

Some Notes on the CBLT in Algeria

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Abstract

This article presents some reflections on the shift in September 2003 from a time-based approach to a competency-based approach in the Algerian educational system since September 2003. It also reflects on the subsequent syllabi. The teaching of English as a Foreign Language is explored as a case in point. The way the Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching (henceforth CBLT) has been implemented since September 2003 - and more recently revisited - in Algeria is discussed on the basis of classroom observations, the learner's attributes together with the current school setting and environment. These will serve as indicators and markers of school failure in Algeria today. This article concludes with some suggestions on a more adequate implementation of the CBLT for a more appropriate English Language teaching and learning in Algeria.

Introduction

The current educational system in Algeria remains essentially based on courses which are scheduled to last for a given period of instruction (Time-based programs and text-books). At the same time, one notices a growing tendency among various actors (school inspectors, teachers, parents, etc.) that the Algerian educational sector needs amendments. Similarly, a *de facto* recognition amongst higher level decision makers is indicative of the will and wishes that changes must be

brought urgently¹. This issue takes place of pride in the most recent debates on schooling and education. The issue at stake is that the current educational system in Algeria remains essentially and fully based on courses scheduled to last for a given period of instruction. This implies that learners in various fields of study like Maths, Physics or languages are involved in courses that supposedly prepare them for a profession in the Algerian socio-economic sectors.

If one takes the case of English for illustration, progress in these courses is time-based (1st year English, 2nd year English, 3rd year English, 4th year English, etc.). This means that during this learning phase, the teacher is supposed to have given an amount of knowledge and reached a particular stage in the textbook or the course content. This entails that the learner is supposed to have learnt at the pace “imposed” by the teacher, the textbook, or the course itself. Yet, it is generally agreed today that not all learners learn at the same pace, nor is the teacher’s output necessarily the same as the learner’s input (Krashen, 1995). Tests are scheduled on a periodic basis to evaluate the learner’s acquired knowledge in terms of scores (marks out of 20) in order to check

¹. Cf. the successive ministerial instructions in this vein, the different committees of programs and syllabus designers and experts, TV and radio debates, speeches and recommendations, the documents published by under the banner of the National Education Reform in Algeria, etc.

his/her progress in the course. In case of failure, some remedial work is sometimes improvised by the teacher, but it has never been based on the individual's needs because of overcrowded classrooms (over 40 pupils, sometimes more). The failing learner rarely obtains individual assistance unless he resorts to private courses outside the school (or the university) and provided the parents can afford it financially.

The typical effects and affects of a time-based teaching program in Algeria appear clearly in the low rates of success for equivalents of the O level and A level results (BEM, Baccalaureate, etc.) which are published each year and which are indicative of school failure and of the inadequacy of the teaching / learning policies in Algeria.

Time-based teaching has proven successful at times over the years and in specific teaching environments (sandwich courses, crash courses, etc.). Nevertheless, such approaches to teaching have also proven to be inadequate if the course objective is to lead the learner to perform a number of tasks on the basis of the knowledge he has acquired during the learning phase.

At university, the 'Licence d'Enseignement de Langues'² has produced over the years teachers who have been poorly prepared for *teaching* (rather than for the teaching profession). The programs, knowledge, skills and training

². It is no more called so. The cover label "Licence" is a global term for what is taught in the BA in Foreign Languages in Algeria.

at university are inadequately designed for the teaching profession of foreign languages³. The result is that the Algerian school learner knows basically how to perform an addition, a multiplication, a subtraction or a division in class. However, he/she often fails to apply this knowledge in real everyday situations simply because he has been trained and used to ‘return back’ what he has learnt in the classroom during an assessment, a test or an exam at school. This entails that knowledge in such cases remains confined or restrained to the classroom environment and for evaluation purposes both for the teacher, the learner, and the school institution under the form of a summative evaluation.

