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Aligning Teaching and Assessment: A Study on English Language Education Practices in Algerian Primary Schools

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Sciences of Language**

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Declaration

I, **Cherif Ihssane** do hereby declare that I am the sole author of this Master Dissertation, entitled “Aligning Teaching and Assessment: A Study on English Language Education Practices in Algerian Primary Schools” which represents my original work. I further declare that I developed this research project based on my personal efforts, except for quotations, paraphrases, and summaries that have been duly acknowledged. This research has not previously been submitted to any institution or university for a degree.

This research was conducted and completed at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra, ALGERIA.

Conducted by:

Cherif Ihssane

Dedication

To my mother,

The soul of my strength. Your patience, your prayers, your endless sacrifices, they held me up when I felt like giving in. Everything I am, everything I've achieved, is because of your guidance and unwavering dedication to nurturing and raising me.

To my father,

Thank you for your presence, for being part of this long journey, for always encouraging me to keep moving forward. Your support gave me the strength I needed to keep pushing through.

To my favorite and only sister, Imene,

You were more than a listener, you were my second pair of eyes, my calm when I was overwhelmed, and my quiet supporter through every step. I'll never forget how you stood by me, and how you believed in me even when i didn't.

To my cousins, Lina and Wissem,

You were my happy place. I came to you tired and frustrated, and you always understood and reminded me of what truly mattered. Your warmth, enthusiasm, and presence were more powerful than you know.

To Aya,

My partner in this academic ride, my friend in sleepless nights, and my thesis twin. Working side by side, lifting each other up, panicking together and pushing through. I wouldn't have made it through this without our shared determination and mutual encouragement.

This is for all of you, with all the gratitude and love my heart can hold.

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Abstract

With English becoming more globally dominant, its presence in educational systems has grown significantly. Including Algeria, where English was recently introduced into primary schools. While this change is promising, especially with the implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT), it also raises important questions about how language is assessed. In many cases, the teaching approach and the assessment practices do not seem to go hand in hand. This noticeable gap between instruction and evaluation was the starting point for this study. This research explores the misalignment between teaching and assessment practices in Algerian primary schools, focusing on fourth-year English classrooms. While the syllabus promotes a communicative approach that focuses on speaking and listening, assessment still relies mostly on written tasks. This mismatch may prevent teachers from getting a full picture of students' language abilities and may limit learners' development. To investigate this issue, a mixed methods approach within a pragmatic paradigm was adopted. Data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire answered by 22 English teachers from Laghouat city, and through pretests and posttests conducted with 172 fourth-year students across four classrooms. A treatment focusing on balanced instruction in all four skills was implemented over a semester. The results showed that students performed better in oral tasks than written ones before the treatment, confirming that written tests alone don't reflect their true proficiency. After the treatment, their written scores improved significantly. Teachers also expressed dissatisfaction with the current curriculum and called for the integration of oral assessment. In conclusion, this study confirms the need to align teaching and assessment practices. Adding oral components to evaluation can give a fuller, more accurate picture of learners' language abilities.

Keywords: communicative language teaching, english language assessment, primary education, oral vs. written assessment, teaching methods, curriculum alignment

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

YLL: Young Language Learners

YL: Young Learners

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

MKO: More Knowledgeable Other

LLT: Language Learning and Teaching

ASTP: Army Specialized Training Program

TPR: Total Physical Response

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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General Introduction

Study Background

In recent years, English language education in Algeria has grown to be of great importance, a result of a wider world current/trend towards multilingualism and an increasing role of English as a lingua franca. As Algeria seeks to enhance its educational framework, primary schools form a starting point for setting a solid base for language acquisition, as the learners are much younger and more open to acquiring a new language. Pedagogically, however, the teaching practices suggested in these institutions are often at a loss to effectively align teaching with assessment methods. In particular, fourth-year primary school students are primarily focused on oral skills in English classes, such as speaking and listening. This approach is crucial for developing communicative competence; however, it sharply contrasts with the written formats of assessment taken for the evaluation of students' proficiency. This can lead to a misjudgement of their true level.

Problem Statement

The highlighted misalignment between teaching methodology and formats of assessment raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness of English language education in Algerian primary schools. While the majority of the learning process is dominated by teaching methodologies that prioritize oral skills, students are primarily assessed through written tests. This misalignment can lead to anxiety, loss of self confidence, and an inaccurate reflection of their actual language proficiency. Consequently creating obstacles in their language development and overall affecting the educational outcomes of the course.

Research Questions

This study will provide answers to the following questions:

Main Question

Can the student's learning process be enhanced by balancing the teaching and assessment methodologies implemented in their learning?

Sub Questions

Q1: What are the current practices used for English language instruction in fourth-year primary schools in Algeria.

Q2: How does student performance in an oral assessment compare to that in a written assessment under the current instructional conditions?

Q3: What are teachers' opinions about the current English language curriculum, and what do they recommend to better align teaching methods and assessment practices?

Research Hypothesis**Main Hypothesis**

Implementing a combination of oral and written teaching methodologies will significantly enhance students overall learning outcomes and engagement in English language education

Sub Hypothesis

H1: The current teaching practices at primary schools are primarily focused on oral skills.

H2: Students will perform significantly better in oral assessments than in written assessments due to the emphasis on oral skills in their current instruction

H3: Teachers would express dissatisfaction with the curriculum due to the misalignment between its emphasis on oral instruction and its reliance on strictly written assessment.

Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

- identify the gap between teaching and assessment practices in Algerian primary school English classrooms.
- examine the effectiveness of written tests in reflecting students' true language proficiency.
- evaluate how the misalignment between teaching and assessment impacts learners' overall development.

- explore teachers' views on the current curriculum and assessment methods.
- collect recommendations from teachers to better align teaching and assessment.
- offer practical suggestions for improving TEFL policy and classroom practices in Algerian primary education.

Research Methodology

Research Design This research will follow a mixed-methods approach, as It will describe current teaching practices and assessment methods, exploring perceptions and experiences of teachers and students. It will also analyze the relationships between teaching methods and student performance, identifying potential correlations (e.g., the relationship between the balance of oral and written instruction and student proficiency/scores), in addition it seeks to explore and understand the complexities of teaching and assessment practices.

Data collection and Analysis Procedures The study will be conducted in Laghouat at Gouili Mohamed primary school with the 4th year classes and the 4th year English teachers. There will be an oral and written pre-test to assess the learners' level, Afterwards there will be a treatment where we randomly select four 4th year classes (cluster sampling) as a sample, the selected class will be taught with equal focus on the writing and oral skills, at the end of the semester the class will be post-tested both in oral and written skills, the results of the test will be contrasted to answer the questions of this study. Furthermore, a semi-structured questionnaire will be administered to the teachers at the beginning of the study to assess their opinion on the current instruction and assessment methods. The Data collected will be analyzed using statistical procedures/tests to make use of the raw data collected from the semi-structured questionnaire and the pre and post tests. Mainly descriptive statistical tests (such as measure of frequency, central tendency, and standard deviation) and inferential tests (parametric tests such as paired sample t-test, and correlation tests). Also thematic analysis

will be employed to analyze the qualitative data acquired from the semi-structured questionnaire.

Population/Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population that concerns this study is the 4th year primary schools teachers and learners. Four classes from gouili mohammed primary school in laghouat were randomly selected to participate in this study. This study aims to acquire generalizable findings therefore probability/random sampling techniques will be employed, specifically the cluster sampling method where four random classrooms in the primary school will be selected as the sample of this research. Furthermore the teachers selected will be sampled through voluntary response sampling in which a questionnaire will be posted online and the English primary school teachers concerned will provide their answers.

Significance of the Study

This research is particularly relevant in the context of educational reform in Algeria, where policymakers are increasingly focused on improving language education to form knowledgeable students in the Lingua Franca that holds the key to a globalized world. By exploring the current misalignment between teaching practices and assessment methods, this study aims to provide insights that can enrich curriculum development, teacher training, and assessment strategies. The findings could contribute to creating a more coherent and effective English language education framework, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes and fostering greater proficiency in the language. Furthermore, this research has the potential to influence educational practices not only in Algeria but also in other contexts facing similar challenges in language education.

Structure of The Dissertation

This dissertation comprises three chapters. The first two chapters make up the theoretical part of the study, and the third chapter is the practical part. **The First Chapter**

mainly tackles TEFL to young learners, young learners' characteristics, how they are different from adult learners in addition to some key YLs language acquisition theories, their teaching and learning principles, in addition to, the teaching approaches available, and the current teaching approach employed in Algeria with regard to its lacks and advantages. **The Second Chapter** is about assessing young learners, the assessment cycle, the assessment approaches available, which is employed in Algeria and finally what should be done to make it better suited for the implemented teaching approach. **The Third Chapter** is the practical section of this study in which methodology; research approach, methods, data collection (semi-structured questionnaire, treatment, and pre and post-tests) and analysis tools are further detailed and elaborated. This section also comprises the data interpretation and the findings of the study.

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Introduction

English has become the most dominant language in the world, with around 1.5 billion people worldwide who speak it either natively or as a second language. (Galan, 2025). In August 2022, in a news conference, Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboun stated that "French is a spoil of war, while English is the language of research and science, and it must be taught and given more attention," announcing that it would be incorporated at the primary school level starting in September 2022. With this shift, it is crucial to make sure that the teaching methods implemented actually suit young learners' needs, not just in terms of age, but also in the way they learn and acquire the language. The methods have to be both appropriate for their developmental stage and effective in helping them acquire the language.

1.1. Young Language Learners

Young learners are children in primary school who are learning a foreign language. These learners are not only acquiring a new language but are also developing cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Therefore, language teaching should be tailored to their developmental needs.

1.1.1. Characteristics of young language learners

In his book "The Practice of English Language Teaching", Harmer (2007) described the characteristics of several age groups. He asserted that young children, especially those up to nine and ten years old, learn differently from children, adolescents, and adults in the following ways:

1.1.1.1. Meaning is Emphasized

YL are less concerned with grammar or word choice and more focused on the meaning of what is being communicated. Contextualized language is key to their understanding. For instance, even if they do not know every word, they may be able to infer the message or instruction based on non-verbal cues like gestures, tone of voice, and context.

1.1.1.2. Environment as a Source

Rather than only receiving direct instruction, young learners also take in information from their surroundings and environment, such as interactions, body language, and visual cues; consequently, they don't rely solely on the topic being taught to learn.

1.1.1.3. Sense Reliance

Young children learn best through concrete experiences and interactive activities that allow them to participate hands-on in their learning (e.g., touching objects, acting out scenarios, or using props). They make sense of the world primarily through their 5 senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch)

1.1.1.4. Abstract Concepts are Difficult

Young learners struggle with understanding abstract concepts like grammar rules, verb tenses, or sentence structure when explained explicitly. Instead, they internalize grammar naturally; they spontaneously acquire the language rules in parallel with acquiring the language as a communicative.

1.1.1.5. Motivation

Young learners are naturally enthusiastic and motivated; they are inherently fascinated and curious about the world, so it is expected that they bring that same attitude to the classroom towards learning.

1.1.1.6. Attention-seeking

Young learners crave to be acknowledged, and for their learning experience to be better, they need to feel seen by their instructors. It would help them if their teachers were to take initiative and check on them during activities, guide them through their learning, provide positive or constructive feedback while answering any inquiries they might have, and establish a teacher-learner rapport.

1.1.1.7. Self-centered

YLS learn best when they can relate to the topics on a personal level; they like to share and talk about their interests. When the topic is a part of their everyday life, learners can draw on their past experiences to make relations between their previous knowledge and construct their new one, which leads to a deeper understanding of the topic.

1.1.1.8. Limited Attention Span

Young learners have a limited attention span. An attention span refers to the amount of time a person can focus on a task or stimulus before becoming distracted, and children tend to get distracted easily, especially if they think the topic is boring or too difficult; therefore, the activities in the class need to be stimulating and motivating to keep them engaged for longer periods of time.

Douglas Brown (2000) mentioned the same characteristics and added two more:

1.1.1.9. “Affective Factors”

Children are sensitive to social and emotional factors, including peer perceptions, self-esteem, and inhibition, which can affect their willingness to participate and take risks in language learning. Fostering a supportive atmosphere in the classroom from the teacher’s and the learners’ parts reduces their anxiety and encourages them to willingly participate.

1.1.1.10. “Authentic, Meaningful Language”

Children are motivated by language that is relevant, functional, and immediately useful. Making sure the learning topics are examples from real-life situations and interactions promotes better engagement on the learners part.

1.2. Difference Between Adults and Young Language Learners

Douglas Brown (2000) highlights the difference between children and adults learning an additional language. He explained that whereas adults give much importance to language forms and rules (grammar and vocabulary), young learners pay little attention to these

aspects. Instead, they are acquired spontaneously through interaction as they progress with language as a means of communication. Brown notes that while children learn language effortlessly and naturally, adults require conscious effort and awareness. He adds that the children's advantage lies primarily in their fluency, as adults are intellectually superior to children, more cognitively developed, and possess a wider range of strategies at their disposal, such as enhanced vocabulary retention and deductive reasoning, which is the ability to create meaningful links to understand grammatical concepts. These differences have significant implications for TEFL and YL since they convey the need for different perspectives or approaches to teaching them than the ones used to teach adults.

1.3. Principles of Language Learning for Young Learners

Scott and Yeterberg (1995) outline seven language learning principles. These principles explain how young learners acquire language, at what stage they are in their development, and their cognitive abilities and the role they play in their learning experience. They are as follows:

1.3.1. “Words Are not Enough”

The teaching should not depend/rely entirely on spoken words instead, it needs to comprise movements and the five senses. you should make use of any audio or visual tools, to keep them engaged

1.3.2. “Play With the Language”

Learners tend to experiment and do silly things when learning their mother tongue; learning a foreign language is no different. You should allow your learners to play with the language so they can get comfortable with it.

1.3.3. “Language as language”

Learners start perceiving the language not just as a means of communication but as a system with its own rules and structures. Learning reading and writing is a bit of a challenge

at this stage since the transition from oral/spoken language, which involves context and physical gestures or body language, to a permanent form of language, i.e., words written (or to be written) on a page and open to interpretation, needs some time, but it is most important for learning a foreign language.

1.3.4. “Variety in the classroom”

It is imperative that there be a variety in activity, pace, organization, and voice implemented in young learners’ language learning classrooms, Since they have a smaller attention span than adults and need the diversity to be engaged and not get bored.

1.3.5. “Routines”

Learners need to have a sense of normalcy/familiarity with the classroom environment, having constant/unchanging systems, and planning lessons ahead would benefit their learning.

1.3.6. “Cooperation not Competition”

Young learners and humans in general enjoy having a sense of belonging and togetherness, allowing young learners to work in pairs or groups whenever possible provides opportunities for interaction and cooperation. They learn from one another and feel more encouraged and motivated for their learning.

1.3.7. “Grammar”

Most learners at this age can have a good knowledge of the foreign language structures and rules, i.e., they use the language correctly, yet they are not explicitly aware of it. According to Scott and Yeterberg (1995), young learners should be taught the barest minimum of grammar, and it should be introduced carefully when a learner inquires about it or when the teacher feels it is beneficial to them. The explanations must be kept as simple as possible, or through play and other activities that the learners find enjoyable and allow them to subconsciously absorb the language.

1.3.8. “Assessment”

Assessment allows for teachers to assess their learners’ progress; it can be in the form of a test or simply through the teacher’s observation.

1.4. Core Learning Theories

The first formal language learning theory can be traced back to Ancient Greece, particularly to the 5th century BCE, when philosophers like Plato and Aristotle began theorizing about how humans acquire language. However, these early ideas were more philosophical than scientific.

The first systematic and scientific theory of language learning emerged much later, in the late 19th to early 20th century, with the rise of behaviorism. Later and within the span of years, several other theories emerged, each with its own rationale and principles.

1.4.1. The Behaviorism Learning Theory

1.4.1.1. Definitions and Origins of Behaviorism

The term “behaviorism” is derived from the word “behavior,” which means everything people do. Behaviorism is concerned with everything that people do, like visible acts, words, etc., spoken or written. This concept has been introduced by J.B. Watson based on anchoring the problem of life and psychology as a natural science. The behaviorist learning theory uses the behaviorist assumption that people’s actions are controlled by their environment; this theory stems from different experiments which shaped the concept that human behavior can be influenced or controlled by different stimuli and reinforcement. This was later labeled classical behaviorism and operant behaviorism (Abidin, 2009). Behaviorism is a learning theory that only focuses on objectively observable behavior and discounts any independent activities of the mind. Behaviorist theories are based on contiguity and reinforcement. Behaviorism is a doctrine, or a set of doctrines, about human and non-human animal behavior. It is maintained on the assumption that any human behavior is a result of

interaction between the surrounding environment and the living people or non-human creatures. Scientists performed many experiments which later formed the foundation of behaviorism.

