Instructional Strategies and the Application of Competency-based and Standards-based Approaches in EFL Classrooms in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

This article is a reflection on the teaching practices of English as a foreign language classroom at the secondary school in Morocco. Our observation is that the practices of the majority of teachers do not adhere to the principles of the competency and Standards based approaches that are recommended by the ministerial pedagogical guidelines. These principles are based on the heritage of socio-constructivism and cognitivism. In this perspective, this contribution, which is part of the general context of research in foreign language didactics and that of socio-constructivism and competency-based training in particular, and which attaches great importance to the "field", proposes to observe the practices of teachers of English as a foreign language in the qualifying secondary cycle and to report on the extent to which the new pedagogical orientations are present in classrooms at the present time, The aim is to assess the distance that remains to be covered in order to put into practice a teaching and learning that is truly in line with the spirit of the competency-based approach and standards based approach and, therefore, with the new theories of learning sciences.

Keywords: Teaching Practices, Competency-Based Approach, Standard Based Approach, Socio-Constructivism, Cognitivism, Ministerial Pedagogical Orientations

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Introduction

Since the dawn of the 21st century, Morocco has embarked on a transformative journey in its educational landscape. The year 2000 marked the initiation of a pivotal reform in the Moroccan school system, introducing competency-based and standards-based training into its revamped curricula. Rooted in the pedagogical doctrines of cognitivism, constructivism, and socio-constructivism, these approaches champion the learner's central role. They emphasize the development of both disciplinary and transversal competences and standards. This paradigm shift challenges the antiquated notion of students as mere passive recipients and teachers as the exclusive custodians of knowledge, dispensing it in a top-down manner. Consequently, these innovative approaches present a novel challenge for educators, necessitating a reevaluation and recalibration of their teaching methodologies and classroom practices.

Yet, two decades post this seminal reform, the outcomes of English education at the qualifying secondary level in Morocco seem to be in a state of dissonance with the envisioned aspirations of both the ministry and the teaching fraternity. A significant proportion of learners grapple with pronounced deficiencies in English, manifesting in both written and oral modalities. This stark reality begets a pressing question: To what extent, and in which configurations, are the contemporary pedagogical orientations manifested in EFL classrooms within the qualifying secondary cycle?

In this scholarly contribution, we endeavor to address this query, drawing insights from an empirical study previously undertaken with this objective in mind. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of this issue, we adopted a mixed-methods approach, synergizing both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. This holistic approach was deemed essential to glean a nuanced understanding of the prevailing dynamics within EFL classrooms at the qualifying secondary level in Morocco.

Review of the literature

Teaching english in the qualifying secondary cycle

The National Charter for Education and Training recommends modern pedagogical approaches aiming to put the learner at the centre of pedagogical action: "The reform of education and training places the learner, in general, and the child in particular, at the centre of pedagogical reflection and action. In this perspective, it must offer the children of Morocco the conditions necessary for their awakening and development"(Charte Nationale d'Education, 1999).

It therefore aims to lay the foundations for "a living school through a pedagogical approach based on active learning and not on passive reception; cooperation, discussion and collective effort, not individual work alone" (Charte Nationale d'Education, 1999).

The teaching/learning of English in the qualifying secondary cycle is part of a project approach which is:

"The translation of the educational project into action. Its relevance lies in the fact that it allows pupils to be placed in real learning situations and that it offers the teacher the opportunity to take an interest in each individual's progress. Rather than intervening in repetitive, traditional

and decontextualized activities, it relies on planning, interactive facilitation techniques, reinvestment of learning and development of new skills" (Charte Nationale d'Education, 1999).

This project therefore allows the teacher to plan his or her work while taking into account the profile of his or her pupils. It is made up of a set of modules divided into didactic sequences, which sequences are composed of successive, coherent and interdependent implementation activities.

Notion of competence

The notion of competence is an important aspect in the field of education, and has invaded contemporary educational discourse, in particular the vocabulary of teachers and institutional texts containing pedagogical recommendations

In the book entitled "De la pédagogie par objectif à la pédagogie des compétences" by François Fotso, several definitions of this concept are proposed (Fosto, 2011). While Perrenoud perceives competence as: "An ability to act in a defined type of situation, an ability that is based on knowledge but is not reduced to it" (Perrenoud, 1999). Roegiers defined competence as: "The possibility for an individual to mobilise in an internalised way an integrated set of resources in order to solve a family of situations" (Roegiers, 2000)

The three meanings of the notion of competence complement each other and consist in presenting it as the ability to act effectively in a situation or a family of situations by mobilising the necessary knowledge and resources in a timely manner.

