Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Morocco

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Morocco:

Perspectives and Aspirations

Edited by

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Cambridge
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Publishing

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FOREWORD

When I was asked to write a foreword to this book, my first impulse was to look back over my own experience of how the ways in which English is viewed, used and taught in Morocco have changed since I first started teaching in a Moroccan university's English department forty years ago. At that time French was very much a second rather than a foreign language in Morocco, still extensively used as a medium of instruction and administration, and still seen as a key to knowledge and success. English was then merely a subject taught in high schools and on fairly academic degree courses, most of whose graduates went on to become teachers themselves. Today, however, English is no longer seen as just a specialist subject for the few, but rather as an essential tool for those working in science, technology, business, tourism and many other fields, as well as a key offering access to all kinds of entertainment and recreation.

The present collection of articles, by a group of dedicated and enthusiastic teachers of English at secondary and tertiary levels, is a reflection of how much things have changed. In the past few years there has been much debate on educational policies which would strengthen the role of English rather than French, for instance by expanding the English courses required for students specializing in other fields, such as science and economics. There has even been discussion of the possibility of adapting the current education system to fit more closely with an Anglophone rather than a Francophone model. The COVID-19 pandemic also caused a huge upheaval in the education system, with the emergency imposition of distance learning and later the recourse to blended instruction involving both face-to-face and online teaching. I am delighted to see these teachers and academics actively contributing to the debate on such issues, drawing on their own recent and ongoing experience in the field. The book offers a timely exploration of current issues and future possibilities, and deserves the attention of policymakers as well as teachers themselves.

Having watched the changing roles of French and English in Morocco over the last four decades, I remain convinced that a decent knowledge of either constitutes a huge asset, and that it would be a shame for one to flourish to the detriment of the other. When I first began teaching here in the early

1980s, students began a degree in English after a bilingual Arabic-French high school education, and their already high proficiency in French was a valuable foundation for their English studies. Many students from very ordinary backgrounds, with no tradition of English studies in the family and no access to private lessons, went on to obtain higher degrees in English and then became leading lights in the English departments of Morocco's universities (which had hitherto been largely staffed by foreigners, many of them non-native speakers of English).

Things have changed since then. With the Arabisation of secondary education and the spread of private schools, high proficiency in French is now more difficult to achieve, except for the privately educated elite or those whose parents are keen Francophones. And now that so many private schools apparently teach English as well as French to much younger pupils, with even kindergartens claiming to provide a "trilingual" education, there is of course a danger that English will also become more and more the domain of the privileged. It is important to combat this tendency towards elitism, and the proposed policies of increasing access to English for students in the public education system may help to do this.

A second huge contrast between today's students of English and those of previous generations relates to the accessibility of materials in English and the opportunities to use English for genuine communication with other Anglophones. Before the days of satellite television, computers and the internet, students' access to English media was mainly restricted to the small selection of books they could borrow from libraries or buy from the rare bookshops that stocked a few works in English. I myself recall struggling to listen to the BBC World Service on a poor-quality short-wave radio, and paying what seemed like exorbitant prices for British newspapers that were at least three days old when they arrived in Moroccan newsagents' shops. Today's students of English have an almost limitless choice of English language television and YouTube channels, podcasts, online study materials and websites on any subject they may be interested in. EFL instructors could do more to exploit this wealth of materials, and to show students how best to choose, use and enjoy the English language media which are literally at their fingertips.

A third contrast with former days concerns the motivations of current students of English. While at one time English may have been seen as a fairly academic subject, of value in itself and for the prestige attached to its mastery, it is now a tool that can be useful to almost any Moroccan, whatever their background or ambitions. Even those with very limited

English seem eager to use it for online communication, and for those who can express themselves reasonably well, it offers by far the most effective platform for exchanging views and ideas with the rest of the world. So many people now see English as a key to greater fame, power or prosperity, whether they are scientific researchers who want to publish their research in English, or social media influencers who can earn much more if they appeal to the vast Anglophone community. ELT policies in Morocco need to take into account this thirst for practical skills in English and harness it in order to achieve better results.