1.4.1.2. B.F. Skinner: Operant Conditioning and Behavior Control

Skinner is widely considered one of the most prominent American psychologists of the 20th century. A determinist, Skinner felt that behavior was a more suitable focus than the mind or other internal variables and phenomena. With regard to behavior, Skinner's emphasis was on how to control, predict, and interpret that behavior. His seminal work was the study of behavior in operant chambers, eventually known as the Skinner Box, which evolved to encompass more sophisticated experimental settings (Peterson, 2004). Using these operant chambers, Skinner showed that most behavior was operant in nature, meaning that it was controlled by its consequences rather than being elicited by the environment. (Staddon & Cerutti, 2002)

1.4.1.3. Ivan Pavlov and Classical Conditioning

Ivan Pavlov is one of the most important behaviorist scientists; he pioneered the classical conditioning theory (Abidin, 2009). In classical conditioning, a conditioned response is commanded by a new conditioned stimulus. Originally, the unconditioned stimulus brings the unconditioned response. The procedure Pavlov applied in this experiment is pairing the act of serving food to the dogs with ringing bells; as a result, the dogs salivate whenever they hear the bells ringing, demonstrating that they have been conditioned to associate the bells ringing with eating. They expect to be fed even if there is no food. Therefore, a neutral stimulus can produce a specific response if repeatedly paired with a particular stimulus. (Rehman et al., 2024)

1.4.1.4. Skinner's Experiments and the Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement Process

Operant conditioning developed as a progression of these earlier ideas. Skinner's work became central in explaining how behavior could be shaped and maintained by its consequences. In his experiment "Skinner's Box," a rat was put into a box which contained a lever and some electric iron bars on its floor; whenever the rat pressed the lever while moving haphazardly, food was served (by a mechanism). The rat would repeat the action again and again because its consequence was good, desirable (Staddon & Cerutti, 2002). In contrast, as soon as the rat was put into the box, it received a light shock that would stop when it pressed the lever. This would lead the rat to press the lever immediately after being put in the box to prevent the shock. (Skinner, 1938, as cited in Redalyc, 2024)

1.4.1.5. Reinforcement: Positive, Negative, and Punishment

This would be called the stimulus-response-reinforcement process; it is the assumption that whenever a stimulus invokes a particular reaction/response, the following reinforcement determines whether it will be repeated (or become a habit). If the reinforcement is positive (receiving food), the action will happen more often. If the reinforcement is negative (if the rat does not press the lever, the shock will not stop), the response will change accordingly into a more favorable response or happen less often. Punishment by taking away the desired outcome can also be a reinforcement to obtain favorable behaviors.

In summary, operant behavior encompasses behavior shaped or maintained by consequences. Positive reinforcement is described as the contingent presentation of a reinforcing stimulus following a response, which increases the future rate of that response. This teaching happens continuously, and the wanted/goal behavior can be drilled through shaping. Regarding philosophy of education, Skinner recommends that reinforcement be used in the teaching-learning process in lectures, assignments, and so forth (Abidin, 2009).

1.4.1.6. Skinner's Verbal Behavior and Language Learning

Skinner's verbal behavior theory is also one of the discoveries in behaviorism. In language learning theory, he would discuss some strategies teachers use in a behaviorist approach to language learning and the teaching process. Skinner is a behaviorist who examines the role of reinforcement in the language learning process and its production. According to him, the process of learning is changes in behavior, spoken, controlled, or memorized as a result of a consequence that happens to an individual. He explains that language is arbitrary, learned, or taught through operant conditioning. Skinner proposes that the language teacher use a mimicry or imitation method, just like children who learn the mother tongue. Here, the stimulus presented is the teaching of said language, the response is the learners' understanding/acquisition and overall reaction to the language (stimulus), and the reinforcement is the positive feedback and rewarding reactions from the teachers or fellow students, while the punishment could be in the form of negative feedback. Language mastery is represented as acquiring a set of appropriate language stimulus-response chains. (Skinner, 1938)

1.5. Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist and a pioneer in developmental psychology, famously referring to children as "little scientists." He believed that children learn through experience and interaction with their environment, like putting objects in their mouth to explore texture, weight, and taste. Observing his own three children, Piaget developed one of the most influential theories of cognitive development, proposing that human beings are active participants in their own growth, learning, and thinking. He emphasized that learning stems from mental development and that children's logic is fundamentally different from adults'. Piaget (1996) viewed children as the doers of learning, heading from action to abstract knowledge.

Piaget adopted a biological perspective on cognitive development, conceptualizing it as a process akin to biological maturation that guides children toward a more advanced form, similar to their physical growth. In contrast to behavioral theories, he contended that cognitive growth is not merely a result of teaching or structured learning, but rather stems from the natural complexity and maturity of the organism's cognitive framework, which evolves with age and experience. "Language is necessarily acquired in a context of imitation [but] involves original constructions" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 55). Development is not guaranteed to improve—it can lead to improvement or decline. There is a reciprocal relationship between cognitive development and other areas of overall development, resulting in various structures, patterns, or specific mental content. Cognitive development encompasses key processes such as schemes, assimilation, accommodation, organization, and equilibrium.

According to Piaget & Inhelder (1996), knowledge arises from the child's interaction with the physical world. The capacity for specific cognitive structures at different ages is determined by the maturation of the nervous system. Heredity provides consistency to development. Cognitive development is not a linear progression, but rather involves continuous change through the formation of specific stages and the transitions between them. "While the adult educates the child by means of multiple social transmissions... every adult began as a child" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. ix). Development is structured into a series of stages, each characterized by distinct modes of thinking and world interpretation, with qualitative changes marking each stage. Each stage has specific characteristics that apply universally, no matter the child's origin.

Piaget's theory is grounded in genetic epistemology; he stated that learning is based on mental development. Mental development, or what is known as the cognitive process, emerges and can only be revealed by understanding the developmental level of individuals in

learning. This theory has since become a guiding framework used worldwide by educators in curriculum development, especially in early childhood education (Bloom, 1997; Kurniati, 2017). The child develops in four major stages at about the same ages in all cultures. One cannot apply any fixed set of logical operations or principles universally to their experiences. The operations or principles accessible to an individual are contingent upon the organization of their experiences, which accounts for changes in a child's perception of certain elements of reality, despite the underlying reality remaining unchanged.

1.5.1. Sensorimotor Stage (0–2 years)

The sensorimotor stage spans from birth to around 2 years old. In this stage, children learn and experience the world primarily through their five senses—touch, smell, sight, taste, hearing. They focus on the here and now and cannot create mental representations. "Articulate language makes its appearance, after a phase of spontaneous vocalization... at the end of the sensori-motor period, with what have been called 'one-word sentences'... These single words may express desires, emotions, or observations" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 85). Hearing the word "apple" would not trigger a picture of an apple. They lack object permanence and believe that an object's presence or existence is limited to when they're seeing it. For example, when playing with a toy and it slips out of sight, they believe it has vanished. It no longer exists simply because they cannot see it.

1.5.2. Preoperational Stage (2–6 years)

The preoperational stage, from 2 to 6 years old, is marked by the emergence of mental representations. Children begin using words and images to represent things. However, they lack logical reasoning. They are limited by egocentrism—they view the world solely from their own point of view. "The speech of subjects between four and six... consists rather of monologues or 'collective monologues' in the course of which everyone talks to himself without listening to the others" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 120). If their favorite fruit is

watermelon, they assume everyone's favorite fruit must also be watermelon. They are unable to perform operations and lack a sense of conservation. For instance, they believe that a taller glass holds more water than a wider one, even if the amount of liquid is exactly the same.

1.5.3. Concrete Operational Stage (7–11 years)

The concrete operational stage typically spans from 7 to 11 years old. Logical reasoning is developed. Conservation rules are understood. "With the advent of concrete operations, language becomes an instrument of genuine exchange and logical coordination... The child can now use words to express classes, relations, and serial order in a systematic way" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 132). Children in this stage understand concrete concepts and events, but still lack abstract logic and moral reasoning abilities. Thought processes become more logical, organized, and tangible. They can now categorize information, deduce rules, and acquire a more substantial understanding of their environment. Their responses are grounded in concrete, logical, and empirically structured information. However, their knowledge is still simpler and more fragmented than that of adults. This stage is deemed intermediate, as reasoning remains tied to concrete experiences rather than abstract thinking. The primary goal at this stage is to arrive at answers that reflect formal logical reasoning.

1.5.4. Formal Operational Stage (12+ years)

The formal operational stage begins around age 12 and extends into adulthood. Abstract thinking is developed. Individuals can now reason about hypothetical situations and discuss moral conflicts and dilemmas. "At the level of formal operations, language permits the manipulation of hypotheses ('if... then') and abstract concepts (justice, infinity), transcending the immediate context" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 144). Adolescents begin reflecting on their own thoughts, considering implications, and planning for the future. They possess the capability to think beyond immediate circumstances. This stage marks a transition

from concrete operational thought, where logical operations are applied to tangible experience, to formal operational thought, where operations are formalized through internal transformations and representations. However, until a certain level of maturation is reached, education systems often emphasize memorization over independent thinking or inquiry.

Piaget also emphasized the relationship between language development and cognitive growth. He viewed language as part of cognition and essential to thinking, as it helps individuals solve problems. "Language is far from being the source of logic; rather, logic is the source of language's constructive operations. Language continually enriches thought, but it does not furnish its structures, which derive from action and from immanent coordination" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, p. 89). Children develop their own logic and navigate conceptual realms that allow them to engage socially. Language development follows the stages of cognitive development and evolves in response to cognitive conflict. Grammatical errors in children are natural and reflect their individual developmental processes.

There are two views of development: one, that it occurs through distinct stages with universal characteristics, and two, that it is a linear process unfolding over time. Psychological growth can be seen as a creative process, one that is dynamic and shaped by the organization of the individual's experiences. "The logic of deaf-mutes... indicates a systematic delay in the emergence of logic without language" (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, pp. 87–88). The child's thinking changes not because reality changes, but because the way the child organizes reality changes. Piaget's work illustrates how the development of intelligence is not just a product of external teaching but of the individual's active engagement in their own cognitive transformation.

1.6. Vygotsky's Social Learning Theory

Lev Vygotsky is a Russian teacher, psychologist, and social constructivist, best known for his contribution to language learning theories with his social development theory.

Vygotsky emphasizes that the essence of language learning is social interaction. Three major concepts of this theory are the zone of proximal development, sociocultural interaction, and scaffolding.

According to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), language learning does not happen through imitation, memorization, or reinforcement but through interactions in socially meaningful contexts. Only when one is ready to benefit from it do they start to understand the language presented to them. As Vygotsky (1978) explains, "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (p. 57). The psychologist also believed in sociocultural interaction in language learning. He measured the impact of social relationships and culture on learning, focusing on the joint construction of knowledge. He stressed that the relationship structure developed in early conversation is essential. The key to linguistic development is this conversational turn-taking, initiated by caregivers through questions that urge the child to contribute. "The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech. As a result, the immediacy of 'natural' perception is supplanted by a complex mediated process" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 32).

1.6.1. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

ZPD is Vygotsky's most prominent contribution; the idea behind it is that one cannot understand a child's developmental level without considering both the student's actual developmental level (competence) and their potential developmental level. Thus, a child's competence, or what the child knows, can have different forms: the actual and the potential developmental levels. The actual developmental level, also referred to as isolating abilities or problem-solving capacities, is the level of development attained when a child attempts to solve problems independently.

Therefore, language learning takes place in this ZPD where the learner is capable of solving certain problems, such as understanding language, by seeking help from someone who has more knowledge about how to go about the problem, such as a teacher or a peer. In this sense, language learning is more effectively taking place through social interactions and participating in events in which learning and teaching occur in both more and less knowledgeable individuals. Vygotsky described this developmental space as “functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Additionally, the person with greater language proficiency (or any other content area) providing such help is referred to as the more knowledgeable other (MKO).

1.6.2. The More Knowledgeable Other

Lev Vygotsky also laid much emphasis on the importance of social interaction during the acquisition of language. His influential theory maintains that children learn language through interaction with others. He further states that as children progress towards a more adult-like linguistic capability, they accept more responsibility for the management of their own speech. As a result, self-directed speech is gradually internalized into thought. “Speech not only accompanies practical activity but also plays a specific role in carrying it out. Children solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 25). Vygotsky also maintains that a child’s use of verbal language acts as a guide in the ZPD whenever they are attempting tasks that are beyond their immediate cognitive capability. This zone of proximal development is the difference between the actual development level and the development level that can be reached with the help of a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (Abdul Rahim et al., 2009). Typically, the MKO referred to by Vygotsky in much of his writing is an adult. However, it does not necessarily follow that the MKO must be a fully grown person in every situation. In the school setting, the MKO is

frequently the children's teacher, especially when the children are being taught how to read. But the psychologist made it explicitly clear, in his writings, that anyone displaying more knowledge could be considered a MKO. "Children can imitate a variety of actions that go well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. Using imitation, children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under the guidance of adults" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). The effects of other children and adults on the children's language strategies were distinguished because a further important tenet of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is that language is not just a means of communication but an essential tool in the acquisition and organization of knowledge, meaning that logic development is tightly linked to that of the language. However, the ability to use language in a more sophisticated manner comes from the children's interaction with adults, especially when they are in the ZPD. "The specifically human capacity for language enables children to provide for auxiliary tools in the solution of difficult tasks, to overcome impulsive action, to plan a solution to a problem prior to its execution, and to master their own behavior" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 28).

1.6.2.1. Scaffolding

Furthermore, Vygotsky suggests the use of scaffolding. Teachers would help students in teaching and learning activities, gradually withdrawing this help through a scaffolding process so that students could become independent learners. According to Gibbson (2009), scaffolding, in the way it is used here, has three major characteristics:

- It is temporary help that assists a learner to move toward new concepts, levels of understanding, and new language.
- It enables a learner to know how to do something (not just what to do), so that they will be better able to complete similar tasks alone.
- It is future-oriented: in Vygotsky's words, "What a child can do with assistance today, she will be able to do by herself tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87).

1.6.3. Implications of Vygotsky's Theory on Learning

There are several implications of Vygotsky's theory on learning. First, in-class activities should involve working with peers in groups, and students must interact with each other. However, for some activities, pairs rather than groups are best. The idea of the jigsaw model is that groups are made of individuals, and each individual is assigned different information. Each student is responsible for a part of the work, and in the end, participants can practice teaching each other about their assigned topic. The jigsaw model allows for individual accountability and ensures that students rely on each other.

Furthermore, the lower level of knowledge should be scaffolded for students to take the next step, meaning that when they are out of the "Too hard zone" and into the zone of proximal development, scaffolding helps them transition the information/skills to the "too easy zone". This can be achieved through various types of activities in which the teacher or more competent peers help students by simplifying the task and breaking it down into smaller parts, pointing out important information, or giving clues or examples. Gradually, the independent responsibility/knowledge about the task/content should be given to the student.

1.7. The Most Prominent Language Teaching Approaches

Similar to language learning theories, many language teaching methods/approaches emerged with the goal to facilitate and create a clear framework to guide the learners, their principles and implications ranged according to circumstance and the influence of the evolving LLT at the time.

1.7.1. The Audio-lingual Approach

The audiolingual, or aural-oral, method is an approach to second language learning that aims to compensate for the lack of attention to the performative aspect of the second language as it is learned.

According to Lado, the renowned pioneer of this approach, learning a second language is “acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the conditions of normal communication among native speakers at conversational speed” (Lado, 1964, p. 38). This means the ability to perform in the second language efficiently, at the same rate, and follow conversational norms that govern speech in native contexts. This includes correct grammar, spoken fluency, and the ability to understand words in real-time as you listen to the SL.

Lado (1964) emphasizes the importance of the association between C (content) and E (expression). He describes the process of speaking as going from content to expression and the process of listening as going from expression to content. This association ensures the understanding of the language both when listening and speaking. He goes on to state that these concepts are not necessarily learned in an orderly manner; the learner can comprehend the content but fail to grasp the expression until later on, or vice-versa, or both the expression and its content are learned, but the learner fails to link it in conversational contexts (Lado, 1964).

Lado believes that experience is essential in learning a language. These experiences leave a “trace” or a mark on the individual’s memory store. Constant exposure to the language makes it a habit, and the individual will eventually be able to learn and use it fluently. When these experiences are unavailable, learners fall back into partial experiences, which Lado defines as “learning the expression, the content, and the association separately” (Lado, 1964, p. 38); an example is learning through mimicry or silent rehearsal. Lado also emphasizes the importance of attention, awareness, and motivation. He maintains that being aware and able to pay attention to larger utterances while speaking or listening increases language fluency, and motivated learners learn more than unmotivated learners.

Lado (1964) highlighted principles of the audiolingual method:

1.7.1.1. Principle One: Speech before Writing

Listening and speaking are taught before reading and writing in the audiolingual method. According to Lado, writing does not account for the other aspects of language, such as intonation, rhythm, stress, and junctures. He argued that once the learners know how to speak and listen, they can learn to read independently without explicit help. The psychologist argues that the student's speech is defined by the models they imitate; if the model is fluent and proficient in the language, the imitation is the same, and vice versa.

1.7.1.2. Principle Two: Basic Sentences

Giving the learners a list of authentic conversational expressions and instructing them to memorize them, because learners have a shorter memory span in the foreign language than in their native language, having them listen to and repeat these conversational expressions strengthens their memory and allows them to store them for future use .

1.7.1.3. Principle Three: Patterns as Habits

“The student does not know a sentence until he can speak it” (Lado, 1964, p. 61). Making language use a habit through constant practice in the classroom is important because knowing the grammar rules, having the correct vocabulary, or talking about the language is not knowing the language. Knowing the language is being able to use it appropriately in different contexts.

1.7.1.4. Classroom Implications and Implementation

ASTP is defined as “Army Specialized Training Program, established in more than 50 colleges and universities of the United States during the Second World War. The ASTP provided intensive courses in various languages, emphasizing the ability to speak the language and understand it when spoken by native speakers” (Lado, 1964, pp. 213–214). The audiolingual method makes use of the ASTP materials, specifically the dialogues. The aural-oral approach is based on memorization of these dialogues, and these dialogues are

adopted/used on four conditions. First, they have to be graded, meaning that the language structures level progresses linearly and is in accordance with the learners' level. Second, they should not be packed with too much information that is still unfamiliar to the learner. Third, they should be short enough to be memorized. Finally, they should not contain robotic/artificial or made-up language; instead, they should reflect the natural language, i.e. authentic language. The translation or explanation of the dialogues to be memorized is provided in written form as in an appendix in the learners' native language, although it shouldn't be. It is also not spoken aloud by the teacher or the learner (Lado, 1964).