Competence, according to Roegiers, is characterised by five major characteristics: Mobilisation of a set of resources as "knowledge, knowledge from experience, patterns, automatisms, abilities, know-how of various types, know-how to be (etc., Roegiers, 2000).

Purposefulness

The resources mentioned above are mobilised by the learner "with a view to a production, an action, the resolution of a problem, which arises in his or her school life or in his or her daily life". In addition to their academic function, skills therefore have a social function for the individual who possesses them.

Link to a family of situations

The mobilisation of resources only takes place in a well-defined family of situations: "Competence can only be understood with reference to the situations in which   it is exercised".

Thus, it is possible to be competent to solve a problem in mathematics and incompetent to solve a problem in physics.

Disciplinary character

"A competence is often defined through a category of situations corresponding to specific problems linked to the discipline".

This characteristic is closely related to the previous one, as both are related to a family of situations, while the second one consists in confining the competence to a specific discipline.

Evaluability

Competence is assessable: "It is assessable because it can be measured by the quality of the execution of a task, and by the quality of the result" (Roegiers, 2000, p. 70)

The evaluation is therefore based on two criteria: the quality of the product and the process which takes into account different parameters such as the learner's speed, autonomy, and respect for others.

The notion of standards

The notion of standards in a standards-based approach refers to the establishment and use of predefined guidelines or learning expectations to ensure consistency, clarity, and accountability in educational practices (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004). Standards outline the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to attain at different grade levels or stages of their education. They provide a framework for curriculum development, instructional planning, assessment, and evaluation (Marzano & Kendall, 2007).

Here are some key aspects of the notion of standards in a standards-based approach in education:

1.   Learning Goals: Standards articulates the desired learning outcomes for students. They articulate what students should know and be able to do at each grade level or academic stage. Standards typically cover various subject areas such as language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and more. They serve as a guide for educators to design their instructional strategies and learning experiences (Popham, 2008).

2.   Alignment: Standards-based approaches emphasize the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the defined standards. Curriculum frameworks and instructional materials are designed to align with the content and expectations outlined in the standards. Teachers use the standards as a reference point to plan their lessons and ensure that the learning experiences are aligned with the desired outcomes. The emphasis is on aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the set standards (Anderson, 2002).

Clear Expectations: Standards provide clear and specific expectations for student learning. They help create a shared understanding among educators, students, and parents about what is expected at each grade level. Clear and measurable standards facilitate effective communication about student progress, as well as enable targeted support and intervention strategies for students who may be struggling to meet the standards. Standards foster a shared understanding among educators, students, and parents (Darling-Hammond & Pecheone, 2010).

3.   Assessment and Evaluation: Standards guide the development of assessments that measure student progress and achievement. Educators design assessments, such as tests, projects, or portfolios, to evaluate how well students have met the defined standards. The results of these assessments provide valuable feedback to students, parents, and educators to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and make informed instructional decisions. They guide the formulation of assessments that gauge student progress (Stiggins, 2005).

4.   Continuity and Progression: Standards provide a coherent and sequential progression of learning across grade levels or educational stages. They ensure that students build upon their knowledge and skills from one level to the next in a logical and progressive manner. This helps maintain continuity in education and facilitates smooth transitions between grade levels or educational institutions. Standards ensure a logical progression of learning (Schmidt et al., 2005).

5.   Accountability: Standards-based approaches in education often involve accountability measures to monitor and assess the effectiveness of educational systems. These measures may include state or national assessments to evaluate student achievement, school performance metrics, or teacher evaluations. Standards help establish a common benchmark against which educational outcomes can be measured, allowing for comparisons and identification of areas that need improvement. Standards-based approaches incorporate measures to assess the efficacy of educational systems (Elmore, 2002).

