

The Implementation of the CBLT in Algeria: from Euphoria to Bitter Criticism

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Abstract:

This article explores the gap which exists between the spirit, principles and objectives of the Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching (henceforth, CBLT) and its implementation in the Algerian educational context. The euphoria that prevailed in Algeria around the CBLT and the Educational Reform led, later on, to bitter criticism on its official implementation and its actual application and practices. Some observations are made on how this approach has been implemented since September 2003. These are based on issues related to what has been done for the CBLT at the institutional level and what the reality is at school. Classroom observation and practices and outside school behaviours of both pupils and teachers are indicative of the distancing between institutional decisions and field realism. Some factors related to the socio-educational environment in which this approach was introduced are examined and discussed. The article raises the question on the hiatus between myth, reality and challenges concerning the issue on the CBLT in Algeria.

Key words: Algeria, competencies, education, foreign languages, teacher-training

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of an ‘abrupt’ shift in the teaching and learning attitudes, methods, materials and behaviours that prevailed prior to 2003 towards the CBLT which was instituted in the Algerian educational system since the school year of 2003-2004. The issues raised here relate to some decision making actions that were taken then by means of ministerial instructions for a shift from the Communicative Approach to the Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching. Needless to mention here that at school, all the other subject matters (Music, Sports, Arithmetic, etc.) are taught under the Competency Based Approach (CBA). This sudden transition did not actually prospect in detail the socio-educational and cultural environment in which this approach was initially carried out. The effect and affect of this change on the teachers’ and the learners’ attitudes and motivations are discussed in the light of the use of the new pedagogies (CBLT) in actual classroom situations. In fact, neither the teachers nor the pupils had been prepared in advance for the move towards the CBLT. They remained, so to speak, unfamiliar or alien to this mode of teaching and learning, not to say, resistant to change. Most of them preferred to stick to their usual teaching/learning behavioursⁱ. Instead of proceeding upstream to an evaluation in terms of the teachers’ and the pupils’ entry and exit profiles before injecting the CBLT into the educational system, decision makers limited themselves to top-down instructions as to how this approach had to be carried out. This situation triggered off divergences in the educational arena in Algeria. For example, the logistics put in place for the CBLT in Algeria in September 2003 included new textbooks at primary school for the teaching of Englishⁱⁱ and the teacher’s booklet with guidelines on his new ‘role’ and on how to lead the learner to think and act in order to work out a project in the form of collaborative learning. Some seminars for a better understanding of the CBLT prospects and perspectives were organised in some parts of the country. At the same time, a number of ministerial instructions on the CBLT which spelt out the objectives and the didactic orientations and dimensions of this approach in the Algerian context were sent to the school administration for dispatching among the teachers and staff. Some of these instructions included the targeted socio-educational, cognitive and socio-constructive purposes that were aimed at by implementing the CBLT in Algeria. The message was sometimes vaguely grasped by those teachers who were not acquainted with the new terminology (competency, know-how-to-do, know-how-to-act, know-how-to-be, project pedagogy, collaborative learning, cognitive capacities, socio-constructive behaviours, etc.). Although the new pedagogy stood as a challenge to all actors of education in its broadest sense (decision makers, teachers, learners and even parents) for a more adequate teaching of foreign languages in Algeria, teachers and learners in particular seemed rather anxious of these changes in the programs for which they had neither been properly and adequately informed nor prepared. Moreover, the monitoring in situ of the accomplishment of the CBLT appeared more complex than expected and planned by high level decision makers. Two determining factors for the success or failure of the CBLT project in Algeria remained beyond their control. There still exist *centrifuge forces* primarily composed of female and young teachers who more or less accepted these changes. On the opposite, we have a strong presence of *centipede forces* which resist in one way or another to changes in the programs, changes in classroom activities and practices, etc. One possible reason for this is that the decision for the implementation of this approach was made at the institutional level with no consideration of the first users who are the teachers and the learners in the first place. The hectically organised seminars on the CBLT in some schools across the country did not actually come out with indicators for an adequate implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. The objective

was to inform on paper the teachers and inspectors on the relevance of the CBLT in Algeria. More than a decade after its implementation, the euphoria around the CBLT and the excitement of its advocates gave rise to bitter criticism by teachers, learners, the Press and parents in particular. A dilemma is installed nowadays concerning the implementation of new teaching programmes based on the CBLT in Algeria. The prime objective of the CBLT was to shape and prepare the ‘new citizen’ⁱⁱⁱ through training on meta-linguistic activities like the ‘know-how-to-do’, ‘know-how-to-act’ and ‘know-how-to-be’ in front of a task or in new situations and contexts. This objective seems to turn nowadays into a source of tensions and even divergences between decision makers, inspectors, teachers, pupils and parents. It reflects in fact the gap which exists between myth and reality in the implementation of this approach in Algeria.