What lacks in the case of the teacher and that of the learner is the opportunity - or at least the adequate environment-, where the acquired knowledge becomes dynamic rather than static. The learner needs to put to work the acquired knowledge in terms of skills and capacities, to be able to re-invest it during the performance of a task and to call upon his/her individual strategies such as breakdown strategies in problem solving situations. The learner needs to develop a new

³. During their graduation, students never have the opportunity to prepare a project (oral or written) on teaching a given structure, form and function in front of their peers. Similarly, once they graduate for the “Licence d’Enseignement de Langues” and get a job, there are no teacher-training sessions to improve their didactic knowledge, skills and performance.

behaviour in class as well as outside class. Most of all he/she needs to be guided to develop the feeling of having achieved something on the basis of what was learnt during the course.

No doubt, a time-based educational system as expounded in our schools - and universities - is not appropriate for such an achievement, nor is it adequate for the training of successful actors in the Algerian educational and socio-economic development. The answer would rather be teaching and training based on competencies, capacities, strategies and skills which he/she develops and acquires through learning and practice inside and outside school. This can be achieved by implementing an adequate and more appropriate Competency Based Approach (henceforth, CBA) and in particular a Competency Based Language Teaching (CBLT) approach that fits into the Algerian educational field and responds to classroom reality setting and requirements.

The next section presents, from a socio-educational and a socio-linguistic perspective, an overview of the Algerian teachers' and learners' entry and exit profiles. The case in point concerns the teaching / learning of English as a Foreign Language. These profiles have been subject to changes in the Algerian society at different periods of time. The main objective is to illustrate how social upheavals in Algeria have affected the teacher's and the learner's attributes and attitudes towards English. At the same time, they highlight their impact on the educational sector as a whole.

1. The Teacher's Entry and Exit Profile

The eighties are used here as a demarcating line to illustrate changes that occurred in the teacher's profile⁴. These will serve for comparison purposes to illustrate the impact of socio-economic and cultural changes on the teaching and learning of English in Algeria since independence (1962).

Prior to the 80's, teaching was considered as a profession. It was mainly motivation based. The would-be teacher of English was undoubtedly someone who, for various reasons - cultural, vocational but hardly ever triggered by instrumental motivation - wanted to be a teacher. Teaching was then considered as a respected and respectable profession in the society. The teacher stood as the source of knowledge inside as well as outside the classroom and he represented somehow the Authority in the city. Prior to getting the job, the would-be teacher had to follow teacher-training programs in special institutions (ITE)⁵ for a better practice and an adequate management of his profession. Teaching was *a profession* and a creative source in terms of cultural and scientific activities. Official texts encouraged at that time the exchanges between the University and the industrial sector in terms of applied research.

⁴. We refer here to Teachers of English in Algeria as a case study.

⁵. ITE : Institut de Technologies de l'Enseignement (Teacher Training Institute) which exists no more today.

For the case of English, there was an open access to educational reviews, journals and magazines on Teaching / Learning English. The magazine “Forum”, for instance, to which most teachers of English used to subscribe, was available and the subscription was free of charge. Open air activities such as theatre plays and dialogues in contexts were performed almost daily. Movie sessions, language laboratory sessions, tape recorders and self-access teaching cards constituted teaching aids, materials and realia available and accessible to teachers to help the learner at school or at university. The relationship teacher-learner was based on mutual understanding. Parents or relatives were part of the game and worried about their children’s behaviour at school (or at university) by monitoring their progress and their results. In addition, the presence of expatriate teachers, advisors, syllabus designers and counsellors, among others, motivated the national teachers to be professionals as they were aware of how to handle a class in terms of their learners’ motivation, personality, gender, anxiety, beliefs, misconception and apprehension of cultural aspects of the targeted foreign languages in order to avoid, for example, cultural clashes. Teaching represented a dynamic and honourable profession in the service of society.

During the 80’s, the teacher’s profile represented someone who had mastered a know-how in Didactics and Pedagogy that he/she improved thanks to various human

and material resources available on the spot (Specialists in Didactics, pedagogy, inspectors, ...) along with teaching materials, facilities and up-to-date documentation in place (School library, University library, magazines received from abroad – Great Britain and the US in particular -). Although teaching was teacher-oriented and based on defensive learning at times, the Statistics of the eighties are indicative of substantial results obtained by pupils and students alike during their school or university studies. For example, the best students who were selected by joint committees from the Ministry of Higher Education and the British Council took standard international tests of English and succeeded to get national or international grants to study abroad.