The teaching exercises employed to facilitate the memorization, according to Lado (1964), are

Imitation or mimicry, which involves the teachers speaking the utterance several times (up to three times) and then having the learners repeat after them, and if the utterances are too long for the learners, they are split into parts. Lado highlighted that children are more likely to achieve fluency in pronunciation through mimicry.

Props, in this exercise, the teacher gives the learner an "articulatory hint" when they are struggling with the repetition and memorization of an utterance.

Group and individual recitations, which involve the whole class reciting/repeating an utterance together until they are somewhat familiar with the utterance; afterwards, each individual recites on their own. Lado highlighted the importance of using choral recitation before individual recitation as it lowers the learner's anxiety or fear of failure (Lado, 1964).

Lado does not neglect the cultural implications of the dialogues. Instead, teachers are asked to explain any aspect of the target culture that is different from the speaker's native culture to prevent the learners from confusing the cultures (Lado, 1964).

This theory also makes use of technology, using the language lab/laboratory: "A separate room where students may practice speaking and listening with the aid of tape

recorders, earphones, microphones, and/or other sound equipment chiefly as an audio-lingual supplement to class work. The language lab supplements the work of the teacher” (Lado, 1964, p. 217), and Lab materials: “Exercises, tests, supplementary readings, etc. usually recorded on tape for use in the language laboratory. Publishers now provide sets of tapes to accompany their language texts. Teachers prepare supplementary lab materials of their own to meet the specific needs and interests of their classes” (Lado, 1964, p. 217). As previously stated by Lado, these language labs can provide a good model for the learners and even replace the teacher. The materials are also a source of practice for the learners, allowing them to use the second language freely.

1.7.2. Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by James Asher, is often described as a teaching method that makes use of physical movement to learn a language. While Asher himself refers to TPR as a "tool" rather than a standalone method, its structured approach and effectiveness in language teaching are enough to include it among recognized teaching methodologies (Asher, 2009).

Asher (2009) believes in Piaget's cognitive development theory that children accumulate and comprehend the language first; this happens through their interactions with adults, which usually comprise many imperatives or action verbs, such as look at mommy, smile for dada, touch your feet, etc. This continues until they feel they have a sufficient amount of reality construction to comprehend the language, so they start to respond with the actions asked of them. Only then do they start to produce one-word responses like yes or no.

Asher argues that this can also be applied to second language learning, claiming that “once the child achieves fluency in the native language, the biological pattern for acquiring language does not disappear” (Asher, 2009, pp. 2–18). This is the concept of the total

physical response method/tool. It is that anyone learning a second language can learn it stress-free, using imperatives instead of declarative, i.e., actions instead of repetitive words.

Asher (2009) also mentions brain lateralization. In his work, he referenced experiments that concluded that the brain's right hemisphere is "mute" or "nonverbal." It does not produce language. Instead, it produces actions, meaning that it is the part responsible for listening and comprehension. In contrast, the brain's left hemisphere is verbal; it produces language, meaning that it is the part responsible for speaking and language production.

By playing into the right brain hemisphere, Asher (2009) believes that:

- Language learning will be sped up; learners will internalize and start thinking with the language.
- Long-term retention of the language will be achieved, meaning that the learners will not completely forget what they have learned even after months of not using it. A little warm-up can get them right back to where they were.
- Language learners will be more motivated since they are involved in their own learning and the activities are fun and hands-on

Asher's TPR strategy involves using imperatives and giving commands in the target language like: "stand up," "touch the door," "turn left." The learners then listen to these commands and respond with physical movement, i.e., acting out the imperative, without needing to speak. This promotes learners' comprehension of meaning through actions, successfully engaging the right brain hemisphere. Over time, learners will understand more complex instructions without being forced to speak. Asher emphasizes that speaking comes naturally once learners feel they are ready. Trying to force speaking too early (a left-brain activity) will cause stress, boredom, and poor retention (Asher, 2009).

Asher (2009) also references several other right-brain activities that follow similar principles and are suited to TPR:

The Learnables by Harris Winitz: Learners listen to audio instructions while viewing matching context images. As a consequence, they can grasp the meaning just by looking at the pictures without the need for translation.

Sens-it Cell Model by James R. Nord: Learners listen to a sentence presenting a situation, then match it to the correct situation (represented in pictures); speaking comes later.

Comprehension-Based Instruction by Norman & Judith Gary: Students listen first, then they read only after they have internalized and comprehended meaning aurally. Speaking is delayed to reduce stress.

Suggestopedia by Georgi Lozanov: It uses music, role-play, costumes, and relaxation techniques to decrease inhibition and help learners grasp the language in a more natural, relaxed manner

In TPR, grammar and grammar rules are embedded into the imperatives given to the learners. For instance, a command can be

- Stand up, Walk to the door, Touch the handle

Then look into the other learners and say:

- Ahmed is holding the door handle.

This way, the learners experience both the present and present continuous tenses, therefore learning them without being consciously aware of it and without the complication of abiding by strict rules (Asher, 2009).

1.7.3. Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to approaches that focused on the grammatical aspect of the language only, such as the audiolingual method.

As we have previously seen in the audiolingual method, language is mostly learned through repetition and memorization of certain utterances, with a clear fixation on correct grammar and impeccable form. In contrast to this traditional view of language learning, the

communicative approach views language as both communicative competence and grammatical competence, giving importance to both form and content.

1.7.3.1. Communicative Competence VS Grammatical Competence

"Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g. parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed" (Richards, 2006, p. 3). In other words, grammatical competence encompasses vocabulary (lexical items of the language), syntax (sentence structure and rules), morphology (word, formation, and structure), semantics (meaning), and phonology (the sound system of a language). This grammatical competence was the sole purpose of language learning before the emergence of CLT.

According to Richards, communicative competence "included knowing what to say and how to say it appropriately based on the situation, the participants and their roles and intentions" (Richards, 2006, p. 8), which means being able to choose appropriate language based on the situational needs, the relationship nature between the participants, and the intent to be conveyed.

This makes it an essential part of language learning since knowing the language structures and grammar rules is not much help in real-life contexts. Being communicatively competent in a language ensures smooth communication. Even with some grammatical mistakes, the speaker's intention can be understood through the implementation of language strategies.

1.7.3.2. Functional Activities and Communicative Activities

Pre-communicative activities: They provide the learner with the necessary skills to communicate without actually making him use the language, i.e., "His main purpose was to produce certain language forms in an acceptable way" (Littlewood, 1981, p. 16) after being

prompted. P being the prompt and R being the response. These activities mix both the grammatical and situational context in a communicative manner by giving possible real-life situations or contexts that the learners might find themselves in, such as

1. Asking for directions:

P: Pardon, do you know the way to the school?

R: No sorry

P: Hello, can you help me find the park, please?

R: Yes, it is across the post office.

In this example, the students learn expressions, such as across, in front of, behind, on the left, on the right... etc. (according to different responses)

2. Buying groceries:

P: Do you have chicken?

R: Yes, it is in the fridge over there

3. An invitation for dinner:

P: Shall we have some Mexican food tonight?

R: Oh no, I do not feel like Mexican food tonight

P: Shall we have some Italian food?

R: Yes, please.

In this last example, the learners acquire the form "shall we" and how to use it, as well as confirmation and refusing, i.e., expressing negation and confirmation.

1.7.3.3. Communicative activities

- They are learner-directed activities which require the learners to work in pairs or groups to perform an interaction. The teacher's role is to onset the activity/task, and the learners conduct it.

- The teacher's role is to observe, guide, monitor, and even intervene sometimes to remind the learners not to use their mother tongue, to resolve their disagreements, or to provide them with necessary advice so they can continue the activity
- The level of complexity and authenticity of the language used progresses gradually. Inexperienced learners are first presented with simple, easy activities that get progressively harder until they level up their language competence and are able to communicate in more complex, closer-to-reality communicative activities. These are called Mechanical (form-focused), Meaningful (form + function), and Communicative (real interaction with unpredictable responses).
- These communicative activities can be functional or social. Functional communication activities are more focused on achieving a particular function with the language; the learners should practice picking correct and fitting language to execute a certain purpose, such as to invite, to greet, to advise, to complain, to apologize, to promise, to agree, to disagree, to suggest, to accept... etc. On the other hand, social interaction activities are more focused on the social context; learners are required to not only use the language to achieve a function but also be mindful of choosing the appropriate language for a specific social context.

In addition to these functional and social interaction activities, Richards (2006) includes a range of task types that support meaningful interaction in the communicative approach. Among them are

Information gap activities, where learners use the language to share information. For example, a learner does not know a piece of information, and they have to communicate appropriately with their classmates to get it.

Example: One student has a food list, and another has a recipe; they must ask/answer to plan a lunchbox.

Jigsaw activities, in which each group of learners has different information, and they are required to collaborate and combine the information to get the whole picture, are a kind of information gap.

Task completion activities, where the focus is on achieving a practical outcome using the language. It can be by solving a puzzle, playing a game... etc.

Finally, **role-plays** are central to CLT, giving learners a chance to act out real-life situations (e.g., ordering from a restaurant, visiting the doctor, making friends in a park... etc.). This kind of activity provides communicative experience and promotes fluency.

It should be noted that the communicative language teaching approach has two phases; according to Richards, we can differentiate:

The classic communicative language teaching, ranging from the 1970s to 1990s, was heavily focused on oral communication skills and looked to eradicate the grammatically focused teaching that was widely adopted at the time. This led to the writing skill, which was heavily associated with grammar rules and structure, being put in the further back of language teaching; even though this was not the intention of the founders of this approach, it was a mere misinterpretation on the part of the audience.

After the 1990s, proposals for a communicative syllabus emerged that advocated for a skills-based method towards teaching and the adoption of the communicative language teaching approach as the broader syllabus design method; this meant putting equal emphasis on the four language skills: reading, writing and listening. "Advocates of CLT, however, stressed an integrated-skills approach to the teaching of the skills. Since in real life the skills often occur together, they should also be linked in teaching, it was argued" (Richards, 2006, p. 10).

Richards (2006) defines a skills-based approach as focusing "on the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and breaks each skill down into its component micro-skills" (p. 10). An example of this in the writing skill can be

- Producing relevant vocabulary to the topic
- Producing simple sentences about the topic
- Being able to link those sentences using the correct connectors
- Being able to create a comprehensive composition about the topic

Language skills can be devised as productive and receptive or comprehensive:

Oral and written skills are productive skills. In speaking, the individual produces speech, communicates ideas and transmits information. This requires the production of a stream of words and/or sentences. In writing, on the other hand, the individual produces text, which also communicates ideas and transmits information. This requires the production of written words and sentences that convey meaning. Both skills are also considered cognitive development skills; both allow for the learners to experiment and enrich their communicative and grammatical competence.

Writing is regarded as a tool for learning grammar more than speaking is, but in reality, both require a significant degree of mastery of grammar and grammatical components.

Listening and reading skills are receptive/comprehensive skills in which the learner receives information or meaning. Mastering them is not any less important than speaking and writing, as there will be a communication breakdown without them.

It should be noted that writing activities in communicative language teaching are also productive and communicative in nature. Learners write to achieve a function. These activities can be implemented at the end of a speaking activity. An example would be students collaborating at the end of a session to create a comprehensive paragraph about the

topic discussed during that session. Alternatively, they are tasked to complete a dialogue... etc.

From my observation of the textbook provided for primary school teaching in Algeria, specifically the fourth-year textbook, I have noticed:

- The book has very few writing activities.
- Writing activities provided for the learners include copying sentences in cursive, filling in the blanks with provided missing words, matching activities, circling activities, drawing activities and colouring activities (although, I am not sure the last couple ones can be categorised as writing activities)
- The writing activity does not require any productivity on the learners' part, and even most of the activities involve them reading dialogues and repeating/performing them; various mechanical activities and little to no meaningful or communicative activities.

This observation led to the conclusion that the communicative language approach implemented in Algeria is either the classic communicative teaching approach or a misinterpretation of it, as there is condensed concentration on listening and speaking and minimal regard for reading and writing.

My suggestion in this chapter is to opt for a correct overall implementation of the CLT approach or a shift towards an integrated skills approach, as this will better align with the principles of communicative language teaching and the written assessment implemented in primary schools.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that teaching English to young learners requires more than simply choosing a method. It requires understanding the learners, how they acquire the language, and how theory translates into the classroom. While Communicative Language Teaching is the dominant method in Algeria, its misimplementation, especially the neglect of

the writing and reading skills, creates a misalignment with learners' actual needs. A shift toward a more integrated-skills-based approach to the application of CLT could significantly improve language policy development and prepare learners more effectively for assessment. The next chapter explores this very issue by examining current assessment practices and their alignment with the teaching methods discussed here.

Chapter Two: Assessment Practices

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Introduction

Assessment is an essential part of the teaching and learning process. It plays a major role in accounting for learners' progress, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and making sure the learning objectives are achieved. Assessment is not only about giving grades or scores; it is about understanding how much learning has been fulfilled, how effectively learners can use what they have learned, and how teaching can be improved to better support them. Knowing the criteria that make up good assessment helps the teachers and curriculum designers to curate effective assessment that improves the learning experience rather than hinder it.

2.1. Important Concepts and Distinctions

Assessment, evaluation, and testing are all terms used interchangeably across literature in reference to the act of measuring achievement. However, it is important to know "that even though closely related and overlapping these three terms do not have the same meaning.

A test "is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain". (Brown, 2021, p. 3). A test is a tool or procedure used to gather information about the test taker's performance and then quantify it to determine or to make interpretations/conclusions about the learner's competence. "A well-constructed test is an instrument that provides an accurate measure of the test-taker's ability within a particular domain." (Brown, 2021, p. 4).

In the language learning domain, tests are used for two purposes: one is to measure the learner's competence, that is, the learner's mastery of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) in the target language. The other purpose is to measure/judge or gather information about the learner's knowledge about the language itself.

Measurement is also an important concept as it is the purpose of the tests. Usually, the students are graded according to specific scales, grids, and criteria; these grades consist the outcome/results of the test. (Green, 2021) "They are then evaluated to make decisions about the learners. "Evaluation is involved when the results of a test (or other assessment procedure) are used to make decisions" (Bachman, 1990, p. 22-23).

Assessment, on the other hand, "is an ongoing process that encompasses a wide range of methodological techniques." (Brown, 2021, p. 3). It is a never-ending process, where teachers make judgments about the learners performance, it could be formal or informal.

Informal assessments "can take a number of forms, starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to the student... it is embedded in classroom tasks designed to elicit performance without recording results and making fixed conclusions about a student's competence." (Brown, 2021, p. 6). In language context, they can take any form of teacher feedback: positive, like praising the learner's performance in a task or a test, and negative, like correcting errors and giving advice and tips to improve the learner's language proficiency. This kind of assessment is always nonjudgmental. It is mostly to enhance the teaching process by the teachers for the learners.

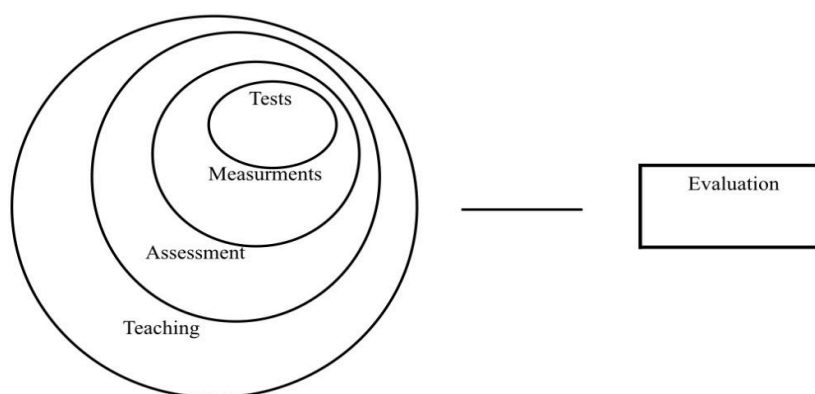
Formal assessments, on the other hand, "are exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and student an appraisal of student achievement." These kinds of assessments are more rigid and usually conducted within a specific timeframe. The judgmental conclusions are of significant academic importance as they mostly decide the learner's standing in academia, i.e., whether they passed the year, graduated, or failed.

Figure 1 below provides the interrelations between the four concepts;

Teaching takes place first, where the learners acquire language with clearly set objectives to be achieved by the end of the course, semester...etc. Then comes assessment, which is incorporated as an everlasting process in both formal and informal forms. Afterwards, measurements take place in the form of tests. The testing outcomes are the results, grades... etc. that will be evaluated to draw conclusions about the test takers' performance, consequently informing decision-making about the learners' proficiency and competence.

Figure 1

Tests, measurement, assessment, teaching, and evaluation.



Note. Adapted from *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (3 ed., p. 7), by H. D. Brown, 2021, Pearson Education. Copyright 2021 by Pearson Education.

2.2. Assessment Principles

Now that important distinctions have been made about these four terms, the next step is to consider the assessment principles that constitute good assessment practices.

2.2.1. Practicality

The noun “practicality” is derived from the word “practical” which means feasible, reasonable, doable...etc. In the educational context and assessment specifically, a practical test is an accomplishable test. According to Brown (2021), it needs to be feasible in terms of:

Time: The time allotted for the test should not be too long or too short that it cannot be realistically done. The duration and effort required to design and grade it should also be considered.

