

Towards a more Objective Evaluation of EFL Teacher Training in Algeria

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In this expose I would like to consider a very important problem concerning the training of teachers of EFL (PES) in some Algerian universities. I do not mean to assess their training because, and I must apologize for that, no assessments tools, nor was scientific evaluation of the curriculum used. However, teaching in a secondary school for two decades, supervising trainees, being a member of the CAPES commission may help to have a more or less objective evaluation of the EFL teacher training. The diagnosis is unfortunately severe and negative: the departments of English in some universities do not train efficient teachers of EFL neither do they train competent "speakers" of English.

The training sessions and the great deal of conversation with the trainees have revealed some deficiencies in their initial training. This expose will look into the two types of training the university is supposed to provide in order to produce teachers of EFL ready to face their pupils in the secondary school classrooms. We will attempt to detect the deficiencies and the causes which have engendered them.

The Linguistic Training

The linguistic deficiencies are linked to the main modules which constitute the curriculum of the "Licence", and concern the language practice.

Oral Expression

The trainees seemed to understand perfectly conversations about teaching, pupils, methodology, university life; they could also express themselves with some kind of fluency. However, some deficiencies could be noticed in: intonation, speech delivery, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary

Written Expression

The trainees' writing skills could not be accurately evaluated through the teaching unit plans they designed because these consisted of short sentences such as instructions and the formulation of aims, but as part of the preparation of their lessons they were advised to write the final written composition to predict their pupils' language problems and needs, and what they wrote contained many flaws as far as coherence, punctuation, and even capitalization were concerned.

Knowledge of the language structure

Here it seemed that the students had acquired rules of grammar and phonetics but were unable to put them in practice when it came to teaching. Methodology was certainly lacking but they also seemed not being able to understand the function and nature of some rules.

As for the causes which have engendered these deficiencies, they can be traced through the way and methods these modules are taught. Both oral and written expression are very important modules for a future teacher of English, but what is noticed is that they are the most neglected: they are taught by inexperienced

teachers without any programme, a methodology or assigned objectives. Phonetics and grammar are often taught more theoretically and we could not see any impact of the acquired phonetic rules on the students' oral expression, and no impact of what had been learnt in grammar on their oral and written expression.

The Pedagogical /Professional Training

This is done or supposed to be done in a form of some theoretical modules such as: TEFL psycho-pedagogy and psycho-linguistics, and a training period (of about five weeks) in a secondary school in the third term of the fourth year. Most of the students do not see the difference between these modules because they deal with some theoretical aspects of teaching/learning process and some of the well-known approaches to language teaching ,but this remains abstract and the trainees cannot figure out their application in a real classroom; for instance many trainees confessed that they have never received the proper training to design teaching unit plans nor even lessons, nor even methods of evaluating pupils' learning and their teaching.

The pedagogical training in secondary schools planned by the Algerian official texts has been unfortunately either cancelled in some parts of the country or neglected. First it is done in a very short period (4 or 5 weeks).Second, the trainees are supposed to be supervised by their university teacher, inspectors and trainers (professeurs d'application) in the secondary school. Yet it is in this period where the gap between the university and the secondary school should be bridged that it is widening, because the university teachers do not

follow their students in the schools ,inspectors are not even informed of the operation and the trainees go to any available teacher because the Direction of Education does not do its job

The trainees find it an interesting experience and although they have not enough time to observe, to learn and apply what they have learnt, they acknowledge that they learn more about the art of teaching in a classroom than at the university. This has been proved to be true in the CAPES exams: most of the trainees improved not only their teaching but also their linguistic competence. This means that their training is done on the job which also means that the university does not fully contribute to the training of a PES, and does not even meet the needs of the secondary schools in Algeria.

Conclusion

Teacher training at the university leaves much to be desired because the scientific teacher training is not adapted to the reality of the secondary school English classroom. The university seems to be not aware of the reality of the pupil's level and prerequisites the curriculum, the textbooks, the syllabus... And the new teacher finds himself broken with the theoretical courses he has learnt at the university and feels frustrated in front of a teaching / learning situation he has not been prepared for. As a result he finds himself forced to prepare each day what to teach the following day: the gap between the university and the secondary school will probably become wider and wider as long as they continue to ignore each other.

