People's Democratic Republic Of Algeria.

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Inspection and Assessment of the Effectiveness of Competency Based Approach in Teaching EFL in Algerian Middle Schools

- *Case study of Mahari Kouider middle school Elbayadh -*

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Academic year :2020/2021

Dedication

We dedicate this work:

To our parents respectfully for their never- ending love, patience, and unconditional support and encouragement to complete this dissertation. May ALLAH bless them now and forever

To all our extended family

who never forgot us in their prayers

To all our best friends: Hichem , Omar ,

To all those who helped us

Acknowledgement

As a devout Muslim, first and foremost praise is to our Lord, ALLAH, who gave us the power to complete this dissertation to the end.

we would like to thank our supervisor Mr. SABER for his wise guidance and significant support throughout the different stages of this study.

we address our special thanks and gratitude to our examiners.

A special thanks goes to middle school teachers of English who gladly and cheerfully answered the questionnaire.

Last but not least, we would express our warmest thanks to our beloved parents for their great encouragement.

Abstract :

The current study started from the idea that there is no Consistency between what the Algerian middle school pupils need in their real life and what they actually learn in their classroom,That is why, the Competency-based approach (CBA), as a medium of instruction, has been adopted in the Algerian educational system for facilitating learners to practice what they have acquired at school, and to prepare them to be competent and confident in their learning process. Accordingly, the current study aims at investigating middle school EFL teachers' views about the effectiveness of this new interdisciplinary approach in teaching EFL in the Algerian middle schools. It has been hypothesized that Algerian middle school EFL teachers would view CBA as an effective approach in teaching English as a foreign language. To achieve such an objective of and to validate the hypothesis, a questionnaire has been designed as a research tool and has been administered to middle school EFL teachers .

Key words: CBA, English teaching, Middle school, Effective

List of Abbreviations

ALM: Audio Lingual Method

CA: Communicative Approach

CBA: Competency – based Approach

DM: Direct Method

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FL: Foreign Language

GTM: Grammar Translation Method

NA: Natural Approach

TL: Target Language

ZPD: Z one of Proximal Development

Q: Question

List of Figures

Figure A : ……..……11

Figure 1: Teachers' Gender ……...26

Figure2: Teachers' Academic Degree……....27

Figure3: Years of Teaching Experience before the Middle School ……..…28

Figure 4: Experience of Teaching at the Middle School……...29

Figure5: Teacher' Degree of Agreement concerning the Main Aim of the CBA……..30

Figure6: Teachers' Degree of Agreement with the Advantage of the CBA……...…31

Figure7: The Teachers' Role in the CBA……...…31

Figure8: Teachers' Opinions about Teaching English within the CBA ……32

Figure9: Pupils' English Proficiency Level within the CBA……..…33

Table 10: Teachers' view about the Effectiveness of the CBA……..33

Table of Contents

Dedication……..…..I

Acknowledgement…….…….……..II

Abstract…….…….…… III

List of Abbreviations……..... IV

List of Figures ……...……..V

Table of Contents …….... VI

Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem…….……1
2. Aim of the Study …….……..1
3. Research Question ……2
4. Research Hypothesis…….…….2

Chapter One: An Overview of the Competency- based Approach

Introduction……..……..3

1. Basic Definitions of Approach, Method, Technique……3

1.1 Definition of Approach……...3

1.2 Definition of Method…….….4

1.3 Definition of Technique……..……4

2. The Pioneer Methods and Approaches in Language Teaching…….6

2.1 The Grammar Translation Method…….7

2.2 The Direct Method…….....7

2.3 The Audiolingual Method…… …….……8

2.4 The Natural Approach…….…….……..9

2.5 The Communicative Approach ……..…….10

3. The Competencybased Approach…… .11

3. A Brief Background History of Competencybased A pproach…….….11

3.2.1 Definition of Competence……..…….…….....….12

3.2.2 Definition of Competency…….…....12

3.2 The Difference between Competence and Competency…….….13

3.3 Definition of the Competency based Approach…… ……....14

3.4 Characteristics of the CBA……..……...…15

3.5 Principles of the CBA……..……..……..……..16

3.6 Components of the CBA ……...……17

3.8 Learning Theories Related to the CBA……..17

3.8.1Cognitivism……..……..……..…..……17

3.8.2 Constructivism…….……..18

3.8.3 Social Constructivism……19

3.9 Key assumptions of this perspective include:……....20

Conclusion……..21

Chapter Two: Field of Investigation

Introduction…….……22

1. Practical part ……..……23

1.1 Teaching and learning observation session ……..…….23

1.2 Presentation session ……23

1.3 The result ……....24

2. Aim of the Questionnaire……..…24

3. Choice of the Method…….…..24

4. The sample……...……24

4.1 Description of Questionnaire……..……25

4.2. Administration of the Questionnaire……...…25

4.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire……26

4.4 Discussion of the Results……34

Conclusion……35

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations……36

General Conclusion……..…38

List of References……39

Appendix…….……42

Résumé……46

Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem:

The educational sphere has never ceased to witness the coming and going of an endless range of innovations and inventions and creative pathways. All these issues have come into being due fundamentally to one overarching factor: teachers and curricular planners are constantly in search of better and more fruitful avenues for the ultimate attainment of better success scores. However, it has been noticed that learners still do not apply what they have been studying in class in their real life needs, there is a change in most of the educational systems in the world in terms of the implementation of new curricula and a new approach based on competencies. This is the case of Algeria in which the competency-based approach was introduced in 2002 as a result of the educational reform of middle school, it has been adopted in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) .This approach is considered to have a positive effect in teaching English, since it may help learners to develop their capacities and build their competencies. Moreover, it has been adopted in teaching English in order to enable learners to be more autonomous and competent in their learning process as well as in their real life tasks thus, the present study seeks to investigate EFL teachers' views about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English in middle schools.

2. Aim of the Study

The main aim in the present study is to investigate teachers' views about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching EFL in the Algerian middle schools.

3. Research Question

As the aim of the present study is to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the CBA in teaching EFL

What are the Algerian middle school teachers' views about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching EFL?

4. Hypothesis

In the light of the previous stated information, it was hypothesized that: Algerian middle school teachers would find the CBA an effective approach in EFL classes.

Chapter one

Introduction:

Over the last two decades, the discourse around education has shifted, the field of language teaching has witnessed different changes and developments concerning teaching methods and approaches. In this chapter, we will examine the most famous approaches, methods and techniques among which; the Competency-based Approach (CBA) in the Algerian middle schools. First of all, we will start with a brief review of the most common methods and approaches used in language teaching. Then, we will see the CBA in details by introducing its history, definition, characteristics, components, advantages, and demonstrating the teachers' role as well as the learners' role in the CBA. Furthermore, this chapter will end with the main reasons behind the application of the CBA in the Algerian middle schools.

NB: The three terms do not refer exactly to the same meaning as it is defined in the Longman Dictionary of Teaching and Applied Linguistics. "Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (the approach) imply different ways of teaching language (the method), and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activity (the technique)" (Richard & Smith, 2010, p.30).

1-AN APPROACH, A METHOD AND A TECHNIQUE

1.1 . Definition of approach

According to Edward Anthony's model (1965:65), an approach embodies the theoretical principles governing language learning and language teaching. A method, however, is "an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, true in such an obvious way that you do not to prove it, a method is procedural". Various approaches shall have distinctive features, if we are going to be good teachers then we need to blend or

integrate two or more methods in order to come up with a workable procedure in the classroom. The use of two or more methods or approaches is what is referred to as Eclecticism (Richards,1986). The Antony framework attempts to portray the entire language teaching operations as the simple, hierarchical relationship between approach, method, and technique.

1.2 Definition of Method

Richards and Rodgers (2001), agree that the method is theoretically related to an approach, organized by the design, and practically realized in the procedure. The plan of language teaching is consistent with the theories (Edward Anthony-1963). The method may mean different things to different people (Mackey, 1975:155) For some, it means a set of teaching procedures; for others, the avoidance of teaching procedures. For some, it is the primary language skill; for others, it is the type and amount of vocabulary and structure. A method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part or which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods. The term "method" in the direct method may refer to a single aspect of language teaching: the presentation of material. The method in the *Reading Method* refers to the emphasis of a single language skill: reading, while in the *Grammar Translation Method*, the method refers to the emphasis of the teaching material. According to Mackey (1975:157), all teaching, whether good or bad, must include some sort of selection, some sort of gradation, some sort of presentation, and some sort of repetition. Therefore, all methods should include the four steps of teaching a language. Any method should include the four steps: selection, gradation, presentation, and repetition.

