

STATUS OF THE READING SKILL IN THE ALGERIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present research paper is to give a bird's eye view on the situation of the English Language in Algeria with a reference to the teaching and learning processes. Light will be shed on the English Language Teaching at Secondary School level focusing on the reading skill and its place in the newly implemented CBA. In this research paper, special attention will be given to the theoretical definitions of the CBA, its characteristics and its principles, in addition to the different approaches and methods that have been implemented to the teaching of English in the Secondary Schools in Algeria. Thus, it proposes a variety of reading definitions with reference to both intensive and extensive reading, as an attempt to show how to clarify the complexity underlying this skill.

KEYWORDS: Reading Skill, Extensive and Intensive Reading, Teaching and Learning Process

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the present research paper is to give a bird's eye view on the situation of the English Language in Algeria with a reference to the teaching and learning processes. Light will be shed on the English Language Teaching at Secondary School level focusing on the reading skill and its place in the newly implemented CBA. In this chapter, special attention will be given to the theoretical definitions of the CBA, its characteristics and its principles, in addition to the different approaches and methods that have been implemented to the teaching of English in the Secondary Schools in Algeria. Thus, chapter one proposes a variety of reading definitions with reference to both intensive and extensive reading, as an attempt to show how to clarify the complexity underlying this skill.

ELT SITUATION IN ALGERIA

The widespread use of English as a conquering means of global and international communication, has placed a huge need to learn it either as a second language in non-English speaking countries or as a foreign language as it is the case in Algeria. By the way, English is seen from an educational standpoint as the second foreign language.

In fact, the English language has always had the same status as the other foreign languages mainly: French, Spanish and German. Indeed the important role of English in the political, economic, educational and commercial life with the world outside and its emergence as a unique language of science and technology has increased struggle and motivation among people to learn it. English was given the status of a second foreign language by the government, after the French language.

It has been noticed that, learners all over the world show a great preference for the English Language, at the expense of the other languages of wider communication. They learn it in order to pursue the following aims:

- Improve their capacities to understand material written in English (Books, newspapers, magazines, etc)

- Keep pace with the latest scientific and technological development.
- Develop their cross communicative skills.
- Be able to exchange ideas and information across nations.

(As cited in the syllabus).

However, Harmer (1993) notes that: “*Many students study English because they have to; English is part of the school curriculum, because a decision has been taken by someone in authority that it should be so*”. (Harmer, 1993, p. 02).

For the aforementioned reasons, Algeria has undergone great changes in its education system and given more importance to English. Consequently, the teaching of English in Algeria has received a great deal of reinforcement.

The following table illustrates the different school levels, the age of the learners, the weekly teaching load and the textbook used.

Table 1: ELT in Algeria: Levels, Ages, Time Allotment and Textbook in Use

Secondary Education	Class Level	Age	Weekly Time Allotment	Textbooks
<i>First Year</i>	1 st year Literary stream	15_16	4 hours	<u>At the Crossroads</u>
	1 st year Scientific stream	15_16	3 hours	<u>At the Crossroads</u>
<i>Second Year</i>	2 nd year E.G Scientific stream	16_17	3 hours	<u>Getting Through</u>
	2 nd year F.Lges	16_17	5 hours	<u>Getting Through</u>
	2 nd year L.ph	16_17	4 hours	<u>Getting Through</u>
<i>Third Year</i>	3 rd year Scientific stream E.G Maths	17_18	3 hours	<u>New Prospects</u>
	F.Lges L.ph	17_18	4 hours	<u>New Prospects</u>

From the above table, we notice that we have limited time access for an English class.

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL

The teaching of English, as a second foreign language, in the Algerian secondary schools, within the newly implemented approach the competency based approach implies a whole process going through an exhaustive work plan of designing syllabuses, devising accompanying documents and conceiving new textbooks.

