

Bridging Teacher Training and Learner Environment: Insights into Foreign Language Education in Algerian Primary Schools

Ahmed Amina★¹, Benyelles Radia²

¹ Tlemcen university, Algeria; Florista2011@live.fr,

² Tlemcen university, Algeria; Benirad1971@yahoo.com ,

Received: 17./03/2025

Accepted: 09./05/2025

Published: 02./06/2025.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role teacher training plays in helping teachers to cope with foreign languages pupils coming from different social backgrounds. The sample population is selected from six primary schools from the willaya of Tlemcen. It includes teachers of French and English. An interview is used to gather the data. After both a quantitative and a qualitative data analysis, the researcher finds that teacher training plays a crucial role in identifying the adequate strategies that allow teachers to deal with different learners coming from diverse social backgrounds. The findings can help policymakers improve the training programmes to ensure equitable foreign languages education.

Keywords:

Teacher training; foreign languages pupils; social backgrounds; Algerian primary schools; equitable foreign languages education.

★ *Corresponding Author*

1.Introduction

Foreign language learning is the process of acquiring a language other than the learner's native language through formal education. Learning this kind of languages requires taking into consideration many aspects including the different social backgrounds of the learners. That social context may determine the way in which a person assimilates and develops all the language skills that he/she needs to learn a new language. Thus, teachers of foreign languages need to be aware of the diverse social factors that surround their learners so as to ensure a fruitful teaching learning procedure. Accordingly, in this research, the investigator intends to identify the role that teacher training plays in determining adequate teaching-learning strategies to deal with Algerian foreign language learners coming from different social backgrounds at the primary level. Accordingly, the present investigation seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. How can teacher training programs help in addressing the socio-environmental realities of Algerian students?
- b. What strategies can be developed to provide equitable foreign language learning opportunities for students from different social backgrounds?

Trying to answer the above research questions the following hypotheses were formulated:

- a. Teacher training programmes help in addressing the socio-environmental realities of Algerian students as they are crucial in preparing educators to support effectively the varied needs of the learners from various social backgrounds
- b. Equipping educators with the necessary skills and fostering inclusive, resource-rich learning environments can provide equitable foreign language learning opportunities for students from different social backgrounds and improve foreign languages education in Algeria.

2. Literature review

The purpose of this section is to elicit the current landscape of foreign language education in the Algerian primary schools and to shed

light on some studies that were made on the importance of teacher training in enhancing the learners' achievement at school.

2.1. Current landscape of foreign language education in the Algerian primary schools

The Algerian linguistic situation is characterized by a rich tapestry of languages and dialects that reflect the country's diverse cultural heritage. In present day, languages in Algeria are: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Algerian Arabic(AA), Berber, French and English. Each of which enjoys a considerable importance.

Arabic is divided into two types. Modern Standard Arabic which is the official language used in formal contexts, government, and education and the Algerian Arabic (Darja) that refers to the colloquial form spoken by the majority of the population. It incorporates influences from Berber, French, and other languages. There is also Berber (Tamazight) which is recognized as a national language since 2002. It is spoken by the Amazigh population, primarily in the Kabylie region and it has various dialects. French that is a legacy of the colonial period is widely used in many fields including education, media, and administration. Additionally, because of its status as an international language, "English" is increasingly being introduced as a foreign language in primary education.

Therefore, the Algerian landscape of foreign language education is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, social, and educational factors.

In this regards, foreign language education in the Algerian primary schools, is primarily centered around French and English. French is taught as the first foreign language and English as the second foreign language from the third grade in all the Algerian primary schools .However, the teaching process of these two foreign languages encounters various challenges, including how to implement adequate strategies to deal with learners coming from diverse social backgrounds.

2.2. Teacher training

The role of foreign language teachers extends far beyond merely transmitting knowledge of the language. It involves creating an inclusive

and supportive learning environment that accommodates students from diverse social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Respectively, foreign language teachers require specialized training that goes beyond linguistic proficiency and pedagogical method so as to effectively meet the needs of all learners and ensure equitable language education.

2.3 Principles of Teacher Training

Teaching a foreign language requires a strong foundation in both the subject matter and the appropriate pedagogical methods. Therefore, to guarantee a high standard of education, it is crucial to invest in comprehensive teacher training that equips educators with the knowledge and skills required to excel in their roles. This section outlines the three distinct phases of teacher training: pre-service, in-service, and post-service training, highlighting their significance in producing competent and effective language teachers.