In essence, the notion of standards in a standards-based approach in education aims to provide a structured framework for teaching and learning, bolstering educational quality, transparency, and accountability (Reeves, 2004). By defining learning goals, aligning curriculum and instruction, and facilitating assessment and evaluation, standards support educational quality, transparency, and accountability, ultimately contributing to improved student outcomes. In essence, standards in a standards-based approach aim to provide

Theoretical foundations of the competency-based and standard based approach

Cognitivism

In psychology, the cognitivist current is interested in the study and knowledge of the different types of memory (short-term or working memory and long-term or storage memory), as well as cognition strictly confined to the act of memorising. In the field of teaching/learning, cognitivism aims at a better understanding of certain mental processes such as memorization, judgment, motivation or transfer of knowledge, in order to adjust teaching methods. According to this perspective, the teacher's main role is to implement strategic learning, which consists of providing the learner with accessible and stimulating data for reflective processing, placing them in complex situations in order to actively construct their knowledge while developing information networks, modifying and enriching previous bodies of knowledge with new information.

Constructivism

Jean Piaget postulates that the subject reacts to stimuli from the environment and interacts with it (Piaget, 1952). He considers education as a process of knowledge construction carried out by the individual through his action on objects and his interactions with the environment (Piaget, 1952). In other words, each individual constructs his or her own representation of reality by organising his or her subjective experiences (Piaget, 1970). In this perspective, the aim of teaching is to facilitate the construction of precise concepts with scientifically accurate outlines organised in networks, hence the recourse to certain reforms at the level of curricular orientations and the organisation of programmes, taking into account the learning, reasoning and thinking processes

necessary for the assimilation of disciplinary contents, but also for the acquisition of skills, which favour the mobilisation of knowledge and know-how in various situations (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Socio Constructivism

The current of the psychology of learning is grafted onto the constructivist approach by reaffirming the prominent role of interaction in learning and by insisting on the social environment and the relationship between peers. Vygotsky, a 'social' constructivist, saw interaction with peers and socio-cognitive conflict as the basis for development and learning, which rehabilitates the role of the adult in the learning context. According to him, the very development of intellectual functions is primarily social and cultural in nature (Vygotsky, 1978). The Frenchman Freinet introduced the world of education to his concept of trial and error, the ultimate aim of which was to place the learner at the centre of his or her learning. He advocated his natural learning method based on teamwork and the consideration of the classroom as a meeting place where learners share their knowledge (Acker, 2007).

According to this perspective, teaching/learning consists of engaging the learner in complex, enriching learning situations that correspond to their interests and allow them to collaborate and compete with their peers.

The teaching practices in EFL classrooms, particularly in Morocco, have undergone significant transformations with the advent of competency-based and standards-based approaches. Many educators tried to provide a comprehensive understanding of these approaches, their implementation in EFL classrooms, and their implications for Moroccan education.
- The Shift towards Competency-Based Education

Cydis (2014) explored the characteristics of instruction and assessment in teacher education courses that foster student competencies. The study revealed that instructors utilized various competency-based educational practices in their instructional and assessment tasks. This shift towards competency-based education underscores the importance of equipping students with specific skills and knowledge, ensuring they are prepared for real-world challenges.
-Standards-Based Approach in ELT Textbooks.

Bouzid (2017) evaluated the extent to which Moroccan ELT textbooks align with the principles of the Standards-Based Approach. The findings highlighted several shortcomings in the representation of content standards in these textbooks. This suggests a pressing need for improved guidance and materials that better align with the Standards-Based Approach in the Moroccan context.
-Teacher Practices in EFL Moroccan Classrooms, The Role of Technology and Multiple Literacies
Cardoso (2018) conducted a survey with English teachers in Portugal to explore the integration of new technologies in the EFL classroom. The study indicated a need for guidance, training, and the development of appropriate materials to better integrate new technologies in the EFL classroom. This underscores the importance of incorporating digital tools and multiple literacies in modern EFL teaching practices.

Challenges and future directions

Egbert and Shahrokni (2019) discussed the integration of competency-based learning into computer-assisted language learning (CALL) teacher education. The research argued for effective competency-based learning in CALL, emphasizing the need for teacher educators to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to actively engage English language learners in mastering language, content, and technology.