The New Syllabus

The syllabus is a teaching tool. It is a guide which is very necessary to both teachers and learners. It is also: “*a plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning*” (Breen, 1984 as cited in Carter and Nunan, 2001, p.151). The syllabus is an official document in the Algerian secondary schools. It can also be seen as: “*a statement of what is to be learnt*” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p.87). Robinson (1991) notes: “*The syllabus is a plan of work and is thus essentially for the teacher, as a guideline and context of class content. That is, the syllabus acts as a guide for both the teacher and the learner by providing some goals to be attained*”. (As cited in Robinson, 1991, p. 34).

In the same respect, Yalden (1987) notes: “*The syllabus is now seen as an instrument by which the teacher, with the help of the syllabus designer can achieve a certain coincidence between the needs and aims of the learners and the activities that will take place in the classroom*”. (Cited in Yalden, 1987, p.86). Moreover, Ibid (1986) notes: “*A syllabus is a more detailed and operational statement of teaching and learning elements which translates the philosophy of the curriculum into a series of planned steps leading towards more narrowly defined objectives at each level*” (Ibid, 1986, p.35).

Today, new syllabuses are being introduced in the Algerian education system, selected and devised on the basis of the following criteria: learnability, frequency, usefulness and coverage. The newly built syllabus requires the implementation of the following competencies:

- Interacting orally in English.
- Interpreting oral and written texts.
- Producing oral and written texts.

(As cited in Teacher’s book, 2005, p. 4).

Concerning secondary education, a general survey of what the learners should be able to do after three years of study have to be made.

The New Textbook

The textbook is an important element in the teaching and learning process. It plays an important role in developing learners’ competence and increasing their performance. It is regarded as “*The visible heart of any ELT programme*” (Sheldon, 1988, p.237) and “*An almost universal element of ELT teaching*” (as cited in Hutchinson and Torres, 1994, p.315).

The importance of the textbook refers to the direct practice of the English teaching material. It reflects the objectives of the syllabus, depending on the method and techniques used by teachers. “*The role of the textbook is to present new material that must be adapted by the teacher to cover the syllabus*”. (Pedagogical instructions, Inspectorate of English/ M.E.N, 1982)

The textbook may be considered as the major material used in the classroom. The educational authorities have directed textbook commissions of language specialists to design classroom ELT textbooks taking into account the learners’ needs and their educational streams.

The changing needs of the Algerian schools made it imperative that ELT textbooks must be revised and updated. In 2005, Algeria has been involved in a large scale textbooks-design programme for secondary schools. Attempts were made to revise the national curricula on the basis of the Competency-Based Approach. In fact, the Algerian newly designed ELT textbooks represent a considerable improvement over the previously used textbooks.

In 2005, the Ministry of National Education released new textbooks: *At the Crossroads* for first year, *Getting Through* for second year and *New Prospects* for third year. The three textbooks contain a number of units. Each unit is built upon the four skills which are taught in an integrative way. Its aim is to make teaching and learning less daunting, more fruitful and certainly more interactive. In addition, carefully selected texts and interrelated activities are suggested to

foster motivation and provide better opportunities for language development.

The following table illustrates unit one content for third-year secondary school level as presented in ‘*New Prospects*’ (Book Three).

Table 2: Unit One Content of Third Year Secondary School Textbook «*New Prospects*» (Book Three)

Themes	Functions	Grammatical Structures	Vocabulary Building	Pronunciation_Spelling
Ancient Civilization	Narrating	Past simple of ‘to be’(was/were)w/ ordinary verbs(in statements + questions) w/ ago Past perfect (w/ when, as soon as, until, after,before) Used to Although/though In spite of the fact that/ despite the.. Was/ were able to	Prepositions: adj+ prep (good at/ interested in). verb + prep(contributeto/rely on/depend on/believe in) Adverb+noun+ed(well-mannered) Prefix ‘dis’ to form opposites (disappear) Formadjw/al: practical/cultural Formnouns.w/ment: achievement/enrichment/improvement Formnoun.w/tion: invention/civilisation Forma dj w/ ed:devoted/dedicated/ Committed Form adj w/ able: hospitable/ reasonable;	Stress in compound words Pronunciation of final ‘ed’ Shift of stress : noun-verb Syllable stress : civilisation/civilised architecture : ch=k but church : ch=tch
	Informing	Had to Articles : use + omission (nothing before abstract nouns : mankind, progress, culture) Quantifiers : Few /little	Form nouns w/ ic: optimistic/ realistic Form nouns w/ y: honesty/responsibility	
	Comparing	Not as many as : fewer than Not as much as/ less than Comparatives/ superlatives (the most/ the least		