Ultimately, if the education system helps Moroccan students to achieve higher proficiency in English, the benefits will not be confined to the students themselves. Anglophone Moroccans can fulfil important roles as both consumers and communicators. English offers them unrivalled access to information and knowledge, which they can make use of in their own lives, but also pass on to others. And they will be in a better position to promote their own country if they can use English both to present a positive image of Morocco to the outside world, and to welcome and assist visitors inside Morocco.

This is an exciting time for the development of English teaching in Morocco, and the chapters in this volume offer valuable insights into some of the issues currently at stake, including methodology and policy choices. I hope the book will be widely read and that it will contribute to this ongoing debate, for decisions about future reform need to be solidly based, not merely on theory, but also on the experience of teachers on the front line.

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INTRODUCTION

The educational scene has undergone numerous challenges and reforms since the emergent need for learning and interacting with people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The learning outcome has been immensely in line with effective teaching practices and the envisaged goals of learning, which are surrounded by the demands of the era. Hence, there has been a plethora of studies on adult learning theories, sophisticated online platforms, new learning environments and contemporary interaction tools. In this vein, English as a lingua franca (ELF) has rethought effective teaching methods vis-à-vis English as a foreign language (EFL), which in turn paved the ground for the emergence of new teaching concepts and areas (e.g. The flipped classroom (Reidsema et al., 2017); Andragogy (Knowles, 1980; Holton & Swanson & Naquin, 2001); English for Specific purposes (ESP) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2006); Blended Learning (Thorne, 2003; Garrison & Vaughan, 2007); Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Beatty, 2010; Thomas et al., 2012); Online Cooperative Learning (OCL)). In light of the ever-changing needs of EFL learners, who indulge in a complex environment of face-to-face and online learning resources, it is axiomatic that teaching methodology in language education is under constant skepticism.

This edited collection contributes to the literature on EFL in Moroccan education, especially in light of the important position of the English language in higher education. In this respect, the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education has stressed the urgent need to keep abreast of the international policy of tertiary education, and has launched various online platforms for learning English. Therefore, the present book is an academic platform, which gathers issues from different perspectives, say, assessment of and/or for learning, ESP, and research projects. Given the growing interest in EFL in Morocco, reflections on the teaching practices of English, together with quality issues in high school and higher education, remain indispensable.

Mimouni's chapter puts much emphasis on the role of debates as an instructional tool on fostering students' academic skills. Therefore, it sheds light on how Moroccan EFL learners perceive debates as an important dimension of critical thinking. The survey questionnaire of the study

revealed that students strongly support the importance of debates as they pointed out that their level of understanding of the information is better. In addition, the way they evaluate and express opinions is enhanced.

EL Hiani's contribution is an attempt to investigate the extent to which the andragogical model, as an important framework of teaching in higher education, is reflected in the teaching practices of Moroccan university professors. Hence, he adopted the popular andragogical model of Malcom Knowles, which is classified into six major components: the need to know, the learner's self-concept, the prior experience of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn. Overall, the model reflected a good awareness among Moroccan university professors, which was clearly stated through their provision of sufficiently open space for the inclusion of learners in the educational process.

EL Boubekri's contribution targets the new trend of promoting EFL in Moroccan higher education, especially as an important ingredient of the newly adopted reform of the Bachelor system in Morocco. This was approached from the perspective of promoting the blended learning mode that brings together the brilliant use of both online and face-to-face learning methods. To this end, he emphasized the combined use of technology-based instruction and task-based learning as important components of adopting the blended learning mode.

Belbacha's chapter is an analytical study that brings together the two central concepts of translation and communication, especially in the growing globalized world. The chapter is aimed mainly at providing fruitful suggestions vis-à-vis the teaching of communication as an important component of soft skills. In this respect, a number of insights are provided based on the course of teaching translation from English to Arabic with the skills of analysing the context of the text, reading comprehension, dividing the text into segments and the final production. Belbacha concludes that both translation and communication go hand in hand in terms of their development and interdependence.

The study by EL Bguir and Trimasse investigates the relationship between the big-five personality traits, namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness, and the language learning strategies of Moroccan EFL learners. This empirical study has revealed important results and emphasized that agreeableness, openness, and neuroticism are the most used learning strategies among learners. On the basis of this, a number of educational implications are drawn.