I. The place of foreign languages in Algeria: an overview

The 1970’s represent an era where the state economy did not stimulate a particular interest for foreign languages in Algeria. The main concern then was to launch a national language policy for the general use of the Arabic language (اللغة العربية) in all sectors, starting with the primary school level. That was known as the ‘*Arabisation Policy*’ of the 1970’s. Foreign languages were more confined to university studies with degrees such as a ‘BA in French’, a ‘BA in English’, a ‘BA in Spanish’, a ‘BA in Russian’ and less frequently a ‘BA in German’. These degrees were primarily obtained for the teaching of foreign languages at secondary school^{iv} level and they were studied at the universities of Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Annaba, the largest cities in Algeria. 60% of the teaching staff was composed of Nationals while 40% were Expatriates^v. The teaching methods were the Direct and the Indirect Methods. The BA syllabi in Foreign Languages were all set by the MESRS^{vi} and sent to all the universities in the country.

The 1980’s were symptomatic of a shift towards an openness policy and a market economy turning towards the West (Europe in particular)^{vii}. Some internal political and institutional changes had been brought up together with exchanges at all levels and sectors of the Algerian economy. Algeria started to become an affluent and a consumer society with a significant mobility of the Algerians towards Europe in particular. This was one of the main factors, during this decade that triggered off an increasing demand for foreign languages (French, English and Spanish in particular). At the same time, there was a massive wave (1982-1986) of university teaching staff that was granted Algerian scholarships for further studies particularly in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. The teaching methods were based on objective oriented pedagogy and the communicative approach. The teaching materials and textbooks were prepared by the Direction de l’Enseignement Fondamental (DEF), the Commission National des Programmes (CNP), the Institut National de Recherche en Education (INRE) and by the Comité Pédagogique National, MESRS (CPN)^{viii}.

The 1990’s witnessed a wave of violence and uncertainty in Algeria. The resulting hectic situation and the subsequent trouble in the country caused a sudden fall in the teaching of foreign languages in general and French in particular. The CCF (known today as the French Institute, for French), the British Council (for English), the Cervantes Institute (for Spanish) or the Goethe Institute (for German) as well as other foreign cultural and educational centres based in the main cities and in the Capital Algiers, had to close following the massive departure of expatriates who fled the country for safety reasons. Cultural exchanges dropped drastically with a total absence of foreign and French newspapers, magazines, films, etc. This was coupled with a substantial decrease in bilateral co-operation with the CEIL (Centre d’Enseignement Intensif des Langues)^{ix}. The teaching personnel for foreign languages was drastically reduced as many nationals had to

flee abroad for safety. Those who were sent for post-graduate studies abroad following the ambitious training program of the 1980's (see above) did not return to Algeria. They represented about 30% of the National University Teaching Staff. The expatriates (teachers and / or students) at university had all left the country. The Algerian university was thus 'depleted' of its human resources: teachers and students and more particularly the female teachers and students. Teaching was conducted by patching up with the local staff available on the spot. It was often done by some Magister students and 4th year BA students when the permanent teachers had heavy teaching loads. A specificity of the 1990's at university was clear repeated absences which characterized the departments of foreign languages. Students - the female students in particular - had to leave the departments of foreign languages and the more so the department of French to register in departments where studies were followed in Arabic as the case was for the departments of Arabic Language and Literature, History, Geography, Islamic Studies, etc. There was also a student rush towards computing and data processing departments for those who had the required qualifications for registration in these departments.

The years 2000 represent a reopening to the outside world. The tarnished and torn image of Algeria of the dark decade was slowly fading away and the country regained progressively its place in the international sphere. The teaching and the use of foreign languages were encouraged at the institutional level. French regained its place of pride in the linguistic landscape of Algeria^x. An AFP^{xi} despatch at that time illustrated this revival for the teaching of French in Algeria.