1.3 Definition of Technique

A technique is an implementation – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as

well (Anthony 1963: 63-7). In short, the technique is something that actually takes place in language teaching or learning in the classroom. The following are some examples of techniques in error correction. 1. The teacher does not praise or criticize so that language learners learn to rely on themselves (Silent Way).

2. The teacher often praises when a student has made a good thing in learning (Audio Lingual Method).

3. When a student has produced a wrong expression, the teacher just repeats the right one (Total Physical Response).

4. The teacher does not care when a student makes an error as long as it does not hinder (delay/prevent) communication (Natural Method) Carry out a method. Technique is implementation, meaning that a technique is something that actually takes place in language teaching or learning in the classroom. The following are some examples of techniques in error correction.

5. The teacher does not praise or criticize so that language learners learn to rely on themselves (Silent Way).

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1. **The Pioneer Methods and Approaches in Language Teaching**

There were different changes and innovations in the language teaching methods and approaches. These shifts in methods and approaches were done intentionally to move away from methods that focus on the reading and writing proficiency in a foreign language (FL) to methods that stronger concentrate on the learners' oral proficiency. Therefore, each new method or approach has emerged as a reaction or an alternative to the shortcomings of the preceding one. What follows is a brief overview of the methods and approaches used commonly in English language teaching over years.

2.1 The Grammar Translation Method

The grammar-translation method is a method of teaching foreign languages derived from the classical method of teaching Greek and Latin. In grammar-translation classes, students learn grammatical rules and then apply those rules by translating sentences between the target language and the native language. Advanced students may be required to translate whole texts word-for-word. The method has two main goals: to enable students to read and translate literature written in the target language and to further students' general intellectual development.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) propose some of the principal characteristics of the GTM. Grammar was taught deductively, i.e., grammatical rules were at first explicitly stated and then followed by practice through translations and exercises. In addition, reading and listening were given more attention than speaking or listening. That is to say, the main goal for learning an FL in the GTM was not for speaking or communication, but instead, it was for reading in that language. Furthermore, accuracy was an important feature of the GTM, since students were expected to achieve high standards in translating sentences that were tested in written exams. Moreover, the student's native language was the medium of instruction and little attention was paid to the use of the TL. Towards the mid and late 19th century, there was a marked change of emphasis from concentrating upon the language as a set of structures towards the use of language as a means of communication which led at first to the rejection of

the GTM, and consequently to the emergence of a new way of teaching known as the Direct Method

2.2 The Direct Method

The direct method of teaching (DM), which is sometimes called the natural method, and is often (but not exclusively) used in teaching foreign languages, refrains from using the learners' native language and uses only the target language. It was established in Germany and France around 1900 and contrasts with the Grammar Translation Method and other traditional approaches.

The basic idea of the Direct Method was that second language learning should be more like first language learning (lots of oral interaction, spontaneous use of the language, no translation between first and second languages, and little or no analysis of grammatical rules). Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention some of the major principles of the DM as follows. First of all the classroom instructions were only given in the TL. Thus, the student's native language was not used at all. Communication skills were shaped in a carefully graded process in form of question-and-answers exchanges between teacher and learners. Further, vocabulary was emphasized over grammar and taught through dramatization or via the association of ideas. Moreover, grammar was taught inductively. That is to say, grammatical rules were not taught explicitly, but were rather acquired unconsciously through intensive listening and imitation. Finally, in the DM both speech and listening were taught and correct pronunciation was regarded as crucial too. Thus, in summing up, it may be admitted that the DM in spite of its merits and popularity in the first quarter of the 20th century, did not make much progress since it has been criticized for its weak theoretical foundations, and its overemphasis on the skill and personality of the teacher than of the methodology itself (Brown, 2000). Then, it paved the way for the Audio-lingual Method.

2.3 The Audio-lingual Method

The Audiolingual Method (ALM) gained attention in the 1950s, largely in the USA where it was rooted in the military's need during World War II to train large volumes of personnel in disparate languages. Although it claimed to have turned language teaching from an art to a science, it shared several aspects with the *Direct Method*. Both were a reaction to the perceived failures of the Grammar-Translation Method. Both ban the use of mother tongue, and both prioritize listening and speaking skills over reading and writing. ALM is nevertheless different in several ways. It drew on early-20th century beliefs of 1) behaviourism that anything could be learned through conditioning; and 2) structuralism and structural linguistics that emphasized grammatical structure. In ALM, grammar is prioritized over vocabulary, and accuracy over fluency, giving learners few opportunities to produce errors that are seen as potentially "contagious". Ultimately, the learner will speak "automatically".

Prator and Celce-Murcia (as cited in Karunakaran & Suresh Babu, 2013) summarize the key principles of the ALM as follows. New materials were presented in the form of a habit formation, the method fostered dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and over-learning. Then, structures were sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns were taught using repetitive drills and also little or no grammatical explanations were provided. For this, grammar was taught inductively. Vocabulary was also strictly limited and learned in context. Further, great importance was given to precise native-like pronunciation. The use of the mother tongue by the teacher was also permitted but discouraged among and by the learners. In addition, successful responses were reinforced; great care was taken to prevent learners' errors; therefore, there was a tendency to focus on manipulation of the TL and to disregard content and meaning. The ALM, for various reasons, enjoyed many years of popularity, and even today, it continues to be adopted in contemporary methodologies. However, it did not last forever due to its misconceptions and ultimate failure to teach long-term communicative proficiency (Brown, 2000).

2.4 The Natural Approach

The natural approach (NA), is a method of language teaching developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It aims to foster naturalistic language acquisition in a classroom setting, and to this end it emphasises communication, and places decreased importance on conscious grammar study and explicit correction of student errors. Efforts are also made to make the learning environment as stress-free as possible. In the natural approach, language output is not forced but allowed to emerge spontaneously after students have attended to large amounts of comprehensible language input.

The natural approach has become closely associated with Krashen's monitor model, and it is often seen as an application of the theory to language teaching. Despite this perception, there are some differences, particularly Terrell's view that some degree of conscious grammar study can be beneficial. The syllabus focuses on activities which Terrell sees as promoting subconscious language acquisition. He divides these activities into four main areas: content activities, such as learning a new subject in the target language; activities that focus on personalizing language, such as students sharing their favourite music; games; and problem-solving activities. The aim of this approach was the basic personal communication skills and daily language situations such as conversations, shopping, listening to the radio...etc. The job of the teacher was to provide comprehensive input and understandable spoken language for learners (Brown, 2000). In other terms, the teacher was the source of the learner’s input and the creator of interesting classroom activities. In the NA, learners move through what Krashen and Teller defined as three stages. Firstly, the preproduction stage represented the development of listening comprehension skills. Secondly, the early production stage in which students struggled with their errors. Here the teacher focused on meaning, not on form. This means that he did not make a point of correcting errors during this stage unless these mistakes

can hinder or block meaning entirely. Finally, the last stage was the extending production which involved more complex games and discussion; its objective was to promote fluency (Brown, 2000). The major emphasis of the NA on improving the learner's communicative abilities was the main reason that led actually into the emergence of the following approach.

2.5 The communicative approach

The communicative approach (CA), is based on the idea that learning a language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language**.**

In other words, the CA concentrated on the communicative use of language in realistic ways and focused on enabling learners to become communicatively competent. Furthermore, Littlewood states that" One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (1981, p.1). Thus, the CA focused on the two aspects of language. Additionally, the CA was normally characterized as a broad approach to teaching, instead of a method, with a plainly characterized set of principles. According to Nunan (1999), five principles of the CA are provided: 1- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate. 2. Authenticity and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities. 3- Fluency is an important dimension of communication. This latter involves the integration of different skills. 5. Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. Finally, we can say that the CA took into account the four basic linguistic skills as well as the conversational skill where the social context of utterances plays a significant role. After having discussed the major important methods and approaches to English teaching it can be concluded that teaching has been influenced by a wide variety of methods and approaches which have been introduced as part of the ongoing search for the best way to teach.