Cost: A practical test should not go over the budget limits

Resources: A practical Test should not misutilize The human And material resources targeted/assigned by the test.

Finally, A practical test is **unambiguous**; it has clearly set administration rules.

An example of a practical test is a grammatical test where students are provided with multiple-choice questions, and each requires them to choose the correct verb tense/form in a predetermined duration of 45 minutes. Here, the time allotted for the test and the time required to design and grade it are reasonable; the students only have to pick their answer, and the teachers must follow a set answer key for grading. The cost is also within budget limits as the institution covers the print expenses. Resources are utilized efficiently (Human, teacher, learners, and material). Finally, The administration rules and prompts are clear.

2.2.2. Reliability

“A reliable test is consistent and dependable” (Brown, 2021, p. 29). A reliable test produces consistent outcomes regardless of when it is administered or who is taking it. Brown (2021) highlighted that a reliable test is;

Clearly set and unambiguous, it provides clear, understandable instructions for how it is scored, and the scoring itself should follow a fixed set of criteria or rules.

Consistent: It gives consistent results every time it is taken. This means that if the test is administered more than once, the conditions should stay the same.

Precise; it includes clear and straightforward items/tasks so the learners are not confused or misled by what is being asked of them.

Easy to Score: It allows the same rubric to be used across different test-takers without confusing the teacher or the learner.

In addition to the previously mentioned characteristics, Brown (2021) also identifies four major factors that can affect the reliability of a test:

2.2.2.1. Student-related reliability

Sometimes, the test results may be inconsistent not because of the test itself but due to the students. A learner may not perform well on the day of the test as a result of being tired, Sick, or anxious. These factors can affect the reliability of the test outcomes.

2.2.2.2. Rater reliability

This refers to inconsistencies caused by the person scoring the test. If two teachers score the same answer differently, or if the same teacher gives different grades for the same performance at different times, then the test is not reliable. This mostly happens in speaking or writing tests where judgment plays a role or when teachers are prejudiced about good and bad students.

2.2.2.3. Test administration reliability

This concerns how the test is carried out. If the environment is noisy, the timing is unclear, the instructions are not properly given, or one group is in good weather, and the other is in extremely hot or cold weather, these factors will affect how learners perform and consequently affect reliability as well.

focuses on the internal structure of the test itself. If some questions are confusing or too difficult, or if the tasks are not clearly related to the test objectives, then the results cannot be considered dependable.

Figure 2*Reliability*

Note. From *Language Testing in Practice: Designing and Developing Useful Language Tests* (p. 20), by L. F. Bachman & A. S. Palmer, 1996. Copyright 1996 by Oxford University Press

2.2.3. Validity

According to a definition from Gronlund (1998), validity is "the extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment" (p. 226). This means that for a test to be valid, it needs to meet its intended purpose, i.e., it successfully measures or gathers relevant information that serves the goal it was designed for. Brown (2021) puts it in simpler terms: "A valid test measures exactly what it proposes to measure" (p. 32). He further highlights that a valid test is

Reasonably delimited: It only measures variables that are directly linked to its purpose.

Purpose-driven: It evaluates exactly what it claims to test — the performance elicited from the test taker reflects the aspect intended for measuring.

Concretely grounded: It is based on the test taker's actual performance and provides practical insight into their competence (ability).

Evidenced: It is backed up by a solid theoretical framework.

2.2.3.1. Content-related evidence

is achieved when a test "requires the test taker to perform the behavior measured" (Brown, 2021, p. 33). For example, if the purpose of a test is to measure the test-taker's writing fluency, this can be approached through either direct or indirect testing. A direct test would involve students writing sentences or a comprehensive paragraph appropriate to their level

within a limited duration. An indirect test, on the other hand, might ask students to reorder sentences. In this latter case, it can only be loosely argued that the task measures writing fluency, as it does not demonstrate the learners actually producing written language.

Another example would be a test with the purpose of measuring the test taker's speaking ability. A direct test would require learners to engage in real-time spoken interaction like role-plays. An indirect test, on the other hand, would provide them with a written dialogue that has multiple-choice options to fill in the gaps, and they have to choose the appropriate response. This latter method also can barely argue that it correctly measures the speaking ability, as it lacks several crucial aspects of speaking, like pronunciation, fluency, turn-taking, and conversational strategies.

2.2.3.2. Criterion-related evidence

focuses on how well test scores relate to other evidence of the same ability. Instead of looking at the test, this type of evidence compares the test results with other performance measuring methods, whether they happen at the same time or later on. (Brown, 2021)

Brown (2021) explained two types of criterion-related evidence (validity). First, there is concurrent validity, which is when test scores are supported by other current signs of the test-takers' measured ability. For example, if a student gets a high score on a speaking test and the teacher knows his speaking skill is good based on classroom observation, then concurrent validity is achieved. The second type is predictive validity, which refers to the test's ability to predict learners' future performance. For instance, if a placement test given at the beginning of the year accurately predicts students who later succeed in advanced tasks, it is showing predictive validity.

2.2.3.3. Construct-related evidence

is when the construct being measured is covered completely. Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined it as "The term construct is used to refer to the extent to which we can

interpret a given test score as an indicator of the ability(ies), or construct(s), we want to measure." (P. 21). A construct is the broader concept or skill the test aims to assess and to measure it correctly, the test needs to address its components. For instance, a test aiming to measure speaking fluency may have learners perform a role-play or an interview with peers while the teacher uses a grading sheet that evaluates the following components:

- Pronunciation
- Stress placement
- Intonation
- Rhythm
- Delivery

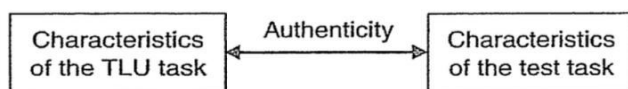
This test is theoretically grounded, as it covers all the important aspects that make up speaking fluency. However, if another test aims for the same purpose but only has students read aloud or memorize a few lines, then the full construct is not being tested. What is being tested instead is reading and memorization. Therefore, the construct validity of such a test would be weak. (Brown, 2021)

2.2.4. Authenticity

The term "authentic" is generally defined as "not false or imitation: real, actual; made or done the same way as an original; conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.); this concept translates into tasks that mirror real-life communication. In the context of language assessment, Bachman and Palmer (1996) define authenticity "as the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task." (P. 23). An authentic test

- Employs context as a significant and important segment of the items
- covers themes that are important, pertinent, and engaging
- is designed using real-life language and mimics real-world tasks.

- Reflects themes and contexts through items that recreate the key features of a target language task.

Figure 3*Authenticity*

Note. From *Language Testing in Practice: Designing and Developing Useful Language Tests* (p. 23), by L. F. Bachman & A. S. Palmer, 1996. Copyright 1996 by Oxford University Press

2.2.5. Washback

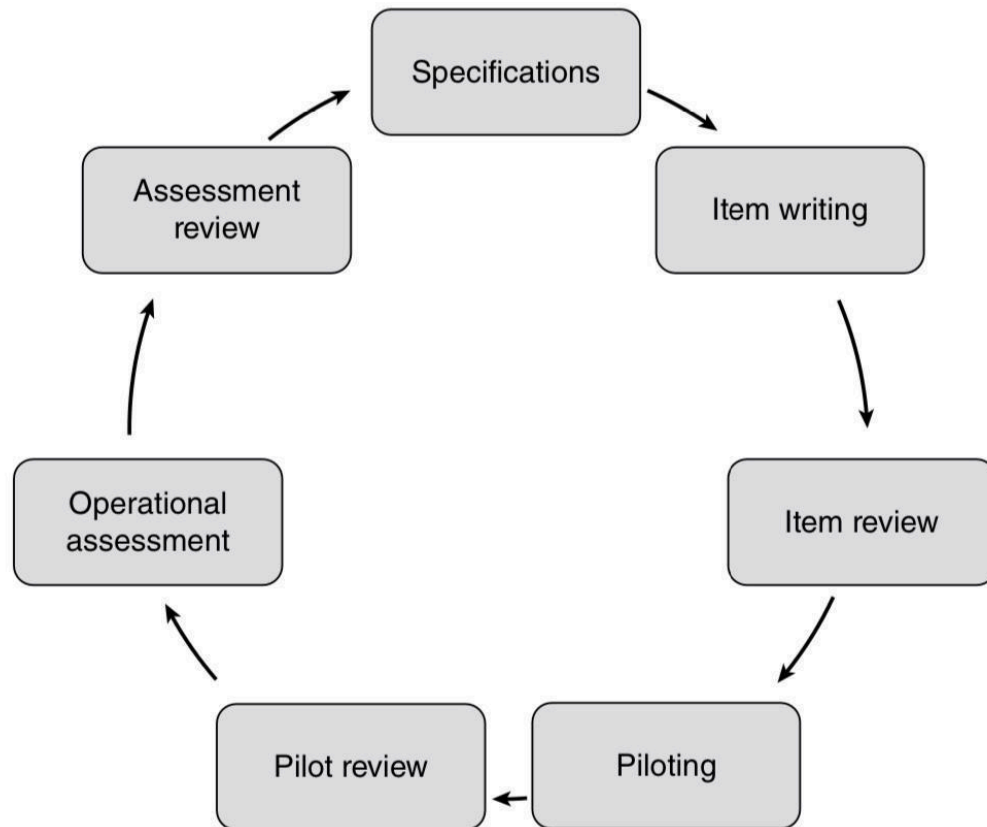
Washback is the consequence of testing on the teaching and learning process. Messick (1996, p. 241) mentioned that there are two types of washback. The first is promotion, which is the positive impact of testing on the learners and the teachers. This positive washback can be in the form of tests being the reason students focus on their learning and study and learn the themes necessary to pass. Likewise, the tests being the reason that teachers give their best while teaching (especially for standardized tests like BEM Or BAC) so the learners can pass the test. Positive washback or promotion can also provide feedback for the learners by revealing their strengths and weaknesses and determining their proficiency level.

The other type is inhibition, or negative washback, Which is the negative impact of testing on the learners and the teachers. It can manifest as anxiety that hinders learning for the students (When they are too worried about their grades and not passing the test, it interferes with their comprehension of the subject matter) or when teachers feel incompetent due to students performing poorly on their tests. A good test should trigger positive washback, as negative washback can hinder the learning and teaching experience.

2.3. The Assessment Cycle

Figure 4

The assessment production cycle



Note. From *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing: Language in Action* (p. 42), by A. Green, 2021, Routledge. Copyright 2021 by Taylor & Francis

Figure 4 above is what Green (2021) called the assessment production cycle; it is a cycle representing the different processes that play into producing tests and assessments. The seven processes are as follows;

2.3.1. Specifications

Specifications are "a document that sets out what is to be assessed and how an assessment should be conducted." (Green, 2021, p. 263). In other words, specifications are the equivalent of teaching objectives but in assessment. They clearly define the aspects of the construct to be assessed and the conditions in which the assessment will be administered.

According to Davidson and Lynch (2008), these specifications go through stages. The first stage is the general description (GD) in which the behavior or skill to be assessed, the assessment purpose, and the reason behind it are indicated and clearly determined. The second stage is the prompt attributes section (PA), which "is the component of the spec that details what will be given to the test taker." (Davidson & Lynch, 2008, p.22). It involves the task or item format, the prompt and exactly what the learners are supposed to do in the task. The third stage is the response attributes section (RA), in which the test takers' or learners' expected response is described in detail. Finally, the last stage is the sample item (SI), which is an actual representation of all the stages we previously mentioned as a concrete assessment item or task is drafted with regard to the purpose, the construct components to be assessed, the prompt and the actual questions will be written and clearly stated.

Bachman & Palmer (1996) also highlighted other components of developing test task specifications; these components are:

1. ***The purpose of the test task:*** which is the specific objective for the designation of the test task
2. ***Construct definition:*** in which the key components of the construct to be measured are clearly highlighted to achieve construct validity
3. ***Setting characteristics:*** This involves the location, seating conditions, participants, and the time of the test task.
4. ***Time allotment:*** which is the determination of the duration of the administration of the test
5. ***Instructions for responding to the task:*** Similar to the prompt attribute, the task question is clearly set.
6. ***Characteristics of input, response, and relationship between input and response:*** also similar to the response attribute concept

7. **Scoring method:** The scoring method needs to be determined to avoid confusion and accomplish validity.

After going through these stages, several items or tasks are created and can be combined to form a test. These items go through to the next stage;

2.3.2. Item Writing

"the challenging process of preparing effective assessment material that matches the specifications." (Green, 2021, p. 258) in which actual item content is written. For example, in a multiple-choice task, the prompt and the choices are clearly written and ready for administration.

2.3.3. Item Review

"a review of assessment items, often informed by statistical and other evidence from trialling. The purpose of item review is to select the best material for inclusion in operational assessments." (Green, 2021, p. 258); this stage can also be called the sifting stage because, from all the tasks created, only a few are picked to be used for operational assessments. The next stage is:

2.3.4. Piloting

"a form of trialling, usually referring to newly developed assessment material." (Green, 2021, p. 260) in which the test created is administered not to the actual audience for which it is intended but to participants that have very similar characteristics to the intended audience of test takers to make sure that measures what it is supposed to measure.

2.3.5. Pilot Review

In this stage, the piloting stage results/answers are scored and analyzed to evaluate the piloted test and its effectiveness and to conclude whether it needs further modification.

2.3.6. Operational Assessment

In this stage, the test (if modified) is administered to the intended test takers.

2.3.7. Assessment Review

Finally, there is assessment review, in which the operational assessments' results are also evaluated and reviewed to improve future operational assessments.

2.4. Types of assessment

In the language learning and educational domain, there are various types of assessment used in classroom settings Brown (2021) points out several kinds, such as;

2.4.1. Diagnostic tests

are a type of test used to point out the aspects of a certain construct that the learners are struggling with, with the purpose of reinforcing that aspect so they overcome that weakness.

2.4.2.Placement tests

are a kind of test used to assess students' overall ability so they can be placed into the right course, which is neither too hard nor too easy for them. Some people argue that placement tests can also be diagnostic tests as they also place the learner in a certain level category.

2.4.3. Proficiency tests

This type of test aims to measure the overall ability or competence of language learners. It is not limited to or concerned with only one skill or construct; instead, it evaluates all aspects that make up language competence.

2.4.4. Achievement tests

This type of test can be administered in the middle or at the end of the course. It is formal, and it is done with the purpose of determining "whether course objectives have been met" (Brown, 2021, p. 10).

In addition to these assessment types, formative and summative assessments are the widely known and recognized kinds.

2.4.5. Formative assessment

is a continuous assessment of the learners' performance. It can be formal and informal. Informal, such as teachers' feedback, warm-up quizzes, or observation. Formal, when evaluated and included in the learners' final summative score.

2.4.6. Summative assessment,

On the other hand, is a one-time test in which learners perform and answer certain tasks to determine whether they pass the course; an example would be achievement tests done at the end of a course.

Figure 5 represents the key differences between formative and summative assessment.

Figure 5

Comparison between formative and summative assessments.

Aspect	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Purpose	Helps students form competencies and skills.	Measures what the student has grasped at the end of a unit or course.
Focus	Ongoing development and progress.	Summarizing and evaluating final achievement.

Timing	Happens during the learning process.	Happens after the learning process (e.g., at the end of a course).
Feedback	Provides feedback aimed at improvement and future learning.	Focuses on what has already been learned (may or may not affect future learning).
Examples	Informal assessments, quizzes, teacher feedback.	Final exams, standardized tests, proficiency tests.
Role in Decision Making	Helps guide learning strategies and teaching decisions.	Used to evaluate and sometimes make final decisions (e.g., grades, certifications).
Nature	Can be both formal and informal	Can only be formal

Note. Adapted from Brown, H. D., 2021, *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices* (3rd ed., pp. 6–7). Pearson

2.5. Communicative Language Assessment

Another relatively new type of assessment is communicative language assessment. Communicative language assessment is based on the idea that the final goal of learning a language is to use it for real-world communication in real-life contexts. Previously, traditional tests were the main assessment tool; these tests focused only on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, and they did not account for the learner's communicative abilities in real-life situations. (Brown, 2021)

Just like communicative language teaching aims to change the traditional views that language learning needs only linguistic competence, communicative assessment also aims to correct the idea that evaluating only the learner's linguistic competence is enough to determine their proficiency level. Instead, it advocates for a more holistic approach where both linguistic and communicative competence are assessed. Following Canal and Swain's (1980) Model of communicative competence, all the aspects that construct language competence should be taken into consideration as they make up the learner's language use.

According to Bachman (1990), language competence consists of organizational competence (grammatical and textual skills) and pragmatic competence (illocutionary and sociolinguistic skills). Organizational competence is concerned with how well the learner masters the language system, while pragmatic competence is concerned with how the learners use language for different purposes and in different situations (how learners effectively use the language to do things). Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) also emphasize the importance of strategic competence, which is the learner's ability to use communication strategies when facing difficulties, such as rephrasing or clarification requests...etc.

In communicative language assessment, tasks are designed to be authentic, meaning that they reflect real-world language use as closely as possible. Instead of focusing on isolated grammar questions, students are asked to perform tasks like role-plays, interviews, or

writing an email. These tasks reflect natural communication and its purposes, taking into consideration who the speaker is, the context, and the goals of the interaction (The Who, How, What, Where, And when of the communicative context) (Weir, 1990). Therefore, communicative assessment provides a more complete and realistic picture of a learner's language mastery.