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES IN ALGERIA

Language teaching approaches and methods have cast light on the language teaching theory and practice. The history of language teaching in Algeria, as we know, has a long tradition. The Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching and the Competency-Based Approach are among the methods used commonly by the teachers of English in Algeria. An attempt, therefore, has been made to review these methods as below:

Grammar Translation Method

It is the most classical method which is used for the teaching of foreign languages. This method was advocated by Roger Acham in the 16th century. Its aim was to make the students understand the grammar of the foreign language. The emphasis was put on accuracy rather than fluency. Translation was used to develop the students’ lexis (lexical competence). The *key features of the Grammar Translation Method* are as follows:

- *Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.*
- *Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.*

- *Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.*
- *Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.*
- *Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.*
- *Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.*
- *Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.*
- *Little or no attention is given to pronunciation”.*
(As cited in Prator and Celce-Murcia, 1979, p.3).

The Grammar Translation Method was introduced to the teaching of English in Algeria after the independence.

Direct Method

The Direct Method was an answer to the dissatisfaction with the grammar translation method. The main cause which helped to the appearance of the direct method was the expanding of colonialism by the early 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century. In the direct method, the learning of grammar and translating skills should be avoided. The focus is on fluency rather than accuracy and grammar is taught gradually and inductively through practice. Rivers (1968) summarizes the characteristics of the Direct Method as: **“Students learn to understand a language by listening to a great deal of it and that they learn to speak it by speaking it associating speech with appropriate action”**. (Rivers, 1968, p. 18).

The main characteristic of the Direct Method was that the emphasis was on speaking rather than reading and writing. Learners should learn to speak and understand the target language in everyday situations. Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe the main principles of the Direct Method:

- *Classroom instructions are conducted exclusively in the target language.*
- *Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught.*
- *Oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question and answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.*
- *Grammar is taught inductively.*
- *New teaching points are introduced orally.*
- *Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas.*
- *Both speech and listening comprehensions are taught.*
- *Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized.*
- *Student should be speaking at least 80% of the time during the lesson.*

- *Students are taught from inception to ask questions as well as answer them.*

(As cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 12).

In the early 1970's, the Direct Method was first implemented in ELT Algerian Middle School Classrooms with the introduction of a new ELT textbook « *Success with English* » **Coursebook One**.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching or CLT in short came as a result to the failure of the Audio_Lingual Method. It emphasizes the use of real_life situations that necessitate communication. The broad objective of this approach is to enhance learners' communicative competence as it focused on the real use of English in class. Thompson (1996) notes: "*The term Communicative Language Teaching is a broad and contested term*". (Thompson, 1996, p.207). Littlewood (1981) notes: "*One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language*". (Littlewood, 1981, p.120).

Under this « umbrella » definition, Communicative Language Teaching is beneficial for good instruction. In the classroom, the communicative approach often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners. This leads or encourages learners to develop their confidence, role-plays in which learners practise and develop language functions, as well as judicious use of grammar and pronunciation. The main principles of CLT are:

- *The communicative principle*: activities that involve real communication promote learning.
- *The task principle*: activities in which language is used to carry out meaningful tasks promote learning.
- *The meaningfulness principle*: language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process.