	GRAMMAR TRANSLATION	AUDIOLINGUAL METHOD	COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING
GRAMMAR RULES	Central feature	Not explained	Explained when necessary
MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION	Not important	Limited	Central feature
PRONUNCIATION	Not considered	Target = native-like pronunciation	Target = comprehensible pronunciation
USE OF TRANSLATION	Central feature	Forbidden	Used when necessary
SEQUENCING OF LESSONS	Follows linguistic complexity	Follows linguistic complexity	Follows learners' needs
TEACHER-STUDENT ROLES	Teacher-centered	Teacher-centered	Teacher facilitates student to student interaction
ATTITUDE TO ERRORS	Accuracy emphasized	Accuracy emphasized	Errors part of learning process
BALANCE OF LANGUAGE SKILLS	Reading and writing emphasized	Listening and speaking emphasized	Skills taught according to learners' needs

Figure A. Comparison of Distinguishing Features of Three Approaches to Language Teaching

3. The Competency-Based Approach

3. 1 The origins

The notion of CBA was first introduced in the USA in the late 1960s and evolved through applications to other professional education programmes in the USA in the 1970s, vocational training programmes in the UK and in Germany and many others in the 1980s and vocational professional skills recognition in Australia in the 1990s. It has been argued that the theoretical roots of the CBA lie in the behaviourist models of human psychology from the 1950s. This is based on the view that CBA is about making inferences about competency on the basis of performance. It has also been argued that the American forces in the 1950s, influenced by Frederik Taylor (1947), one of the founders of industrial psychology, who elevated job analysis to science, first developed and trialled CBA as we know it today. Some commentators have argued that CBA developed in ways that were influenced by more than one narrow approach to learning. For example, Harris et al. (1995, p.36), like Bowden and

Master (1993), have argued that: In the 1970s there were five related to the design of CBE teaching. These were: mastery learning (Bloom 1974), criterion-reference testing (Propham, 1978), minimum-competency testing (Jaegan, 1980), competence in education (Burke et al 1975) and programmed learning (Skinner 1952). These movements shared three things in common: modules design and assessment around a list of observable behaviours and the concept of mastery (Harris et al. 1995, p 396)

3.2.1 Definition of Competency

Basically, a language competency consists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge refers to information and facts; skills refer to the ability to do certain activities; and attitudes refer to positive manners that an individual should observe while carrying out a task (Scallon, 2004). Richards and Rodgers (2001) define the concept of competency as follows: "competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for the effective performance of real-world task or activity" (p. 144). Implied in this definition is that competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform a given real-life task. For example, in teaching making a phone call, the teacher/syllabus designer needs first to identify and teach the knowledge needed such words cell phones, hold a call, put someone through, and hold on. Then, he/she determines the necessary skills of this task such as reading correctly phone numbers, greeting people on the phone, and redirecting calls. Finally, the course designer decides on the positive attitudes for performing this communicative task such as being polite, using a friendly tone, and asking the caller if he/she further needs something else. After teaching and mastering these elements of the competency of phone calls, the students are invited to apply them in an integrative way in a complex task, in which they make genuine phone calls.

3.3.2 Definition of Competence

The term Competence was defined in the New Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 12 (2005) as" the ability to do something well" (p.294). Likewise, in the Business Dictionary, it

was defined as a cluster of related abilities, commitments, knowledge and skills that enable a person (or an organization) to act effectively in a job or a situation. In this sense, competence indicates the sufficiency of skills and knowledge that enable one to perform in a given context successfully. The term gained attraction when in 1973, David McClelland wrote a seminal paper entitled, "Testing for Competence rather than for Intelligence". It has since been popularized by Richard Boyatzis and many others, such as T.F. Gilbert (1978) who used the concept in relation to performance improvement. Its use varies widely, which leads to considerable misunderstanding. Some scholars see "competence" as a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behaviour and values used to improve performance; or as the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, having the ability to perform a specific role. For instance, management competency might include systems thinking and emotional intelligence, and skills in influence and negotiation.

Studies on competency indicate that competency covers a very complicated and extensive concept, and different scientists have different definitions of competency. In 1982, Zemek conducted a study on the definition of competence. He interviewed several specialists in the field of training to evaluate carefully what makes competence. After the interviews, he concluded: "There is no clear and unique agreement about what makes competency."

3.2.3 Difference between Competence and Competency

Throughout the last two decades, the discourse around education and training has shifted towards the use of a pseudo-commercial language of investment, markets, and products. The focus on competence and competency has been part of this move. These two terms are still difficult to be described satisfactorily (Chelli, 2010).

3.3 The Competency-Based Approach

There are different models of curriculum development, some focusing on knowledge transmission and assessment of such knowledge and others more on skills and personal development. The competency-based approach is a very popular approach that focuses on

measurable and useable knowledge, skills and abilities. It consists of teachers basing their instructions on concepts expecting to foster deeper and broader understanding. According to QEP, the competency-based approach consists of organizing the content of a curriculum in terms of the development of competencies using specific pedagogical practices that correspond to the main orientations of QEP (p. 11).

The competency-based approach has become a privileged topic in curriculum discourses as it claims that learners should mobilize their values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in a personal, independent way, to address challenges successfully. Challenges are present everywhere and they can be academic, but also practical and life-oriented. This new approach in education and learning requires a focus not only on input but also on outcomes or results. Such results, however, do not pertain only to academic knowledge, as in traditional testing where rote memorization of pre-fabricated knowledge is required. Competencies are not just skills as opposed to knowledge but represent a complex articulation of knowledge, attitudes and skills that learners can use whenever they are needed not just in the examination. CBA curricula fostering learner-friendly teaching and learning strategies could engender a shift from sheer memorization to the development of higher-order intellectual skills and life skills, including communication, social and emotional and other relevant skills. Competencies could be seen as opposed to the labour market and society.

Competency-based education focuses on outcomes of learning. It addresses what the learners are expected to do rather than what they are expected to learn about. It refers to an educational movement that advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

CBE is a functional approach to education that emphasizes life skills and evaluates mastery of those skills according to actual learner performance. It was defined by the U.S. Office of Education as a performance-based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic

life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society. We can simply say that competency-based education is outcome-based instruction and is adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers and the community. Competencies describe the ability to apply basic and other skills in situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life. Thus CBE is based on a set of outcomes that are derived from an analysis of tasks typically required of students in life situations.

3.3.1 Characteristics of the Competency-Based Approach

The first apparent characteristic of the CBA is the focus on learning and pupils' activities (learners centred) rather than on the teacher's role. The CBA is a socio-constructivist approach based on training students to construct their own knowledge to be able to use it in daily life. According to Auerbach (1986), the essential features included in implementing the CBA syllabus are: It is action-oriented in that it gears learning to the acquisition of know-how embedded in functions and skills. These will allow the learner to become an effective competent user in real-life situations outside the classroom.

It is a problem-solving approach in that it places learners in situations that test/check their capacity to overcome obstacles and problems, make learners think and learn by doing. It is social constructivist, in that it regards learning as occurring through social interaction with other people. In other words, learning is not concerned with the transmission of pre-determined knowledge and know-how to be reproduced in vitro, but as creative use of a newly constructive knowledge through the process of social interaction with other people.

Finally and most importantly, the CBA is a cognitive approach. It is indebted to Bloom's taxonomy (*Bloom, B et al. Taxonomy of Education Objectives, vol 1, The Cognitive Domain in vol 2 and the Affective Domain in New York, 1964*). Bloom has claimed that all the educational objectives can be classified as cognitive (*To do with information*) and affective (to *do with attitudes, values and emotions*) or psychomotor *(to do with bodily movements* …).

He said that cognitive objectives form a hierarchy by which the learner must achieve lower-order objectives before he/she can achieve higher ones.

One of the most distinctive features of CBA is its integration of project work as part of the learning strategy. Overall, if CBA expands on the communicative approach, it is in the sense that it seeks to make the attainment visible, i.e, concrete through the realization of projects. It also makes co-operate learning a concrete reality and opens new avenues for action interaction and the construction of new knowledge. In short, it is only through carrying project work that we and our learners can live the basic principles of CBA.

3.3.2 Principles of the CBA

The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) is divided into two sections, principles that have a relation with a learner and principles which concerned a teacher. The ELT Articles, introducing the CBA, 2009 suggested the following principles:

1. **Principles Concerning the Learner**

• The learner should be motivated and creative. Learners see each other as resources (turned to each other for help). Learners can make some decisions (regarding homework, subject matter...). Learners ask questions and give answers of their own initiative. Learners use English in the classroom more than the teacher. Learners can summarize material acquired through research. Learners must be aware of the strategies they can use to learn better. Learners are not afraid of making errors and viewed them as learning opportunities. Learners can work together to have a spirited group and learn from each other.