The continuous evaluation of teaching materials, as suggested by Bouzid (2017), is crucial to ensure they remain aligned with the evolving educational standards. As the Moroccan educational landscape continues to change, there is a pressing need for materials and teaching practices to be regularly evaluated and adapted to meet the needs of modern learners.

Mechouat (2017) highlights that the integration of civic education pedagogies in Moroccan classrooms is crucial for promoting values such as engagement, democracy, and active citizenship. The study underscores the importance of tailoring these pedagogies to accommodate gender-based perspectives, ensuring that both male and female students are equally engaged and benefit from instructional strategies that promote critical thinking and participatory learning.

Khasanov (2022) emphasizes that the competency-based approach represents a crucial step in updating educational content, focusing on the development of skills and knowledge that are directly applicable in real-world situations. This approach shifts the emphasis from traditional rote learning to fostering students' abilities to apply their learning in practical contexts, thus improving their overall competence in the subject matter.

Junça-Silva, Duarte, and Santos (2023) highlight that fostering personal initiative, creativity, and risk-taking among students enhances their capacity for opportunity discovery and entrepreneurial thinking. These competencies, essential for 21st-century learners, align closely with the goals of competency-based approaches in education, which emphasize practical skill acquisition and critical thinking, rather than rote learning.

The literature underscores the significance of competency-based and standards-based approaches in shaping EFL teaching practices, particularly in Morocco. While there have been strides in integrating these approaches into the curriculum, challenges remain. Continuous evaluation, adaptation, and the integration of technology and civic values are essential for the future of EFL education in Morocco.

Research methodology

In order to take stock and verify whether teaching and classroom practices in the qualifying secondary cycle in Morocco are compatible with the new pedagogical orientations of the education reform, which advocate a pedagogy based on the development of competences and standards, we considered it essential to carry out an empirical study based on the mixed methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative investigation methods. These methods include a questionnaire survey, classroom observations and semi-structured interviews.

The survey was carried out in the Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zair education authority, and more specifically in the Salé delegation. Seven schools were chosen, spread geographically over three different areas: urban (3 schools), rural (1 school) and semi-rural (3 schools).

This article focuses on the core of our investigation and presents just the results of the classroom observation. This method of investigation, whose protocol required us to be equipped with an exhaustive observation grid, consisted in carrying out observations in 8 different classes of scientific common trunks, that is to say, with 8 English teachers, in order to analyse and compare their teaching practices (cooperative learning, strategic learning, integrated learning, modelling, etc.) and also to verify the extent to which pedagogical orientations are present in the English as a foreign language class.

Presentation of the results of the classroom observation
Table 1 summarises the number of hours of recording and the activities recorded per teacher. Teacher E has the most recorded duration equal to 330 min and teachers B, G, and H have recorded 220 min.

Table 1.
Classroom observation information

teachers	Duration in min	Levels activities
A	320	
B	220	
C	220	
D	303	-Reading comprehension common core
E	330	-Vocabulary
F	303	
G	220	
H	220	

-grammar class

The demographic results in Table 2 show that 60% of the teachers are male. The age group of 40-45 has no participants in this study. Participants from 25-30, 30-35, and 50-54 are 75% of the all participants with same percent. Half of participants has 20-30 years' experience and 38% have answered yes about their self training question.

Table 2.
Information about the teachers

Gender of participants	Male	40%
	Female	60%

Item	Item scale	Number of participants	Percentage
Age of participants	[25-30]	2	25%
	[30-35]	2	25%
	[35-40]	1	13%
	[40-45]	0	0%
	[45-50]	1	13%
	[50-54]	2	25%
Initial training	CPR	3	37%
	ENS	4	50%
	None	1	13%
Continuing education	MEN	4	50%
	MEN ELC	1	12%
	MEN BA	2	25%
	MEN MASTER/BA	1	13%
Experience years	0-10	1	13%
	10-20	3	37%
	20-30	4	50%
Self-training	Yes	3	38%
	Some research	1	13%
	A little	1	12%
	No	3	37%

The observation grid we used to collect data on the teaching practices of our participants is both simple and exhaustive, as it is based solely on criteria that are deemed observable and reflect, as transparently as possible, the diversity of classroom practices that indicate manifestations of the competency-based and standards-based approach.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the indices found by category and by teacher.

Table 3.