Sous le titre, "le français reprend des couleurs en Algérie", l'article fait état de la reprise de vigueur officielle de la pratique et de l'enseignement du français en Algérie. (Samedi 10 juin, 2000)

Roughly translated as:

Under the title, "French retakes colours in Algeria", the article reports on the vigorous and official revival of the practice and the teaching of French in Algeria. (Saturday June 10th, 2000)

This reopening and revival after a dark decade triggered off the need for foreign languages not only in the economic sector but also in Education and FLT. The general view in this vein was that FLT would give the Algerian pupil the opportunity to better understand the "Other" (i.e., what is foreign, the foreign culture and the foreigner) and to know more on different cultures and civilizations for his own cognitive and socio-constructive development. The implementation of the CBLT was supposed to achieve these socio-educational goals and to meet the learners' needs in terms of citizenship, vocational and life competencies.

In practice, this political and economic endeavour encouraged the emergence of new projects for university training in foreign languages with an institutional and financial reinforcement of the former CEIL centres across the country. 'Doctoral Schools' were established on the basis of academic and scientific exchanges with France in particular to help in the teaching, co-supervising and training of post-graduate students and encourage a North/South scholar exchanges and mobility. This was followed by the establishment of research and cultural poles such as the AUF Campus or the American Corner for access to research facilities like books, journals, magazines and online reference sources in foreign languages. The co-operation also developed with European consortia such as Erasmus-Mundus, PAU, AUF, Averroes, Tempus, etc. Research laboratories were endorsed by the MESRS from 2000 onwards to

stimulate national research and serve the various sectors of the national economy. Partnerships were signed between some of these laboratories and foreign research laboratories; French research laboratories in particular.

The new orientations also included the institution of specialized committees known as the GSD (Groupe de Spécialité par Discipline)^{xii} to put into practice the orientations concerning the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. The GSD developed school programs based on the CBLT in subject matters such as Arabic, French, English, Arithmetic, Civic Education, Music and Sports etc. The new CBLT textbooks were distributed in September 2003 to schools for use in replacement of the former textbooks. Thus, a new approach on the didactics of foreign languages was introduced in the classroom implying and involving new classroom practices, new teaching materials and behaviours, new tools and a new vision of teaching/learning. The main purpose was to install competencies in the learner and help him develop his own autonomy and critical thinking. He had to produce with his peers projects to present in class. Evaluation and assessment had thus become formative rather than the summative evaluation the learners were used to prior to September 2003. Needless to say that this top-to-bottom action had taken teachers and learners aback!

II. Teaching under the CBLT Algeria

On paper, the prime objective in teaching foreign languages to the Algerian pupil is communicative in essence. He is supposed to be taught how to acquire ‘targeted’ competencies and to stimulate his cognitive development so that he can react in an adequate way to real situations with verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction. The second objective is cultural. The programs and the textbooks that were dispatched for use in the primary and the secondary levels are based on a socio-constructive approach. They aim at making the learner discover other cultures which may be different from his own and develop in him the notion of tolerance and acceptance of the difference together with a critical thinking and a creative mind. The third objective, according to the programs worked out by the Ministry for National Education and its application in the textbooks, is functional. The training and the acquisition of foreign languages based on the CBLT give access to science, technology and arts. These objectives are clearly expressed through the ministerial instructions and the programs for the development of textbooks based on the CBLT. What should be noticed, however, is a huge breach and obvious contradictions between the objectives as spelt out in the documents and the reality on the ground in its various shades and shapes be it at school and outside the school.

Field observation

Classroom observation and practices as much as outside school behaviour unveil the presence of cracks, breaks and distancing with the objectives of the CBLT in Algeria as expounded in the official documents. Such gaps between the official orientations and real classroom settings and contexts lead inevitably to a profound lack of motivation on the part of the learner who develops an increasing apprehension in front of the changes and new learning practices. Three types of ruptures can be observed. The first one dates back to the late 60’s and early 70’s. It is social and it is manifest in the disproportion and the imbalance between the socialisation process and pre-school behaviour on the one hand and the school environment on the other hand. The child’s first year at school does not prepare him to a smooth transition from his mother tongue^{xiii} to the school tongue (Modern Standard Arabic or Literary Arabic in