Wahib's chapter describes the important role of phonological awareness in enhancing students' structuring of the sounds of speech. The rationale behind choosing the present topic lies in the frequent difficulties that some students face in reading ability, especially in the early stages. To this end, the chapter purports to investigate the correlation between learners' phonological awareness and their learning abilities. The results of the test designed reveals that the relationship is missing between phonological awareness and performance in EFL reading. However, it is noticed that a strong relationship exists between the letter-sound knowledge and the reading ability of EFL learners. The chapter stresses the importance of investing effort in providing students with activities that enhance their ELF letter-sound knowledge.

The focal point of Omarakly's chapter revolves around the communicative dimension in the Moroccan EFL curricula. He stresses the importance and value of providing EFL high school students with communicative activities, which frame communicative language teaching (CLT). Hence, Richard's (2006) classification of communicative activities (mechanical, meaningful and communicative practice) is adopted. The mixed-method analysis of the study, by and large, reveals the deficiencies that still hinder the ultimate goal of developing communicative activities. Discrepancies are found in the three targeted textbooks: *Outlook, Window on the World*, and *Visa to the World* at the level of keeping a good balance between the traditional-based activities and the communicative ones.

The contribution of Aakharraz and Chraa sheds a great amount of light on the place of project-based learning in Moroccan secondary schools, using the directorate of Taroudant as a case study. The study reveals that the majority of teachers incorporate PjBL, which immensely impacts their teaching practices. Yet, a number of challenges are stressed as a hindrance to integrating PjBL, which, in turn, affects the instructors, students, textbooks, and administration. As is the case with the other contributions, the study suggests a number of pedagogical implications.

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EFL Students' Perceptions of Using Debates as an Instructional Tool to Enhance Critical Thinking

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine EFL students' perceptions of the use of classroom debates as an instructional tool to enhance critical thinking. A total of 26 MA students at Cadi Ayad University (Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences) participated in this study. Educational debates were used in the "Methodology of Teaching" course to engage students and encourage critical thinking. During the semester, the students in small groups debated the effectiveness of various teaching methods and approaches. At the end of the semester, the students were surveyed for their perceptions of the effect of the debates on their critical thinking skills. The findings showed that students reported positive perceptions of using debates as a tool to enhance their critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Critical thinking skills, academic debates, students' perceptions, higher education

1. Introduction

Graduates of higher education should possess the skills that ease access to jobs and guarantee integration in the growth of the community. Among the skills that are highly required today are critical thinking skills. Today, there is a growing demand for employees with advanced critical thinking skills (Zare & Othman, 2015). Critical thinking not only promotes professional behaviours in the workplace but also leads to scientific progress and promotes democracy in society (Aveyard, Helen, Sharp, Pam, Woolliams, 2011; Lau, 2011). Promoting critical thinking skills is, therefore, a top priority for higher education. Critical thinking can be approached from two

different dimensions in education (Bahr, 2010). The first dimension captures critical thinking as a standalone course that requires direct teaching and methodologies, and the other suggests that critical thinking skills are interdisciplinary and can be nourished through learning activities that are based on questioning and argumentation skills. One of the main instructional tools, for instance, to encourage questioning and argumentation and accordingly enhance students' critical thinking skills, according to the second dimension, is using in-class debates. Research has shown that the use of debates as a pedagogical tool has profound effects on promoting critical thinking skills (Scott, 2008; Zare & Othman, 2015). In the present study, debates were incorporated into the Methodology of Teaching course to get students to think critically about the various methods and approaches of teaching to which they are exposed. The main goal of this study was to examine, from students' perspective, the use of debating as a tool to enhance critical thinking in the Moroccan context.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is not a new concept in education. The term "critical thinking" is derived from the Greek word "kritic", the art of judgement, which described Socrates' approach to learning over 2,000 years ago. Today, as content knowledge has become easily accessible thanks to technology, the demands for critical-reflective skills in education have grown more than ever before. The top priority for education today is to teach students how to reflect on and react to the loads of information they receive every day.