1. **Principles Concerning the Teacher**

• The teacher allows time for learners to think.

• The teacher encourages learners to derive language patterns and rules.

• The teacher uses a variety of activities to address different learning styles.

• The teacher asks learners how they got the answer and did not accept just the answer.

• The teacher plans the task, monitors the work but without destroying it.

3.6 Components of the Competency-Based Approach

3.3 Components of the CBA

It consists of the four components which are proposed by *Weddel (2006, p.3)* as the following: An assessment of the learner's needs. The selection of the competencies. The target instruction. An evaluation of the competency attainment.

A Competency-Based Approach is a cyclical approach. Since its four components do not work in isolation, because the approach begins with the assessment of student's needs, moves towards the selection of the expected competencies, then to the target instruction, and finally shifts to the evaluation of the rate of attainment of the competence and returns back to the assessment of needs. (Nkwetisama, 2012)

3.4 Theories Related to the Competency-Based Approach

3.4.1 Cognitivism

Cognitivism is a learning theory that focuses on the processes involved in learning rather than on the observed behaviour. As opposed to Behaviorists, Cognitivists do not require an outward exhibition of learning but focus more on the internal processes and connections that take place during learning. Cognitivism contends that "the black box" of the mind should be opened and understood. The learner is viewed as an information processor. Knowledge can be seen as schema or symbolic mental constructions and learning is defined as the change in a learner's schemata. Some important classroom principles from cognitive psychology include meaningful learning, organization, and elaboration. Richards and Woollard (2010) explain more of the three concepts of the cognitive theory. For them "the term assimilation means collecting and classifying of new information" (p. 12). Likewise, it is the stage of adopting new knowledge. Accommodation is "the alteration of schema in order for new and contradictory information to be allowed" (p. 12). This means that the prior information is adjusted to grasp the new one. Finally, equilibration is "the state of having no contradictions

present in our mental representations of our environment. The linked process of assimilation and accommodation are the means by which a state of equilibration is sought'' (p. 13). Certainly, these three terms represent the basic stages which we move through when we acquire a piece of new knowledge.

3.4.2 Constructivism

Constructivism has emerged in recent years as a dominant paradigm in education and has had a major intellectual impact on the development of pedagogy, rooted in the cognitive-developmental of Piaget and in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, constructivist notions have had an impact on the development and application of technologically enhanced micro worlds and on the linguistic investigation into literacy and narrative development, constructivist learning has developed as a substantial approach to teaching. Phillips (1995) defined constructivism as a theory of learning that focuses on the construction of knowledge. Constructivism is also was described as basically a" theory of learning that attempts to show that knowledge can and can only be generated from experience" (Steffe & Thompson, 2000, p. 6). Flynn on his part sees constructivism as a theory that is about facilitating the learner to go beyond simple recall (memorization) toward understanding, application, and competence (2004: 113). Similarly, Brooks and Brooks (1993: vii) defines constructivism as a theory that is related to learning, they say that constructivism is not a theory of teaching, it is a theory about knowledge and learning (…) the theory defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated.‖

3.4.3 Constructivism and Social Constructivism in the Classroom

Social constructivism has been studied by many educational psychologists, who are concerned with its implications for teaching and learning. Social constructivism extends constructivism by incorporating the role of other factors and culture in development. In this sense, it can also be contrasted with social learning theory by stressing interaction over

observation. For more on the psychological dimensions of social constructivism, see the work of A. Sullivan Palincsar.[7] Psychological tools are one of the key concepts in Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective. In the constructivist classroom, the focus tends to shift from the teacher to the students. A classroom is no longer a place where the teacher ("expert") pours knowledge into passive students, who wait like empty vessels to be filled. In the constructivist model, the students are urged to be actively involved in their own process of learning. In the constructivist classroom, both teacher and students think of knowledge as a dynamic, ever-changing view of the world we live in and the ability to successfully stretch and explore that view – not as inert factoids to be memorized.

Key assumptions of this perspective include:

1. What the student currently believes, whether correct or incorrect, is important.

2. Despite having the same learning experience, each individual will base their learning on the understanding and meaning personal to them.

3. Understanding or constructing meaning is an active and continuous process.

4. Learning may involve some conceptual changes.

5. When students construct new meaning, they may not believe it but may give it provisional acceptance or even rejection.

6. Learning is an active, not a passive, process and depends on the students taking responsibility to learn.

Conclusion

The main activity in a constructivist classroom is solving problems. Students use inquiry methods to ask questions, investigate a topic, and use a variety of resources to find solutions and answers. As students explore the topic, they draw conclusions, and, as exploration continues, they revisit those conclusions. Exploration of questions leads to more questions.

There is a great deal of overlap between a constructivist and social constructivist classroom, with the exception of the greater emphasis placed on learning through social interaction, and the value placed on cultural background. For Vygotsky, culture gives the child the cognitive tools needed for development. Adults in the learner's environment are conduits for the tools of the culture, which include language, cultural history, social context, and more recently, electronic forms of information access.

In social constructivist classrooms, collaborative learning is a process of peer interaction that is mediated and structured by the teacher. Discussion can be promoted by the presentation of specific concepts, problems or scenarios, and is guided by means of effectively directed questions, the introduction and clarification of concepts and information, and references to previously learned material.

Chapter Two:

Field of Investigation

Introduction……..……..…….23

1. Practical part ……..……..…….23

1.1 Teaching and learning observation session ……..…….23

1.2 Presentation session …….……23

1.3 The result …….…....24

2. Aim of the Questionnaire…….…….…..…24

3. Choice of the Method…….…….…..…..24

4. The sample……..……...……24

4.1 Description of Questionnaire……...……25

4.2. Administration of the Questionnaire……..…25

4.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire……..……26

4.4 Discussion of the Results……..……34

Conclusion…….35

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations……..…36

General Conclusion……37

List of References……..….38

Appendix…….……..…42

Résumé…….….46

Introduction

In the following chapter we present the practical part of our study which aims to collect data, observations on learning and teaching session (1st year middle school) as sample of using CBA in classroom. Additionnally, we make applied session with learners in order to get clear idea about the effectiveness of this approach. In other hand, we analyze and discuss middle school EFL teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching EFL. Interestingly, this chapter explains the aim of teachers' questionnaire, the method used to carry out this study, and the sample selected for the current research. Moreover, it tackles teachers' questionnaire in terms of its description, administration, analysis, and discussion of the results. Finally, the chapter ends up with a conclusion, some pedagogical implications, recommendations for teachers, and limitations of the study.

1. Practical Part :

1.1 Teaching and Learning Observation Session:

- **Content and Structure :**

As students we attended teaching and learning sessions, the main aim isto observe the use of CBA in this session. We have noticed that most learners were invovled when the teacher leads them in commnicative way in the beginning of the lesson. The teacher presents the content in a logical sequence and he effectively uses visual tools aid demonstrating course content knoweldge.

- **Communication and Learners Interactions :**

All learners were communicating easily by speaking clearly and intercating with each other answering questions. Teacher role as facilitator just manages the classroom discussion and participation.

- **Motivation and Learners Engagement :**

Learners were greatly motivated, they have opportunities for skill development, they were engaged in their learning. Teacher creates space in the classroom for learners and learner interactions, he assessed learner progress throughout the session and provided support when needed, he gave learners opportunties to reflect on thier learning.

1.2 Presentation Session :

As students we prepared and presented a lesson for learners focusing on use of CBA approach to achieve learning objective, the group contains 15 students.

We started our session with warming up and led the learner to the situation, learning tasks and activities. We made assessement to check the learner understanding.

1.3 The Result

The result in classroom was great, we achieved the learning objective easily, most learners were engaged in the topic which was related to thier real life situations. Our role as teacher was just facilitator. In other hand, after assessement of all learners we noticed that the result of some students were weak due to some principles which were not fulfilled to the level of learner of 1st year middle school; for instance, self-error correction when learners correct themselves instead of a teacher one.

2. Aim of the Questionnaire

The main aim of this questionnaire is to examine the efficacy of the CBA as it is implemented in teaching English in the Algerian middle schools. The questionnaire,

therefore, helps us to find out whether or not the CBA is effective in achieving pupils' progress in learning EFL.

