was made on 15th November, 2011, and it lasted an hour. There were 35 students in the class. During the observation, the teacher taught "question tags" and the medium of the teaching was English although the teacher resorted to French from time to time to explain vocabulary.

There was no warming-up activity, but after the greetings and the roll-calling, the teacher immediately introduced the lesson. This was probably due to the fact that the session lasted one hour only. The teacher presented question tags as an independent

⁷⁷ An ordinary verb require the auxiliary « do » in the tag

⁷⁸ Question tag = statement + tag ending

grammar lesson and did not resort to any visual or audio aids when implementing question tags. No elements of pronunciation were involved in the teaching.

During the presentation of the lesson, it was noticeable that the students were somewhat reluctant to participate. It seemed as if the teacher taught the lesson too quickly for them that they could hardly assimilate it. However, she tried hard to guide the students by means of a question-answer strategy. Sometimes, the students could give correct answers sometimes no. At last, the teacher herself gave the rules and the exceptions. Once again, this speed was the mere result of time constraint.

Even if the teacher did not have time to deal with the uses of question tags, she could give the students a hint to their meaning in French that is “*n’est-ce pas?*”. Besides, she was not content with teaching the basic rules for forming question tags; she also introduced several exceptional cases. Another positive point of this lesson was that the teacher could manage to include an oral practice in the lesson presentation. Hence, though the students could not finish the written exercise in class, they would probably know how to do it without their teacher’s help.

The students had hardly written the exercise in their exercise books that the bell rang, leaving them homework. A post-observation interview with the teacher informed us that she intended to teach question tag intonations by means of an oral correction of the exercise. Unfortunately, we could not attend the next session because of another class observation in another *lycée*. As a matter of fact, we could infer from this classroom observation that a one-hour session is insufficient to deal with question tag and its different facets without any didactic material.

2.4.3.3 Class observation 3 (See Appendix 15):

This observation of a *Terminale* class was made on 17th November, 2011, and it lasted two hours. There were 53 students in the class. During the observation, the teacher taught “question tags”. In general, the teacher spoke in English, and so did the students. However, French translation was sometimes used in class.

As warm up, the teacher asked a student to write the date on the blackboard, and after that she told her students a joke. It made a good start as there was much laughter in the class. Then, the teacher introduced the lesson about question tags. The lesson was intended to review and/or reinforce what the students already knew about the grammatical point in question. Apart from question tag structures, the teacher also

incorporated question tag intonation and uses in the lesson. Besides, she did not make use of any didactic material.

The teacher introduced the lesson by a brief review on question types. She expected the students to give “question tag” as answer, but as they were unable to state it, she instantly decided to write a few examples of question tags on the blackboard. In the meantime, she highlighted the tag endings by using a different colour. As the lesson was but a review, the teacher directly enquired about question tag definition and the rules of forming question tags. Further, she guided her students in a way that they could apparently form question tags during the lesson presentation. As a matter of fact, the lesson included an oral drill that was meant to check understanding. Thereafter, once the students had mastered the grammatical rules for question tags, the teacher tackled their meaning and uses in French as the students could not enlighten them in English. What is more, the lesson also embraced intonation along with the uses of question tags. Besides, some exceptional cases of structure were also taught to the students.

With regard to the practice stage, the teacher chose to submit a written exercise to her students. Admittedly, this consisted in completing statements with tag endings. Subsequently, the students were asked to go to the blackboard one after the other to write the correction. However, the teacher failed to take advantage of this correction to practice intonation.

As for the production stage, the teacher first asked her students to translate some French sentences with the tag “*n’est-ce pas?*” in English. Then, she solicited them to give their own examples of question tags in English. Obviously, the students did not react until she gave them a clue on what to talk about⁷⁹. Finally, few students could produce their own question tags in class before the bell rang, informing all of us that the English class was over.

2.4.3.4 Class observation 4 (See Appendix 16):

The fourth and last class observation which involved 49 *Seconde* students was realised on November 24th, 2011. During the two-hour session, the teacher taught question tags together with the different verb forms and verb tenses in English. She used three languages in class, notably English, Malagasy and some French.