Observation grid

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Resources and material	11	0	12	11	11	11	0	0
Clear learning objectives	11	0	0	0	0	22	0	0
Cooperative learning	44	11	22	33	33	22	33	44
Autonomous learning	11	11	44	0	0	1	22	11
Collaboration and communication	33	0	55	0	0	11	0	0
Authentic learning tasks	33	11	55	11	0	11	11	0

Integrated learning	22	0	33	0	0	44	11	0
Differentiated instructions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning outcomes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Follow up activities	0	0	11	0	0	0	11	0
Self-evaluation	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0
Pair evaluation	0	0	33	0	0	11	0	0
Ongoing feedback and reflection	66	0	55	22	0	66	22	11
Reactivation of prior knowledge	99	22	99	22	11	88	33	33
Integration of technology	33	0	33	11	0	0	11	0
Authentic assessment	11	22	11	0	22	11	22	11
Critical thinking	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
Students' engagement	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Modeling	22	0	0	0	0	22	0	0
Timing	11	0	0	0	22	0	0	0
Strategic learning	11	0	11	11	0	0	0	0

Results and discussion

In the light of the empirical studies we have carried out, we have observed the following:

-The distribution of cues in our corpus differs from one teacher to another and there are cues that are more present and observed than others such as reactivation of prior learning, guidance and orientation of learning, cooperative learning, etc.

-There are indices that are almost absent from the teaching practices observed in our corpus, namely, links between task and problem, proposals for follow up activities, pedagogical flexibility, self-assessment. Strategic learning, peer evaluation, clear learning objectives, collaboration and communication and the use of authentic tasks and situations.

N. B. In this article we only present the results of the analysis of the practices of teachers A, B, C and G because we considered them to be representative of the whole sample studied.

Teacher A

Teacher A has a rather interesting profile since his practice includes a large number of principles related to the competency-based approach and standards based approach. We observe a fairly high recurrence of the index of reactivation of acquired knowledge and that of guidance and orientation of learning. Indeed, this teacher, at the beginning of each session or activity, stimulates and reactivates previous learning by means of oral questions and by presenting the learners with tasks identical to those carried out previously. This teacher also perfectly applies the principle of guiding and orienting learning by assisting the learner in his or her learning process and by highlighting the strategies and resources to be used. This teacher also puts into practice co-operative learning, which is summarized in group work, and relies on a self-regulation approach as part of the metacognition work that accompanies the collective activity.

For the other indices, such as authentic learning tasks, encourage critical thinking, autonomous learning, clear learning objectives, differentiated instructions and modelling, their

recurrence remains rather average and limited, that said, This teacher manages to hold the attention of the learners and to stimulate them by confronting them with meaningful situations, by reminding them of the problem situation and by proposing complex tasks, in other words, he manages to "give meaning" to what they learn and to bring them to construct their knowledge.

However, what is lacking in his teaching are practices such as peer evaluation, the proposal of follow up tasks, self-assessment, and integration of technology, strategic learning and pedagogical flexibility.

In view of these results, it can be seen that this teacher's practices are moderately close to the principles of the competency-based approach and standards based approach, although the key elements of these approaches are missing.

As regards the profile and experience of this teacher, he is a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure and has 10 years of professional experience. He also has a master's degree in didactics of English as a foreign language and fully believes in the effectiveness of modern approaches. He is open to all changes and reforms concerning both the content of the curriculum and pedagogical approaches. He openly acknowledges his imperfections in this area and shows his desire to improve his skills.

Teacher B

The profile of teacher B is quite remarkable, especially since his practices are at odds with the principles of the competency-based and standards based approaches, and apart from the reactivation of acquired knowledge, clear learning objectives, cooperative learning and autonomous learning, no indication was found in his practices. His teaching was purely transmissive and his questions were strictly about declarative knowledge. The exercises and tasks proposed were mostly structural and without any meaning for the learners (no reminder of the link with the problem situation, no reminder of the problematic...).

As for cooperative learning, it is hardly in keeping with the constructivist spirit, since group work was in no way assisted or guided by the teacher, in other words, the learners were left to their own devices, which shows that the teaching proposed by this teacher does not stimulate the learners' desire to learn and in no way recalls the basic foundations of the three popular currents of learning sciences.