2.3.1 Pre-Service Teacher Training

Pre-service teacher training refers to the initial preparation that prospective teachers undergo before entering the classroom .Hence; it takes place in an academic setting. In this phase the students who would be teachers engage in academic studies that cover relevant theories of language acquisition, linguistics, and educational psychology. Moreover, the students learn about various teaching methodologies, classroom management techniques, and assessment strategies. These courses lay the theoretical foundation for teaching foreign languages because they help prospective teachers understand how to create lesson plans, engage students and evaluate learning outcomes. In this respect, Musset (2010:37) asserts that this stage is “the first stone of a life-long undergoing process through which each teacher has to pass through”.

It should be noted that many pre-service programs include practicum or student-teaching components, where candidates gain hands-on experience in real classroom settings under the supervision of experienced educators. This practical exposure is crucial for bridging theory and practice since it reinforces the performance of the prospective teachers.

2.3.2. In-Service Teacher Training.

This stage occurs after teachers have begun their careers. It tends to enhance their skills, update their knowledge, and improve teaching practices.

This phase is characterised by participating in workshops and seminars that covers current trends in foreign languages teaching, innovative methodologies, and technological integration. These opportunities enable teachers to share best practices and learn from one another. In-service training also includes evaluating teaching effectiveness through classroom observations and peer reviews, followed by feedback sessions that facilitate professional growth through boosting support and idea exchange. In this stage, teachers may pursue further education in areas like teaching specific age groups, special education needs, or advanced foreign languages methodologies.

2.3.3 Post-service Teacher Training

Post-service teacher training or what is called Continuing Training is lifelong learning initiatives that continue after formal employment. It is a significant stage of the continuum of teacher training as a whole since it allows the teachers to be updated to the changes that occur in the educational standards and practices. Therefore, they can perform their teaching task effectively.

This phase is characterised by meetings with colleagues in a continuous way to study the different innovations in the educational system to cope with the rapid change in the world and to stay informed about new developments in foreign languages instruction (Musset, 2010). Accordingly, experienced teachers may mentor new teachers in their professional journeys, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and support. Additionally, Post-service training encourages teachers to engage in research, self-reflection, and critical evaluation of their practices. This fosters a habit of continual improvement and innovation.

To end, it should be stated that the three stages of foreign languages teacher training (pre-service, in-service, and post-service) are crucial to ensure that teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to teach

effectively. By investing in comprehensive training at each stage, educational institutions can cultivate proficient teachers who are well-prepared to meet the challenges of the dynamic and diverse world of teaching foreign languages. This structured approach to teacher development helps guarantee a high level of education in the field and ultimately enhances student learning outcomes.

2.4 Teacher Training From a Psychological Perspective

Teachers of foreign languages confront many challenges in their teaching process. Thus, it is of paramount importance to provide them with adequate training from different perspectives, including the psychological one. Educational psychology is considered as a guide that introduces and applies psychological principles to educational practices. It also tends to investigate how learning is affected by several factors such as the social context. Accordingly, it helps teachers understand and appreciate social differences and this is essential to create a supportive learning environment.

Respectively, “one of the skills of effective teachers is to interpret educational psychology theories and research critically and apply those that are most appropriate for the unique characteristics of each learner in creative and practical way”(Bork and Shavelson,1990 qtd. in Moreno 2010:8).Therefore,training teachers with focus on the psychological principles not only equips them with effective teaching strategies but also enhances their ability to connect with students on a personal and emotional level, ultimately engaging learners from different social backgrounds through fostering an atmosphere where learners perform better in their foreign languages learning.

Additionally, culturally responsive pedagogy should be taken into consideration in teacher training programmes. It refers to an educational approach that seeks to recognize, understand, and respect students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences in the teaching and learning process. (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It equips teachers with the necessary strategies to ensure educational equity, satisfy the different learning needs of diverse learners and challenge any barriers. It is a key to enhance inclusive and responsive educational atmosphere (Samuels,2018)

Incorporating the aforementioned principles in teacher education programs can lead to more effective educators and, consequently, better student outcomes.

3. Methodology

It is necessary to select the most appropriate method to collect relevant data that allows answering the questions under investigation. Accordingly, the researcher adopts an exploratory case study. In this context, Nunan (1992) describes the case study as a "hybrid," as it utilizes various procedures for data collection and analysis. Therefore, it helps the researcher to investigate the role teacher training plays in helping teachers to cope with foreign languages pupils coming from different social backgrounds at the Algerian primary schools.