(As cited in Richards, 1980, p115)

Competency-Based Approach:

The methodology of language teaching has been moved by various steps. Some methods are eliminated since they can not fulfil the learners' needs and the changing situation from time to time. Among the latest methods of the 21st century, we have the competency based approach ***what is the competency-based approach?**

Before defining the Competency-Based Approach, a quick definition of the two terms 'competency' and 'approach' is in order here:

A 'competency' is the use of knowledge, skills and abilities to perform successfully in a given work. Norton and Huaan (1996) define competency as follows: "*Competency refers to achievement of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a given task*". (Norton and Huaan, 1996).

On the other hand, for Hermann (1990), a competency does not simply imply perfection: "*It implies performance at a stated level or criterion (which) needs to be specific for each occupational area*". (Hermann, 1990, p. 46). As far as the word 'approach' is concerned, Anthony and Allen (1965) define it as: "*A set of correlatives assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning*". (Anthony and Allen in Campbell 11, 1965, p.94). This means that an approach is a combined theory, involving both language and learning process.

The Competency-Based Approach has been involved by the Ministry of National Education as a new approach

in order to teach English as a second foreign language in the Algerian schools. This new approach allows the learner to be competent not only in the classroom. It is a problem solving situation which places learners in situation that check their ability to overcome obstacles. The emphasis in the CBA is on learner's ability to perform rather than only the learner's knowledge. Richards and Rodgers (2001) notes:

“The competency based approach focuses on the outcomes of learning. It addresses on what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about. The CBA advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviors that students should possess at the end of a course of study”. (Richards and Rodgers,2001,p.202).

As a matter of fact, the Competency-Based Approach means ‘learner-centered learning’ and ‘assessment of learner learning outcomes’. The learners will be capable of assessing their learning progress. In case they notice weaknesses, they can overcome them and avoid them later on in their learning process. This is important, as it shows that the learners are made responsible for their learning. Thus, the crucial point about the Competency-Based Approach is that it encourages the learner to use, develop and demonstrate the competencies required in the performance of his learning.

Consequently, he will find himself involved in a process of “learning how to learn”, i.e. the learner will be provided with opportunities to rely on himself rather than on his teacher. Therefore, the Competency-Based Approach relies on three main components:

- Assessment of learner needs.
- Selection of competencies based on those needs.
- Evaluation of learner performance in those competencies.

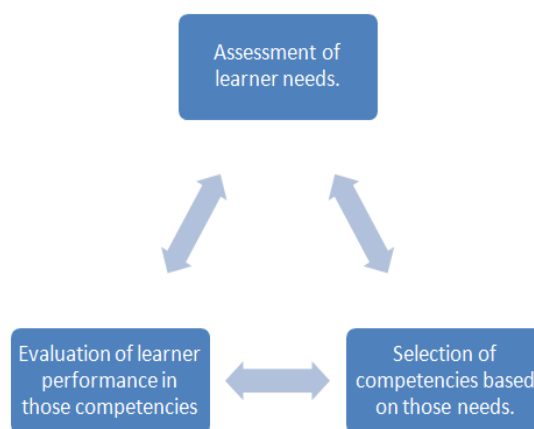


Figure 1: Components of the Competency Based Approach

Characteristics of Competency Based Approach

It is teaching that combines perception, memory and conception which help to think clearly, read and listen critically and write convincingly for self-expression in speech and on paper. It is a creative act and a process through which a learner puts together feelings, attitudes, thoughts and words in a way that makes it impossible for someone to be misunderstood. Each time a learner communicates, he invents a message that projects a part of his experience and part of himself. This approach is characterized by the following:

- **It is Action Oriented**

It brings about language learning to the acquisition of know-how fixed in functions and skills. It allows learners to be effective and competent language users in real life situations outside the classroom.

- **It is a Problem-Solving Approach**

It puts learners into situations where they check/test their capacities to overcome obstacles and problems. Problems make learners think and they learn by thinking. In order to achieve these objectives, the learners are trained through the following activities or tasks:

- Activities related to interaction: in pairs, in groups

(Communicative activities)

- Activities related to interpretation of messages:

(Dialogues, conversations, role play)

- Activities related to project work.