This teacher is also a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieure and has 30 years of professional experience. He was trained in the competency-based approach and standards based approach within the framework of the Ministry of National Education (MEN). He displays a certain rigidity and rejects all new approaches and modern pedagogies and does not want to change his classroom habits and approaches in any way.

Teacher C

This teacher has a certain regularity in his teaching practice and we observe a high number of occurrences of indices such as reactivation of acquired knowledge, guidance and orientation of learning, integrated learning, cooperative learning, proposal of meaningful situations, proposal of

authentic tasks, autonomous learning, integrated learning and reminder of the strategic learning. In fact, this teacher begins all the sessions observed by reactivating what has been learned, while encouraging the learners to recapitulate and diagram their previous knowledge. He often recalls the problematic and tries to correlate it with the learning in progress and the tasks to be carried out so that the lesson is meaningful and consequently motivating for the learner. His guiding work is also surprising as he directs his learners to the strategies and different resources that can be used to carry out the proposed tasks. He also uses this practice to optimize the one related to autonomous learning, consisting in bringing the pupil to look for information himself and to build by himself his knowledge and his know-how. This teacher also used peer evaluation following group work and proposed follow up tasks to get the learner to put into practice his new strategic and disciplinary knowledge. Moreover, as in the case of teacher A, there is a total absence of certain indicators such as setting of clear timing, which is nothing other than a process/metacognitive that the teacher does aloud with the students: a group or individual reflection, an awareness of the learning and the difficulties to be overcome; reflection by verbalizing what has been learned.

In view of these results, we can conclude that the skills-based pedagogy was put into practice to some extent, since many of its principles were applied during the period of our classroom observation.

This teacher did his initial training at the CPR (regional pedagogical center) and has 13 years of professional experience, he is an active member of the MATE (Moroccan association of teachers of English and is well trained in new pedagogical approaches, both within the framework of the MATE and the Ministry. He is very aware of the efficiency of these new methods and makes great efforts to improve and perfect his teaching practices.

Teacher G

We can observe in this teacher a certain regularity in the recurrence of many clues such as the reactivation of acquired knowledge, the guidance and orientation of learning, cooperative learning, integrated learning, the presentation of meaningful situations, the proposal of complex tasks, autonomous learning, the statement of learning objectives, the reminder of the problematic/task/project, modelling and the proposal of a follow up task. However, this distribution is done at the rate of one or two hints here and there. To tell the truth, this teacher's practice is purely traditional and vertical. He is the sole holder of knowledge, the corrector and the consultant. The tasks he proposes to his students are, most of the time, of a structural nature, which are not part of any problematic or project. There is also an almost total absence of learning strategies and initiation to autonomous work; the few indications that his practice showed can be explained in two different ways: either because he is aware of the objective of our investigation and therefore he did his best to make his practice live up to the expected results, or because these manifestations were just a methodological fluke. As far as cooperative work is concerned, it does not really reflect the principles of this approach, but is more a question of "working together".

Moreover, at no time was there any evidence of the most important principles of competence and standards pedagogy, namely strategic learning, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, clear learning

objectives, communication and cooperation, authentic tasks, linkage between task and problem and pedagogical flexibility. However, this teacher's learning is anarchic and based on the transmission of knowledge in a traditional way. Based on these results, we cannot conclude that his teaching practice is in line with the spirit of competency-based pedagogy; he has a long way to go to get there.

This teacher has 14 years of professional experience and was recruited directly by the ministry in charge, without receiving any initial training. The only training he has had was that organised from time to time by the educational inspectors. He claims that he is doing research on the subject in order to improve his practices. What is remarkable about this teacher is that he is aware of the great gap between his teaching practice and that denoted by the three popular currents of the learning sciences, namely cognitivism, constructivism, and socio-constructivism.

Discussion of research findings

The empirical research undertaken offers a meticulous examination of teaching practices within EFL classrooms, particularly concerning the competency-based and standards-based approaches. When these findings are critically analyzed against the backdrop of existing literature, several salient observations emerge.