general). Some kitten gardens may offer this opportunity but not all the children go to kitten gardens where parents have to pay. These ruptures have already been mentioned on several occasions and suggestions were made for a smooth, consensual and more flexible transition from the family language to the school language. The fact remains that the child's language acquisition and use is not taken into consideration when he first starts his school life. This can be used as a basis for the development of programs and textbooks so that the child can find references and landmarks with his pre-school life and establish a link between home and the school. A point in case would be that of introducing colour adjectives in class. The vocabulary of the colour terms in dialectal Arabic is quasi similar to that of the language of the school. So, while the child comes to school with very productive structures of the CCVC / CVCC types such as {zrag} to express the blue colour in dialectal Arabic, he is 'instructed' to use a CVCCVC, i.e., {azraq} 'blue' (masc. sing.) at school. Compared to the school form, the dialectal form undergoes in fact a haplology process where the first \$CV\$ syllable is dropped and the phonic resonance of some sounds may vary slightly as for [g] and [q] in this case for dialectal Arabic and school Arabic respectively^{xiv}. Classroom observation clearly reveals that the pupil is 'blackjacked' by the teacher and the 'coercive' pedagogy he has been trained (or instructed) to use in class. However, as soon as the pupil leaves the school context, he switches back to the form and the pronunciation of his local variety or native language. On the cognitive and socio-constructive plane, the pupil develops the feeling that the school tries to erase or obliterate his assets, his lexical repertoire and his identity and landmarks. This abrupt and coercive transition to the language of the school is regarded sometimes as 'foreign' to his social and family environment^{xv}. The same coercive pedagogy is applied in the teaching of foreign languages at primary school, the middle school, the secondary school and even at university. When he enters school, the pupil comes with a linguistic repertoire and a cognitive baggage which can be used to the greatest possible advantage to make him discover the foreign language sounds and words which have already been acquired at home or outside home. The case of French in Algeria as his 'first foreign language' is a good example on this.

The second split is typical of traditional Arabic teaching and learning. While school Arabic appears to the pupil as 'foreign' to his own home language, he has to learn by heart, memorize and recite what he has learnt in a class or lesson in Arabic (vocabulary, grammar rules, forms of address, ready-made expressions, poems, etc.). The same pedagogical practices are applied to the teaching of French and English. The memorizing of the grammatical rules, in Arabic, French or English, is obligatory for the pupil who must learn by heart and repeat for assessment and evaluation in front of the teacher and the class (summative evaluation). If he passes the tests and exams with a reasonable average, he is then upgraded to the next higher school level. These practices stand in straight contradiction with the objectives of the CBLT in terms of the development of critical thinking, critical appraisal, reformulation, brainstorming and creative in-class and out-of-class activities that the texts on the CBLT in Algeria refer to. Thus, the gap widens between myths and the initial Euphoria and the reality in the classroom situation and settings.

The third rupture is epistemological. The ministerial instructions and recommendations, the accompanying documents, the reference frame, the teacher's guide, the programs worked out by the GSD and the textbooks introduce a whole set of key concepts and a vision of the teaching/learning based on the CBLT to which the teacher is not acquainted and he/she has not been trained for or prepared beforehand. The teacher who is not any more the only source of

knowledge becomes a facilitator and a collaborator in the preparation of projects to be presented and evaluated in a formative way. The question remains on how can he/she achieve this if no teacher training had been programmed upstream? (e.g., in-service training, getting familiar with the CBLT key concepts and terminology, acting up in classroom observation sessions, etc.).

The general conclusion on this issue is that learning remains defensive together with static knowledge and a summative evaluation that are characterized by the absence of an adequate environment where the acquired knowledge becomes dynamic in order to be reinvested in the performance of a new task at school or outside school. The end result for the learner in this case is the feeling of having achieved something (sometimes using his own breakdown strategies) by carrying out a new task on the basis of what has learnt. Put otherwise, the introduction of the CBLT in Algeria is '*a bad answer to a real problem*' to translate the words of an article in a national newspaper.^{xvi}

In 2006, that is three years after the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria, study days were organized by the Ministry of National Education (MEN). These were supervised by the PARE project and the UNESCO (see note 17). Many international experts took part and their results were published by the MEN under the form of conference acts entitled '*Réforme de l'Éducation et Innovation Pédagogique en Algérie*' (Education Reform and Pedagogical Innovation in Algeria). Those results were much more of a theoretical nature than empirical perspectives and advice for what has to be changed, modified or acted out for better results in the actual teaching under the CBLT in Algeria. To sum up, the institutional approaches and pedagogies carried out by the reform in question did not actually sort out the problems encountered at primary school, at college or at secondary school during the application of the pedagogical innovations of the CBLT in actual classroom situations.^{xvii}

III. The current situation: myths, reality and challenges

In general terms, the reform of the programs and the PARE project aimed, in the first place, to sustain the educational system in Algeria where education and schooling are compulsory. The main objective (in 2003) was a restructuring of the teaching methods and techniques and support for the implementation of information and communication technologies (ICT's) in Education. The CTBT was opted for reach this end. The table below shows schematically the general framework for the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria by presenting the actors/decision makers, the arrangements put in place and the aims and objectives of the ministerial documents.