- Activities related to problem solving situation :

(As cited in Teacher's book, 2005, p.11)

The last point deals with the proves itself identifying its different stages:

Stage 01 : Setting the problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Step 01</u>: Assessing the situation : • Uneasiness • Need • Satisfaction ➤ <u>Step 02</u> : Describing the situation • Diagnosing • Analysing • Interpreting ➤ <u>Step 03</u> : Formulating the problem Eg. Since there is something wrong I must take the necessary steps to. ➤ <u>Step 04</u> : Looking for solution • Write an inventory Think of the different possibilities • Select one or several possibilities • State priorities according to feasibility and efficiency
Stage 02 : Acting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Step 05</u> : Stating objectives Consider constraints and resources ➤ <u>Step 06</u> : Planning • Decide about deadlines • Tasks distributions ➤ <u>Step 07</u> : Acting through doing Coordination and regulating ➤ <u>Step 08</u> : Assessing (evaluation what has been done) • Readjust • Identify the differences
Stage 03 : Evaluating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Step 09</u> : Evaluate each step first ➤ <u>Step 10</u> : Evaluate each stage ➤ <u>Step 11</u> : Evaluate the whole process

(As cited in Michel Hiberman, 1987).

- **It is a Social Constructivist**

Through the competency based approach, learning can occur through social interaction not only within the pages of the copybook or the walls of the classroom.

- **It is a Cognitive Approach**

It is indebted to Bloom’s taxonomy. Bloom claims that all educational objectives have to do with attitudes, values and emotions, he says that cognitive objectives from a hierarchy by which the learner must achieve lower order objectives before he can achieve higher ones.

(As cited in Teacher’s book, 2005, p.12).

Principles of Competency-Based Approach

The newly implemented Competency Based Approach relies a great deal on the active part taken by the pupil in the process of learning a foreign language; it is based on learner centred. Thus, it is designed in order to help pupils in their learning, it develops in them cooperation and competition. In addition to this, it relies on learning that aims to create a link between the different aspects of learning, acquired at school and the context of use outside the classroom. It narrows the gap between school life and real life.

The teacher’s role in the CBA is to facilitate the process of learning. He decides on the appropriate methods, assessment tools and types of remedial work that he is going to choose. In sum, the competency based approach came to enlighten the teaching staff and to facilitate learner autonomy.

DEFINITION OF READING

Reading is one of the basic language skills. It is the primary channel of learning a language. It is regarded as the most important activity in any language course and at any level, not only as a means of consolidating an extended one knowledge of the language but as a source of information and pleasurable ability. Nuttal (1996) notes: *“Reading is the process of getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it”* (Nuttal,1996 , p.4).

In the same respect, Goodman (1967) says: *“Reading is a psychological guessing game in which the reader reconstructs as best as he can a message which has been encoded by a writer as a graphic display”* (Goodman, 1967,

cited in Samuals and kamil, 1998, p.23). It is difficult to define reading in a word, Ransom (1978) notes: *“Reading is a conversation between the writer and the reader. The writer is trying to convey some messages to another person”* (Ransom, 1978, p.50). Albert.J.et al notes: *“Reading is the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal symbols and a result of interaction between the perception of graphic symbols that represent language and the reader’s language skills, cognitive skill and knowledge of the world”* (Albert.J.et al as cited in Thao Le Than, 2010).

Moreover, the reading skill is the most important skill in English Language from other language skills in acquiring language because if students are good in reading they will be good in other language skills. For this reason, teachers should focus on this skill. Grabe and Stoller (2002) note: *“Reading is the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately”* (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p.17).

Reading is a very essential and vital skill because it develops the mind, the imagination of learners and it improves their spelling. It involves the interaction of various cognitive, metacognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic elements. The importance of the reading skill in the Algerian Secondary Schools can not be denied because reading is the most important activity. This is why it is very essential to improve the students’ reading skill.