1.   Heterogeneity in Pedagogical Approaches: The literature underscores the pivotal role of diverse teaching criteria, such as the reactivation of prior knowledge and cooperative learning. The empirical data from this research echoes this sentiment, revealing a pronounced variability in the emphasis of these criteria across different educators. For instance, while Teacher A's pedagogical approach is replete with instances of reactivating prior knowledge, Teacher B's methodology leans more towards a transmissive style.

2.   The Disjunction of Theory and Practice: Prominent literature accentuates the necessity of clear learning objectives, fostering collaboration, effective communication, and the incorporation of authentic tasks in contemporary EFL pedagogies. Paradoxically, the research findings indicate a conspicuous absence of these pivotal indicators in the observed teaching practices, most notably in Teacher B's classroom.

3.   Teacher A: A Synthesis of Pedagogical Approaches: Literary discourse champions the amalgamation of both competency-based and standards-based approaches to cultivate a comprehensive learning milieu. Teacher A's pedagogical practices resonate with this paradigm, albeit with certain integral components conspicuously absent.

4.   Teacher B: An Adherent to Traditionalism: In stark contrast to the literature's advocacy for avant-garde pedagogical approaches, Teacher B's pedagogical style remains entrenched in traditionalism. This divergence from contemporary pedagogical paradigms might be rooted in his extensive tenure in the profession and a potential aversion to transformative pedagogies.

5.   Teacher C: A Proponent of Progressive Pedagogies: Literary discourse underscores the imperative of integrating a plethora of teaching criteria to foster an enriched learning environment. Teacher C's pedagogical style is emblematic of this ethos, seamlessly integrating pivotal components such as guidance in learning and cooperative pedagogies.

6.   Teacher G: Navigating Pedagogical Anarchy: While academic discourse promotes structured and purpose-driven pedagogical practices, Teacher G's approach seems to be characterized by a lack of structured pedagogical direction. This incongruence with contemporary pedagogical paradigms might be attributed to his truncated initial training and a limited immersion in progressive pedagogical methodologies.

7.   The Imperative of Continuous Professional Development: The literature unequivocally advocates for the continuous professional development of educators. The empirical findings of this research corroborate this stance, suggesting that educators with robust training regimes (such as Teacher C) tend to align their pedagogical practices more congruently with contemporary pedagogical paradigms.

The juxtaposition of empirical findings against the rich tapestry of existing literature offers a nuanced understanding of the prevailing pedagogical practices within EFL classrooms. While certain educators are making commendable strides in assimilating contemporary pedagogical paradigms, others remain ensconced in more traditional methodologies. This underscores the imperative for a relentless focus on continuous professional development, ensuring that EFL pedagogical practices remain in alignment with the dynamic landscape of educational paradigms (Ergasheva, 2024).

Conclusion

The present study was carried out with the aim of giving an account of the presence of a pedagogy based on the theoretical heritage of socio-constructivism and cognitivism and oriented towards competency-based and standards based training within learning and teaching in English as a foreign language classes at the qualifying secondary level in Morocco.

In the light of the empirical studies we have carried out, we have observed the following

-       Classroom practices in the qualifying secondary cycle integrate socio-constructivist and cognitivist principles as we saw that the eight teachers concerned by our survey all had practices, such as collective learning, reactivation of prior learning, which reflected at least one or two socio-constructivist and/or cognitivist principles, but to varying degrees as regards the truly socio-constructivist or cognitivist character.

-       Only 25% of classroom practices were aimed at the achievement of complex competences and standards as proposed in the ministerial pedagogical guidelines and according to the principles of competency-based and standards based education; indeed, two out of eight teachers were teaching according to the new guidelines.

-       The teacher (his or her experience, age, training) is an important factor to be considered in the successful implementation of the principles recommended by the ministerial pedagogical guidelines, since there is an inverse relationship between seniority and the application of these principles. In fact, the most experienced teachers in terms of years of teaching are those who reject competency-based and standards based training and believe the least in its effectiveness, unlike the teachers who were trained and entered secondary education only recently.

Implications and recommendations

In view of these results, we believe that this work will open up avenues for reflection on the work of training, whether in-service or initial training, as it sheds light on the way in which the subject is taught and the way in which pedagogical guidelines are disseminated in the education system. Suggestions may include professional development opportunities for teachers, the incorporation of authentic materials, promoting learner autonomy, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

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Conflict of Interests
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