

PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATIONS WITHIN THE LMD REFORM IN ALGERIA: SHIFTING FROM TEACHER-CENTEREDNESS TO LEARNER-CENTEREDNESS IN EFL TEACHERS' PRACTICES

 Meriem Azzi¹  Zahia Mebarki²

¹ Department of English Language and Literature, Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University, Algeria,

me.azzi@univ-setif2.dz

² Department of English Language and Literature, Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University, Algeria,

z.mebarki@univ-setif2.dz

Abstract: Shifting from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness is one of the pedagogical innovations advocated by the LMD reform in Algeria. The present paper reports on the prevailing teaching paradigm implemented by EFL teachers and the pedagogical practices they most commonly employ in their classrooms. The study involves thirty-two EFL teachers representing eight universities across Algeria. It builds on the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) developed by Conti (2004) designed to measure the extent to which teachers support the principles of adult learning. Results show that despite over a decade since the implementation of the LMD reform, EFL teachers remain strongly teacher-centered ($M=118.90$, $SD=11.73$), with 84.4% scoring below the mean threshold for learner-centeredness. Furthermore, analysis of the data indicate that the activities most frequently fulfilled by the teachers are first those that aim to create a supportive atmosphere for learning and then those which address students' prior knowledge and relate it to their current experiences. However, the practices that reveal teachers' view of their role as facilitators rather than providers of knowledge and those that foster students' sense of responsibility are found to be less common among the participants. The findings of the study can be used to inform professional development to address the discrepancy between the teaching style recommended to be adopted in higher education and what EFL academics implement in their classrooms in order to align with the objectives of the LMD reform, which is inspired by the Bologna Process, as well as with the pedagogical innovation they promote.

Keywords: Algeria; Bologna Process; EFL teachers; learner-centeredness; LMD reform; pedagogical innovation; teacher-centeredness

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¹ Corresponding author: Meriem Azzi ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5821-2917>
<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6437-8942>

1. Introduction

The present article reports the findings of a case study conducted to investigate about the predominant teaching style of EFL teachers within the LMD reform and the practices they undertake most commonly in their classroom. To do so, an adapted version of the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) developed by Conti (2004) is used. Because there is dearth of research on academics' teaching style in EFL education, particularly in Algeria, the study aims to contribute to research in this field by using a standardized teaching style rating scale. Besides, it aims to provide further insights into research undertaken on the implementation of the pedagogical innovations within the LMD reform, particularly in EFL education which is our area of concern.

2. Literature Review

2.1. LMD Reform and its Pedagogical Orientation

2.1.1. LMD Reform as a Consequence of the Bologna Process

The LMD system is a consequence of the Bologna Process launched in Europe in 1999 (Bologna Declaration, 1999). The Process is a top-down reform which aimed primarily to develop a more harmonized higher education system across the European Union. The reform aimed to restructure higher education seeking to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) within which degrees are comparable, education systems are compatible and the mobility of both students and teachers is promoted.

However, since 2005, an increasing interest to export the Process beyond Europe has been developed. This "external dimension" has given momentum to the Bologna Process since governments of different countries over the world took the decision to reform their higher education sector.

In Algeria, the government launched the LMD reform in the flow of the academic year 2004/2005. By doing so, higher education is meant to be "more competitive in the worldwide workforce market and to provide students with outstanding teaching standards" (Berrouche & Berkane, 2007, p.4, my translation).

2.1.2. Objectives of the LMD Reform

The primary objective of adopting the LMD system is "to design and implement a comprehensive global reform of higher education as put clearly by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS, 2004, my translation). The reform aims to trigger important innovations at the architectural level by implementing the 3 qualifications, viz., Licence, Master and Doctorate. It aims also to reorganize the studies in higher education into semesters with reference to units of study (fundamental, methodological, discovery and cross-sectional units) and credits. Albeit important, these architectural and organizational innovations have already been addressed by the 1971 reform which heralded the beginning of higher education in Algeria (Ferfera & Mékidèche, 2008). For many researchers (e.g., Berrouche & Berkane, 2007; Miliani, 2017), the distinctive feature of the LMD reform is that it is more pedagogically-oriented.

2.1.3. Historical Context: Islamic and Western Educational Models

Instruction in higher education in Algeria has traditionally been teacher-centered. It was based on fact-acquisition whereby the teacher is regarded as the conveyor of knowledge and the student as its recipient.

This orientation to instruction has been advocated by the two models having shaped education in Algeria, namely the Islamic and the western ones. The former was adopted during the colonial domination. It was created by the Reformist Movement headed by the Muslim Nation (Al-Umma) in the 1930s. It aimed to counteract the effects of the assimilation process undertaken by the French colonizer who offered a western model of education.

After independence, the Algerian government undertook the reform of 1971. It was meant to raise the standard of higher education by introducing the western model of education. However, the arabization policy it adopted “paved the way for the revival of traditional Islamic education practices by reinforcing the predominance of memorization” (Miliani, 2012, p.219).

Albeit different, the Islamic and the European models were both of them teacher-centered. They were based on memorization and fact reciting as a predominant pedagogical practice rather than developing awareness, critical thinking and autonomy necessary to be competitive in the labor market both nationally and internationally. The adoption of the LMD reform is meant to remedy the situation by advocating pedagogical innovations targeting a new model of education.