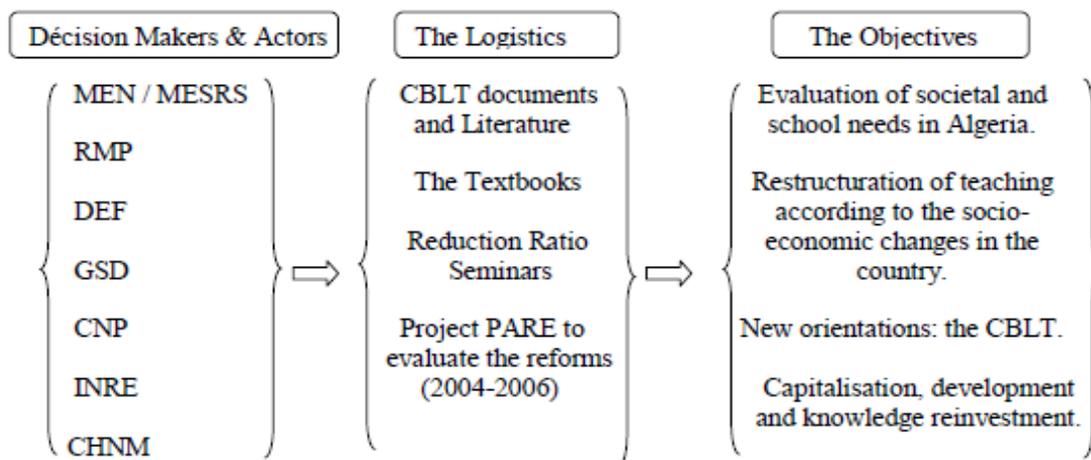


Figure 1. The CBLT in Algeria: general Framework^{xviii}

A. The Myths

The prime objective of this general framework with all its human component, funding, materials and documentation, etc. was to ensure the compliance of the teaching programs and learning with the new needs of the Algerian society which has witnessed rapid changes as an affluent society. Some of these changes have also had an impact on the school system. Various accompanying documents have been produced in order to explain to the users of the new textbooks the objectives and expected results in the application of the new CBLT programs. The latter (still in use) focus on the content and progress in class and outside class, the new teaching approach to follow, the management of the class, the preparation of the project (in and outside class) and on formative evaluation. The competencies identified are intended to develop in the child global language strategies and strategies to understand and then act. These were mainly related to the activities of listening, reading and writing. The learner develops then his own breakdown strategies in verbal and non verbal interactions.

B. The reality

What we observe in real classroom situations and in the environment in which this approach has been implemented is a series of shortcomings at all levels. The recommendations and instructions of an outdated type^{xix} for today's communication and globalization world are still present in the minds of policy makers and of the majority of practitioners and users (teachers, pupils, students, etc.). Even if the programs developed appeared ambitious and bearers of a promising societal project, the textbooks which were distributed in September 2003 do not reflect the real needs and gestalt of the learner. The pedagogic acts and didactic objectives selected in the teaching programs seem to be so far away from what exists on the ground. Moreover, the textbooks in question date back to their first issue in September 2003. Up to today, none has been updated, revised or reprinted. The 'mistakes', 'shortcomings' and 'drawbacks' of 2003 still remain in the pupils textbooks in 2015.

What we notice in reality and in the daily behaviours of teachers is the 'coercive' tendency in teaching practices. This applies to the pupil who is pushed to remain in a defensive learning position while the teacher stands as the only source of knowledge. The native language of the

learner (Algerian Arabic, Berber or its varieties) and the French language still remain ‘striped’ in front of the language of the school: the Arabic language. At school in as much as elsewhere, learning under the approach by skills remains deductive and defensive: learn the rule, then store it, then apply it. This form of traditional learning applies to French which is introduced in the Third year and to English in the Fifth year of primary school.