After the 80's, teaching has become a trade, i.e., a transaction for a particular job or task to perform or '*a business of buying, selling, or exchanging goods and services [...]*', (Longman, p. 1173) rather than a profession, i.e., '*a form of employment, especially one that is respected in society as honourable and is possible only for an educated person and after training in some special branch of knowledge*' (Longman, p. 874).

The subsequent era to the 80's witnessed abrupt changes and radical social upheavals in Algeria. At the same time, uncontrolled population movements heading towards big cities took place. Consequently, overcrowded classrooms emerged everywhere in the country and the teacher

became a kind of ‘knowledge supplier’. He stood, in some cases, as a provider of grades and marks for end-of-term or end-of-year evaluation, tests, and exams which were hardly ever conducted and administered properly. Despite the massive selective program for higher studies abroad of the eighties which was financed by the Algerian Government in order to provide qualified national teaching personnel, the home-bound teacher has become a better knowledge holder to some extent but he / she remained more a knowledge provider than a professional as it were. This was mainly due to the ‘social malaise’, lack of motivation (poorly paid) and most of all the lack of a proper teaching environment in the country. The exception to this general tendency would probably be the very few cases where individual initiative (by teachers representing centrifuge forces in favour of changes) had been stronger than the environmental pressures and teaching routine (by teachers representing centipede forces in favour of a status-quo and reluctant to changes). The teaching of English and other Foreign Languages in Algeria boiled down to individual initiatives with inadequate teaching material, textbooks and classroom environment. University libraries were literally stagnating (no new books or magazines, emptied library shelves, unqualified librarians and personnel, etc.). As a matter of fact, one observed that within the same Department (that of English in this case), a given module was taught

differently, in terms of content, teaching methodology and approaches from one teacher to another. Most of the teaching staff was fully national and trained locally with no selection criteria. The exit profile of the teacher after the 80's was that of someone looking for a full or part-time job to survive financially. Unemployment rose drastically as a result of the oil prices sliding down of 1986 and the teachers' salaries dropped down significantly compared to the costs of living. The teacher became then a job seeker and if he/she was lucky enough he would do some extra hours outside school or university and get paid as a trader more than as a professional.

The teacher who used to be a model for the English Language and Culture, prior to the 80's, did not hold that place of pride anymore. His teaching has become routine work with the same modules being taught over the years without keeping on a par with new theoretical trends or new teaching principles, methods or techniques. This is mainly true for content modules. Even the topics in oral expression, reading comprehension and listening comprehension were the same year in year out. The lack of teaching material, documented literature, teacher training courses, adequate teaching programs etc. did not help to overcome this vacuum where social tensions undermine the teaching itself. Unfortunately, this state of affairs seems to last even today. In fact, the whole question on the teacher's attitude and his motivation

towards teaching a foreign language remains open to debate, revisiting and updating.

2. The Student's Entry and Exit Profile

The student's profile had but only followed suit as that of the teacher. Prior to the 80's, the student's profile was that of a Baccalaureate holder with an above average in English and a strong motivation to learn this language and its culture. Socially, the father was a skilled worker living in an urban area. Some of the freshers came from mixed secondary schools (boys and girls in the same classroom with no distinction or discrimination based on Gender). Their motives for English language studies were more integrative and cultural than instrumental. These preferences and motivations for learning English were dictated somehow by the environment in the city (American and English folksongs, films, the British Council, the Afro-American Institute, etc.). The teaching staff was partly national and partly expatriate (mainly from the UK and the US, but also from Australia, New Zealand, and India). Algeria was then a promising oil and gas producer heading for socio-economic prosperity.