2.2. Pedagogical Innovation in Higher Education

2.2.1 Defining Innovation

Research on innovation in higher education is relatively limited in scope (Coccia, 2017; Mazorodze & Mkhize, 2024; Scott, 2014). Hence, defining it relies on its meaning in other sectors (Ng’ethe, 2003). According to Hannan & Silver (2000), innovation in higher education can be defined as “a planned or deliberate process of introducing change, directed towards (but not necessarily achieving) improvements or solving or alleviating some perceived problem. Such changes may be new to a person, course, department, institution or higher education as a whole” (p.11).

In higher education, the concept of innovation is intricately related to that of “reform” since both of them imply change and intended enhancement. According to De Ketele (2010), “a reform requires an effective introduction of innovations (new practices to supplant old ones) in order to be mirrored in the pedagogical practices of its stakeholders” (p.9, my translation).

2.2.2 .Defining Pedagogical Innovation

A pedagogical innovation is an educational innovation. The latter refers to “a procedure or method of educational activity that differs significantly from established practice and is used to increase the level of efficiency in a competitive environment” (Mykhailyshyn, Kondur & Serman, 2018, p.2).

A pedagogical innovation is by nature multi-disciplinary. It intends to bring about change in the teaching approach, the curriculum, the assessment practices, the use of technology, student agency, and the organization of the educational process. In this sense, pedagogical innovations, in higher education, are meant to address the system in microcosm since they address innovations in teaching and learning (Hannan & Silver, 2000).

Despite the importance of all the changes outlined above, innovating teaching in higher education through the advocacy of a shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach appears as one of the major characteristics of an innovative program to many researchers (e.g. Bedard et al., 2005). This innovation is evolutionary or sustainable because it changes the way students learn by improving the existing instructional approach in order to achieve better learning.

2.3. Shifting from Teacher-Centered to Learner-Centered Teaching in the LMD Reform

Many research studies have focused on defining teaching conceptions and approaches (e.g., Kember, 1997; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004). They have distinguished between two major orientations: one is based on the teacher as a knowledgeable person whose task is to transmit information to the students and the other takes the view that teaching consists of facilitating students' learning. According to Kember (1997), the same conceptions are used in higher education. They can be summarized respectively into teacher-centered and learner-centered approach to teaching.

2.3.1 Teacher-Centered Teaching

The teacher-centered paradigm is closely related to the behaviorist tradition (Skinner, 1957) based on the assumption that learners are passive agents whose actions are mere reactions to the environmental stimuli to which they are exposed. As such, a teacher endorses the role of creating an environment which stimulates specific behaviors on the part of the students and discourages undesirable ones.

2.3.2 Learner-Centered Teaching

The learner-centered paradigm derives from the constructivist theory (e.g., Dewey, 1966; Piaget, 1970) and to andragogy (adult learning), developed by Knowles (1970). Although, there is no one single and standardized definition of the constructivist view of learning, they all agree that it focuses on the individual as an active learner capable to construct meaning from their own experience in a given environment.

Shifting to the learner-centered teaching implies changes in the roles of both teachers and learners. Instead of being dispensers of knowledge, teachers need to guide their students who should bear responsibility for their learning.

2.3.3 Learner-Centeredness: Evidence from Policy Texts

In Algeria, advocating a shift to a learner-centered paradigm in the LMD reform has not been explicitly pointed in the official documents and regulations of the MESRS. Texts referred rather to the teacher's role in promoting "students' autonomy" and to ensure the necessary conditions for optimal achievement by considering them as "responsible partners" (MESRS, 2011, p.57, my translation). It is also implied in the LMD discourse related to the way the course is delivered in which "lecturing and dictation are not the only mode of teaching. The teacher should not be the sole conveyor of knowledge. Students should participate" (MESRS, 2011, p.57, my translation). Reference is made to other modes as, tutorials, practical work, training, projects and seminars in which the focus shifts from the teacher and the input provided to the students and what they learn which is the essence of the learner-centered approach (MESRS, 2009, p.4, my translation).

Similarly, in the Bologna Process, learner-centeredness was not expressed explicitly in its earlier communiqués which emphasized more on the structural changes of higher education than on its pedagogical ones (Eurydice, 2012). It was rather referred to in its framing instruments, namely European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Lifelong Learning (LLL), and Quality Assurance (QA). Learner-centered pedagogy has started to be recognized as a priority area after nearly a decade and was regarded as "the ultimate measure of the success of the Bologna reform" (Surssock & Smidt, 2010, p.32). As such, shifting to the learner-centered paradigm is not just theoretical but is mandated in higher education and EFL education is no exception.

2.4. Learner-Centered Approach in Higher Education EFL Context

2.4.1 Importance of Learner-Centeredness in EFL Education

Language education, in general, and second and foreign language education, in particular, has witnessed tremendous changes since the 1980s. Van den Branden (2011: 659) reported that “there is hardly a single aspect of second or foreign language education that has not been the subject of an educational innovation during recent years”. One of the major movements he cited is “innovations aiming for the implementation of innovative approaches and tools that call for the use of the learner-centered curriculum” (p.659).