In theory and in the texts on the CBLT in Algeria the learner becomes the centre of the educational device for learning and teaching. He is the actor (offensive learning and individual / collaborative discovery) rather than subject to the acquisition of knowledge, sometimes scattered and lacking motivation). In practice, learning is defensive with memorisation and recitation. The whole process is made up of static knowledge stored for a summative evaluation under the form of continuous assessments and exams. The status of the teacher under the CBLT has not changed in reality and in teaching practices in the classroom. In the texts, the CBLT will create a new landscape and a new educational environment. The teacher is no longer the only source of knowledge in class. He must not monopolize the class and the pedagogical activity. He should not also formulate questions and give the ‘correct’ answers (feedback) with no concern on the quality of learning of his pupils. His teaching must mobilize the interest of the learner and his cognitive capacities. In practice, the presence of centripetal forces and centrifugal forces in the teaching staff (see above) gives the feeling of an ambient resistance to change and a tendency in favour of the application of old methods with an authoritarian behaviour of the teacher. We observed a lack of motivation for change and adaptation to new educational approaches (CBLT).

Knowledge is also put in question under the CBLT in Algeria. The texts of application for the CBLT insist on the acquisition and knowledge mobilization for a reinvestment of knowledge at school and outside school. They focus on the cognitive and socio-constructive capacities of the learner for a better understanding of what is foreign as well as on the values of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding. In practice, knowledge remains confined to the teacher in the first place and the school textbook. It remains unchanged and this is in contradiction with a teaching approach based on the CBLT. The teacher just as the learner who follows his model in class do not seem to grasp how to make that knowledge acquired in class not just for evaluation and assessment but also for life.

The socio-educational environment does not facilitate access for the pupil to ICT’s, the Internet, and other computer assisted learning facilities. The assessment in class is always of the summative type even if the learner must submit projects that he had prepared with the means at his disposal in non-educational circles. It happens that the learners just copy and paste stuff from the Net and present it as a Project to get a ‘good’ mark. In addition, the contents of the textbooks do not actually reflect the learner’s environment. For instance, it may be the case that some passages in the textbook include cultural aspects with very difficult words, sentence constructions and concepts that are alien to the learner’s immediate socio-cultural environment. No explanation is given and sometimes the teacher him/herself is unable to provide an appropriate clarification. The learner is disillusioned, not to say unsatisfied, right from the start by a vocabulary and a choice of words that are totally alien to him. The textbook contents boil down sometimes to the abstraction of the knowledge and experience of the child in his pre-school phase and early childhood. Drawing is almost absent in the text illustration with a proliferation of clipart which have no direct connexion with the texts or with the child’s inner

experience of life. The learner thus becomes increasingly uneasy about the understanding of the foreign language that he is presented.

Another equally important factor which stands in direct opposition with the principles and teaching practices of the CBLT appears in the overloaded lessons in overcrowded classrooms. At primary level, pupils are introduced to subjects such as Arabic, French, English, Science and Technology, Arithmetic, Civic and Islamic Education, History, Geography, Music and Physical Education among others. The general picture across the country is that of pupils getting out of school in a melee and heading home with heavy bags on their backs containing copybooks, textbooks, school materials and sometimes dictionaries, etc. It may happen that they also have to carry them from classroom to classroom. There is a characteristic lack of CBLT support facilities such as the access to the Internet in schools. Similarly, there is an absence or non-availability of means of Xeroxing (failures of all kinds: out of order machines, electricity cuts, or simply a lack of paper to print and reproduce the projects to present in class.

C. The challenges

In view of this situation which does not actually render the spirit of an adequate implementation of the CBLT, it is first and foremost a must to come to a consensus among all the participants in the educational system. Teachers, parents, learners and decision makers, school headmasters, etc., should gather and discuss the issue as objectively as possible and suggest possible answers to sort out the problems that hinder a successful implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. All pedagogical and administrative actors should be consulted in order to assess what has worked so far and what not in terms of pedagogy, administration, training, resources, etc. They may also suggest ways and approaches to reconcile the learner with the school, the school textbook and the teacher. In the short term, it is more than urgent to carry out a re-evaluation of the textbooks by experts, cartoonists and drawers, inspectors and practitioners. Objective expertise and rational investigation into this issue are more than necessary today for a revision of the programs in place and a re-adjustment according to the pedagogical principles of the CBLT. This does not mean a total rejection of the presentation and contents of the 2003 textbooks. It is also necessary to give a better place to the learner in the didactic triangle, to revive the institutes for teacher-training and facilitate access to the multimedia and ICT's at school.

Finally, we truly believe in the reformulation of the educational objectives in a more explicit and adequate way in order to respond to the issues and challenges in place and ensure a more appropriate relevance of education in an ever changing society. The school ensures its function of education, socialization and qualifications only if we install in the learner competencies which enable him to become autonomous in developing his analytical capacities, mobilizing his knowledge acquisitions and synthesising when he faces new problem-solving situations. He has to develop learning strategies which enable him to confront his knowledge to that of others and acquire the capacity to 'learn how to learn'. The table below summarises the arguments developed above on myths, reality and challenges of the CBLT in Algeria.