Critical thinking started to gain more importance in the modern world with John Dewey, the father of critical thinking traditions (Fisher, 2001). Dewey used the term reflective thinking to refer to critical thinking and defined it as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933). Based on Dewey's definition, more definitions have since been developed in order to describe critical thinking for the classroom. Freeley and Steinberg (2008), for instance, summarized critical thinking in the ability to analyse, criticize, and advocate ideas; to reason inductively and deductively; and to reach factual or judgemental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief. Lau (2011) simplified

critical thinking into thinking precisely and systematically following the rules of logic and scientific reasoning. According to Aveyard, et al., critical thinking is about taking a step back and adopting a questioning approach and thoughtful attitude to what you read, see and hear, rather than accepting thinking at face value.

It has also been noted that the absence of agreement among a number of scholars about what exactly constitutes critical thinking has affected learning and assessment of critical thinking skills in education (Bahr, 2010; Bissell & Lemons, 2006; Stassen, Herrington, & Henderson, 2011). Therefore, there was a call for more systematic ways of depicting critical thinking skills. Bloom's taxonomy (1956) of the cognitive domain has been considered as one of the most effective ways to categorize critical thinking for the classroom (Bissell & Lemons, 2006; Scott, 2008; Sousa, 2011). The taxonomy consists of six categories arranged in a hierarchical order starting from the lowest or simplest levels to the highest or more complex levels (Bloom, Englehard, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). The lowest levels of thinking are knowledge, comprehension and application. The most complex or highest levels of thinking are application, synthesis and evaluation. Each of these categories contains a set of sub-categories except for the category of application. Although critical thinking occurs through all levels of the taxonomy (remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create), it is believed that the top three levels (analyse, evaluate and create) demand more critical thinking (Sousa, 2011). The taxonomy has been criticized for its cumulative hierarchy. Hence, a revised version of the taxonomy has been devised to cover the anomalies of the original one and to respond to the latest developments in education and psychology (Anderson et al., 2001; Wilson, 2016). Among the breakthroughs of the revised version are splitting the taxonomy into two distinct dimensions (cognitive dimension and knowledge dimension) and loosening the cumulative hierarchy of the cognitive dimension. As a result, moving from one cognitive level to another in the revised taxonomy does not necessitate the completion of the previous one. Other changes in the cognitive levels are using action verbs to describe the categories instead of nouns and reversing the order of the two highest categories (Figure 1).
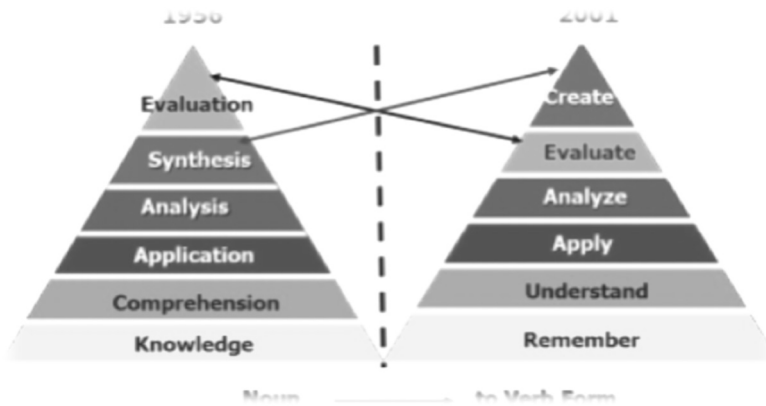
Figure 1. The difference between with the original taxonomy and the cognitive dimension in the revised taxonomy (Wilson, 2016)

In this chapter, the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy is used as a framework to categorize and define critical thinking skills. Although critical thinking occurs through all levels of the taxonomy (remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create), it is believed that the top three levels, analyse, evaluate and create, demand more critical thinking (Sousa, 2011).