The social and economic impact and upheavals of the dark decade in Algeria (1988-1998) produced learners who do not seem to 'worry much' about what or how knowledge in general and learning in particular may help them shape their personality and prepare them for a future integration into a profession. They worry more

about an overall average of 10 out of 20 (or an equivalent pass mark or grade) in the exams. The student comes from a mixed urban / rural background. In most cases, the students are weak in English and almost ignorant of the culture of the language they study at university. The motives for a BA in English have become more instrumental than cultural. Attitude and motivation towards the target language (English in this case) have changed substantially over the years (1990-2018). Attitude here refers to the student's general state of apprehension towards the target language and culture. Motivational props at the family and university levels are scarce for the student nowadays. This appears in his basic need in ELT. He/she needs to get a degree for a job (rather than teaching as a profession). This is clearly spotted in expressions used among students and produced in the mother tongue. These may be translated as: « I want to *lock* the module» (I want to get a pass mark), «I only need half a point to *close* my module», «I don't think I'll be able to *close* the module this year ».

These sociolinguistic characteristics of the student are closely related to environmental settings for ELT in Algeria. On the whole, direct contact with the native speaker does not exist⁶. Programs such as «Follow me»

⁶. Exception being made here for the use by students of social media and CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) for chatting or exchanging news and views with native or neo-native speakers of English on a virtual basis. However, not all of them can afford paying to have access to the Internet and the Web.

and «On we go» that used to be shown on the Algerian TV have disappeared from the screen. This may be due to a shortage of supplies in the series or for any other unknown reason by the author. It may also be the result of a top-down language policy dictated by higher decision makers. The only contact remains through social networks, the satellite TV programs in English and scarcely through written literature available in situ, i.e., in our university libraries and perhaps in some bookshops downtown. Both the TV channels and the book represent a unidirectional contact that is not always very motivating for the student to learn about culture of the 'Other' (socio-constructivism). When the student reaches university, he comes with a cultural background in his own home language (Arabic and Berber in particular), some cultural background knowledge in French and a rather poor knowledge of the English language and culture. This background knowledge made of a mixture of Arabic (including Berber) culture and French culture constitutes the common layer on which his learning is based.

3. The Current Situation

As it stands, the quality of L2 instruction is not effective enough to achieve an adequate teaching/learning that not only allows the student to build and re-invest knowledge in the performance of a task but also to cultivate himself

for a better cross-cultural communication while preserving his own '*forces propres*' and cultural identity. No adequate and appropriate responsive educational or pedagogical programs that suit the Algerian educational field reality have been suggested or implemented. Unfortunately, no feedback, surveys or suggestions on this issue are solicited from above. The exception is perhaps the articles or outstanding dissertations and theses (Master / Doctorate) produced at the national and international levels in this vein but which remain either unknown, ignored or just set aside.

The BA curriculum dates back to the 1980s with no subsequent amendments being made in spite of the drastic changes in the socio-economic structure of the country. The teacher still lacks qualified ELT professionalism despite the new ELT methodologies and approaches that proliferate in the market. The teaching is often conducted hastily with no suitable teaching material or adequately trained instructors. EFL methods and approaches are often instructed from above⁷ which most often leave the teacher bewildered and intimidated in the performance of his task. The educational system has thus far failed to develop appropriate curricula. The teachers

⁷. Cf. The Ministerial instructions and orientation notes on the implementation of the Competency Based Approach in the Algerian Educational Sector which started during the academic year 2003-2004 (September 2003) and provoked a massive misunderstanding of this 'new approach' by teachers, learners and parents alike.

still use English as an educational end (i.e., leading to a BA degree). They do not see it as a means to an end, i.e., a language that opens up ways to global communication and modernity. The question often raised is where does the problem actually lay? Some teachers and course designers and educational specialists see it in the dissimilarity that exists between L1 and L2 which affects the language instruction in Algeria today, while they agree that the cultural background (Arabic/French) of the learner may help bridge this gap. Others see the 'cloisonnements universitaires'⁸, the social malaise and the teaching routine as the prime factors that hinder the development of a proper English language curriculum where culture understanding and learning should be implemented. Others still blame the learner himself whose motivation has become purely instrumental. In any case, they all agree that the lack of internal support (government, institutions, university, etc.), teaching facilities and the current environment have a direct impact on the quality of L2 instruction in Algeria, no matter what the subject matter or the levels (school, university, private teaching) are. This issue remains open to debate and will be presented in a subsequent article in this avenue of exploration.

⁸. Cloisonnement universitaire, i.e., the university represents closed doors in relation to society. They seem as two separate worlds (environments) apart.