Teaching language with the learner-centered approach aims to help students to understand how language is used for communication and to cope with the different contexts (social, cultural or communicative) they can be involved in rather than providing them with language rules to memorize. This approach is undeniably more important in the EFL context mainly because of the status of English as an international language, and the students’ growing enthusiasm to learn it to get better job opportunities in the labor market both nationally and internationally.

Besides, in an EFL learner-centered classroom atmosphere, students’ motivation is triggered to learn new information to solve problems at hand by engaging in a process of “active exploration, construction, and learning rather than the passivity of lecture attendance” (Norman & Spohrer, 1996, p.26). Students are regarded as active participants in the learning process. They can choose tasks and topics that are of interest to them and the strategies that suit their styles of learning (peer collaboration, group work...) to regulate it. The teacher’s goal is, then, to nurture students’ autonomy and to empower them to impact their outcomes. Given the considerable benefits of the learner-centered teaching, Marwan (2017) concluded that “it is no longer a choice for English teachers particularly those working in the context of English as a foreign language not to apply this approach” (p.46).

2.4.2. Learner-Centered Practices in EFL Teaching

To implement effectively a learner-centered orientation in a higher education EFL classroom, academics are offered a wide array of practices and strategies. They all aim to empower the students by putting them at the center of the learning enterprise. In such contexts, the pedagogical practices include, but are not limited to, designing communicative tasks that encourage students to use authentic language and engage them in interactive activities, such as role-playing, pair and group work. These activities are mainly used in a communicative language teaching classroom where teachers do not act as lecturers.

Besides, academics can guide their students by providing them with necessary input and encouraging interaction and peer collaboration. By undertaking authentic communicative tasks, EFL students are expected to become “risk-takers, negotiators, and problem-solvers who use language purposefully” (Ellis, 2009, p.223).

Moreover, academics can use mini projects, case studies, debates and research tasks, particularly when integrating content and language learning which stands as a consequence of the recognition of English as “an essential global skill” (Graddol, 2006, p.15). These practices offer students the opportunity to use EFL for academic and professional careers which is considered as a key objective of teaching EFL within the LMD reform. The role of EFL teachers in such contexts is “...to scaffold students’ understanding of complex materials” (Stoller, 2008, p.59). They select topics that are relevant, useful and fit their students’ interests aiming to help them construct their knowledge by relating it to their own experiences. The practices aim to promote active learning, collaboration, and critical thinking which align with the learner-focused teaching orientation.

To sum, innovating pedagogy in higher education EFL contexts aims not only to help students develop their linguistic skills, but to become autonomous and active participants. To achieve this aim, teachers need to reconsider their roles and practices in the classroom. As such, the teaching style of EFL teachers should move towards a learner-centered teaching style to align with the objectives of the LMD reform.

2.5. Investigating EFL Teachers' Teaching Style within the LMD Reform

2.5.1 Defining a Teaching Style

The concept of teaching style is introduced by Fischer and Fischer (1968) who defined it as "...a pervasive quality that persists even though the content that is being taught may change" (p.245). It does not refer to the isolated teaching strategies employed by a teacher to accomplish an established set of instructional objectives but rather to "... the total atmosphere created by the teacher's views on learning and the teacher's approach to teaching" (Conti, 2004, pp.76-77). It is also different from a method but refers to "the range of behaviors in which a teacher can operate comfortably according to a certain value system" (Conti, 1989, p. 4). This is due to the fact that "...our beliefs and values are directly related to our styles as teachers" (Apps, 1989, p. 17). In this sense, a teaching style is related to educational philosophy (Conti, 1989, 2004; Heimlich & Norland, 2002; Shah, 2020). The latter is "...formulated by a thorough examination of values, beliefs and attitudes to the teaching-learning exchange" stated (Heimlich & Norland, 2002, p.40). Hence, the way teachers organize the classroom, deliver content, interact with their learners and evaluate them reflects their assumptions about the aim of education, the learning process and the teacher-student interaction.

Educational philosophy differentiates between teachers with a teacher-centered or a learner-centered style. This distinction resides basically in "the educator's view of the role of the teacher in the teaching-learning process" (Conti, 2004, p. 77). These two styles of teaching are considered as distinct constructs rather than "two sides of the same coin" (Camille et al., 2015, p. 155).

2.5.2. Measuring Tools of Teaching Style in Higher Education Research

Studying teaching style is important because teachers bear the responsibility to nurture students' potential and motivate them to attain their learning goals (Larasati et al., 2019). The impact of teachers on students' achievement and engagement is undeniable (Heimlich & Norland, 2002; Opper, 2019). Hence, academics' behaviors and activities in the classroom are regarded as the most influential aspects (Knowles, 1984).

Given its importance, a growing body of research is warranted to study teachers' teaching style using differing frameworks and tools. The most widely used instruments include: Pratt' Teaching Perspectives Inventory (TPI) (2000), Grasha's Teaching Styles Inventory (TSI) (1996), and Conti's Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) (1982, updated in 2004).