3. Choice of the Method

It is known that, the choice of the research method mainly depends on the aim of the study as well as the subject being tackled. Therefore, we have used a descriptive method to reach the objective of this study, since it aims at investigating teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching EFL. Moreover, a questionnaire was administered as a research tool to discover whether or not the CBA is an effective approach in teaching English to middle school pupils.

4. The Sample

The target population of this study is a number of Algerian middle school teachers of English, for the academic year 2020/ 2021. Practically, we designed a questionnaire of the research work on the whole population of middle school teachers that is why we have selected teachers of English from different middle schools in NAAMA city as a sample of this study. Our sample consists of thirty one (35) teachers. We have chosen middle school teachers of English to be used as the sample of our study because these teachers are considered to have great relation with the subject.

So, they can easily determine the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English. Besides, they have a sufficient experience that makes their views and answers more helpful and useful for the aim of this study.

4.1 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire includes twelve (12) questions. Some are open ended, others are of multiple choices, and other ones are rating scale questions. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: general information, middle school teachers' views of the CBA, teachers' viewpoints about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English in the Algerian middle schools with suggestions and comments.

Section one: General Information (Q1- Q4)

This section seeks to gather general information about middle school teachers of English. (Q1) seeks to know teachers' age. (Q2) is about teachers' gender. In (Q3) and (Q4), teachers are asked if they have any previous experience in teaching English other than their teaching experience at the middle school.

Section two: Middle School Teachers' Views of the CBA (Q5- Q9)

The second section is mainly concerned with teachers' opinions about the CBA. In (Q5) How would teachers define and describe the CBA? . Then, (Q6) is designed mainly to know teachers' views about is put to collect data about teachers' degree of agreement about the main aim of the CBA. (Q7) seeks to find out teachers' degree of agreement about the main advantage of the CBA, and (Q8) which aims at testing teachers' understanding of the CBA. Finally, (Q9) tackles teachers' opinions about the teaching of English language under the framework of the CBA.

Section three: Teachers' viewpoints about the Effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English in the Algerian Middle School (Q10 –Q 12)

The third section contains three questions. This section aims at discovering teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of the CBA in teaching English. It begins with (Q10) which aims at knowing the current pupils' English proficiency level within the CBA. Besides, (Q11) which is the core of the questionnaire seeks to find out whether or not the CBA is effective in teaching EFL and comments whether they answer yes or no. The last question (Q12) contains an open ended question which consists of adding any further suggestion or comments concerning the CBA.

4.2 Administration of the questionnaire

The administration of the questionnaire took place at all middle schools of NAAMA. But the teachers were asked to answer online questionnaire. It was submitted to the entire sample i.e., all teachers of English. Thirty (35) teachers among them answered the questionnaire.

4.3 Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaire

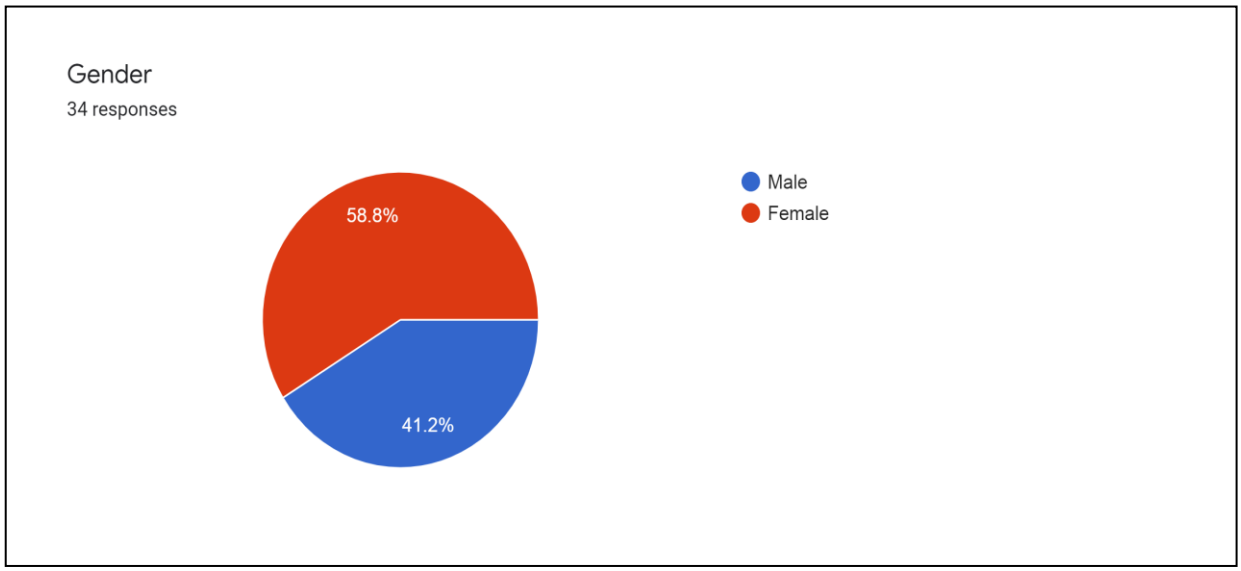
Section One: General Information

Q1. Gender :

a. Male

b. Female

Figure01 : Teachers' Gender



From the results in *figure 1*, we observe that the percentage of females is 58.8%, whereas the percentage of males is 41 %. So, it seems clear that there is a significant difference in the gender of respondents and maybe this due to sociological reasons; mainly the number of males is fewer than females in the Algerian society, and females prefer to join this profession more than males.

Q2. What is your degree(s)?

a. (BA) License
b. (MA) Master
c. (ENS)Licence in English language teaching

Figure 2.Teachers' Academic Degree

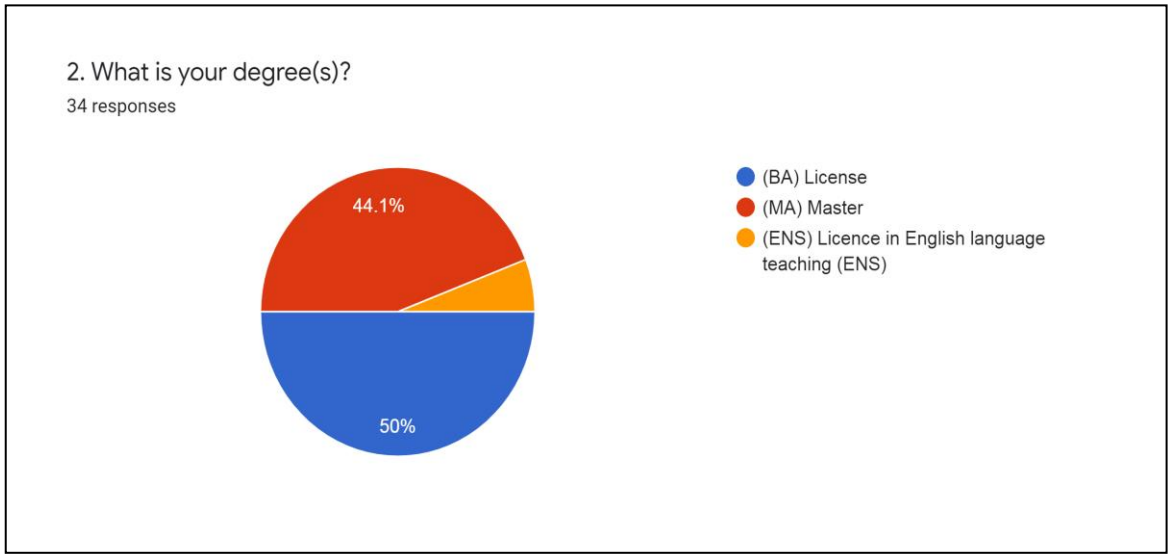


Figure 2 shows that most teachers 50 % in the Algerian middle schools have a License (BA) degree, which indicates that the degree required for teaching at the middle school is a License degree. However, 44.1% Master degree.