The fact remains that since 2001-2003, urgently required changes in and by the Educational Sector had to be conducted in Algeria. This was triggered off by the fact that the country's economy headed more and more towards an affluent and a consumer society. A 'new educational policy' was then launched and expounded in the official documents published under the banner of 'Réformes de l'Éducation' (Educational Reforms of 2003). Teachers, learners, inspectors and parents alike were looking forward to this change. The Press in all its forms and tendencies encouraged this need for change which they said and wrote will make the educational system more appropriate, the teacher more professional and the learner more competitive. This approach was seen a means for new horizons to prepare Algerian citizen of the 21st century. Consequently, high level decision makers in Algeria called upon local and foreign experts to implement the Competency Based Approach as a teaching/learning approach and to elaborate curricula and programs for 'a new vision and new perspectives' for the training and development of the 'New Algerian Citizen' through Education, Teaching and Learning in a globalised / globalizing world.

4. Some Views on the CBLT

We shall not embark here on the various shades and shapes of a Competency Based Approach (CBA). Given the proliferation of definitions of this fairly new approach

to teaching and training, the definitions based on the CBLT which are presented here are those which influenced in a way its implementation in Algeria. Mention should be made, however, that while this approach originated in the Anglo-Saxon world, the European definitions and perspectives (French and Belgian in particular) have had the lion's share in the syllabi designing and teaching orientations under these reforms.

A prime distinction between what was used in terms of teaching and learning practices and this new approach is the place and role of the learner. A time-based teaching is teacher-oriented (centred) and progression is essentially based on a time unit (teaching / learning schedule or programme). The Competency Based Language Teaching is learner-oriented (centred) and based essentially on progression in terms of the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills⁹ to perform different new tasks. The key concept is obviously the concept of 'Competency' which boils down to a 'know-how-to-do' and a 'know-how-to-act' combined together

⁹. A skill is enveloped in a task or tasks that the learner performs within a given competency e.g. interact orally. It usually requires cognitive and motor functions such as performing a form of address in the foreign language with the necessary behaviour and the required greeting forms. It is knowledge - and attitude- based in this case. In the technical field, a skill is easily detected during the manipulation of instruments or equipment, e.g. mantling / dismantling a tool or a machine (a drill, an engine, a fridge, etc.)

and acted out under specific conditions. However, these two factors have been subject to debate¹⁰ for a long time. Perrenoud (2000) for instance, rejects the ‘know-how-to-do’ as part and parcel of a competency which he defines as:

La compétence n’est pas un état ou une connaissance possédée. Elle ne se réduit ni à un savoir ni à un savoir-faire. Elle n’est pas assimilable à un acquis de formation. Posséder des connaissances ou des capacités ne signifie pas être compétent. On peut connaître des techniques ou des règles de gestion comptable et ne pas savoir les appliquer au moment opportun. On peut connaître le droit commercial et mal rédiger des contrats. (Perrenoud, 2000 : 45)

Perrenoud insists, as it were, on the fact that a competency does not boil down to knowledge per se, nor is it a know-how-to-do on its own. It is rather a manifestation of some skills in particular circumstances and at a particular time for a particular task.

De Ketele (1996) goes even further. He argues that a competency should be spelt out in terms of its basic constituents. He thus defines it as:

¹⁰. The term ‘savoirs’ is often used as a blanket term for “knowledge”. It was then divided into ‘savoir-faire’, ‘savoir agir’ and ‘savoir-être’. This in turn was split out into ‘savoir-redire’ and ‘savoir-refaire’ that belong more to a skill than to a competency (cf. De Ketele, 1989, in Xavier Roegiers, *Une pédagogie de l’intégration*, De Boeck, 1999, pp. 55-56)

... un ensemble ordonné de capacités (activités) qui s'exercent sur des contenus dans une catégorie donnée de situations pour résoudre des problèmes posés par celles-ci. (in Xavier Roegiers, 1999 : 65)

The key concepts here, according to De Ketele, are 'capacités' (skills and activities), 'contenus' (contents) and 'situations' (contexts / tasks). This stands in fact as an integrating concept as opposed to specific objectives of the former approach (time-based) to teaching. Accordingly, a competency envelops at the same time the contents of the course in terms of acquired knowledge, the activities that are subsequent to this content and most of all the situations in which these activities are put to work.