Albeit important, we will focus on the third measurement scale, namely PALS since it is the research procedure used in our study. Unlike the preceding instruments, PALS is designed to measure the extent to which teachers support the principles of adult learning founded on the adult learning theory developed by Knowles (1970). These principles are "...compatible with realistic experiences of practitioners" (Conti, 2004, p.165) and "congruent with the collaborative teaching-learning mode" (Brookfield, 1986, p.34). They align with andragogical education which characterizes the LMD reform case (Miliani, 2017).

PALS embraces 7 factors that are described by Conti (2004, pp.80-82) as follows:

Factor 1 is “Learner-Centered Activities”. It reflects the degree to which teachers support the learner-centered style by adopting behaviors that enhance students’ sense of responsibility. Teachers who score low on this factor support a teacher-centered approach by adopting formal evaluation, particularly through standardized tests. They favor controlling the classroom by undertaking disciplinary action when needed, adopting methods that enhance quiet desk-work and establishing learning objectives for their students. These teachers have a tendency to use only one teaching method.

Factor 2 is “Personalized Instruction”. It reflects the degree to which teachers use some techniques aiming to personalize learning to match each student’s abilities and needs. Teachers with a learner-centered style adopt a self-paced instruction. They encourage cooperation instead of competition among their students and favor the use of different materials and methods. Consequently, lecturing is regarded as a poor method of instruction.

Factor 3 is “Relating to Experience”. It shows the degree to which teachers consider their students’ prior experiences when planning learning activities and encourage them to relate new learning to experience.

Factor 4 is “Assessing Students’ Needs”. It indicates the extent to which teachers are engaged in helping students to define their individual needs and set the objectives to meet them. To do so, individual conferences and informal counseling are conducted.

Factor 5 is entitled “Climate Building”. It reveals the degree to which teachers are able to establish a friendly learning atmosphere in which dialogue and interaction are promoted. In such a classroom, errors are allowed, breaks are offered, interpersonal skills are developed and students’ different competencies are exploited.

Factor 6 is “Participation in the Learning Process”. It assesses whether teachers are engaged in a process where students are allowed to participate in determining the content material and the mode of evaluation to adopt.

Factor 7 is “Flexibility for Personal Development”. Teachers who score low on this factor consider themselves as knowledge providers instead of facilitators. They establish a rigid learning environment where instructional objectives are predetermined and maintained regardless of potential changes in students’ needs. However, teachers who score high on this factor tend to adapt the content material and the classroom environment to their students’ needs in order to maintain flexibility.

2.5.3 Related Studies on EFL Teachers’ Teaching Style within the LMD Reform

Studying pedagogical innovation within the LMD reform– and the BP which inspired it– embodied in the shift to the learner-centered teaching style in EFL contexts has aroused the interest of many researchers. This may be due to the fact that teaching EFL inherently encourages principles as, communication, active learning, autonomy and reflection (Marwan, 2017; Zohrabi et al., 2012) which are at the core of the learner-centered orientation advocated by these reforms. As such, examining the application of this pedagogical renewal in EFL classrooms can represent a case for the reform implementation.

In Algeria, several studies have been conducted on the extent to which EFL academics’ practices align with the principles of learner-centeredness (e.g., Badjadi, 2020; Benadla, 2013; Bensemmane, 2012; Idri, 2005; Miliani, 2004). They all agree with Bouhadiba (2015) that “[P]aradoxically, while English should easily lend itself to innovation ... most teachers still rely on traditional lecturing” (p.37).

The same conclusion has been drawn in several studies carried out in international research on the Bologna-type reforms. Studies conducted by Brahim (2019) on Tunisian EFL teachers, Nonkukhetkhong et al., (2006) on Thai instructors, Zohrabi et al., (2012) on Iranian ones and Lamkhanter (2022) on Moroccan teachers within the LMD system suggest that the new trend to put the student at the centre of the learning enterprise remains an ideal that fails to be mirrored in the classroom practices and experiences.

To investigate the implementation of the learner-centered teaching style in higher education EFL classroom in Algeria studies have adopted either a conceptual/analytical research design (e.g., Bouhadiba, 2015; Miliani, 2004; 2012), a qualitative design (e.g., Bensemmane, 2012; Idri, 2005) or a quantitative one (e.g., Badjadi, 2020). A variety of research tools and procedures have been employed such as, document analysis, observation, interviews and self-designed questionnaires in order to document the gap between official intentions and academics' claim to implement a learner-centered teaching style and classroom realities. However, no published study has employed a standardized measurement scale. The importance of such a tool is to help depict more accurately the learner-centered practices that teachers use more commonly in their classrooms in order to encourage them. By the same token, researching the less frequent practices would help identify areas where teachers need support and professional development (Conti, 2004).