2.1. Debate

Debate is the process of presenting arguments by one or more individuals for or against a controversial proposition. Every debater is an advocate who tries to present logical arguments to get the belief of the audience on their side (Huber & Snider, 2005). Debate can be classified into two broad categories, applied debate and educational debate (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008). These two types differ in terms of the debaters' interest in the topics and the audience or jury's power. Applied debate requires advocates with special interest in the propositions and topics and, in Freeley and Steinberg's words, this "is presented before an audience or jury with the power to render binding decision on the proposition or respond to the questions or the topic in a real way" (2008, p. 2). By contrast, educational or academic debate involves advocates with academic interest and is typically delivered before a teacher, judge or audience with no direct power to render a decision on the proposition. The current study focuses on academic debate and the educational opportunities it provides for students to enhance their critical thinking skills.

2.2. Debating and Critical Thinking

As noted previously, the literature has praised debating as being an effective tool to encourage students to develop many sub-skills which enhance critical thinking. This section lists some of the benefits of classroom debates on students' critical thinking skills and discusses some related studies that have measured the effect of debates on students' critical thinking from student perspectives.

Research on debates has highlighted different effects of debate on critical thinking skills. Debating an issue requires deep knowledge about it. In the quest to gain depth in knowledge, students are encouraged to consider the issue under debate from different perspectives. Therefore, one of the benefits of educational debate is encouraging students to search for and gather information from different sources and widen their perspectives about the issue under debate (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008; Lilly, 2012). In addition, debate encourages active listening among students and provides them with the opportunity to investigate, analyse, reflect on, evaluate and question the relevant literature behind the proposition under debate (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008; Lau, 2011). While debating, students take frequent questions from their opponents and from the audience, and they must respond meaningfully within a limited period. This constraint is believed to develop students' ability to respond promptly and analytically (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008). Debate also enhances reasoning and argumentation skills (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008). Finally, debate encourages students to make mature judgements. Students learn the value of delaying their judgements until they have amassed and analysed an adequate amount of evidence (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008).

Measuring the effect of classroom debates on enhancing critical thinking has been a critical subject in the literature. One way in which this effect has been measured is through examining student perceptions. In investigating the impact of debating on critical thinking skills in ESL classrooms, Zare and Othman (2015) examined the perceptions of 16 undergraduate students. The latter took part in debates for nine sessions throughout one whole semester and were surveyed at the end to elicit their perceptions about the effect of debating on their critical thinking. The findings of the study revealed that students believed that debates had helped to improve their critical thinking. In another similar study, Scott (2008) investigated student perceptions of the debate process used to increase critical thinking in a technology classroom. In the fall and spring of 2005-2006, 111 students performed one debate during the semester in which they participated in the

course. At the end, the participants were surveyed by a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The study reported that students thought that the debates increased their critical thinking skills. One criticism against this way of eliciting student perceptions is that it is general and might confuse students due to the complexity and broadness of the term "critical thinking" (Zare & Othman, 2015). In their study, Zare and Othman tried to eliminate this issue by developing a survey questionnaire based on the literature review of classroom debate and critical thinking elements. In the present study, Bloom's revised taxonomy is used as a framework to define critical thinking. Therefore, the items of the survey questionnaire used in this study to elicit student perceptions on using debates to enhance their critical thinking skills are built on the levels of the cognitive dimension of the taxonomy.

3. Methodology

3.1. The participants and Procedure

The participants of the present study were 26 students enrolled onto the Linguistics and Advanced English Studies master's program at Cadi Ayad University in Marrakesh. 34% of the participants were females, and 66% were males, and all ranged in age between 20 and 30. The participants took part in debates during a semester, either as debaters or as an audience. In the present study, the terms participants, respondents, and students are used interchangeably to refer to students who took part in the study.

Before they were divided into teams of 3, students had attended a workshop about the tactics, format and process of educational debate. The workshop ended with a demo debate. Then, students were divided into teams of 3. Each set of two teams was given an assignment to prepare for a debate on a method of teaching. Students took part in five different debates on five methods of teaching (the direct method, audio-lingual method, silent way, suggestopedia and total physical response). Each debate took place during a two-hour session. The classroom seats were rearranged; the debaters were placed before the audience, and the professor's desk was moved aside. The professor initiated every debate by introducing the debaters and giving a short introduction about the method of teaching under debate. The professor also took part in managing the time and directing the debate. All of the debates followed the format below (Figure 2).