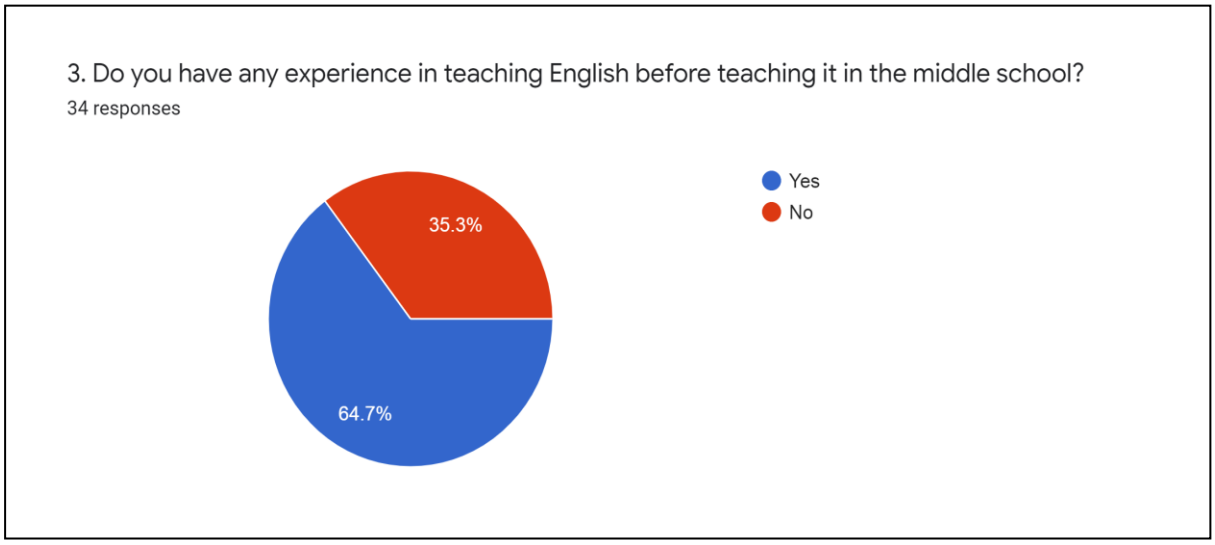
Q3. Do you have any experience in teaching English before teaching it in the middle school?

a. Yes

b. No

If 'Yes', for how many years?

Figure 3.Years of Teaching Experience before the Middle School

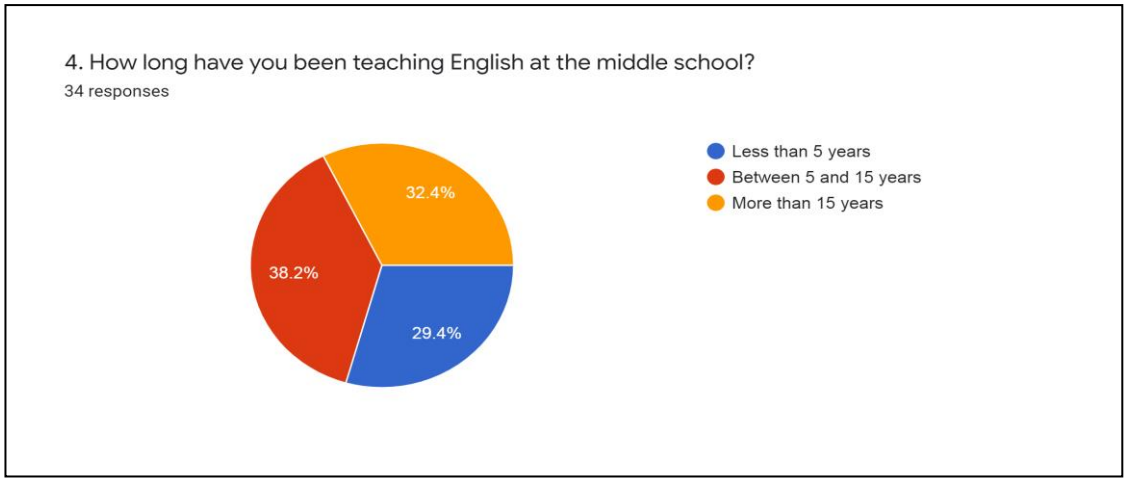


The results in figure 3 show that 64.7% of teachers have experience in teaching English before their teaching experience at the middle school. However, 35.3 % said that they don't have any experience in teaching English. From these results, we deduce that some teachers from our sample are experienced teachers.

Q 4. How long have you been teaching English at the middle school?

a. Less than 5 years
c. Between 5 and 15 years
d. More than 15 years

Figure 4. Experience of Teaching at the Middle School



Results in *figure 4* reveal that 29.4 % of middle school questionned teachers have less than 5 years of teaching experience. The majority (38.2%) o f teachers has an experience between 5 and 15 years and 32.2 % of teachers have been teaching English for more than 15 years. This implies that most teachers are experienced ones and this would help us to get valid results.

Section two: Middle School Teachers' Views of the CBA

Q5. How would you describe the CBA?

It appears from teachers' responses that the majority of them showed a good understanding of the CBA since all of them gave the appropriate definition to the new approach. They all defined it as an approach which is based on training learners to construct their own knowledge to be able to use it in their real life tasks. This confirms that the majority of teachers were well trained to use the CBA.

Q6. The implementation of the CBA helps learners to become effective competent users of English in their real life tasks.

a. Strongly agree

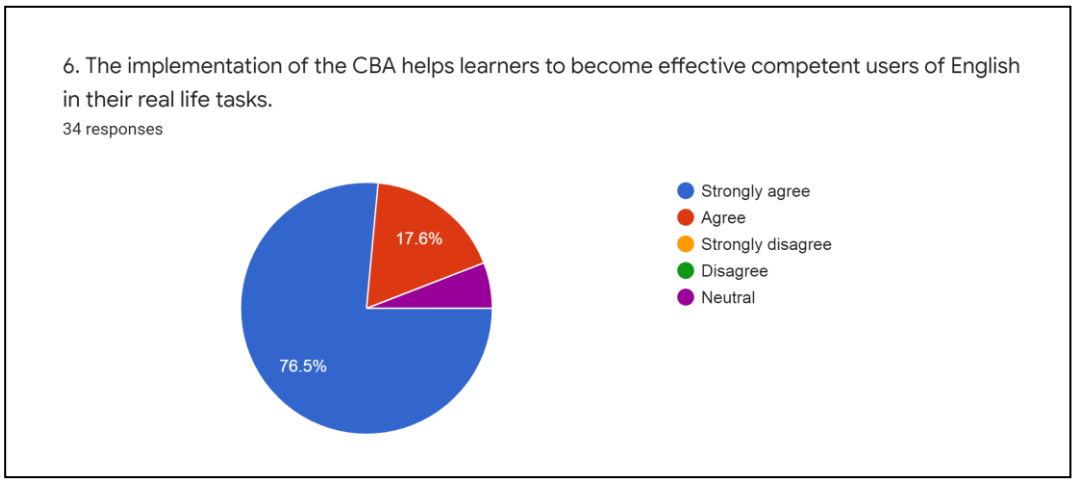
b. Agree

c. Strongly disagree

d. Disagree

e. Neutral

Figure 5. ***Teacher' Degree of Agreement concerning the Main Aim of the CBA***



The results indicated in *figure 5* reveal that, most of teachers 76.5% show that *agreed strongly* with the fact that the CBA helps learners to use English effectively and competently outside the school. Besides, 17.6 % of them agree upon its aim.

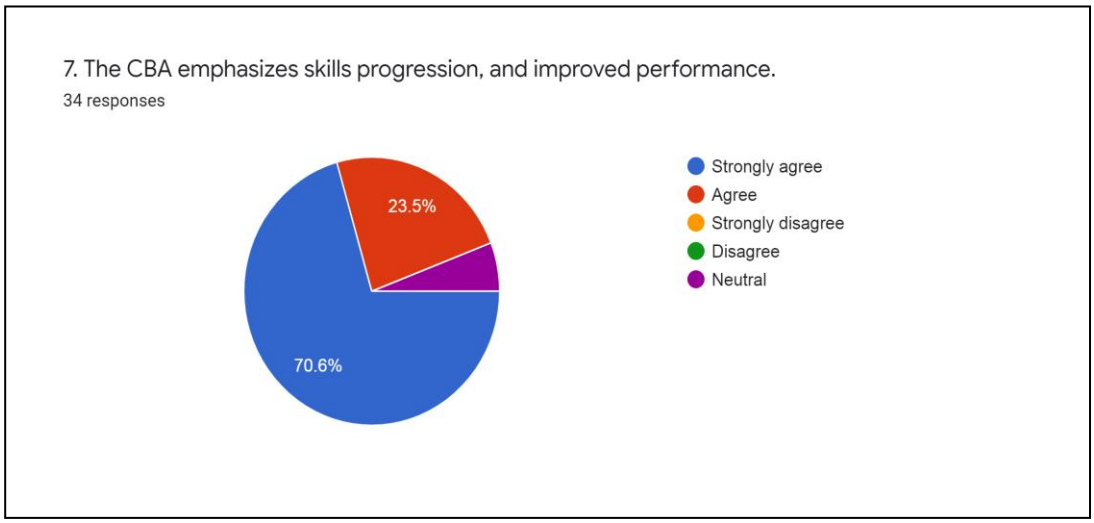
Q7. The CBA emphasizes skills progression, and improved performance.