⁷⁹ The teacher said: “*I’m going to give you a clue: Ask something about the sky!*”

In the first place, noticeably the teacher began the class by greeting her students and then by asking one of them to write the date on the blackboard. Thereafter, the teacher wrote the title of the lesson on the blackboard. The main purposes of the lesson were to teach the students how to ask for agreement or confirmation, to make real questions by means of question tags, and to make short answers. Apart from question tag structures, the teacher also integrated verb forms⁸⁰, verb tenses, modals, question tag intonation, question tag uses, and short answers in the lesson. Besides, she did not resort to any didactic material.

Before dealing with the actual lesson on question tags, the teacher focused on the use of “to have” as an ordinary verb, first. Indeed, she assumed that her students only knew it as an auxiliary having the same meaning as “to possess”. Subsequently, she drew the difference between a direct question and a question tag, stressing that the latter is mainly used to ask for agreement or disagreement. Soon after, she explained the rules for forming question tags according to the verb tenses and forms used in the statements by giving one or two plausible examples each time. Apart from the arrows up (↗) and down (↘), the teacher also used her hands to teach intonation. Next, she also taught some uses of question tags, and some exceptions as the combination of the imperative with “will you?” for instance. Then, she ended the lesson by explaining the rules for forming short answers, pointing out that these rules were the same as those for forming question tags.

During that two-hour session, the teacher definitely presented the lesson in a way that her students had never done question tags before. Perhaps this is why the students seemed rather motivated and really concentrated while the teacher was explaining and writing the lesson on the blackboard. Furthermore, the teacher often resorted to Malagasy language to explain the lesson. The classroom activities were maintained permanently as the lesson was rather long (Cf Appendix 16). In fact, each time the teacher had finished writing the lesson on the blackboard, she asked her students to copy it down on their copybooks, insisting on the fact that they must always read a whole sentence before writing it for the sake of a better understanding.

The length of the lesson presentation did not allow much time for practice and production. However, the presentation comprised some pronunciation practice and some drills, more precisely those related to the tags of statements with modals. Yet, the

⁸⁰ The term « verb forms » is used by the teacher to refer to simple verb form, continuous verb form and modals

teacher was able to assign an exercise on short answers in time before the end of the class, which as such became homework to be corrected for the next English class. Apart from time constraints, another problem encountered during this classroom observation was that the teacher failed to clearly explain the different types of direct questions⁸¹. As a matter of course, the examples of direct questions provided by the teacher were not very plausible as in the first section of the lesson, she gave a Wh- question as an example⁸² whereas in the section devoted to short answers, she only gave Yes/no questions.⁸³ Actually, question tags can also be considered as yes-no questions.

These four classroom observations gave us an idea about the different aspects of the current teaching of question tags to four different classes by four different teachers at four different *lycées*. Thanks to these observations, we have also witnessed the possible problems linked with the teaching of question tags. On the whole, the current teaching of question tags to Malagasy *lycée* students presents some inconvenience for teachers and mainly for students in their learning process.

Altogether, in this second part, we have discovered the typical situations related to the implementation of question tags in the Malagasy *lycées*. We have found out that question tags should be taught in every *lycée* level, notably in *Seconde*, *Première* and *Terminale* classes. Further, we have also noticed that most teachers do not focus their teaching on the communicative functions of question tags through their intonations, but rather on the mere grammatical rules of forming question tags.

These investigations also helped us to determine four main points that need special considerations when dealing with question tags. First, what is the tense of the verb in the statement? After that, what kind of verb is it: “to be” or other verbs? Then, is the statement affirmative or negative or imperative? And finally, does the subject need to be changed or is it already a pronoun? These are the questions that need to be answered before writing the correct tag.

Besides, we have also detected the main challenges for teachers of English in teaching question tags. Among these challenges are the lack of time for practice, the

⁸¹ According to the teacher, direct questions are yes /no questions and Wh- questions.

⁸² The question was : « What time is it ? »

⁸³ The examples of yes/no questions were: “Have you finished?” and “Do you like English?”