3.1. Setting and sample population

Studying the entire population is impossible; therefore, information can be gathered from a small group that represents the larger population under investigation. The selection of the sample population should meet the following criteria: representativeness, suitability and generalisability. Accordingly, the sample population has been selected randomly from six primary schools .It includes 10 teachers of French and English .The primary schools are from four (4) distinct areas located in the willaya of Tlemcen, namely, Tlemcen city, Maghnia, Boughrara and Beni Snous so as to ensure collecting data from diverse areas and therefore , diverse perspectives. The names of the schools with their geographical locations are presented in the table below:

Table1. The names of the primary schools with their geographical locations

Primary schools	Geographical locations
Hafed Tnessi	Tlemcen city
Hasnaoui Ahmed	Tlemcen city
Hassiba Ben Bouali	Maghnia(centre)
Mohammed Boulenouar	Maghnia(outskirt)
Liani Tidjini	Boughrara(suburban area)
Houzi Abdelkader	Beni Snous (urban area)

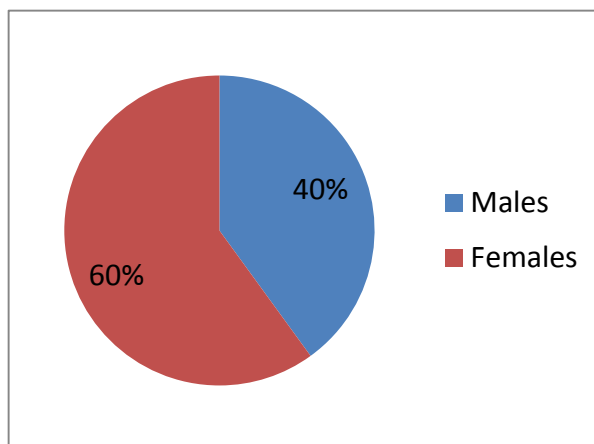
3.1.1Teachers' profile

The study involves five (5) teachers of French and five (5) teachers of English, 4 of them are males, rating 40% and 6 of them are females, rating 60%. The table and figure below highlight the gender variable rates of the teachers.

Table 2. The gender variable rates of teachers

Gender	Frequency	Rate
Male	4	40%
Female	6	60%.
Total	10	100%.

Fig. 1. The gender variable rates of teachers



The teaching experience of those teachers differs from one to another. It varies from two (2) years to twenty (20) years as shown in the following tables and figures.

Table 3. The years of experience of English language teachers

Teachers of English	1	2	3	4	5
Years of experience	2	3	3	3	3

Fig. 2. The years of experience of English language teachers

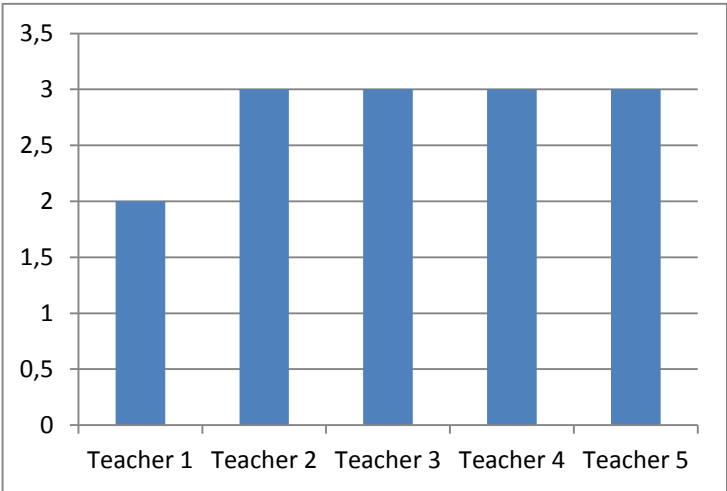
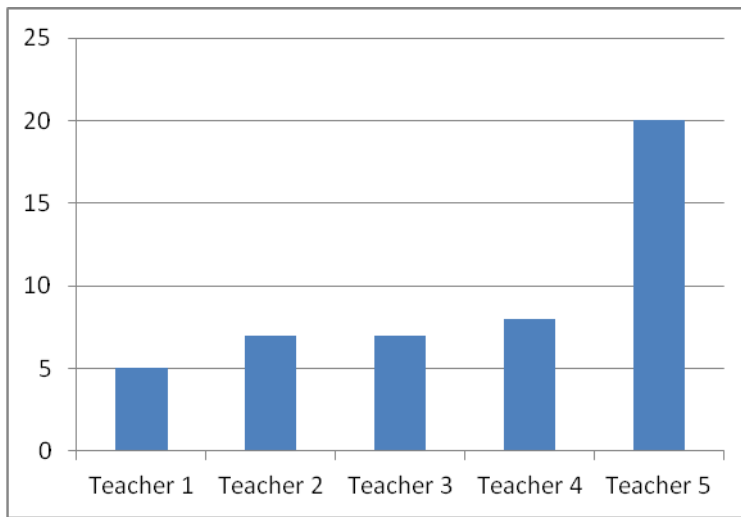