Pro Team	Opening statement	5 min
Con Team	Opening statement	5 min
Pro Team	Two arguments in favor of the method	10 min
Con Team	Rebuttal	5 min
Pro Team	Response	5 min
Con Team	Two arguments against the method	10 min
Pro Team	Rebuttal:	5 min
Con Team	Response	5 min
Audience & both teams	Audience Teams: response	10 min
Pro Team	Closing statement	2 min
Con Team	Closing statement	2 min

Figure 2. Debate Format

3.2. Data Collection

By the end of the study, the participants were surveyed for their perceptions of debates as a tool to enhance critical thinking.

3.3. Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 11 items with a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree 1 to Strongly Agree 5). The items were developed based on action verbs that belong to different levels of the revised version of Bloom's taxonomy. Accordingly, items (1) and (2) fall under the level of "remember", items (3) and (4) fall under "understand", item (5) falls under "apply", items (6) and (7) fall under "analyse", items (8) and (9) fall under "evaluate", and items (10) and (11) fall under "create" (Figure 3). Bloom's revised taxonomy provides a definition of critical thinking, and a framework for the participants to respond to the items, and for the researcher to analyse the responses. Although critical thinking occurs through all the levels of the taxonomy, the top three levels (analyse, evaluate and create) require more critical thinking (Sousa, 2011). To avoid confusion, the levels of Bloom's revised taxonomy were not displayed to the respondents. Therefore, the

questionnaire distributed to the participants only contained items with the
Likert scale (Strongly Disagree 1 to Strongly Agree 5).

Remember	1. Thanks to the debates, I can define the teaching methods and approaches debated .
	2. Thanks to the debates, I can remember the main principles and techniques of the debated teaching methods and approaches
Understand	3. The debates helped me to discuss the theoretical assumptions underlying the debated teaching methods and approaches
	4. The debates helped me to understand different teaching methods and approaches
Apply	5. The debates helped me link the theoretical assumptions of the methods and approaches of teaching to their teaching practices
Analyse	6. The debates helped me to analyze different methods and approaches of teaching
	7. The debates helped me to compare different methods and approaches of teaching
Evaluate	8. The debates helped me to ask appropriate questions about the practicality of different methods or approach
	9. The debates helped me to define the pros and cons of each teaching method or approach
Create	10. The debates helped me develop a reasoned point of view of the methods of teaching we debated
	11. The debates encouraged me to form clear and coherent arguments

Figure 3. The items of the survey questionnaire according to the levels of Bloom's
revised taxonomy

4. Results And Discussion

The survey questionnaire consisted of 11 items with a Likert scale (Strongly
Disagree 1 to Strongly Agree 5). The items of the survey fall under different
levels of the cognitive dimension of Bloom's revised taxonomy (Figure 3).
Figure 4 provides the mean scores of students' responses according to all
levels of the taxonomy.

Create	4.12
Evaluate	4.25
Analyze	3.81
Apply	3.62
Understand	4.06
Remember	4.17

Figure 4. The mean scores of students' responses according to the levels of Bloom's revised taxonomy

As mentioned earlier, critical thinking occurs through all the levels of the taxonomy, yet the three top levels (analyse, evaluate and create) are believed to require more critical thinking. According to the whole mean score of students' responses to the survey questionnaire (m=4), students believed that debates helped them to enhance their critical thinking. More precisely, the results revealed that students thought that debates helped them to remember information about the methods and approaches of teaching they debated (m=4.17). Students also believed that debates facilitated their understanding (m=4.06). The results also showed that students were somewhat undecided as to whether debates helped them to apply the theoretical assumptions of each method of teaching to its teaching practices (m=3.62). Concerning the top levels of the taxonomy, the respondents demonstrated a positive perception of debates in enhancing the two top levels (evaluate and create). Specifically, the respondents believed that debates helped them to evaluate the methods and approaches of teaching they debated (m=4.25). The respondents also reported that debates helped them to create reasoned points of view and arguments about the methods and approaches of teaching they debated (m=4.12). However, the respondents were undecided to some extent about whether debates helped them to analyse and compare the methods and approaches of teaching they debated (m=3.81).