3. Methodology

3.1 Context

The study was conducted in the flow of the academic year 2017/2018. The participants belonged to departments of English Language and Literature representing 8 universities across Algeria as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1:

Universities Represented in the Study

University	Frequency	Percent
University of Bejaia	12	37.5
University of Batna	6	18.75
University of Biskra	3	9.38
University of Constantine	3	9.37
University of Annaba	2	6.25
University of M'sila	2	6.25
University of SidiBellabes	2	6.25
University of Skikda	2	6.25
Total	32	100

3.2 Participants

Thirty two EFL academics participated in the study. The participants within each university were chosen through convenience sampling. They were involved in the study because they were present in a seminar organized on the LMD system the researcher attended. The participants received no training on the teaching practice through the learner-centered paradigm. Their socio-demographic profile presented in table 2 below showed that 22 of them (68, 75%) were female and 10 (31, 25%) were male. The majority of the teachers (90.63%) were more than 30 years old. They were predominantly full-time instructors (78, 1%). More than half of them (56.26%) held a Magister degree, 15.62% a doctorate and 6.25% of them were professors. Part-time teachers were either doctoral candidates (12.5%) or had a master's degree (9.37%). The majority of them (43.75%) had between 5 to 10 years of teaching experience, 21.88% had more than 15 years, 18.75% had less than 5 years and

15.62% had between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience. Twenty three of the teachers (71.9%) taught EFL to the first year bachelor's degree, 21 (65.9%) to the second year and 16 (50%) to the third year level. Seven of them (21.9%) were in charge of master one and 5 (15.6%) of master two. For this item, the sum of percentages is above 100% because teachers teach multiple levels.

Table 2:
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	10	31.25
Female	22	68.75
Age		
Less than 30	3	9.4
30-40	22	68.8
41-50	3	9.4
More than 50	4	12.5
Status		
Full-time	25	78.1
Part-time	7	21.9
Education		
Master's degree	3	9.37
Doctoral candidate	4	12.5
Magister degree	18	56.26
Doctorate degree	5	15.62
Professorate	2	6.25
Length of Teaching Experience (LoTE)		
Less than 5 years	6	18.75
5 to 10 years	14	43.75
11 to 15 years	5	15.62
More than 15 years	7	21.88
Levels of Study Taught		
L1	23	71.9
L2	21	65.9
L3	16	50
M1	7	21.9
M2	5	15.6
Total	32	100%

3.3 Procedures

The study was a small-scale survey. It adopted a descriptive design to describe in numerical terms (frequencies, percent, mean and standard deviation) the teaching style used predominantly by EFL teachers within the LMD system and the pedagogical practices they most commonly employed in their classroom.

The survey used an anonymous questionnaire composed of two parts. The first one included 6 items devoted to gather personal background about the participants (gender, age, status, education, length of teaching experience (LoTE) and levels of study taught). The

second part was an adapted version of Conti's PALS (2004) representing the 7 factors referred to above (See Appendix for full questionnaire including socio-demographic items).

In line with ethical research procedures, a permission letter was mailed to Conti who granted written consent for the use of PALS on August 11, 2017.

The number of items contained in the adapted version of PALS (APALS) was reduced to 32 (originally 44). This is due to the fact that some of the questions were not appropriate to the university or the Algerian cultural contexts such as, "I allow older students more time to complete assignments when they need", "I plan units which differ widely as possible from my students' socio-economic backgrounds", "I encourage students to adopt middle class values", "I use materials that were originally designed for students in elementary and secondary schools" or "I measure a student's long term educational growth by comparing his/her total achievement in class to his/her expected performance as measured by national norms from standardized tests". SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to analyze the items.

To test the reliability of APALS, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. The results demonstrated that the overall reliability coefficient was moderate ($\alpha = .655$) compared to that of PALS which was $\approx .92$ (Conti, 1985; 1990). This reliability level was expected since the length of the questionnaire was reduced. According to Gliem & Gliem, 2003, reducing the number of items could affect cronbach's alpha by decreasing it. Besides, since the framework used was a multidimensional scale consisting of several factors, then reducing the number of items within it could decrease the inter-item correlations across the full set of items which naturally would reduce the overall alpha (Hussey et al., 2025). Moreover, reliability coefficient could be reduced if the items in the original scale were omitted because of the cultural and the contextual characteristics of the population under study (Hambleton & Patsula, 1999) which was the case in our study. However, despite this, the reliability level of APALS was acceptable since it remained within the acceptable values of Crombach's alpha which were ".60 or .70" according to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994, p.265).

APALS is a summative scale that uses a 6-point Likert scale ranging from always to never as follows: 0=Always, 1=Almost Always, 2=Often, 3=Seldom, 4= Almost Never, 5=Never. It comprises positive items (1, 3, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32) and negative ones (2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 20, 22, 23, 27, 29). For positive questions, the highest score is 5 and the lowest is 0. Conversely, for the negative ones, the highest score is 0 and the lowest is 5. Scoring consists first of converting the values for the positive items. They are then summed to all the items. The total score of the scale is divided into seven factors. Table 3 below shows the items targeting each factor:

Table 3:
Items Targeting the Seven Factors in APALS

Factors	Items
Factor 1 "Learner-Centered Activities"	2, 8, 9, 12, 22, 23
Factor 2 "Personalizing Instruction"	6, 13, 18, 25, 27, 29, 30
Factor 3 "Relating to Experience"	10, 24, 28, 31,32
Factor 4 "Assessing Student Needs"	3, 17,19
Factor 5 "Climate Building"	14, 15, 16, 21
Factor 6 "Participation in the Learning Process"	1, 7, 11, 26
Factor 7 "Flexibility for Personal Development"	4, 5, 20

The 32 questionnaires that were distributed were all returned (100%). To identify the predominant teaching style of EFL academics and their level of commitment to a particular teaching style, a total score calculated from the items results of each participant was used. According to Conti (2004), a high score indicates an inclination to a learner-centered teaching style while a low score indicates a preference for a teacher-centered one. However, scores near the mean show that teachers undertake different practices that pertain to both styles. To indicate the most commonly used practices, the percentage of the mean score for each factor relative to its total was calculated. The higher percentage the mean score is, the most commonly the activities are used in the classroom. Conversely, the lowest the percentage the mean score is, the less frequently they are.