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree
c. Strongly disagree
d.Disagree

e. Neutral

Figure 6. Teachers' Degree of Agreement with the Advantage of the CBA



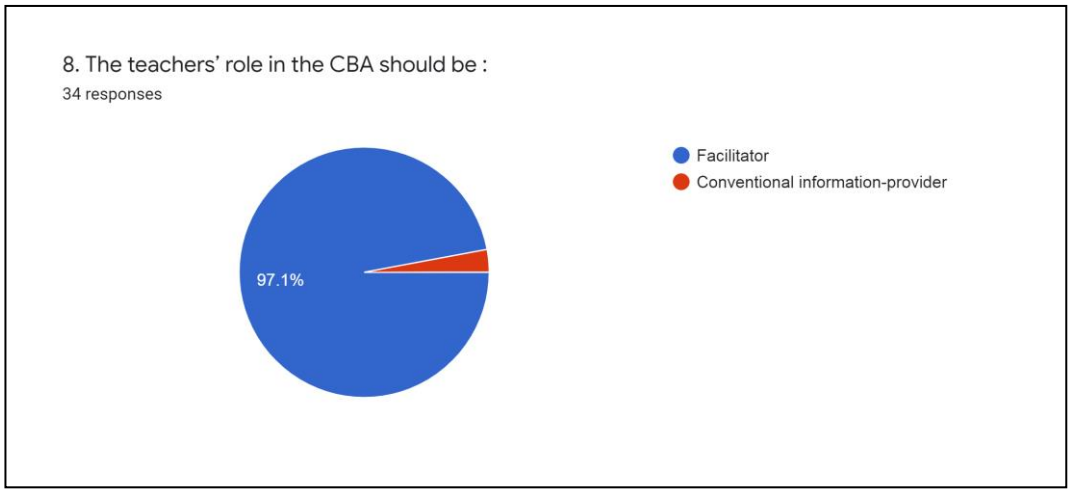
In *figure 6* we indicates that the majority of the teachers 93 % (23 % + 70%) do agree that the CBA improves learners' performance and motivates them to learn more.

Q8. The teachers' role in the CBA should be:

a. Facilitator

b.Conventional information provider

Figure 7. The Teachers' Role in the CBA



This question (Q8), highlights the teacher's role in the CBA. Teachers were to some extent unanimous about the role they play in implementing the CBA. Statistically, (97.2%) of teachers said that their principle role is that of facilitator, less than (1%) of the respondents said that their role is just information provider. Teachers justified that the role of the teacher should be a facilitator and a guide in order to facilitate learning and make the learners less dependent and more responsible for their learning process.

Q9. Teaching English under the framework of the CBA means:

a. Teaching its grammatical rules

b. Teaching its communicative use

c. Both

Figure 8. Teachers' Opinions about Teaching English within the CBA

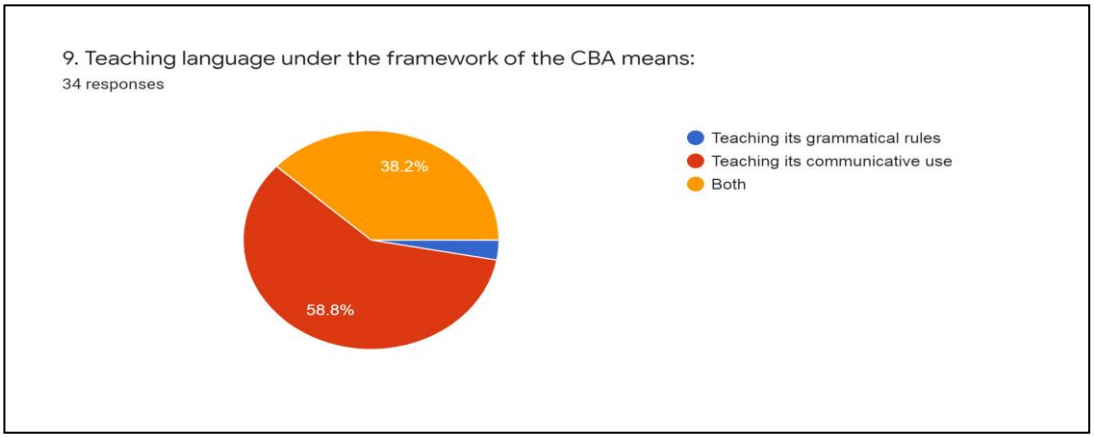


Figure 8 indicates that the majority of teachers (58.5 %) said that teaching English within the CBA means teaching its communicative side i.e., teaching the real functions of a language in daily life settings of communication. On the other hand, the rest of them (38.2%) stated that it means both grammatical and communicative use.

Section Three: Teachers' viewpoints about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English in the Algerian middle school

Q10. The Pupils' English proficiency level in previous years was:

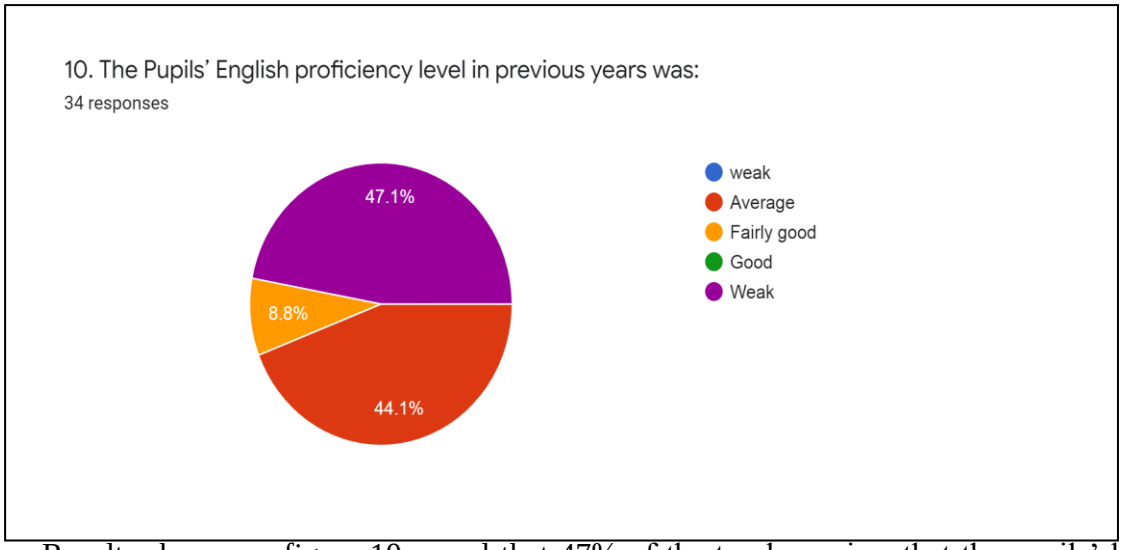
a. Weak

b. Average

c. Fairly good

d. Good

Figure 10. Pupils' English Proficiency Level within the CBA



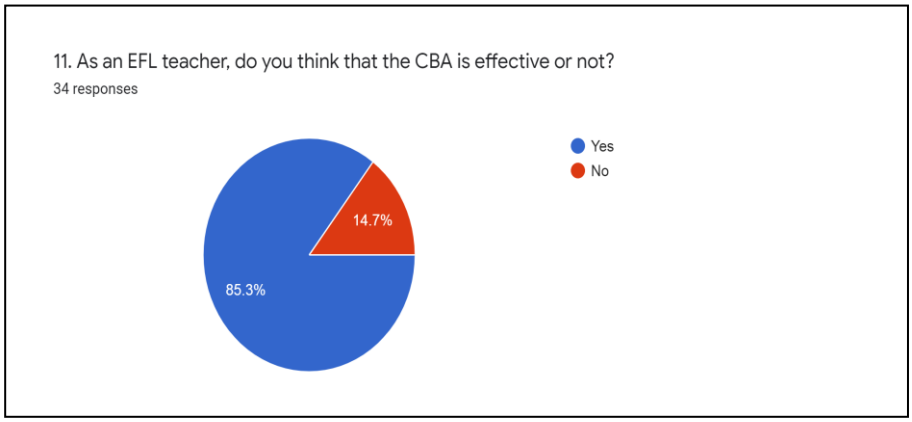
Results shown on figure 10 reveal that 47% of the teachers view that the pupils' level in English is average while 44.33% think that they are weak. Only 8.8% regard their level as fairly good. The results obtained from this question reveal that the CBA helps pupils to reach an acceptable level in English.