Myths	Reality	Challenges
Free and obligatory schooling, authenticity of the identity and arabisation of teaching.	Coercive Pedagogy. Errors are not tolerated. Memorisation and Recitation. Denial of the use of the mother tongue in a foreign language class.	To make the state of the art after a 12 year experience with the CBLT. Open dialogue between teachers, pupils, parents and the decision makers.
Ambitious CBLT programs aiming at radical changes in the Algerian school: GSD, INRE, MEN.	Deductive reasoning and defensive learning. Traditional learning which is reproduced for French in the 3 rd year and for English in the 5 th year at primary school.	High level expertise by academics and scholars for the revision of the programs. Textbooks revision and re-edition.
Textbooks (Sept. 2003) supposed to materialize the programs by teaching and didactic acts inside and outside school. The new citizen with a critical thinking and a creative mind.	Contents with no incentives for the pupils. Lack of motivation. Inadequate instructions with difficult words for the pupil right from the start. Absence of knowledge, assets and experiences of the child. Improper use of images for text illustration.	Re-evaluation and reediting of the textbooks by linguists, didacticians, inspectors and experts.
The pupil in at the centre of the teaching / learning process. He is an autonomous and authentic actor. Offensive learning.	Defensive learning. Memorizing and recitation. Language mechanisms and development of automatisms. Scattered knowledge leading to a lack of motivation from the learner.	To reconcile the pupil with the school, the teacher and the textbook. To revalorize the image of learning in the didactic triangle.
The teacher: facilitator, Co-communicator, guide, tutor, questioner for a better locating and handling of the learner's queries and worries.	The teacher: main source of knowledge in class. He monopolizes talking in class and the teaching activity, He formulates questions and gives the 'correct answers'.	To re-establish the ITE for teacher training. To return to the act of teaching as a rational and effective act.
Acquisition and mobilization of knowledge. Reinvestment in new tasks. Better understanding of the 'Other'. Tolerance and dialogue.	Knowledge is based on the teacher and the textbook. This comes in direct opposition with teaching under the CBLT.	To install in the pupil selected competencies to develop his own learning and knowledge re-investment.
Multi-racial classes with pupils of various nationalities in Algeria. Classes not overloaded with pupils. Collaborative and cooperative learning Use of the Internet and ICTs	Overloaded lessons in overcrowded classrooms. Absence of ICT's and the Internet. Proliferation of private schools across the country. Illegal reinforcement private lessons paid in cash in homes and basements.	To allow the school as much as possible to play its proper function of education, socialization and qualification.

Figure 2. arguments developed above on myths, reality and challenges of the CBLT in Algeria.

The euphoria for the CBLT that prevailed in 2003 and the momentum that followed for the change in the educational system in Algeria have led to bitter criticism. The main reason is that this approach which was supposed to bring in a comprehensive framework, as applied throughout the world, and modernize the Algerian school has not been properly and efficiently thought out and implemented on the ground.. The means put in place did not meet the requirements and objectives of this integrative approach based on learning by projects and a formative evaluation. The programs were supposed to prepare the ‘citizens of tomorrow’ in his profession and in society through the installation of competencies. These would allow him to self-assess and reinvest the knowledge acquired. In the case of foreign languages, they make him communicate with others and widen his horizons on the world culture, civilisation and technologies. In reality, these programs ended up with heavily concentrated aspects of the foreign language such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing with some cultural aspects that did not lead to understanding and verbal / non-verbal interaction. The language skills and socio-cultural aspects needed to develop a spirit of tolerance and dialog in the Algerian learner have simply been left aside with a few hints that appear in the textbooks without being explicated and clarified. The current curriculum is not based on methodologies that encourage and develop the capacity of the learner to analyze and synthesize before taking a decision in front of a problem situation. This failure in the implementation of the CBLT at school is mainly due to an inadequate and inconsistent preparation of the teacher to a project pedagogy which implies new teaching tools, new statuses, behaviours and attitudes in class for the learners and a formative evaluation which motivates him in acquiring a know-how-to-be, love for learning and love of the school.