With this background in mind, and since the Algerian language teaching approach in primary schools is communicative language teaching (Benaissa & Zeghibib, 2023). It is obvious that the corresponding communicative language assessment has not been implemented to complement it. This is obvious in the way that only summative assessment is employed in the form of a written achievement test /examination alongside teacher observations or what is called "Continuous assessment" " which does not only involve the teachers' informal assessment of the learners' language competence but also mostly to their evaluation of the learner's behavior in class.

Therefore, it is important to consider aligning the teaching approach (CLT) and the assessment methods by at least implementing an oral test at the end of the course and including its results with the achievement test, giving 10% to the observation of their behaviors and 90% to both tests split in half, i.e. (45% for the oral test and 45% for the written achievement test). This way, the assessment would measure both the linguistic and communicative competencies.

Conclusion

In short, assessment is a key element in the teaching-learning process, and for it to be effective, it must follow certain important principles. Practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and positive washback all work together to make an assessment meaningful and fair. Knowing the types of assessment and how they are used helps teachers to better evaluate their students. As shown through the observation of the Algerian primary school educational system, there is still a clear gap between what is taught and what is assessed. It is necessary to aim for a more aligned assessment system that measures both the learners' linguistic and communicative competence to truly represent the communicative language teaching approach adopted.

Chapter Three: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

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Introduction

The previous chapters mainly dealt with the theoretical aspects of this study; it provided an overview of the aspects of teaching a foreign/second language to young learners, the teaching approach adopted in kindergartens, and the assessment principles and current assessment practices in Algerian primary schools. This chapter delves into the practical aspects of this study; it highlights the research methodology, the population and sampling techniques, the data collection methods used, and the data analysis tools and procedures.

3.1. Research Paradigm

Every research study is based on a set of beliefs and assumptions that guide how the research is carried out. These beliefs are what we call the research paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry” (p. 107). In the same sense, Babbie (1998) described paradigms as “general frameworks or viewpoints: literally ‘points from which to view’” (p. 33), meaning they give us a way of looking at and approaching the problem we are studying.

This study follows the pragmatic paradigm, which means that the methods used depend on what helps answer the research questions best. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained, a paradigm is “a worldview that represents a set of beliefs and assumptions that guide the inquiry” (p. 5). Pragmatism focuses on what works. It allows the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative methods to get a clearer picture. It also values practical thinking and real-world problem solving. This fits well with the goal of this study, which is to understand the problem from both sides; the measurable results from the tests and the experiences and views of teachers gathered through the questionnaire and interviews. Combining both gives a more complete and useful understanding of the issue.

3.2. Research Approach

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “Research approaches (or methodologies) are procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.” (p. 5) a research approach is the blueprint or the work plan that outlines the whole research steps from the research paradigm to basic data collection and analysis procedures. Determining the research approach is crucial to accomplish comprehensive and effective research where all the components and steps complement each other.

This study follows a mixed methods approach. That means it uses both numbers and words, or more specifically, it combines quantitative and qualitative data to get a full understanding of the problem being studied. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), using a mixed methods approach brings out the strengths of both approaches and helps give a more complete view. Sometimes, one method alone isn’t enough, especially when we’re dealing with something complex like classroom practices or learner progress (Creswell, 2014).

In this case, the quantitative aspect comes from the pre-test and post-test results, which help measure learners’ improvement after the treatment. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect comes from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and semi-structured interview with the teacher. This combination allows us to compare, confirm, and better understand what’s happening, which is called triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3. Research Design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study.” (p. 11) this means that research design is a procedural

framework for the research. It defines the nature of your actions. There are three types of research design. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research design.

This study is based on a quasi-experimental design, which means there's an intervention involved (the treatment), but the learners were not randomly assigned to groups. This kind of design is common in education, where randomisation is not always possible, but we still want to determine whether there's a relationship between the intervention and the outcomes (Ary et al., 2019).

At the same time, the study also uses what's called an embedded mixed-methods design. This means that even though the center of the research is the quantitative data, some qualitative data is added to support it. In this study, qualitative and quantitative methods were used sequentially; qualitative, then quantitative. This helps explain things in more detail and gives more context to the test results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). For example, the teacher's views or the questionnaire answers can help us understand why learners improved or how the teaching was received.

3.4. Population and Sampling Techniques

This study focuses on primary school learners in Algeria, more specifically, on 4th-year primary school students at Gouilli Mohammed Primary School in Laghouat and 4PS teachers currently working in the city. The sampling techniques used were probability sampling techniques and voluntary response. Probability cluster sampling was used; A total of 172 learners from four fourth-year primary school classes participated in the pretest and posttest phases of the study and voluntary response sampling was applied to sample teachers; a questionnaire was administered online, and the teachers who responded (22 teachers in total) formed the teacher sample of this study.

3.5. Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools employed in this study were both qualitative and quantitative; a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to explore teachers' perceptions of the current instruction and assessment methods and the challenges they face while working with them. Then, a treatment took place where the selected classes took an oral and written pre-test; afterwards, the classes were taught with equal focus on all four language skills. In the end, an oral and written post-test took place to assess whether there was any significant improvement.

3.5.1. Semi-Structured Questionnaire

According to Smart Survey (2023), a semi-structured questionnaire is a flexible research tool that mixes both closed and open-ended questions. This means it collects both numbers (quantitative data) and opinions or experiences (qualitative data). Because it provides a middle ground, it is not fully fixed or fully open; it gives the researcher a clearer view of the problem by showing both quantifiable results and personal insights at the same time. In this study, the questionnaire was meant to verify whether the teachers noticed the syllabus' orientation towards oral skills (and to what degree) and their opinions and perceptions about this dilemma; that is the reason behind choosing the semi-structured questionnaire.

3.5.1.1. Piloting and Validation

The questionnaire was first reviewed and validated by the supervisor, and then it was piloted to ensure its effectiveness in obtaining relevant answers.

3.5.1.2. Administration

After the piloting and validation of the questionnaire, it was administered on February 18th. A total of 22 responses were received.

3.5.2. Written and Oral Pre-Test

Before the treatment, a written and an oral pre-test were administered to the selected classes. The written pre-test included basic grammar and vocabulary tasks and a short writing prompt. The oral pre-test involved speaking activities such as asking and answering questions or participating in short dialogues where the learners performed using the language and were assessed using a set grid. These tests were realised with the aim of assessing the learners' level in both written and spoken English before being taught with equal importance to all four language skills. These tests provided a base foundation for later comparison after the treatment.

3.5.3. Written and Oral Post-Test

After the treatment phase, which spanned the duration of an entire academic semester (which allowed sufficient time for observable and measurable changes in learners' performance to take place) the same learners undertook a written and an oral post-test. The written post-test, similar to the pre-test, dealt with grammar, vocabulary, and writing. The oral post-test, on the other hand, focused on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, grammar and accuracy, and comprehension based on the learners' performance and the same grid used in the evaluation of the oral pre-test was used in this test. It should be noted that both oral and written post-tests were similar in the level of difficulty and the overall test items to ensure a fair representation of the effect of the treatment on their proficiency. These post-tests helped determine whether the balanced focus on all four language skills during the treatment made a noticeable improvement, especially in writing, which was often neglected before.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedures

3.6.1. Thematic Analysis

“TA is a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes”

(Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 35). Thematic analysis is the qualitative data analysis method that will be used in this study. It is appropriate because it allows for the identification of recurring themes/ideas in the open-ended items of the questionnaire, which will reflect the 4PS teachers' opinions and perceptions about the misalignment between the teaching and assessment methods

Thematic analysis was carried out according to its set phases highlighted by Braun & Clarke (2021);

- familiarization with the dataset (immersion, critical engagement, and note making)
- Coding which involves “reading each data item closely, and tagging all segments of the text where you notice any meaning that is potentially relevant to your research question with an appropriate code label” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 87).
- Generating initial themes; which are reoccurring patterns across the data set
- Developing and reviewing themes; in which the theme generation is still ongoing alongside reviewing the already generated themes. (Braun & Clarke, 2021).
- Refining, defining, and naming the themes
- And the final step which is reporting and interpreting the generated themes.

3.6.2. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

“The IBM® SPSS® software platform offers advanced statistical analysis, a vast library of machine learning algorithms, text analysis, open-source extensibility, integration with big data and seamless deployment into applications” (IBM, n.d.). In this study, the software was used to analyze the quantitative data which consists of the students pre-test and post-test results, by running descriptive statistics tests i.e. calculating measures of frequency,

central tendency, and standard deviation, and influential tests, i.e. parametric test tests, such as samples t-test to determine whether there was a significant improvement in the learners proficiency, both oral and written.

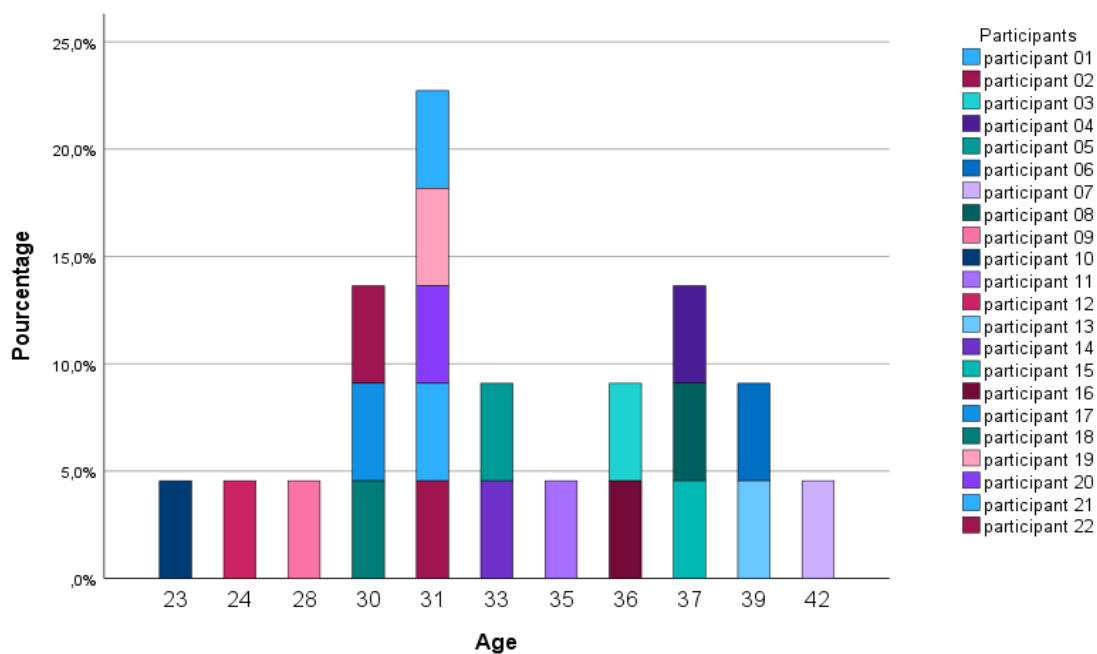
3.7. Data Analysis

3.7.1. Questionnaire Analysis

3.7.1.1. Part One: Demographic Information

Figure 6:

Teachers' Age Distribution



According to Figure 6, the teachers' age distribution ranges from 23 to 42 years old, and the age 31 is the most represented age group, with over 20% of the total responses. the age groups of 30, 36, and 37 years also show notable participation, with around 10 to 15% of the total responses. This distribution is slightly skewed towards younger teachers, as there is minimal representation of teachers younger than 23 and older than 42. This distribution suggests that the responses come mostly from teachers with a moderate level of experience, as they are neither recent graduates nor nearing retirement.

Figure 7:*Teachers' Gender*

Gender:
22 réponses

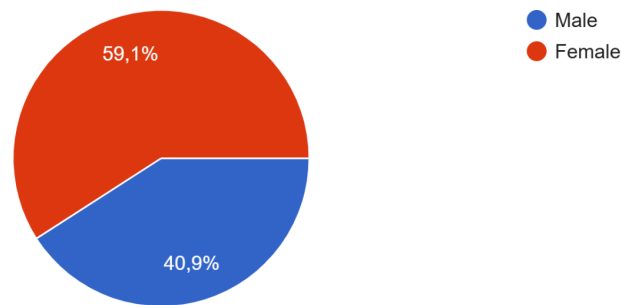


Figure 7 is a pie chart that represents teachers' gender; it can be observed that female teachers make up 59.1% of the respondents, and the male teachers make up 40.9%. This means that Laghouat city teachers are more female-oriented.

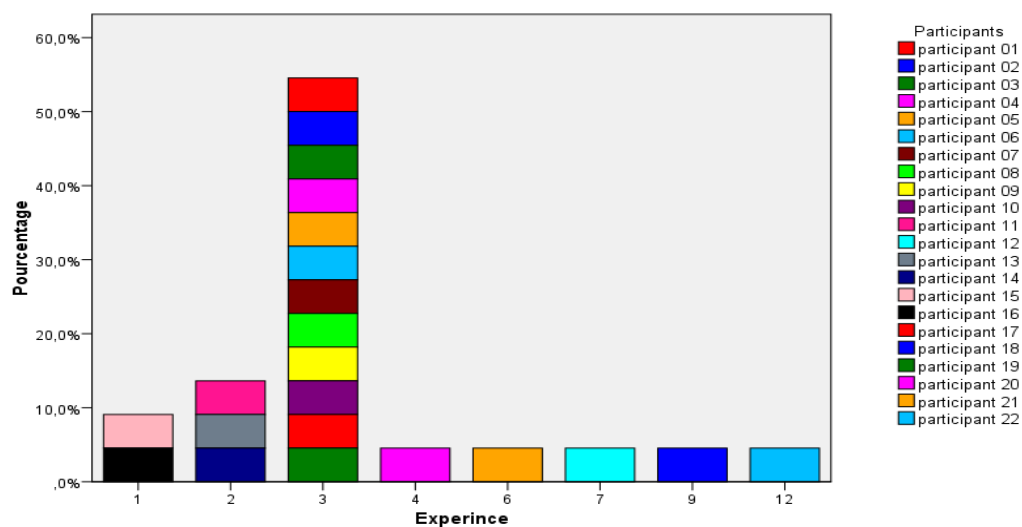
Figure 8:*Years of Teaching Experience*

Figure 8 is a bar graph, which represents the participants' teaching experience. According to the figure, 55% of the participants have 3 years of experience, while 15% have 2 years of experience, and 9% of participants have 1 year of experience. The remaining 21%

have between 4 and 12 years of teaching experience. This indicates that most perceptions and insights were collected from newly recruited teachers. This implies that the responses obtained are likely modern and up-to-date, they reflect the current teaching practices and education trends.

Figure 9:

Teachers' Academic Qualifications (Degree)

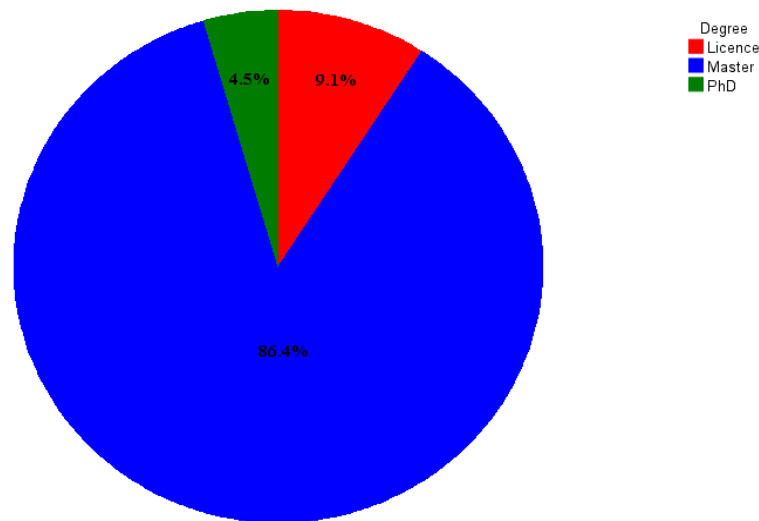


Figure 9 above represents teachers' degrees; it can be observed that 86.4% of the participants have a Master's degree, 9.1% have a licence degree, and only 4.5% have a PhD degree.

This indicates that the majority of teachers have an advanced level of education; most teachers are well-qualified to perform and meet the requirements of their job. Overall, this positively affects the quality of education provided to the students and reflects the teachers' professionalism and competence.

3.7.1.2. Part Two: Instruction Practices

Figure 10:

Main Language Skill Emphasized in The Curriculum (Teacher's Views)

According to your observation, which language skill does the current curriculum focus on primarily?
22 réponses

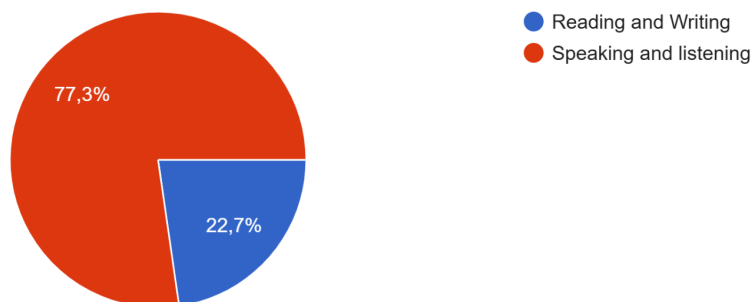


Figure 10 showcases the teachers' views/observations about the language skill taught primarily in the current curriculum. The pie chart concludes that speaking and listening, which make up 77.3% of total responses, are the primary focus of the current curriculum compared to reading and writing, which make up only 22.7% of total responses. This further solidifies this study and its purpose, as it proves the heavily oral-oriented teaching methods.