Q11. As an EFL teacher, do you think that the CBA is effective or not?

a.Yes

b. No

Figure 11. Teachers' view about the Effectiveness of the CBA



As we can notice from figure 11 the majority of teachers (85.3%) declared that the CBA is indeed as effective approach in teaching EFL .While, 14.7% of them did not find the CBA as an effective approach in teaching English at the middle school. We can deduce from the results that, the targeted teachers for this study seem to demonstrate some inclination to the CBA as an approach to language instruction due to the fact that the majority of them see that this approach is an effective for successful language learning.

Teachers comments : most of teachers said that number of pupils and materials help to achieve the main aim of CBA.

Q12. If you want to add anything about the CBA, please add any comments or suggestions?

For this question, teachers believed that teaching English effectively under the umbrella of the CBA needs additional specific training sessions. Moreover, number of learners should be less than 15. They asserted that technological tools have a pivotal role in facilitating the process of teaching within the CBA.

4.4 Discussion of the Results

The questionnaire's main objective is to validate the research hypothesis which states that Algerian middle school teachers would find the CBA as an effective approach in EFL classes.

To start with, the first section of the questionnaire deals with the personal background of the teachers where (Q3) and (Q4) demonstrated the 'highly' qualification of the teaching experience of the instructors. On the other hand, questions from (Q5) to (Q9) were to get a view about the teachers'opinons whether they possess some knowledge about the CBA or not. Actually, all respondents asserted they have a 'good knowledge' about the CBA since most of them selected the options that deal with the main aspects of the CBA (as shown in the analysis).

Teachers' viewpoints about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English is dealt with in question (Q10) where it has been revealed that (50%) of pupils have reached an intermediate level (i.e., acceptable in the teachers' terms) of proficiency in English within the framework of the CBA. A fact which implies the relative success of the CBA in promoting the teaching of English in the Algerian educational system.

Finally, the teachers' answers (80%) through (Q 11) (Q 12) make a 'confession' that the CBA remains an effective approach for successful language learning.

In sum, the results discussed in the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire confirm the initially stated hypothesis, which consists of admitting that the CBA is an effective approach to English language teaching.

Conclusion

The present chapter shed light on some practical parts of the study which have been described, analyzed, and discussed. Overall, the teachers' answers denote an almost total agreement about the fact that the CBA displays effective and efficient features of a successful method. The discussion and the results of the questionnaire were about the study's questions of whether the CBA is an effective approach to language teaching or not. The results obtained from the questionnaire prove that the majority of middle school teachers find the CBA really an effective approach in teaching EFL.Thus; the positive results we revealed in this study have confirmed our hypothesis.

Pedagogical implications and Recommendations Pedagogical Implications

The current investigation indicates that the chosen sample for this study did respond positively to the use of the CBA as a basic approach to teach EFL epecially for biginners (1st year middle school) Therefore; some pedagogical implications are drawn:

- Use the CBA with mixed methods is an effective way to language instruction in the Algerian EFL classrooms.
- Pupils in the middle school do have an inclination and thus motivation to learn under the umbrella of the CBA.
- The CBA has been shown to have advantages in promoting the learners' autonomy in learning EFL.

Recommendations for Teachers

To be aware of something means you know what to do, when to do, and most importantly how to do. In other words, teachers need to know what the CBA is, in terms of both theory and practice. To do so, they should have more knowledge about the approach to enlarge their repertoires about its different features and requirements. Moreover, seminars must be held frequently and regularly because they are of a great help especially for novice teachers. Along inspectors and mentors, it would be more fruitful if all teachers can be invited to enrich the meeting with model lessons and their experience in terms of the teaching practices. Thus, such opportunities and meetings can redirect some teachers' way of teaching and help them overthrow the way they have been taught before.

General Conclusion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the Algerian middle school EFL teachers' views about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching EFL. In other words, the purpose of this study was to find whether the CBA as an approach of language instruction is effective in teaching English for the Algerian middle school pupils.

The dissertation included two main chapters. The first chapter constituted the theoretical part of this research work which was about an overview of the CBA, in which we reviewed briefly the most common used approaches and methods of language teaching; we tackled in details the theoretical aspects of the CBA such as (its history, definition, characteristic, components, advantages, teachers' role as well as learners' role within the CBA, and pedagogical implications behind its application in the Algerian middle school).

The second chapter was the practical part of this study. We collected data through observations on 1st year middle school learners in classroom session, moreover, we prepared and presented lesson in a session for learners. Additoinnally, we represented the analysis of the middle school teachers' questionnaire. The results we have obtained from this questionnaire confirmed our hypothesis; in the sense that the findings show that the CBA is an effective approach to English language teaching. In other hand, after assessement of all learners we noticed that the results are diffrent from one class to another and some learners' results were weak due to some principles which were not fulfilled to the level of learner of 1st year middle school as for instance self-error correction when learners correct themselves instead of a teacher. Their ability to apply and use information in new situations (demonstrate, interpret, schedule….).Also, they were not able to evaluate and create (justify a stand or decision, produce new or original work). This led to conclude that teacher need to make mixed methods and techniques with CBA to achieve his learning objectives.

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Appendix

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is a data collection tool in order to prepare a Master Dissertation in Language Sciences and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). It aims at investigating middle school EFL teachers' viewpoints about the effectiveness of the Competency-based Approach (CBA), which is implemented in the Algerian educational system since 2003. Therefore, your answers and suggestions will be of a great help to make the research work achieve its objectives.

Please, tick (√) the appropriate box/es that reflect/s your choice and write full answers whenever necessary.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Mr. Merzougui Abbes

Center University of Naama

Faculty of Letters and Languages.

Department of English.

2020/2021

Section One: General Information

1. Gender :

a. Male

b. Female

2. What is your degree(s)?

a. (BA) License

b. (MA) Master

d. (ENS) Licence in English language teaching

Other, please specify?

……

3. Do you have any experience in teaching English before teaching it in the middle school?

a. Yes

b. No

If yes, for how many years?

……

4. How long have you been teaching English at the middle school?

a. Less than 5 years

b. Between 5 and 15 years

c. More than 15 years

Section Two: Middle school Teachers' Views of the CBA

5. How would you describe the CBA?

……

……

6. The implementation of the CBA helps learners to become effective competent users of English in their real life tasks.

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Strongly disagree

d. Disagree



e. Neutral

7. The CBA emphasizes skills progression, and improved performance.



a. Strongly agree



b. Agree



c. Strongly disagree



d. Disagree



e. Neutral

8. The teachers' role in the CBA should be:



a. Facilitator



b. Conventional information-provider

Explain your choice, please?

……

9. Teaching language under the framework of the CBA means:

a. Teaching its grammatical rules

b. Teaching its communicative use

c. Both

Section Three: Teachers' viewpoints about the effectiveness of the CBA in teaching English in the Algerian middle school

10. The Pupils' English proficiency level in previous years was:

a. Weak

b. Average

c. Fairly good

d. Good

11. As an EFL teacher, do you think that the CBA is effective or not?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Your comments…….
……
……
……..

12. If you want to add anything concerning the CBA, please do comments or suggestions?

……

……

……

……

……

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

RÉSUMÉ

Le but principal appliqué en le system éducatif algérien en basant sur l'approche basée sur les compétences (ABC) d'enseigner la langue anglaise au cycle moyen c'est de faire améliorer les capacités des apprenants et leur réussite de s'informer à la langue anglaise. C'est pour ce la cette étude descriptive tente d'analyser des différentes points du vue des enseignants sur l'efficacité de cette méthode d'apprendre la langue anglaise. Pour vérifier l'efficacité de l'approche basée sur les compétences (ABC) nous avons distribuer des questionnaires à trente et un (31) des enseignants de la langue anglaise à plusieurs établissement au cycle moyen à la wilaya de Naama pour atteindre notre objective et confirmer notre hypothèse. Les résultats ont révélé que l'ABC est une approche efficace et efficiente pour apprendre l'anglais comme langue étrangère. Par conséquent, l'hypothèse de l'étude a été confirmée