Johanne Myre (2000) also spells out what she considers as prime features of a competency. The latter emerges when the following characteristics are observed in the learner's behaviour and actions:

- Elle se démontre par des résultats observables; (It is demonstrable and actual)¹¹
- Elle fait appel à plusieurs habiletés; (It requires various skills and abilities)

¹¹. These are the Author's translations in English for clarification purposes only.

- Elle a une valeur sur le plan personnel, social ou professionnel; (It has a personal, social or professional value)
- Elle est associée à la réalisation d'activités que l'on retrouve dans des situations réelles; (It reflects task performances in real contexts and situations)
- Elle permet de mettre à profit des habiletés. (It triggers off the learners own skills)

In other words, Myre (2000) argues that a competency is demonstrable in terms of observable facts (performance of the participant – learner / student). It requires various skills, it represents a personal achievement in actual situations and contexts and it helps making use of the skills of the performer (learner / student).

Gillet, P. (1991) argues along the same lines:

La compétence est un des principes organisateurs de la formation. Elle s'inscrit dans une logique d'organisation de la formation qui supprime la logique d'exposition des contenus. La définition des contenus est imposée par la compétence et non par le développement expositif de la discipline. C'est elle qui est le maître d'œuvre dans la composition d'une formation. (P. Gillet 1991:72)

Gillet stresses on the fact that in terms of teaching programmes, the contents are dictated by the competency(ies) to be installed (and not taught) rather than on the content knowledge to be taught. This view

diverges from the traditional approach in teaching programmes where the contents of the course are prior to the skills to be attained by the learner (Pedagogy by Objectives). Thus syllabus designers and text-book writers have to think in advance of what competency (ies) must be installed in the first place before they think of the content of the discipline.

This approach differs from the text-books for English used in Algeria (and elsewhere) where the lesson is followed by some practical exercises and drills to make sure the learner has grasped its content. In fact, this approach (CBLT) requires that the learner puts into practice and re-invests the knowledge he has received in problem solving tasks and situations.

On the basis of the above mentioned definitions, the Programme d'Anglais - 2ème Langue Étrangère- (Niveau 3ème Année) of the Ministry of Education (2001)¹², defines a competency in these terms:

La compétence est un savoir-agir qui intègre et mobilise un ensemble de capacités, d'habiletés et de connaissances utilisées efficacement dans des situations problèmes, circonstances variées qui peuvent ne jamais avoir été rencontrées.

¹². The official teaching program of English for 3rd year pupils (where English is given the status of 'Second Foreign Language' compared to French as First Foreign Language). Notice that these are institutional, not sociolinguistic statuses. On sociolinguistic grounds, French is a second language in Algeria.

In other words, emphasis is put here on an adequate behavior of the learner who has to re-invest the knowledge acquired in class in a problem solving task in and out of class (writing in English to a pen-pal, asking the way in an English environment, forms of address, etc.).

The issue at stake is that such a definition, which is used as the main starting principle for new teaching programs based on the types of competencies required in Algeria, is more than acceptable in theory. However, in practice and according to the field and classroom reality such a definition cannot apply or be applied. The various bilateral meetings, detailed reports, suggestions and seminars including foreign experts for the elaboration of syllabi and programs for the CBLT in Algeria have resulted in a series of very sound recommendations and suggestions in perspective but which we believe had not taken into account the very nature or the pros and cons of the educational system in Algeria. Moreover, no readjustments, amendments or evaluation have been brought out or instructed so far on what worked well and what didn't work in the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria.