For this reason, there are two types of reading which have been used in order to develop the reading skill known as: intensive and extensive reading.

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading is an effective tool for improving the reading skill. The reading purpose in intensive reading is to skim, scan, reading between lines, analyzing extracts or parts and seeking for different points of view. It is the type of work which is done in the classroom under the teacher’s supervision for a high degree of comprehension. Brown (1988) notes: *“Intensive reading is a classroom-oriented activity in which students focus on the linguistic or semantic details of a passage. It calls students’ attention to grammatical forms, discourse makers and the surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships and the like”* (As cited in Brown,1988, p.400).

Nuttal (1982) says: *“The intensive reading lesson is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies”* (Nuttal, 1982, p.23). In the same line of thought, Long and Richards (1987) suggest: *“Intensive reading is a detailed in class analysis, led by teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points in a short passage”*. (Long and Richards, 1987, p.125).

Through intensive reading, learners can go through different activities:

- Identify main ideas and details.
- Looking at the order of information.
- Identifying words that connect one idea to another.
- Identifying words that indicate change from one section to another.

(as cited in Davies,1995, p235).

In sum, intensive reading is a means of increasing learners’ knowledge of language features and their control of reading strategies. It is the most typically taught method of teaching the reading skill in the Algerian Secondary Schools as it is the case in the book of Third Year *“New Prospects”*.

Now, let us move to the second type of reading: extensive reading.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading has been defined in various ways by educators and reading specialists. It refers to all the readings that learners do it outside the classroom for leisure and enjoyment without teachers' supervision. It is a lifelong reading habit; it helps students to develop reading fluency. Bamford et al (2002) notes: *"Extensive reading is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in the new language"*. (Bamford, 2002, p.1). In the same line, Carrell and Carson (1997) notes: *"Extensive reading is a rapid reading of large quantities of material or longer reading for general understanding"* (Carrell and Carson, 1997 as cited in Richards, 2002).

Extensive reading is essential for success in acquiring a foreign language because students have the choice to select their own books to read it at their own pace. Through extensive reading, learners can develop their positive attitude toward reading in a foreign language and they gain more vocabulary and grammar knowledge. In addition to this, thanks to extensive reading, learners can improve their writing skill. Grabe (1991) notes: *"Longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills and promote confidence and motivation"* (Grabe,1991,p.396).

As a matter of fact, through Extensive reading learners can go through various activities for example: interview each other about their reading, write a book report or a summary. In this respect, Smith (1985) notes: *"learn to read is by reading"* (Smith, 1985, p.70).

In sum, both intensive and extensive readings are complementary to teach each other and both of them can be beneficial for achieving reading goals at different levels.

TEACHING THE READING SKILL THROUGH THE CBA

The reading skill is considered as the major mean and the essential tool in the process of teaching and learning. It is one of the most significant human skills because it involves so many different elements. It is also one of the most fruitful skills to teach. *"To teach foreign or second language reading well, we need to know as much as possible about how the reading process works and how to integrate that knowledge effectively into our reading pedagogy"*

(Barnett, 1989, p. 1).

Teaching the reading skill through the Competency-Based Approach is not as easy as it seems to be. It makes heavy demands on both teacher and learner because to teach reading means to train the learners to read effectively to get information or meaning from written material with full understanding. Rivas (1999) notes: *"Several factors now influence the selection of reading texts for the EFL classroom a part from read ability other criteria taken into account include authenticity and reader interest"* (Rivas,1999,p.12). Moreover, Eskey (1983) notes: *"The point of the reading course should be reading, not reinforcement of oral skills, not grammatical or discourse analysis and not the acquisition of new vocabulary"*. (Eskey, 1983, p.130).

Moreover, the teaching of the reading skill within the CBA is learner centred rather than teacher centred because teacher places learners in situations that test and check their capacity to overcome obstacles and problems. It is no more monopolized by the teacher and the text context. Learners are made aware of their active participation. They are not only taught to read in order to learn but they are also taught how to read. Learners are no more guided in reading; it is the

teacher's tasks which show them how to cope with different readings. In this respect Widdowson (1983) notes: "A pedagogy that does not involve learner participation is not likely to be as effective as one that does".