Figure 11:

Most Used Oral Activities

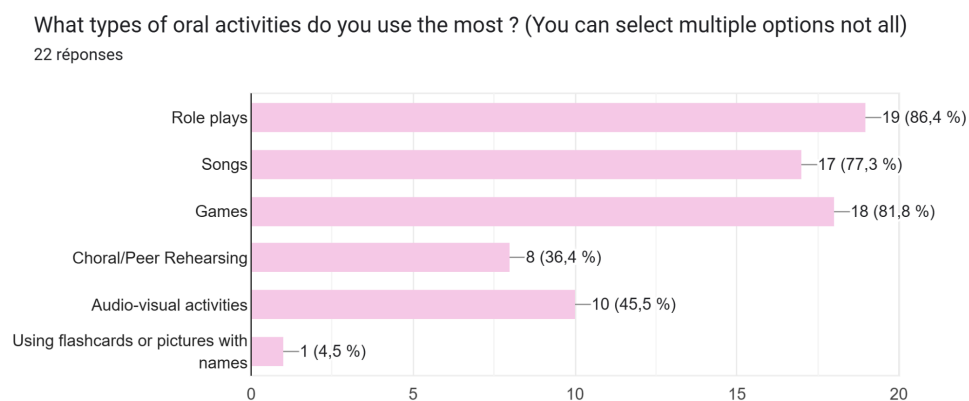


Figure 11 above represents the oral activities used the most by the teachers. Role plays were the most used activity by the participants at 86.4%, followed closely by games and songs at 81.8% and 77.3%. However, audio-visual activities and choral/peer rehearsing are less popular/used by the teacher at 45.5% and 36.4%. Finally, flashcards were the least used oral activity at only 4.5%.

The wide use of role plays, games, and songs shows the emphasis placed on interactive activities, which require performance from the learners' and stimulate young learners' exploratory nature.

Figure 12:

Vocabulary Introduction Activities

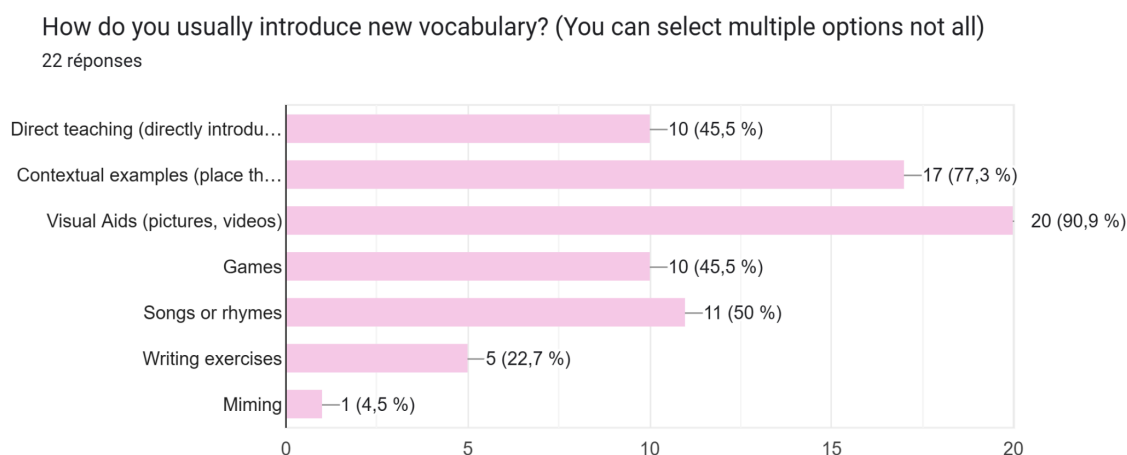


Figure 12 illustrates the methods used to introduce new vocabulary to the learners. Visual aids take up the largest percentage at 90.9% followed by contextual examples at 77.3% and songs and rhymes at 50%. Less frequently used methods include direct teaching and games, both at 45.5%. Finally the least used methods are writing exercises and miming at 22.7% and 4.5% respectively.

The emphasis on visual aids, contextual examples, and songs and rhymes indicates that learners are encouraged to explore the language and use their cognitive abilities to infer

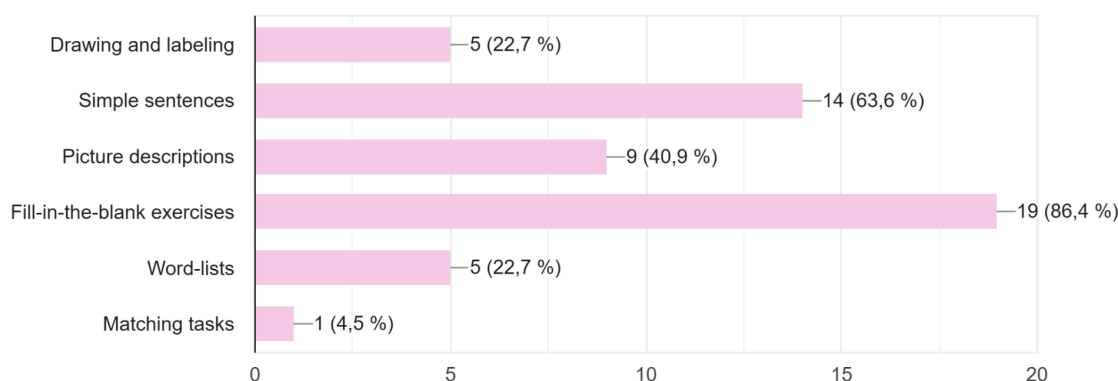
the new vocabulary's meaning from its context, which improves their language familiarity and retention. Furthermore, writing exercises and miming being the least used methods further solidifies the claim that language is primarily taught through communication and oral activities/methods.

Figure 13:

Most Used Writing Activities

What types of writing activities do you use the most? (You can select multiple options not all)

22 réponses



According to Figure 13, Fill-in-the-blanks exercises are the most frequently used writing activities at 86.4%, followed by simple sentences and picture descriptions as less frequently used activities at 63.6% and 40.9%, respectively. Finally, the least used writing activities include word-lists, drawing and labelling both at 22.7% and matching tasks at 4.5%.

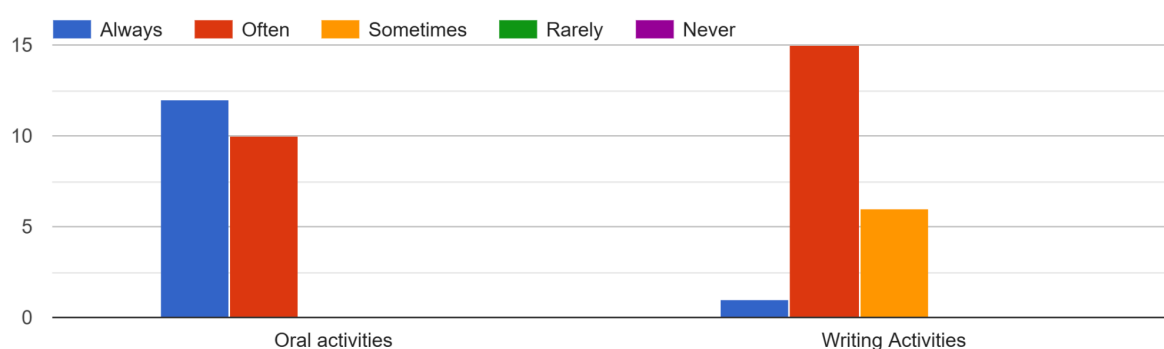
The wide use of fill-in-the-blank activities suggests a lack of written language production activities, as this kind of activity usually provides a word bank for the learners to use, consequently limiting their freedom in using language. The moderate use of picture descriptions and simple sentences suggests that learners have opportunities to produce their own written sentences, though these activities are less frequent. Furthermore, the low frequency of using word-lists, drawing and labelling, and matching tasks indicates that variety is limited in writing exercises. Overall, these observations highlight the rigid and

heavily structured nature of writing activities and further cement the idea that the writing skill is less emphasised and creative.

Figure 14:

The Frequency of Incorporation of Oral and Writing Activities

Please select the option below that best represents how often you incorporate the type of activities into your lessons



According to Figure 14, oral activities are more frequently incorporated in the classroom, with teachers stating they use them always or often. While writing activities are less frequently incorporated, with teachers indicating they use them often or sometimes. This shows that the teaching practices/activities are more centered on the oral skill compared to the writing skill, meaning that it emphasizes communication over writing.

Figure 15:*Balancing Oral and Written Skills in Teaching: Teachers Responses*

Do you try to incorporate a balance of oral and writing skills in your teaching?

22 réponses

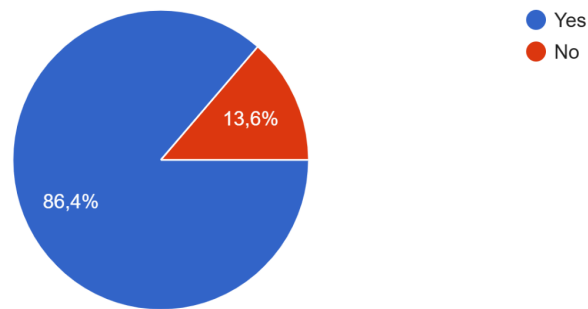


Figure 15 represents teachers' efforts in incorporating a balance of oral and written skills in their teaching. The majority of the participants (86.4%) responded with yes; they do try to establish an equilibrium, and only 13.6% responded with no. This showcases the teachers' awareness of the problem and the importance and their personal efforts at mending it.

3.7.1.3. Part Three: Assessment Methods**Figure 16:***Teachers Reported Assessment Methods*

What assessment methods do you use the most to evaluate students' English proficiency?

22 réponses

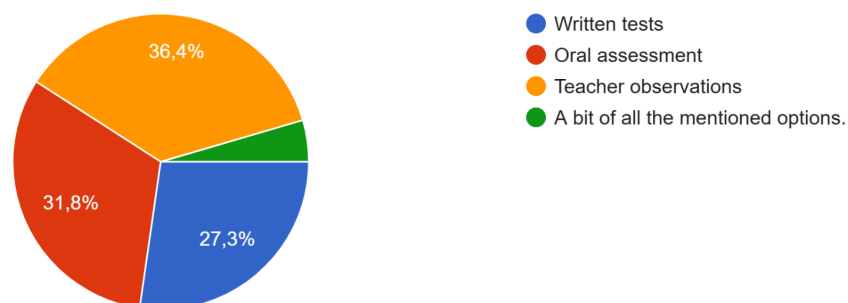


Figure 16 presents a revealing contradiction. While 31.8% of respondents indicated that they use “oral assessment” as part of their evaluation methods, this is not fully supported by The current educational policy. In reality, there is no formal or standardized oral test that contributes directly to learners’ final academic credit. The closest thing to oral assessment would be what’s referred to as “teacher observation,” which does include some evaluation of learners’ oral performance. However, only a portion of the observation grade is actually based on oral skills. The rest is formed Through other behaviors or general classroom participation, and may also reflect performance across the four skills, not speaking alone.

Figure 17:

Teachers’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Written Assessments

Do you find written assessments effective in evaluating students' English proficiency?

22 réponses

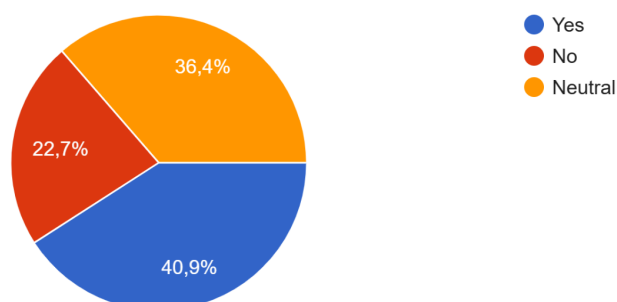


Figure 17 represents teachers’ perspectives on the effectiveness of written assessments, and the results were quite divided; 40.9% of respondents believe that written assessments are effective in evaluating students’ English proficiency, while 22.7% of the respondents disagreed or were neutral (36.4%). This disagreement highlights the uncertainty and hesitation of the teachers towards written tests and their efficiency in reflecting learners’ language competence.

Despite written assessment being the primary method used in the system and the primary constituent of the learners’ final credit, many teachers seem to question its efficacy

in measuring learners' oral skills. This leads to the conclusion that there is a disconnect between what is taught and what is assessed.

The following question was “why? Justify your opinion about written assessment's effectiveness”. The answers were varied across participants, but four major themes surfaced. One of the most recurring answers was the idea that written assessment alone is not enough; Respondents believe that written tests cannot reflect learners' english proficiency fully, and they advocated for a combined approach where oral assessment and written assessment go hand in hand to provide a more complete, accurate depiction of the learners' level. Another frequent theme was the individual differences among learners; respondents mentioned that not all students perform equally well in writing; some will simply do better in speaking; therefore, an oral assessment is needed to accommodate different learning styles and strengths. The third theme was the limited effectiveness of written assessment, respondents believe that written assessment do not always reflect true proficiency; some learners would cheat, and consequently, it wouldn't reveal their weaknesses accurately. The last observed theme is the recognition of written assessment strengths; despite the critiques and scepticism of most respondents, a few responses acknowledged that written assessments are useful, particularly for evaluating specific language skills like structure, reading comprehension...

Figure 18:

Teachers' Beliefs on the Effectiveness of Oral vs. Written Assessment in Reflecting Students' Language Proficiency

Do you believe that using oral assessments would better reflect students' actual language skills than written tests?

22 réponses

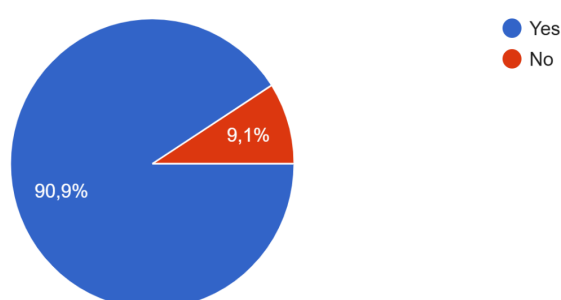


Figure 18 is a pie chart which illustrates teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of oral vs. written assessments in reflecting students' language proficiency. 90.9% of the respondents were positive that oral assessment would provide a better presentation than written assessment. The remaining 9.1% of the respondents were negative, believing that written tests are enough.

The next question was “ Why or why not?” and through the respondents' answers, four major themes emerged. The first one being the teachers' emphasis on the priority of oral skills in early learning stages; the respondents believe that oral language should take precedence over written forms, arguing that it is natural for young learners to be taught communication over writing, and written production becomes important in middle school. The second recurring theme was the idea that language was primarily auditory and oral in nature; therefore, the listening and speaking skills form the core of language use and play a crucial role in building the learners' language competence. The third one was the role of oral assessment in revealing true competence; respondents believe that oral assessment better represents authentic and natural language in use, making it easier to assess the learners' actual level. The fourth and final theme identified was the need for balanced assessment approaches, which was discussed earlier.

Figure 19:

Oral Skill Evaluation Method

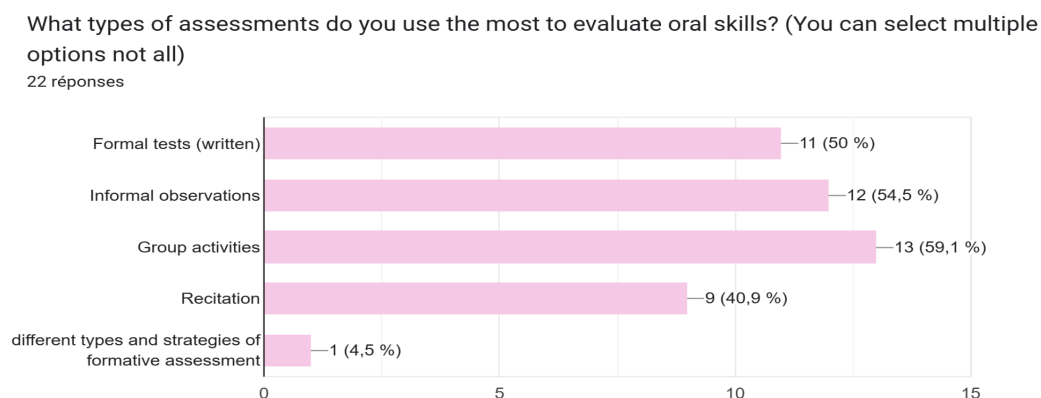


Figure 19 represents the types of assessment used to evaluate learners' oral skills. Group activities are the most frequently implemented type of assessment at 59.1%, followed closely by informal observations and formal tests (written) at 54.5% and 50%, respectively. The less frequently used type of assessment is recitation at 40.9%. Finally, the least used method is different types of formative assessment At 4.5%. These results are concerning because none of them are formal and included in the students' final credit except for the formal tests, which are written; therefore, it cannot be said that they evaluate the oral skills. This highlights a lack of attention to the importance of evaluating oral language competency.

3.7.1.4. Part Four: Student Performance

Figure 20:

Students' Performance

In your opinion, would students perform better in oral assessments compared to written ones?
22 réponses

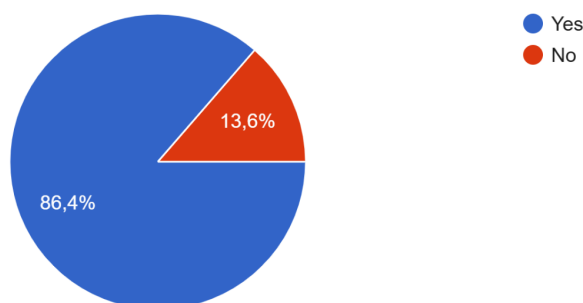
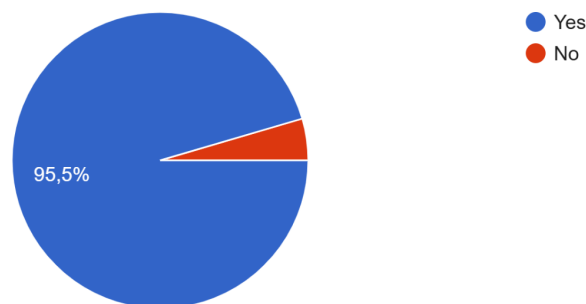


Figure 20 represents teachers' opinions about whether their students would perform better in oral assessments compared to written ones. The majority of respondents (86.4%) were positive that their students would, in fact, do better in oral assessments, While the remaining respondents (13.6%) were negative. This highlights the teachers' confidence in their learners oral proficiency and further underscores the clear need for the integration of an oral test/assessment in the assessment protocol

Figure 21:*Student Engagement differences*

Do you notice any differences in student engagement during oral vs. written instruction?