There are, we believe, various reasons for the failure of the CBLT in Algeria. Some of them are summarized below.

a. The attributes of the Algerian learner were not necessarily reflected in the teaching programs and textbooks resulting from the implementation of the CBLT in 2003. A case in point appears in the first lessons of English which refer to a multiracial classroom in Algeria with pupils like Chan and Aminata at a time where you hardly ever find foreign learners in the Algerian school. The objective was to teach under cognitivism and socio-constructivism to better know ‘the Other’. This objective does not appear to have been reached today.

b. The topics and the related vocabulary, forms and functions of English presented in a lesson do not necessarily motivate the learner (or the teacher). The pupil is more motivated to learn when the textbook contains hand drawings and pictures rather than icons, emojis, smileys and scanned photos. One of the objectives was to illustrate that one form may serve different functions in English (e.g. the use of the present tense for description, habitual actions, declarations, comments, etc.) The learner failed to grasp these differences in English. One reason – among others- is that Arabic has a different way of expressing time and space which do not necessarily match the subtleties of the English gestalt of time and space.

c. The Algerian learner (and the teacher) has a cultural background which is heavily based on reciting and repetition (Arabic rhetoric). One cannot expect him/her

to switch suddenly to self-reflecting, reasoning (deductive and inductive; cause and effect, ...) and most of all self confidence as he/she has always relied heavily on what the teacher has given him (defensive learning).

d. Evaluation today remains summative (a grade out of 20) at a time where it should be formative under the CBLT (Project presentation, personal initiative in the preparation of the project, searching and filtering information and data from the Web, ...). Although access to the Internet is available today in theory; in practice it is hardly ever available at school (or at university) as a learner's facility. The happy ones have it at home but it is so slow. The unlucky ones have to go to a cyber café to prepare the project in an overcrowded and noisy atmosphere.

e. The most obvious cause of failure in the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria is that the teachers (as much as the Inspectors and later on the learners and the parents) have not been prepared for this approach despite the initial round of seminars that took place just before September 2003 to make actors and recipients aware of the importance and impact of this approach in the Algerian society.

f. Last but not least, overcrowded classrooms, pupils with heavy bags full of different textbooks and copybooks, extensive homework, the lack of recreation sessions and most of all considerations of the learners attributes such as his/her characteristics, motivation,

individuality (age, gender, personality, anxiety) attitudes towards the English language and culture are but some prime factors and markers that should've been explored and analysed in advance before the implementation proper.

The most obvious consequences of the failure and today's bitter criticisms of the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria are that while the CBLT was seen as a good path for changes at University level (Licence, Master Doctorat (LMD) or the 3, 5 8 university curricula), its application and use has ended up in poor university students who still rely heavily on the knowledge they get at university and who are often holders of degrees that do not reflect their knowledge, skills, capacities and competencies.

5. Some suggestions and recommendations

The following are some suggestions and recommendations which may help the Algerian teacher and the learner to improve their competencies in an EFL setting. The teacher must be aware that he/she should no more spend hours teaching a given subject while his learners are trying to store as much as they can for future evaluation in class. He must create authentic and increasingly complex situations as the course while showing them procedures which help them carry out new tasks. He/she may for example ask the successful learner the question why he/she used such or such a procedure, or why he/

she started with a given procedure and finished with another. In most cases, the learner would not be able to answer these questions. This is in fact due to his / her meta-knowledge where several processes based on his own experience are put to work and gathered to carry out a task. Basically, the learner acts by using his primary knowledge (knowledge not necessarily acquired in class) with that which he/she learnt in class. He must be led to feel that he has to organize his knowledge to perform a task.

The learner can interpret and produce verbal and nonverbal messages of average complexity in English. He can use personal working methods and share them with his/her peers (negotiation, exchange of ideas, etc.). He needs to use his own learner's strategies to face problem situations and improve his knowledge of the culture(s) of the Target Language. He/she must be made aware that he needs to interpret authentic materials of average complexity in English with a certain degree of autonomy and call upon transversal competencies as breakdown strategies.

By doing so, the learner's motivation increases through self-satisfaction of having accomplished a problem solving task with less guidance. He/she gets the feeling of giving significance to the task rather than prepare for a test or an exam. During the presentation of a task the learner feels the need to put to work his knowledge and know-how. Knowledge and the know-how the learner

acquires during a problem solving task and its realization can in turn be put to work (completely or partially) to carry out other similar tasks or more complex ones. The role of the teacher is mainly to check if a given competence (e.g. Interacting orally) has been installed while the learner chooses for himself the procedures he knows to perform a task. The teacher should also check if the procedures by the learner are adequate for the performance of the task in question.

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