Even if this "acknowledgement of failure" is over-exaggerated and not based on some sound scientific facts, it is obvious now (in the 21st century) that the world-wide economic conditions are imposing the English language as the tool of work in different fields such as import / export business, international relations, insurance and bank systems, computing,... The university must train efficient teachers for the primary, intermediate and secondary schools, because our pupils even at an early age urgently need to have access to information now available on satellite TV and Internet. It will also have to train experts and negotiators in different fields. For this, it is now more than ever imposed on the Algerian university to be reformed to succeed in this double task.

A Suggested Plan for Future Training

The rapid changes happening in the world and our society are urging our educational system to quickly change, if not, it will be obsolete and non-efficient because as Rivers said:

« "With the passing of time, new situations arise for a nation and its people, or for a district and its school, and these establish priorities of objectives of the teachers of other languages who must be constantly aware of such changes if their teaching is to be appropriate to the generation before them »

(Rivers,1981:7-8)

For our university, the changes are occurring quickly and at a larger scale; the new situations are imposing urgent objectives for the teaching of English. So the mission of the department of English should be

clearly stated and not wrongly interpreted as limited to the production of teachers of English for secondary schools.

From clearly stated objectives, the curriculum and assignment methods will be reformed to train efficiently motivated students willing to become teachers of English in the Algerian schools and other university departments, and competent graduates who will use English in their work. This means, for instance, that a module of ESP must be introduced at a certain stage of the training period.

The training for a “Licence” could be planned in two stages: The first stage would be a two-year study which would re-enforce the linguistic competence acquired at the secondary school level; the two year programme will include the language practice, scientific study of the language and ESP modules, this will lead to a diploma that would be a pre-requisite for students who wish to continue their studies and specialize in fields like : journalism, management, tourism, business administration ...

The plan of the first two-year study will look like:

Year	Modules	Sub Modules	Objectives
First Year	Language Practice	Written exp Oral Expression Listening Comp Reading Comp Phonetics Grammar	-To achieve communication in its various forms and dimensions -To speak fluently English respecting the rules of grammar and phonology -To write correctly respecting the rules of syntax and mechanics of writing -To understand oral messages linked to everyday activities and on various cultural, scientific and technical themes -To understand and tackle different types of texts
Second Year	Language Practice		-To master accurately the rules of grammar and phonetic transcription -To recognize the different registers and types of discourse and be able to use them
	ESP		-To exploit documents related to specific fields
	British and American Civilization		-To know about the history of G.B and the USA and the Commonwealth countries, their cultures and their institutions.

At the second stage the students whose marks allow may register for another two year programme to prepare for a career of teachers in the intermediate, secondary schools, and even at the university. The suggested plan would be as follows:

Year	Modules	Sub Modules	Objectives
Third Year	Language Practice	Written exp Oral expression	To be able to use the language appropriately, meaningfully spontaneously in an authentic communicative situation, be it verbal or graphic
	Knowledge of Language	Grammar Linguistics Phonetics Phonology	To master the theoretical and practical aspects of the English language and the rules that govern it to apply them in the teaching process
	Civilization	British Civilization American Civilization	
	Literature	British Literature American Literature	To know about the literary works and movements in the English literature
Fourth Year	Scientific Knowledge of Language Psycho-pedagogy TEFL professional training	} linguistics	-To know about the different approaches methods to the teaching of F.L, psychological aspects of learning that play a role in the learning process. -To apply what has been acquired theoretically in a real classroom situation.

This suggested plan will of course need to be refined and enriched by experts and specialists to allow the department of English to fulfill the double task of training competent " users" of English and efficient teachers. The students who are really motivated to work

as teachers will have to work hard to get over the first stage (1er cycle) in order to receive a pedagogical and professional training in the second stage (2eme cycle) .They will be motivated by their choice and everyone knows that teaching is one of the jobs that is well done only if it is chosen and liked; otherwise secondary school pupils would suffer a lot from a frustrated teacher and the English language will carry on its descent to a level which will be useless to acquire information, knowledge and technology.

References

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