4. Results

4.1. Participants' Prevailing Teaching Style and Strength of Commitment

The results presented in table 3 below showed that for the 32 participants, the mean score was 118.90 with a standard deviation of 11.73. Almost all the respondents (84.4%) had a composite score below the mean compared to only 1/6 of them (15.6%) who scored above the mean. Almost half of them (46.9%) had a composite score that ranged between 95.8 and 107 (2 standard deviations below the mean) and 1/3 of them (34.4%) scored within 1 standard deviation below the mean with scores ranging between 108 and 118.8.

Table 4:

Participants' Teaching Style and Strength of Commitment

Strength of Commitment	Interval	Frequency	Percent
Extreme Commitment (Teacher-Centered)	0 --- 95.73	1	3.1%
Strong Commitment (Teacher-Centered)	95.8 --- 107	15	46.9%
Moderate Commitment (Teacher-Centered)	108 --- 118.8	11	34.4%
Moderate Commitment (Learner-Centered)	118.9 --- 130	5	15.6%
Strong Commitment (Learner-Centered)	131 --- 142.37	0	0%
Extreme Commitment (Learner-Centered)	143 --- 220	0	0%

4.2. Participants' Most Commonly Used Practices

To answer the second question on the practices the 32 EFL teachers most commonly use in their classrooms, the percentage of the mean score for each factor relative to its total was computed. The higher the percentage, the most frequently the behaviours indicated in a factor were used by the participants. The findings of the study shown in table 4 indicated that the seven factors forming APALS were implemented at different degrees by faculty. The practices they most frequently used formed factor 5 "Climate Building" (70.8%) with a mean of 14, 16 followed by factor 3 "Relating to Experience" (70.43%) with a mean of 21,13. However, the practices that were rarely used by the teachers were found to be those pertaining

to factor 7 “Flexibility for Personal Development” (35%) with a mean of 8.75 followed by factor 1 “Learner-Centered Activities” (45.1%) with a mean of 27.06.

Table 4:

Descriptive Statistics on the Most/Least Commonly used practices in EFL Classrooms

Factors	Number of Participants	Mean	Percentage
Factor 1	32	27,06	45.1%
Factor 2	32	22,41	49.8%
Factor 3	32	21,13	70.43%
Factor 4	32	11,97	59.85%
Factor 5	32	14,16	70.8%
Factor 6	32	13,44	67.2%
Factor 7	32	8,75	35%

In order to complement the descriptive statistics shown in table 4 above, figure 1 below shows through histograms the distribution of the percentage of the mean score of the seven factors constituting APALS. The visual representation of these percentages allows distinguishing more clearly between the 7 factors in terms of their frequency.