At the institutional level, the reform of the educational system through the CBLT was made without transition. It resulted in a sudden shift for the teacher and the learner who were not prepared in a thoughtful and coherent manner. The quick elaboration of programs, textbooks and teaching and learning methods through ministerial instructions and official documents has produced an opposite effect as to the objectives and expected results in the implementation of the CBLT. The school, which was supposed to reflect the social changes in Algeria and meet the challenges of globalization, resulted in a compartmentalization of education programming that led to a notorious didactic and pedagogical confusion which does not respond in any way to the principles and teaching criteria for competencies, skills and qualifications under the CBLT. As it stands today, the Algerian school had failed to respond positively to the challenges of modernity and to fulfil its mission in producing critical and creative minds in today’s global transfer of information, science and technology.

ⁱ . Two diverging tendencies emerged right from the beginning (2003) among teachers, pupils, decision makers, the syndicates and parents alike. These were represented by those who accepted the changes in the educational system and pedagogic methodologies and those who were clearly resistant to change.

ⁱⁱ . See Spotlight on English (Textbooks I and II) for example.

ⁱⁱⁱ . In the ministry documents, the term often used is ‘préparer le citoyen de demain’.

^{iv} . The official title of the four year degree was: ‘Licence d’Enseignement du Français’, ‘Licence d’Enseignement de l’Anglais’, ‘Licence d’enseignement de l’Espagnol’, ‘Licence d’Enseignement du Russe’ ‘Licence d’Enseignement de l’Allemand’. Today, the degree is ‘Licence de Français’, ‘Licence d’Anglais’, etc.

^v . Source: National Office of Statistics (ONS, Algeria), November 1972.

^{vi} . MESRS: Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Search.

vii. Exception being made here for the petroleum and gas industry which had ties with the US and many other European and non European countries and markets.

viii. DEF: Directorate of Basic Education, CNP: National Program Committee, INRE: National Institute for Research in Education, CPN: National Pedagogic Committee. MESRS: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

ix. CEIL : Centre for Intensive Language Teaching.

x. Though officially, French is still considered as a first foreign language (اللغة الأجنبية الأولى) compared to English which is classified in the syllabi as a second foreign language (اللغة الأجنبية الثانية).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, French is undoubtedly a second language in Algeria.

xi. Cf. the AFP dispatch of Saturday June 10th, 2000 at 10h30.

xii. GSD: Composed of a group of experts by subject matter (e.g., Arabic, French, English, Arithmetic's, History, Geography, Music, etc).

xiii. The mother tongue is Algerian spoken Arabic in general. It may also be Berber or any of its varieties in Algeria. In which case, the rupture is even more serious compared to the school tongue which is Modern Standard Arabic or a variety of Literary Arabic.

xiv. In fact, some areas of the country use [q] instead of [g] in Algerian Arabic. So the difference in sound production between the home variety and the school variety (or Norm!!!) should not normally be an issue at stake.

xv. Despite radio, TV and satellite dish programs which use a form of Arabic considered as the 'Norm' and which may influence the child's use of Arabic, using the Norm at home or even among children in daily conversation may be a source of laughter as in 'qol li min fadhlik min ayna ashtari khobz' (Normative) instead of 'win neshri l kesra (or al khobz)' (Dialectal).

xvi. Cf. an article published in El Watan of November 21st, 2011 : '...une mauvaise réponse à un vrai problème'

xvii. Program of Support to the Reform of the Educational System (PARE), supported by the UNESCO (2004- 2006) and funded by Japan with 50,000 US dollars.

xviii. MEN: Ministry of National Education, MESRS: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, RPM: Methodological Reference Frame for Programs (a Committee for the Approval of the new textbooks), DEF: Directorate of Basic Education, GSD: Group of Specialty by Discipline (Inspectors and Academics; later on including teachers), CNP: National Program Committee, INRE: National Institute for Research in Education , CHNM: Commission of Homologation of the New Textbooks.

xix. Cf. the ordinance of April 16th, 1976 referring to the Algerian identity and its foundations which bears more ideological than didactic dimensions. The latter is always present in the minds. It stands in contradiction with the socio-constructive spirit of the CBLT.

About the author

Farouk Bouhadiba; is a professor specialized in Linguistics, sociolinguistics, ELT translation and ICT. He has been teaching at university since 1988. Farouk held many pedagogic, administrative and scientific positions both nationally and internationally. He is an active member in higher education as a member in the ministry's staff, an expert in many journals and he is the editor-in-chief of two journals. Farouk Bouhadiba is known for his active work as a researcher and an educator. He has more than 30 publications (papers, chapters of books, books and textbooks) as he is the creator of many post-graduate programmes in Algeria. He has been invited as a visiting professor in many universities in France, UK, Spain, Qatar and the USA.

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