22 réponses



According to Figure 21, there is a significant difference in students' engagement between oral and written instruction, with the majority of the respondents being positive at 95.5%.

The follow-up question was "please elaborate," and through the provided answers, five major themes were highlighted. First, the learners' comfort; many teachers noticed that their students feel a lot more at ease during oral tasks—they are less anxious and more confident, which makes them more likely to participate. Second, learners' excitement; several respondents said that learners are simply more excited and willing to engage when it's oral. The third recurring theme was the age factor; oral skills were said to match the learners' level better, especially in Algerian third-year primary school where oral interaction is the main goal. Fourth, learner preference; some students do much better in oral tasks, while others prefer writing due to the various learner differences. Finally, understanding; many teachers believe that learners understand and process things faster when they're hearing and speaking, especially when the teacher is actively interacting with them.

3.7.1.5. Part Five: Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges

Figure 22:

Teachers' Perceptions

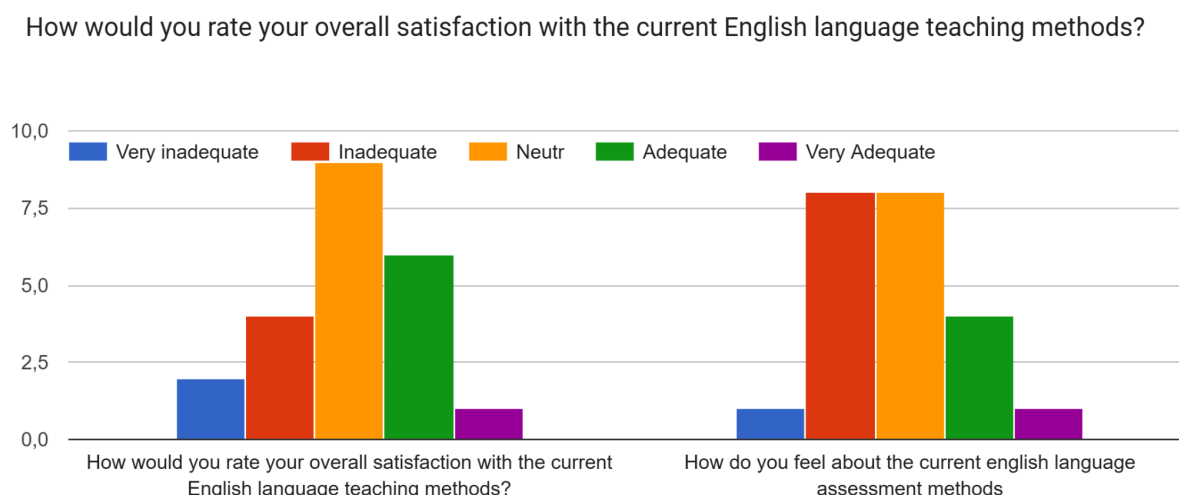


Figure 22 illustrates teachers' perceptions of both the current teaching and assessment methods. Regarding the teaching methods, most teachers felt neutral or considered them adequate, while only a small number deemed them very inadequate, inadequate, or very adequate. For the assessment methods, most teachers felt neutral or considered them inadequate, while a smaller number of teachers rated them as adequate, very inadequate, or very adequate. This leads us to the conclusion that teachers are overall satisfied with the teaching methods, but unsatisfied with the assessment practices implemented in the current curriculum, which further highlights the misalignment between them.

The follow-up question required teachers to provide their recommendations to improve alignment of teaching and assessment practices in the Algerian educational system. Through thematic analysis of the provided answers, four recurring themes emerged:

1. The need for a skill-based and aligned assessment: teachers are calling for assessments that reflect what is actually taught; there is a clear concern that

speaking skills are neglected in assessments despite them being the core focus of instruction. respondents insisted on assessment that covers all four language skills and aligns with instructional content.

2. Use of varied and authentic assessment methods: respondents recommend diversifying assessment types beyond written tests, incorporating formative assessment and tasks which reflect real-world interaction.
3. Time constraint and workload: teachers feel that time limitations and large class sizes hinder their ability to effectively teach and assess English skills
4. lack of resources and institutional support: there is a perceived lack of infrastructure, training (CPD), and institutional support.

3.7.2. Inferential Statistics

“Inferential statistics are used to help us look beyond raw data and descriptive statistics. They help us make inferences about population parameters” (Phakiti, 2010, p. 44). For the analysis of the treatment results and to further investigate the highlighted gap the paired samples T-test was implemented to determine whether or not there is a significant statistical difference between the means of the writing and oral pre-test, then the means of the writing pre-test and post-test. The results serve to accept or reject a null hypothesis.

3.7.2.1. Paired Samples T-test of writing and oral pre-tests

Table 1

Paired Samples Statistics of writing and oral pre-tests

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Writing_pretest	6,5465	172	2,12666	,16216
	Oral_pretest	7,291	172	1,7048	,1300

To determine whether there was a significant difference between students' written and oral proficiency/performance before the treatment, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. As

shown in Table 1, students scored higher in the oral pretest ($M = 7.29$, $SD = 1.70$) compared to the written one ($M = 6.55$, $SD = 2.13$), suggesting that students performed better in oral tasks than written ones.

Table 2

Paired Samples Test of writing and oral pre-tests

		Paired Samples Test								
		Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Significance	
					Lower	Upper			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Writing_pretest - Oral_pretest	-.74419	1.25655	.09581	-.93331	-.55506	-7.767	171	<.001	<.001

Table 2 above represents the output for testing two types of hypothesis;

- The null hypothesis (H_0) : The mean of the differences between the scores of the oral and writing pre-tests is zero.
- The alternative hypothesis (H_A): The mean of the differences between the scores of the oral and writing pre-tests is not zero

In other words, the null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no difference in students scores between the oral and writing pretests. While, the alternative hypothesis (H_A) states that there is a significant difference in student's scores in the oral and writing pre-tests.

The Mean= -0.7442 is the sample mean of the differences between the oral and writing pre-test scores, the standard deviation =1.26 is also the measure of variation obtained from the difference of the two paired scores. the 95% confidence interval shows that the mean of the differences is as low as -0.933 and as high as -0.555, which in fact indicates that the oral. pretest scores is higher than the writing pretest score scores is higher than the writing pretest scores. The p-value is <0.001 which is less than the SPSS default level of significance 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis is rejected, and we can conclude that student's oral pretest scores are statistically better than their writing pretest scores.

Through this interpretation we can deduce that the learners' oral proficiency was stronger than their writing proficiency at the start of the study. This supports the main idea of this thesis; that relying solely on written assessment might not reflect learners' actual language proficiency, especially in the early learning stages where oral communication plays a critical role.

Table 3

Paired Samples Correlations of writing and oral pre-tests

Paired Samples Correlations					
		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Writing_pretest & Oral_pretest	172	,807	<,001	<,001

Table 3 also shows a strong positive correlation between the two scores ($r = .807$, $p < .001$), meaning that students who did well in writing tended to also do well in speaking. Still, the difference in averages shows that depending only on written assessment wouldn't give an accurate picture of what learners are really capable of.

3.7.2.2. Paired Samples T-test of writing and oral pre-tests

Table 4

Paired Samples Statistics of writing and oral pre-tests

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Writing_pretest	6,5465	172	2,12666	,16216
	Writing_posttest	7,3696	172	1,71352	,13065

Table 4 shows the descriptive stats of students' performance before and after the treatment. The average score in the writing pretest was 6.55, while in the writing posttest, it jumped to 7.37. This is a noticeable improvement. Also, the posttest has a lower standard

deviation, which means students' scores became more consistent after the intervention. So not only did they improve, but they improved more evenly across the classes.

Table 5

Paired Samples Test of writing and oral pre-tests

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				Significance			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Writing_pretest - Writing_posttest	-.82308	.71400	.05444	-.93055	-.71562	-15.118	171	<.001
									<.001

The paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the writing pretest and writing posttest scores after the treatment. The null hypothesis stated that there is no difference between the two scores, while the alternative hypothesis suggested that the treatment had an effect and the scores would differ.

Table 7 results show that the mean difference between the writing pretest and posttest scores was -0.823, with a standard deviation of 0.714. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranged from -0.931 to -0.716, indicating that the posttest scores were consistently higher than the pretest scores. The p-value was less than 0.001, which is well below the standard significance level of 0.05.

This means that the null hypothesis is rejected, and we can conclude that the treatment (i.e., balanced instruction in all four skills) had a statistically significant positive effect on students' writing performance. The improvement in posttest scores clearly shows that learners benefited from the instructional intervention.

Table 6*Paired Samples Correlations of writing and oral pre-tests*

Paired Samples Correlations					
		N	Correlation	Significance	
				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Writing_pretest & Writing_posttest	172	,953	<,001	<,001

Table 6 shows a very strong positive correlation between the writing pretest and posttest scores ($r = .953$). That means the learners who performed well in the pretest also did well in the posttest. But more importantly, this correlation supports the reliability of the data; there's a consistent relationship between both sets of scores. And since the p-value is less than .001, this result is statistically significant.

3.8. Discussion and Interpretation of The Results

The analysis results of the writing pretest and post-test provided an answer to the study's main research question, showcasing that the students' learning process can be enhanced by balancing the teaching and assessment methodologies implemented in their instruction. To achieve this balance, either the assessment methods should adapt to account for all language skills, or the teaching methodologies should place equal emphasis on all four language skills. This would ensure a more accurate interpretation that reflects the learners' true language proficiency and, in turn, enhance their learning experience. The main hypothesis addressed in this study was confirmed; implementing a combination of oral and written teaching methodologies significantly improved students' overall learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the comparison of learners' performance in the oral and written pretests addressed the study's second sub-question, confirming the hypothesis that students perform significantly better in oral assessments than in written ones under the current instructional system.

The questionnaire analysis offered insights into teachers' opinions about the current English language curriculum, specifically its teaching and assessment methods, and elicited their recommendations for better alignment. This confirmed the hypothesis that teachers would express dissatisfaction with the curriculum due to the misalignment between its emphasis on oral instruction and its reliance on strictly written assessment formats. Moreover, the questionnaire highlighted teachers' recommendations for bridging this gap; most responses called for an integrated approach that targets all four language skills and includes an oral assessment to evaluate all aspects of the learner's language competence. Finally, the findings of both the questionnaire and the pretest/post-test comparisons confirmed the hypothesis that current teaching practices in Algerian primary schools are primarily focused on oral skills.

In conclusion, the methodology employed in this study successfully provided answers to all of the research questions and confirmed its main hypotheses.

Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the methodology used in this study, delving into the details of the research paradigm, approach, and design implemented, along with the rationale behind them. Furthermore, the data collection tools and data analysis procedure, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative instruments, were highlighted. Then, the obtained data was analyzed and interpreted using both descriptive and inferential statistical measures. Finally, the results confirmed the existence of a gap or misalignment between the teaching methods implemented and their assessment counterpart in Algerian primary schools, highlighting the need for a more balanced and aligned approach.

General Conclusion

This study set out to explore the misalignment between the teaching and assessment practices in Algerian primary schools, particularly in fourth-year English classrooms. The initial problem emerged from the noticeable gap between the communicative language teaching approach recommended in the syllabus and the written-focused assessment practices implemented in schools. It was assumed that this lack of alignment might hinder learners' language development and obscure their actual level of proficiency.

In this light, this research consisted of three chapters. In the first chapter, we looked at how English should be taught to young learners, highlighting their characteristics, learning principles and differences from adults. We further explored different approaches and focused especially on communicative language teaching, which fits young learners best as it focuses on interaction, meaning, and real use of the language. The second chapter introduced the topic of assessment. We went through what makes a good assessment, how assessments are curated, the main types of assessment, in addition to how the current assessment practices don't seem to match the teaching approach. It ended with suggestions for a more balanced and fair way to evaluate young learners' language abilities.

In the third chapter, the research methodology was carefully outlined. The study adopted a pragmatic paradigm and an embedded mixed-methods design. Data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire with 22 respondents being fourth year primary school teachers from Laghouat city, a pre-test, and a posttest also took place with 4PS classes where 173 students underwent a treatment, which consisted of an instruction equally focused on all four language skills. The findings revealed several important conclusions:

- There is a clear gap between what is taught and what is assessed. While the curriculum encourages oral language development, written tests remain the dominant form of assessment.

- Learners performed better in oral pretests than written ones, confirming that their communicative skills are stronger and that written tests alone may not reflect their actual level.
- After a balanced instruction that focused equally on all four skills, students' performance in the written posttest improved significantly, suggesting that integrating oral instruction benefits overall language development.
- Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the current curriculum and called for a more balanced, skill-integrated approach to both teaching and assessment.
- Most teachers favored the implementation of oral assessment alongside written tests to ensure a more accurate evaluation of learners' language abilities.

In conclusion, the results of this study confirmed the hypothesis that aligning teaching and assessment practices, particularly by integrating oral assessment, can provide a more complete and fair reflection of young learners' language proficiency. It is hoped that this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about improving language education in Algerian primary schools and serves as a small step towards more effective, inclusive teaching and assessment practices.

Implications of the study

The results of this study carry important implications for classroom practice. They highlight the need to create a better balance between what is taught and what is assessed, especially in the context of primary school English education. This means that decision-makers and curriculum designers should reconsider the current approach to assessment and allow room for more communicative, skill-integrated testing methods. Teachers, too, may benefit from further support and training in how to evaluate speaking and listening skills fairly and effectively. At the classroom level, this balance can help reduce

learner anxiety and increase engagement, especially when students are given more opportunities to show what they know through both oral and written modes.

Limitations of the study

While the study focused on a specific region, it's important to note that Algeria follows a national educational policy, meaning the same curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment formats are applied across the country. Therefore, the selected sample can be considered reasonably representative of the broader context. Additionally, the treatment phase spanned an entire academic semester, which provided sufficient time to observe measurable changes in learners' performance. The significant results confirmed by statistical analysis further support the adequacy of the treatment duration. However, like any research, this study had its own set of limitations. First, the data collection tools (especially the questionnaire) relied on self-reported responses, which could be influenced by personal bias or misunderstanding of the questions. Second, the relatively limited number of questionnaire respondents, with only 22 teachers participating. While their insights were rich and valuable, a larger sample could have offered broader perspectives and a more generalisable understanding of teachers' opinions across the country. Still, the responses provided a strong sense of the recurring issues and concerns shared among primary school teachers, especially regarding the gap between teaching and assessment. Lastly, while the study aimed to explore the alignment between teaching and assessment, it did not examine all factors, such as teacher training or institutional policies, that might also play a role in shaping classroom practices.

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Appendix A: Teachers' Questionnaire

Introduction

Dear respondent,

I am an undergraduate student of the Department of English and Literature, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra. This questionnaire is designed for data collection on all the 4th year primary school English teachers in Algeria, their perceptions of the current instruction and assessment methods employed in TEFL, and the challenges they face in aligning their instructional methods with the assessment formats used in English language evaluations. By filling this questionnaire you will be participating as part of the sample for this study. Please note that your personal and professional identities will be anonymous and your responses will be treated with confidentiality. Please take your time in answering the questions honestly, all perspectives whether positive or negative are valid and accepted.

Questionnaire Items

Part One: Demographic Information

1. Age of the Teacher:
2. Gender:.....
3. Years of Teaching Experience:.....

Part Two: Instruction Practices

1. According to your observation, which language skill does the current curriculum focus on primarily?

<input type="checkbox"/> Reading and Writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking and listening
--	---
2. What types of oral activities do you use? (Select all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Role-plays.	<input type="checkbox"/> Presentations.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discussions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Songs.
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):.....	

3. How do you introduce new vocabulary? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Direct teaching (directly introduce the word and its meaning)
- ☐ Contextual examples (place the word in its context and the learners infer its meaning)
- ☐ Visual aids (pictures, videos)
- ☐ Games
- ☐ Songs or rhymes
- ☐ Writing exercises
- ☐ Other (specify).....

4. What types of writing activities do you use? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Drawing and labeling ☐ Fill-in-the-blank exercises
- ☐ Simple sentences ☐ Word lists
- ☐ Picture descriptions ☐ Other (specify).....

5. Please select the option below that best represents how often you incorporate the type of activities into your lessons

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Oral Activities					
Writing Activities					

6. Do you try to incorporate a balance of oral and written skills in your teaching?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Part Three: Assessment Methods

1. What assessment methods do you use to evaluate students' English proficiency?

- ☐ Written tests ☐ Teacher observations
- ☐ Oral assessments ☐ Other:.....

2. Do you find written assessments effective in evaluating students' English proficiency?

☐ Yes☐ Neutral☐ No

Why:.....

.....

3. Do you believe that using oral assessments would better reflect students' actual language skills than written tests?

☐ Yes☐ No

Why or why not:.....

.....