(Widdowson, 1983, p. 76).

Thus, teacher's role necessarily changes and varies according to the approach adopted, he as the role of a guide, co-ordinator, an observer and an assessor. *"These changes strengthen teachers' roles making them more varied and more creative. Their status is no longer based on hierarchical authority, but on the quality and importance of their relationship with learners"*

(As cited in Oxford, 1990, p.11).

In sum, the teaching of the reading skill within the CBA might have a positive influence on learners' performance inside and outside the classroom.

PROBLEMS IN TEACHING THE READING SKILL THROUGH THE CBA

Teaching the reading skill within the CBA is seen by most EFL teachers as a very difficult task. It is no more monopolized by the teacher and the text context; it shifts from teacher centered to learner centered. Harmer (2007) notes: "Reading is useful for language acquisition the more they read, the better they get. Reading has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and their writing" (Harmer, 2007, p.99).

Both teachers and learners face several problems. The following lists represent some problems:

- Teachers misunderstanding of the process of shifting from a teacher centered to the new one learner centered.
- Lack of adequate teaching materials.
- Pupils do not read outside of the classroom.
- Pupils' wrong idea about what reading is.
- Selecting appropriate text.
- No reading culture.
- Designing reading task.
- Lack of schema activation.
- Limited time access for an English class.
- Unfamiliar context to the students.

Consequently both teachers and learners need to progressively alter their traditional views about the reading skill. In order to achieve this, the former must adopt and adapt them to the new methodology and the latter must be more attentive to the skill they are learning rather than to the content of what they read. Goodman (1967) notes: "Reading is more than just picking up words, phrases, and sentences written in the text; it is, an activation of the prior knowledge that we already have in our mind. When we read any text, we use our knowledge of the world to understand the text. Reading is, therefore, a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' (Goodman, 1967, as cited in Hedge, 2010).

CHALLENGES OF THE READING SKILL

Learning to read is one of the essential skills for learners. In this vein, Trudell *et al* say:” *Of all the core competencies recognized to contribute to lifelong learning and sustainable development, none is quite as central as the ability to read*”. (Trudell et al, 2012, p.8).

Teaching the reading skill within the CBA is a complex process that draws upon an extensive knowledge base and repertoire of strategies. However, in Algeria, the assessment of teaching this skill faces several difficulties. The changes related to the assessment of teaching the reading skill within the CBA are not only faced by learners but also by some teachers. This means that student’s weak performance in a reading lesson or in reading assessment is reflected by the teachers’ weak performance in teaching the reading skill. This observation implies that there are teachers who are not fully prepared to face the changes involved in the assessment of teaching the reading skill. Indeed, it is difficult for teachers to properly manage reading when they themselves have some difficulties with reading tests.

The following list represents the challenges of teaching the reading skill in the Algerian Secondary Schools:

- *Large and overcrowded classrooms.* The size of the classroom in many secondary schools varies between 35 to 40, The teacher cannot have a full control over the classroom. Unfortunately, the teacher cannot reach his aim to provide his pupils much practice in reading activities. Indeed, overcrowded classes are a problem for teaching the reading skill.
- The students cannot understand the meaning of the reading passage because they try to understand the word meaning rather than the gist.
- The students do not understand the pronunciation of the majority words.
- Unfamiliar context to the students.
- Limited time access for an English class.
- All students cannot read properly.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the competency based approach makes the learners learn by themselves. It is a very effective method of teaching English. It fulfils the learners’ needs and makes them participate in their own learning.

Learning to read in a foreign language within the CBA is a formidable task, involving time and efforts on the part of the pupils and teachers alike. Both have to be aware of the fact that reading requires process and product that are closely related to meaning which can be acquired through silent reading. In short, the reading skill has a great importance within the CBA.

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