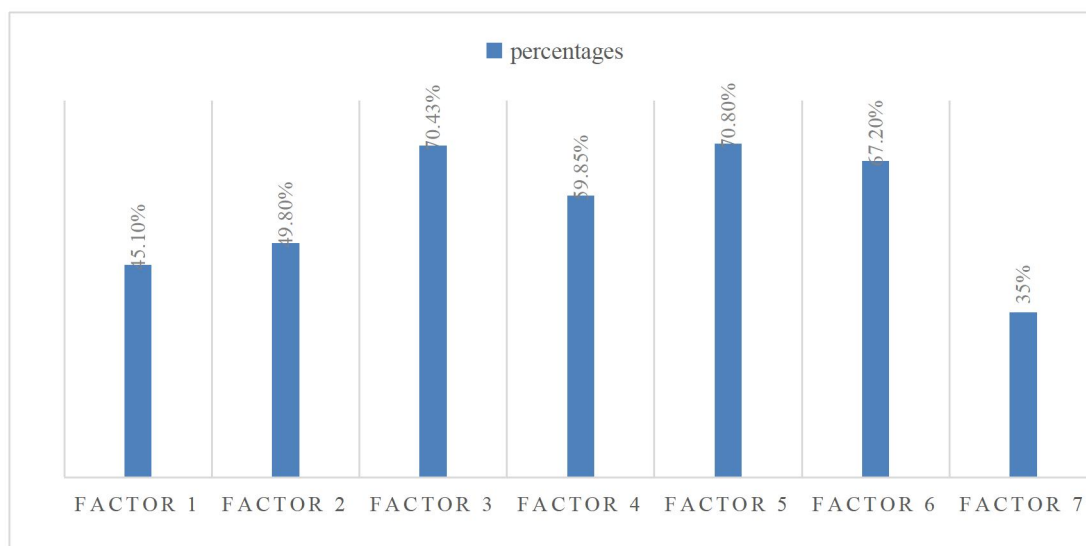


Figure 1:
Percentage of the Mean Score by Factor

5. Discussion

In this section, the findings are discussed in terms of the two research questions raised in the study. The first question was “what is the prevailing teaching style of EFL academics within the LMD system? Results revealed that teachers still adhere to the teacher-centered teaching style with a strong commitment towards it. Hence, although the LMD reform through its discourse and instruments seeks to innovate teachers’ pedagogical practices by advocating a more learner-centered mode, the reality experienced in the classroom is different. The empty rows in the strong and extreme learner-centered categories offer a powerful insight suggesting that strong learner-centered commitments are not merely rare but entirely absent among the participants.

The gap between policy and practice has been documented by several research studies conducted locally (e.g., Badjadi, 2020; Benadla, 2013; Bensemmane, 2012; Idri, 2005; 2014). In his study on 30 teachers in EFL departments of 3 universities in western Algeria (Tlemcen, Oran and Sidi Bel Abbas), Benadla (2013) concluded that “teachers in EFL departments

continue to rely on traditional, teacher-centered methods. The learner-centered approach promoted by the LMD reform remains largely theoretical” (p.78). The same conclusion was drawn in international research (Brahim, 2019; Zohrabi et al., 2012). In his study, Zohrabi et al., (2012) observed that “EFL classes at the university level in Iran were still predominantly teacher-centered” (p.19). This conclusion emphasizes the nature of the pedagogical innovation advocated by the LMD reform embodied in the shift to the learner-centered approach as “a paradigm of challenge” to use Brackenbury’s phrase (2012, p.21). This is due to the fact that implementing this shift is hampered by a variety of obstacles. Time constraints, large class sizes, insufficient logistical resources and lack of teacher training make it hard to engage students in active learning. Besides, the deep-seated educational tradition in higher education in Algeria which still values the role of the teacher as a source of knowledge and of the students as its recipient challenges the implementation of the innovative pedagogy advocated by the LMD reform.

The second research question was “What are the practices EFL teachers most commonly use in their classrooms? Results indicated that teachers consider the practices pertaining to factor 5 “Climate Building” (70.80%) followed by those forming factor 3 titled “Relating to Experience” (70.43%) as the ones they most frequently undertake in the classroom. The activities that are moderately adopted by the faculty constitute factor 6 titled “Participation in the Learning Process” (67.20%) followed by factor 4 “Assessing Students’ Needs” (59.85%) and factor 2 “Personalized Instruction” (49.8%). The practices that are rarely used in the classroom are those forming factor 7 “Flexibility for Personal Development” (35%) followed by those in factor 1 “Learner-Centered Activities” (45.1%).

The results provide insightful information on the implementation of learner-centered practices. The study shows that the most frequently used practices are those that help teachers create a supportive atmosphere for learning by tolerating errors, offering breaks and inciting students to participate in the classroom. Such behaviors exhibit the interpersonal characteristic of the learner-centered educational orientation. Albeit important, Benadla (2013) observed that this interaction “is still dominated by the teacher’s voice” (p.75). It is generally unidirectional reduced to answering questions initiated by the teacher without any genuine and effective student participation. The second most commonly used activities are those reflecting teachers’ tendency to consider students’ prior knowledge as a valuable resource for learning. Studies on andragogy in EFL teaching assign great importance to adult learners’ previous experience (e.g., Mali, 2017; Manangsa et al., 2020; Musallam Alshebou et al., 2019) since it can provide solid grounding to make sense of new content, enhance students’ confidence and classroom participation. According to Purwati et al., (2022), “teachers should explore and understand adults’ experiences as this information plays an essential role in assisting adult learners to meet their needs” (p.88). Similarly, prior experience is highly valued in the BP instrument namely, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Hence, despite the teacher-centered general orientation of EFL academics, we have to acknowledge that the findings concerning these two factors can be interpreted as a positive sign of a progressive change towards learner-centeredness in EFL teaching.

However, although the aforementioned factors embody important tenets of learner-centeredness, an examination of the least used activities by the faculty members indicate that teaching EFL remains strongly traditional. These practices pertain to factor 7 “Flexibility for Personal Development” and factor 1 “Learner-Centered Activities” respectively. The results of the study revealed that teachers still regard themselves as a major source of knowledge. They consider that to stimulate their students’ learning, they have to endorse the role of setting instructional objectives and keeping a disciplined classroom environment. Lecturing appears as the major teaching method and evaluation is basically summative. These results are