Overall, the participants believed that debates helped them to enhance their critical thinking skills. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies that examined students' perceptions of learning critical thinking through debates (Scott, 2008; Zare & Othman, 2015). However, the use of Bloom's revised taxonomy in the present study as a framework to develop the survey items revealed very interesting data about which cognitive levels are more activated by debates from the students' perspective. It is very significant that students reported that debates helped them to evaluate and create arguments. This supports the idea that debate enhances reasoning and argumentation (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008). The participants' positive perception of the effect of debates on their ability to remember and understand information supports what the literature has reported about the potential effect of debates on widening students' knowledge of the issue under debate (Freeley & Steinberg, 2008). It is also worth noting that the participants in this study are to some extent undecided as to whether debates enhanced their ability to apply and analyse. This might be due to the nature of the topics of debates which were methods and approaches of teaching. The topics of debates can indeed affect students' motivation and perception as reported by other previous studies (Zare & Othman, 2015). Therefore, more future research using Bloom's revised taxonomy as a framework should be devised in order to examine students' perception of debates on different topics and in different contexts.

5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to evaluate the use of debates as a tool to enhance critical thinking in the Moroccan context from EFL students' perspectives. Critical thinking was defined and approached in this study using Bloom's revised taxonomy. The findings of the study revealed that students demonstrated positive perceptions about debates as a tool to enhance their critical thinking. More specifically, the respondents believed that debates helped them to remember and understand information and evaluate and create opinions and arguments. Nevertheless, the respondents were undecided as to whether debates helped them to apply and analyse. The topics of debates in this study were methods and approaches of teaching. As noted by other previous studies, the topics of debates can affect students' motivation and perception (Zare & Othman, 2015). Therefore, future research should target students in other disciplines and assign debates on different topics.

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Teaching Methodology in Higher Education: What Prospects for Applying the Andragogical Model?

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Abstract

Teacher education has always been a major concern in the language policy of higher education. Part and parcel of this policy is teaching methodology in tertiary education, surrounded by a great awareness of adult learning theories (e.g., Holton, Swanson & Naquin, 2001; Merriam, 2001). Therefore, the objectives of the present study are two-fold. First, it investigates the extent to which Moroccan university professors reflect the andragogical model in their teaching process. Second, it examines how Moroccan university professors involve students in their teaching process, including the different stages of preparation, teaching and assessment. The two objectives are brought to the surface based on the components of Knowles' andragogical model. The study included 52 Moroccan university professors from the department of English from different Moroccan faculties. Questionnaires and interviews were used as the major data collection instruments. The results obtained revealed that Moroccan university professors are aware of the importance of involving learners in the different stages of teaching. Many professors argued that project-based learning and flipped teaching are important for adult learners and autonomous learning. Finally, the study provides a number of implications for university professors and learners.

Keywords: Andragogy, adult learning, tertiary education, multicultural classes

Introduction

Today's huge expansion of higher education institutions has motivated a number of researchers around the world to question the efficiency of teaching adults in higher education, taking into account the psychological characteristics of adults. This interest is driven by the need to adopt effective teaching approaches and practices to equip adult learners with lifelong learning skills (Jarvis, 2004). Over the last few decades, Knowles' notion of "Andragogy"[1] has been an influential reference for many researchers to investigate teaching methodology in higher education and the inclusion of learners in the teaching process (e.g., Howard, 1993; Holton, Wilson and Bates, 2009; Chan, 2010). By the same token, the present study attempts to examine the harmony existing between the teaching methodologies of Moroccan university professors and the dimensions of the andragogical model.

As a result, the study at hand is divided into four main sections. The first section sheds light on the theoretical framework of the study, stressing the principles of Knowles' model of andragogy. The second section describes the research methodology, including the participants, data collection instrument and analysis. The third section describes the results obtained regarding the participants' thoughts and ideas about adult learning. The fourth section is concerned with a general discussion of the findings and some implications for teaching in higher education.