Table 4. The years of experience of French language teachers

Teachers of French	1	2	3	4	5
Years of experience	5	7	7	8	20

Fig. 3. The years of experience of French language teachers



The teachers in the sample were those to whom the researcher had access and who volunteered to participate in the study. Most of them hold the degree of 'Licence'.

The selection of the teachers of French and English from the primary schools stems from the belief that they can provide important information about the role teacher training plays in determining the adequate strategies to cope with pupils coming from diverse social backgrounds. Thus, an interview is conducted with them.

Whenever the researcher had to negotiate for interviews in primary schools, she had to confer access with the headmasters before meeting teachers, so as not to disturb them during their working time. She arranged appointments to meet with them, and during the meetings, she explained the aims of the research work. She assured them that her purpose is to supply as much as a possibly objective interpretation of the teachers' assumptions bearing in mind their anonymity

3.2 Research instruments

This investigation requires the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from different sources in order to reach answers to the

research questions. Thus, a teachers' interview is used as a research instrument.

3.2.1 Teachers' interview

For the sake of collecting the information to identify the role teacher training plays in coping with foreign languages pupils coming from different social backgrounds, the researcher carried a structured interview with ten (10) teachers of foreign languages (five teachers of French and five teachers of English). This research instrument aims at checking how teacher preparation influences pupils' learning motivations and outcomes. The interview is also employed so as to understand the interviewees' perception and their interpretations in regards to the situation studied.

The interview is composed of five (5) questions that vary from open-ended to close-ended questions. The interview questions were piloted with a small sample of individuals before being used in order to find out whether the questions are yielding the necessary information and also to avoid ambiguity

It should be mentioned that the interview's items; which are used with the teachers of French; are translated into French to cooperate with the informants' capacities

3.3 Data analysis

In the current study, the researcher opts for both a quantitative and a qualitative data analysis so as to ensure reliability and to have multi-levels of analysis. In this respect, Dörnyei (2007:45) affirms that:

We can gain a better understanding of a complex phenomenon by converging numeric trends from quantitative data and specific details from qualitative data. Words can be used to add meaning to numbers and numbers can be used to add precision to words.

Hence, this kind of analysis allows us to get a deep understanding of the role teacher training plays in enabling teachers to cope with foreign

languages pupils coming from different social backgrounds and helps in increasing the credibility of the present research.

4. Results of the interview

The information yielded from the interview, which was carried with the teachers of French and the teachers of English, revealed that when they were still students, they received theoretical training but not a practical one. In other words, the gap between what they learned at university and what they actually perform with the pupils is an extensive one. When the researcher asked them if they received formal training in teaching diverse learners, they said that they studied some theoretical courses in educational psychology. They also asserted that they received formal teacher training after getting their post as teachers. That training includes workshops, attending continuous seminars with their inspectors and peer observation. They all claimed that the content of the seminars and workshops is based on didactics without focusing on methods or strategies which can help them to cooperate with students coming from different social backgrounds. When asking them about the challenges that they face when teaching students from diverse social backgrounds, they listed a set of challenges including: language barriers, socioeconomic challenges, cultural differences and lack of support from families. When asking them about their suggestions for additional training or resources that would further enhance their abilities to teach learners from diverse social backgrounds, they state that more workshops on cultural competence, training on socioeconomic issues and support for language diversity will be certainly facilitate the teaching-learning process.