4. What types of assessments do you use to evaluate oral skills? (Select all that apply)

☐ Formal tests (written)☐ Group activities☐ Informal observations☐ Recitations☐ Different types and strategies of formative assessment

Part Four: Student Performance

1. In your opinion, would students perform better in oral assessments compared to written ones?

☐ Yes☐ No

2. Do you notice any differences in student engagement during oral vs. written instruction?

☐ Yes☐ No

Please elaborate:.....

.....

Part Five: Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges

1. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the current English language teaching methods?

Question	Very inadequate	Inadequate	Neutral	Adequate	Very adequate
how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the current English language teaching methods?					
How do you feel about the current English language assessment methods?					

2. What changes would you suggest to improve the teaching methods?.....

.....

Part Six: Additional Comments

1. What recommendations would you make to improve the alignment of teaching and assessment in English education?.....

.....

2. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions regarding the teaching and assessment of English in primary schools (optional)

.....

.....

Appendix B: Treatment Activities

Writing Activities:

Prior to starting any of these activities, it is best to take some time to talk with the students about the subject (whether it is health or healthy food)

1- healthy food list:

Ask students to write a list of healthy foods they know

2- Question writing: (this can be used for both healthy food and the health domain)

They Use these prompts to formulate their questions:

Prompts:

- What do you eat for breakfast ?
- How do you feel when you are sick?

3- My favorite body part:

Write 2 to 3 sentences about your favorite body part and why you like it.

4-my day in food:

Write 3 to 5 sentences about what you eat or ate in your day.

5-simple recipe writing:

In this activity, students are asked to describe in writing how to make a healthy snack even if it is just a cheese sandwich

6- delayed copying:

Students are presented with pictures (of foods or of people having an ache) each picture is labeled (say if the picture is of the food the name of food will be written at the bottom of the picture, and if the picture is of someone having pain it will be stated what kind of pain is suffering from)

Children are asked to memorize what is written on each picture. After giving them some time, the teacher removes the pictures from the board and the students are asked to

write whatever they remember.

- this can also be done by just writing a sentence on the board, letting them memorize it, then wiping it and ask them to write it again.

Examples:

- Maria has a headache, she is sleeping and resting
- Adam eats a lot of candy and sweets, he has a toothache
- Lina is feeling hot, she has a fever.
- Housseem sees his little sister biting her foot.
- Lana likes eating chicken and rice
- Iyad loves his mother's cooking, it is healthy.
- Sarah drinks soda every day, it is unhealthy
- Noah always eats hamburger and pizza, he is fat/unfit.

7- ask students to keep a journal/diary where they write what they ate every day even when they do not have English class.

8-at the end of each sequence,

ask students to write a paragraph about their favorite food.

Ask students to write a paragraph about a time when they were sick

Listening Activities:

Mime stories: Teacher reads, and the children (and teacher) act it out together.

Health:

1. Mime Story 1: "I Don't Feel Well"

It's morning. We wake up. [Stretch and yawn]

We open our eyes. [Blink and open eyes wide]

Oh no! Our head hurts! [Hold head]

We touch our forehead. [Pretend to feel temperature]

Oh! We're hot. We have a fever!

We sit up slowly. [Act tired]

Our tummy hurts! [Hold stomach]

“Ouch!” We have a stomachache.

We try to stand up. [Wobble and hold back]

But our back hurts too! [Touch back and bend]

We go to the mirror. [Pretend to look]

We open our mouth. “Ahhhh.” [Say “ahhh” and look surprised]

Our throat is red! A sore throat!

We go to the doctor. [Walk slowly]

The doctor says, “Rest and drink water.”

We go home. We lie in bed. [Lie down]

We drink warm tea. [Sip]

We close our eyes. We sleep. [Pretend to sleep]

2. Mime Story 2: “I Am Sick”

We wake up. [Stretch and yawn]

We open our eyes.

Oh no! Our head hurts. [Hold head]

We sit up.

Oh no! Our tummy hurts. [Hold stomach]

We stand up.

Our legs are weak. [Wobble legs]

We walk to the mirror. [Slow walking]

We open our mouth. “Ahhhh.” [Say “Ahhh”]

Our throat hurts. [Touch throat]

We are sick. [Sad face]

We go to the doctor. [Walk slowly]

The doctor says:

“Drink water and aspirin.” [Pretend to pop a pill and drink it with water]

“Go to bed.” [Lie down]

We close our eyes.

We sleep. [Snore sound]

3. Mime Story 3: “Ouch! My Tooth!”

We eat candy. [Pretend to eat]

Yum! So sweet!

We eat more candy. [Eat again]

Yum, yum!

But... oh no! Our tooth hurts! [Hold cheek]

Ouch! Ouch!

We touch our cheek. [Touch gently]

It hurts. So much!

We go to the dentist. [Walk slowly]

We sit in the chair. [Sit down]

We open our mouth. “Ahhh.” [Say “Ahhh”]

The dentist looks. [Pretend to look in mouth]

“Oh no!” says the dentist.

“You must brush your teeth.” [Pretend to brush teeth]

“You must eat less candy!” [Shake finger]

We go home.

We brush our teeth. [Big brushing motion]

We smile. [Big happy smile]

No more pain! [Thumbs up]

4. Mime Story 4: “My Friend Is Sick”

We are in the classroom. [Sit and write]

Our friend comes in.

Oh no! He looks sad. [Make a sad face]

He holds his head. [Point to head]

“My head hurts,” he says.

He sits down.

We give him water. [Pretend to hand water]

He drinks. [Pretend to drink]

He coughs. [Cough]

We give him a tissue. [Pretend to give]

He says, “Thank you.”

We tell the teacher. [Point and speak]

The teacher says, “He must go home.”

We wave goodbye. [Wave]

“Get well soon!”

We smile. [Big smile]

We are good friends.

Healthy food:

1. Mime Story 1 : “Lunch at the Canteen”

It’s lunchtime at school! [Rub tummy]

We stand in line. [Stand straight, wait patiently]

We walk to the table. [Walk in place]

We sit down with our friends. [Sit and smile]
The lunch lady brings the food. [Pretend to serve]
Today we have chicken, rice, and carrots.
Yum! Healthy food!
We say, “Thank you!” [Smile and wave]
We eat slowly. [Pretend to eat]
Mmm... The chicken is tasty!
The carrots are crunchy!
We drink water. [Pretend to drink]
We talk with our friends. [Smile and pretend to chat]
We laugh. We eat. We feel good!
Healthy food makes us strong. [Show muscles]
We finish our lunch.
We clean up. [Pretend to wipe table or carry tray]
Now we are ready to learn! [Nod and smile]

2. Mime Story 2: “The Picnic”

It’s a sunny day!
We’re going on a picnic! [Clap and smile]
We pack our basket. Let’s see...
We put in an apple. [Pretend to put in apple]
A banana. [Put in banana]
A sandwich. [Put in sandwich]
Carrots! [Put in carrots]
And water. [Lift a pretend bottle]
No candy. No chips. No soda. [Shake head]

We carry our basket. It's heavy! [Act like carrying a heavy basket]

We walk to the park. [March in place]

We sit down. We open the basket.

We take out an apple. Crunch! [Pretend to eat]

Yum! It's sweet!

We drink water. [Pretend to drink]

We smile. We feel strong and happy!

Healthy food gives us energy!

Now we clean up. [Pretend to clean]

We stand up and stretch. [Stretch arms]

We run and play. [Run in place]

We're happy and healthy!

3. Mime Story 3: "What's in My Lunch?"

It is lunchtime! [Rub belly]

We open our lunchbox. [Open hands like a lid]

Let's look inside!

An apple! [Pretend to take and eat]

Crunch, crunch. So good!

A carrot! [Pretend to eat a carrot]

Crunch, crunch. Very healthy!

A banana! [Peel and eat]

Mmm, sweet banana!

Water! [Pretend to drink]

Glug, glug. So fresh!

We smile. [Big smile]

Healthy food makes us strong! [Show muscles]

We jump! [Jump in place]

We run! [Run in place]

We are happy!

We are healthy!



Spot the mistake:

Show picture: and read:

“The family is having dinner together. The table is full of food like; pizza, hamburgers, and candy”

Correction: The family is having dinner together. The table is full of food like; chicken, rice, and soup.



Show picture: and read:

“The tooth looks white, happy, and healthy. There is no decay on it”

Correction:

“The tooth looks sad, and unhealthy with monsters (bacteria) trying to eat it, there are black spots on it too, poor tooth”



Show picture: and read:

“Maria is at the doctor. she has a toothache and the doctor tells her to eat candy and ice cream!”

Correction: “Maria is at the doctor. She has a toothache and the doctor tells her to brush her teeth and stop eating ice cream for a while”

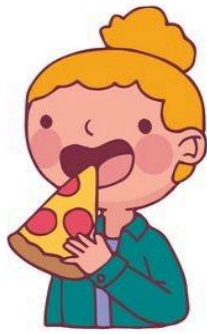
Speaking Activities:

Role plays:

Learners are asked to play the role of Dr. and patient, or a customer at a healthy restaurant

Picture description:

Show the students these pictures and ask them to describe what they see.



Reading Activities:

The students were given flashcards with actions/states and words and they were asked to read them aloud

Appendix C: Oral and Written Pre-tests

Oral Pre-test:

Correction Grid:

Category	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Fluency	Speaks smoothly with no hesitation	Minor pauses but maintains flow	Hesitates often but completes thoughts	Frequent hesitation, difficult to follow
Pronunciation	Clear and easy to understand	Mostly clear with few pronunciation issues	Some difficulty understanding due to errors	Hard to understand most of the time
Vocabulary Use	Uses a wide range of food-related vocabulary	Uses appropriate vocabulary with few gaps	Limited vocabulary, relies on basic words	Very limited vocabulary
Grammar & Accuracy	Accurate use of tenses and sentence structure	Minor grammatical errors, meaning still clear	Frequent errors, but message mostly clear	Grammar errors interfere with meaning

Comprehension	Responds well to follow-up questions	Understands and responds with some support	Needs support to understand or answer questions	Cannot respond or understand
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Activity Title:

“My Day in Food – Oral Presentation”

Goal:

To assess students’ oral proficiency in a meaningful and personal context through speaking about their eating habits.

Instructions:

1. Preparation Phase (can be done the day before or as warm-up):
 - Discuss healthy foods (use flashcards, posters, or a short story).
 - Students create a food diary by listing what they ate yesterday (3–5 items).
 - Encourage vocabulary expansion: fruits, vegetables, meals, snacks, drinks.
2. Speaking Task:
 - Each student presents orally to the class or in small groups:

“Yesterday, I ate bread and cheese for breakfast. At lunch, I had rice and chicken. I drank orange juice. For dinner, I ate soup and an apple.”
 - Encourage natural sentence connection and time expressions (“then,” “after that”).

Optional Extension:

- Pair students and have them ask and answer questions about each other’s meals:

A: What did you eat for dinner yesterday?

B: I ate spaghetti and salad.

Note, feel free to choose one of these activities, whichever suits you the best.

Written Pre-test:

Written Test: “Let’s Talk About Food!”

Level: 4th year primary

Theme: Healthy Food

Total Points: /10

Part 1: Vocabulary (2 pts) (0,25 for each one they get right)

A. Circle the healthy foods.

milk – soda – carrots – cake – eggs – chips

Orange juice - french fries - bread - cereal

Fish - chicken - candy - chocolate

Part 2: Grammar (2,5 pts)

A. Fill in the blanks using “eat” or “eats”. (1 pts)

1. I _____ rice every day.
2. She _____ apples in the morning.

B. Put the words in order to make sentences. (1,5 pts)

1. for / What / eat / do / you / lunch / ?

→ _____

2. salad / I / like / and / bread

→ _____

3. breakfast / had / We / eggs / for

→ _____

Part 3: Reading Comprehension (2,5 pts)

Read the text and answer the questions.

Hello! My name is Lina. I eat healthy food. For breakfast, I drink milk and eat toast. At lunch, I eat rice and chicken. I eat fruits after lunch. I don't like candy or soda. I like water.

A. Answer the questions: (1,5 pts)

1. What does Lina eat for breakfast? _____
2. What does she eat for lunch? _____
3. What does she drink? _____

B. Yes or no (1 pts)

1. Lina likes candy. → _____
2. Lina eats fruits after lunch. → _____

Part 4: Writing (3 pts)

Write 2 to 3 sentences about what you ate yesterday. Use past tense.

Example:

Yesterday, I ate bread and cheese for breakfast. I drank milk. At lunch, I had chicken and rice. I ate an apple in the evening.

Appendix D: Oral and Written Post-test

Oral Post-test

Goal:

To assess students' oral proficiency in a meaningful and personal context by having them describe their daily activities and how they relate to a healthy lifestyle.

Instructions:

1. Preparation Phase:

- Discuss the concept of a healthy lifestyle (exercise, sleep, hygiene, eating habits).
- Brainstorm common daily activities related to health (e.g., brushing teeth, walking, playing, sleeping early).
- Teach or review relevant vocabulary (verbs like wake up, eat, run, rest, brush, etc.).

2. Speaking Task:

Each student presents orally to the class or in small groups:

“Yesterday, I woke up at 7 a.m. I brushed my teeth and washed my face. After breakfast, I walked to school. In the afternoon, I played football with my friends. Then I did my homework and slept early.”

Encourage the use of time expressions and connectors like after that, then, later, finally.

Optional Extension:

- Pair students to ask each other:
 - What time did you wake up yesterday?
 - Did you do any exercise?
 - What healthy food did you eat?
 - What time did you go to bed?

Written Post-test:

Level: 4th Year Primary

Theme: Health and Illness

Total Points: /10

Part 1: Vocabulary (2 pts)

A. Circle the words that describe being sick. (0.25 each)

happy – headache – tired – football – fever – dancing – sick – stomach ache

medicine – TV – pain – juice – earache – reading – okay – strong

Part 2: Grammar (2.5 pts)

A. Fill in the gaps using “have” or “has”. (1 pt)

1. I _____ a fever.

2. She _____ a headache.

B. Reorder the words to make sentences. (1.5 pts)

1. sick / am / I / today

→ _____

2. has / Housseem / a / fever

→ _____

3. better / feels / now / Lina

→ _____

Part 3: Reading Comprehension (2.5 pts)

Read the text and answer the questions.

Hello! My name is Adam. Yesterday, I had a stomach ache. I didn't go to school. I stayed in bed and drank some juice. My mom gave me some medicine. Today, I feel better.

A. Answer the questions (1.5 pts):

1. What was wrong with Adam? → _____

2. Did he go to school? → _____

3. What did his mom give him? → _____

B. Write Yes or No (1 pt):

1. Adam had a headache. → _____

2. Adam feels better today. → _____

Part 4: Writing (3 pts)

Write 2 to 3 sentences about a time you were sick. Use the past tense.

Example: Yesterday, I had a headache. I stayed in bed and drank water.

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الملخص

مع تزايد الهيمنة العالمية للغة الإنجليزية، ازدادت أهميتها في الأنظمة التعليمية حول العالم، بما في ذلك الجزائر، حيث تم مؤخراً إدراج اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الابتدائية. وعلى الرغم من أن هذا التغيير يبدو واعداً، خصوصاً مع تبني منهج التدريس التواصلي (CLT)، إلا أنه يثير تساؤلات مهمة حول كيفية تقييم الكفاءة اللغوية. ففي كثير من الأحيان، لا يبدو أن طرق التدريس تتماشى مع أساليب التقييم المعتمدة. هذا التفاوت الملحوظ بين التعليم والتقويم شكّل نقطة الانطلاق لهذا البحث. تتناول هذه الدراسة مشكلة عدم التوافق بين ممارسات التدريس والتقييم في المدارس الابتدائية الجزائرية، مع التركيز على أقسام السنة الرابعة في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية. ورغم أن المنهج يشجع على اتباع مقاربة تواصلية تُركّز على مهارات التحدث والاستماع، إلا أن التقييم لا يزال يعتمد أساساً على الاختبارات الكتابية. هذا التباين قد يحول دون حصول المعلمين على صورة دقيقة وشاملة عن قدرات المتعلمين اللغوية، وقد يحد من تطورهم الأكاديمي. ولفهم هذه الإشكالية، تم اعتماد منهج مختلط ضمن إطار براغماتي، حيث جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان شبه مُقنن أُجيب عليه من طرف 22 أستاذاً للغة الإنجليزية من ولاية الأغواط، بالإضافة إلى اختبارات قبلية وبعديّة خضع لها 172 تلميذاً من أربعة أقسام سنة رابعة ابتدائي. وقد استند التدخل البيداغوجي إلى تدريس متوازن يشمل المهارات الأربع خلال فصل دراسي كامل. أظهرت النتائج أن أداء التلاميذ في المهارات الشفوية كان أفضل من أدائهم في الاختبارات الكتابية قبل التدخل، مما يؤكد أن الاعتماد على الاختبارات الكتابية فقط لا يعكس مستوى الكفاءة الحقيقي. بعد التدخل، تحسنت نتائجهم في الاختبار الكتابي بشكل ملحوظ. كما عبّر الأساتذة عن عدم رضاهم عن المنهج الحالي، ودعوا إلى ضرورة إدماج التقييم الشفوي. ختاماً، تؤكد هذه الدراسة على ضرورة تحقيق التوافق بين أساليب التدريس والتقييم، حيث إن دمج العناصر الشفوية في عملية التقييم من شأنه أن يقدم صورة أكثر شمولية ودقة عن مستوى المتعلمين، ويسهم في تعزيز العملية التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التدريس التواصلي، تقييم اللغة الإنجليزية، التعليم الابتدائي، التقييم الشفوي والكتابي، طرق التدريس، انسجام المنهج والتقييم