1. Literature Review

Throughout history, the emergence of language theories and assumptions has been geared towards the ultimate goal of maximizing the learning outcome. In the first half of the twentieth century, much emphasis was placed on ways of transmitting knowledge from teachers to learners. However, since the beginnings of the second half of the twentieth century, theories of learners' centredness have sparked a rethink of new ways of autonomous learning such as project-based learning. This shift from learners' dependency to self-directness is the major premise that characterized Malcom Knowles' (1980) concept of andragogy.

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[1] It was first used by Malcolm Knowles to distinguish between teaching young learners, i.e., "pedagogy" and teaching adult learners, i.e., "andragogy".

The concept of andragogy was used to draw a borderline between the learning characteristics of young learners, including all psycho-social factors, and their counterparts of adult learners. Andragogy is then defined by Knowles as "the Art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children" (p. 43). This definition revolves around the idea of valuing the particularities of adults' learning strategies, which go beyond the mere acknowledgement of their effort. In this respect, Fenwick and Tennant (2004) stress that even theories of adult learning may not work efficiently for all learning-and-teaching environments in that learners' economic, social and psychological backgrounds differ from one context to another. Raising awareness of the needs of the adults, therefore, has been at the core of interests of a number researchers and educators for the sake of increasing adult learners' productivity in meaningful learning environments.

The model suggested by Knowles (1980) sheds light on six major assumptions. The first assumption is *the need to know* as adult learners need to be aware of the importance of any subject or module in the program. This assumption underlies the level of maturity among adults and their own responsibility for learning. For instance, if "grammar" is included in a given program, the professor needs to highlight its importance for students and how it fits into the whole program. The second assumption is *the learner's self-concept* which presupposes that adults are able to build their own responsibility. Learners then are seen as self-directed as they start moving from being dependent learners to independent individuals who direct their own learning. The third assumption is *prior experience of the learner* which takes into account the life and learning experiences that learners have accumulated. The fourth assumption is *readiness to learn* which gives much importance to the roles that learners can play in society, to which they can, therefore, attach their learning. The fifth assumption is *orientation to learning* which focuses on life-centred and problem-solving tasks instead of subject-centred orientation. The last assumption is *motivation to learn* which suggests that adults, as they grow, are motivated by internal factors (e.g., self-esteem, satisfaction…) more than external ones (getting promotions, higher salaries…).

Furthermore, the development of some ELT branches, including EAP[2] and ESP,[3] has contributed to the growing interest in adult learning. In this vein, there are various overlapping points between andragogy, and its assumptions, and ESP. First, both andragogy and ESP are oriented towards adult learning needs and the psychological factors that facilitate learning for adults. Second, while learners are actively involved in choosing materials, and negotiating evaluation forms and content in the andragogical model, they take part in designing ESP courses through participatory needs analysis[4] given that learners express their thoughts about their subjective needs and methods of learning (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2006). Third, the andragogical model stresses the importance of taking account of students' prior experience in the subject matter when designing the envisaged course. Similarly, needs analysis in ESP seeks to build an initial profile of students for the sake of identifying learners' linguistic deficiencies. This is known in needs analysis as *present situation analysis*. All in all, both trends put the learner at the heart of the teaching-learning process and reconsider the traditional orientations where the learner was passively involved in the course design.

In short, the increasing emergence of higher institutions as well as the increasing number of university students have pushed a number of researchers, practitioners and university professors to reconsider effective ways to teach adults, taking into account their special needs and psychological factors. Hence, andragogy was a point of reference for many researchers to investigate the harmony between content and teaching practices, on the one hand, and students' involvement and interest in the course, on the other hand.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

For the sake of gathering data on ways of reflecting the andragogical model in teaching, a total of 52 university professors took part in the present study.

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[2] English for Academic Purposes: this is a branch of ELT which focuses on developing learners' academic skills such as writing and vocabulary.
[3] English for Specific Purposes: this is an approach to teaching English which focuses on developing learners' communicative competence in a particular scientific or academic area, e.g., English for engineering, English for science and technology.
[4] Participatory needs analysis is an approach to needs analysis that involves students in negotiating their preferred methods and materials used in the course.