5. Discussion

This section is devoted to discuss the results obtained from the interview. It has been proved that promoting teacher quality is a key element in improving foreign languages education .Seddiki (2022) claims that the teacher's role is important in motivating and creating interest inside and outside the classroom .Moreover, he is able to change his roles according to the students' needs.

Therefore, ameliorating the teacher training programmes and making it continuous; as Musset (2010) asserts in his studies; is considered as the foundation stone to help the teacher to identify the learning problems that he may face in the classroom. It also enables him to find the appropriate solutions to deal with the several issues that hinder the educational attainment of the learners including the diversity of their social backgrounds. Ensuring an effective teaching is related to the reforms in the Algerian teacher training programmes that can be reached through the collaboration of the different agents in the educational community. Recognizing the important role that teacher training plays in ensuring effective foreign languages learning for students coming from diverse social backgrounds is vital for the development of inclusive and effective language education programmes. Focusing on educational psychology courses in teacher training programmes will help educators tailor their teaching methodologies to accommodate learners' social backgrounds, preferences, and motivations, fostering a more engaging and relevant learning environment.

6. Limitations of the Study

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Firstly, inspectors were not involved in the study, which might bias results. However, information about the content they present in seminars and workshops were provided by teachers of French and teachers of English through the interview. Additionally, the sample of the study is restricted to six primary schools.

7. Suggestions for Further Research

The current study opens avenues for future research. Investigators can delve deeper into the long-term impact of teacher training on foreign languages learning in the different educational levels including: primary, middle and secondary schools to make the results more generalizable. They can also explore first-language influence on foreign languages attainment in Algerian schools.

8. Conclusion

The main aim of this research is to evaluate the role of teacher training in determining appropriate teaching-learning strategies to deal with pupils coming from different social backgrounds. According to the outcomes of the study, the two research questions are affirmed. First, teacher training programmes help in addressing the socio-environmental realities of Algerian students as they are crucial in preparing educators to support effectively the varied needs of the learners from various social backgrounds. Second, equipping educators with the necessary skills and fostering inclusive, resource-rich learning environments can provide equitable foreign language learning opportunities for students from different social backgrounds and improve foreign language education in Algeria .

Accordingly, bridging the gap between teacher training and learner social background is of paramount importance for improving foreign language education in Algeria. By equipping educators with the necessary skills and fostering inclusive, resource-rich learning environments, Algerian schools can better prepare students for the challenges of a globalized world. This holistic approach does not only enhance language proficiency but also promotes cultural understanding and prepares students for future opportunities in an interconnected society.

On the basis of the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government should organize continuous training, seminars, workshops on new teaching methods and their implementation in schools in order to enable teachers from:
 - ✓ improving learner environment through creating an inclusive atmosphere that recognizes and celebrates social diversity.
 - ✓ encouraging collaborative learning experiences that allow students to work together and learn from one another.

- ✓ developing an understanding of different cultures, values, and social challenges. This knowledge allows them to create a more inclusive classroom environment.
- ✓ recognizing their own biases and the systemic inequalities that may affect their students, promoting fair treatment for all.
- ✓ Using strategies to customize their teaching methods, accommodating diverse learning styles and backgrounds.
- ✓ Identifying and supporting students who may face socioeconomic challenges that hinder their learning performance.
- ✓ building relationships with learners, fostering a safe space for learning.
- ✓ Understanding students' backgrounds and connecting curricular content to their lives, enhancing motivation and participation.
- ✓ leveraging community resources that can assist students facing social or economic challenges.

2. schools should also :

- ✓ prioritize investments in linguistic resources such as books, audio-visual aids and online materials.
- ✓ incorporate computers, language labs, mobile applications and internet technology to enhance foreign language learning. In this respect, Geryville (2021: 728) asserts that “ internet technology allows diverse learning, drives motivation, promotes learner autonomy and independence, encourages innovation and creativity, establishes interaction, boosts communication and fosters cooperative learning”
- ✓ Engage families and communities for supporting students' language learning through organizing workshops and informational sessions to educate parents on the importance of foreign language proficiency and how they can support their children at home.

- ✓ Adopt community programs like the one that Webb Middle School applied. Webb Middle School is a public middle school located in Austin, Texas. The school authorities, hundreds of community members, teachers, students, and other community stakeholders implemented the Community School strategy which makes sure that all the educational programmes are well coordinated, aligned with student and community needs, and sufficient to support the social and emotional development of the students (Frankl,E et al., 2016).

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