corroborated by other studies having used other research procedures. In his study, Badjadi (2020) concluded that “teachers claim to implement learner-centered teaching, yet classroom observation reveals a persistence of teacher-dominated interaction” (p. 85). Besides, by using an adapted version of Pratt’s TPI (2000), Brahim (2019), in his study conducted on 40 EFL academics’ perceptions on learner-centered teaching in Tunisia, observed that “teachers conceptually agree with learner-centered principles but their practice remains largely traditional” (p. 63). In his study, Benadla (2013) enumerated a list of activities that align with the learner-centered teaching style but are found to be poorly implemented in the classroom such as, pair and group work, projects and presentations. He asserted that “even when teachers report using group work or projects, these activities are often used as add-ons rather than as integral components of instruction.” (p.168). Ineffective use of these student-led activities emphasizes the role of the teacher as the sole provider of knowledge and a center of classroom behaviour. To sum up, the practices associated with Factor 5 “Climate Building” are the most frequently implemented, while those related to Factor 7 “Flexibility for Personal Development” are the least. This indicates that teachers tend to adopt learner-led practices superficially and partially. While they appear comfortable to involve their students in some classroom activities (like asking for participation, encouraging interaction), they, nonetheless, do not embrace fully the principles of the learner-centered education. As such, they do not offer flexibility for self-paced learning, autonomy, or adaptation to learners’ individual goals. This constrained flexibility reduces the degree to which EFL teaching aligns with LMD reform principles and hence those of the Bologna Process which inspired it. These findings stress the need to develop and train teachers professionally to endorse these principles. This is due to the fact that shifting from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered teaching style necessitates profound changes in both educational philosophy and pedagogical practices (Hoidn, 2017).

6. Conclusion

The pedagogical innovation embodied in the shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness remains a challenging dimension of the LMD reform. To be implemented effectively, logistical resources (e.g., class size and time constraints) should be reconsidered and institutional support should be granted. More importantly, EFL teachers’ should be engaged in ongoing professional development, training and collaboration with peers in order to promote pedagogical transformation in the teaching style. This would help them reconsider their role in delivering content, setting objectives, conducting evaluation, meeting students’ needs and managing classroom environment. By addressing these challenges, higher education can better prepare EFL faculty to meet the needs of their students to cope with the demands of the 21st century.

To provide more insight into EFL academics’ shift to the learner-centered teaching style and their practices within the LMD system, more research is needed with a larger sample size. Additionally, a mixed method including observation and interview would yield more information about classroom reality.

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Appendix

APALS Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is designed to investigate about your teaching style and the practices you perform in your English classroom. Please, respond to all the items by ticking / ✓ / the answer that suits you most. Your answers will be treated with utmost confidence and will be used for the research study only. Thank you for your collaboration.

1-What is your gender?

Male Female

2-What is your age?

Less than 30 30-40

41-50 More than 50

3-What is your level of instruction?

Master's degree Doctorate degree

Magister degree Professorate

4- What is your status?

Full-time teacher

Part-time teacher

5- For how many years have you been teaching in higher education?

Less than 5 years 5 to 10 years

11 to 15 years More than 15 years

6-What are the levels you are currently teaching?

L1 L2 L3

M1 M2

For each of the items below, please indicate the extent to which you perform in your classroom the practice described. Circle one of the options offered to you, namely Always (0), Almost Always (1), Often (2), Seldom (3), Almost Never (4), Never (5).

<u>Always</u>	<u>Almost Always</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Almost Never</u>	<u>Never</u>
0	1	2	3	4	5

1. I allow students to participate in developing the criteria for evaluating their performance in class.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*2. I use disciplinary action when it is needed.

0 1 2 3 4 5

3. I help students diagnose the gap between their learning goals and their present level of performance.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*4. I provide knowledge rather than serve as a resource person.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*5. I stick to the course objectives in the syllabus that I write at the beginning of a semester.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*6. I use lecturing as the best method for presenting my subject material to students.

0 1 2 3 4 5

7. I arrange the classroom so that it is easy for students to interact.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*8. I determine the educational objectives for each of my students.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*9. I get a student to motivate himself/herself by confronting him/her in the presence of classmates during group discussions.

0 1 2 3 4 5

10. I plan learning activities to take into account my students' prior experiences.

0 1 2 3 4 5

11. I allow students to participate in making decisions about the topics that will be covered in class.

0 1 2 3 4 5

*12. I use one basic teaching method because I have found that most students have a similar style of learning.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I use different techniques depending on the students being taught.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I encourage dialogue among my students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. I utilize the many competencies that most students already possess to achieve educational objectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. I accept errors as a natural part of the learning process.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have individual conferences to help students identify their educational needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. I let each student work at his/her rate regardless of the amount of time it takes him/her to learn a new concept.	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. I help my students develop short-term as well as long-term objectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5
*20. I maintain a well-disciplined classroom to reduce interferences to learning.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. I allow my students to take periodic breaks during class.	0	1	2	3	4	5
*22. I use methods to foster quiet, productive desk work.	0	1	2	3	4	5
*23. I use tests as the chief method of evaluating students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24. I plan activities that will encourage each student's growth from dependence on others to greater independence.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25. I gear instructional objectives to match the individual abilities and needs of the students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. I have my students identify their own problems that need to be solved.	0	1	2	3	4	5
*27. I give all students the same assignment on a given topic.	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. I organize learning episodes according to the problems that my students encounter in everyday life.	0	1	2	3	4	5
*29. I encourage competition among my students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
30. I use different material with different students.	0	1	2	3	4	5
31. I help students relate new learning to their prior experiences.	0	1	2	3	4	5
32. I teach units about problems of everyday living.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Note. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are reverse-scored.