EXPLORING CURRENT CHALLENGES AND PRACTICES IN EFL TEACHING IN SENEGALESE SECONDARY SCHOOLS: PERSPECTIVES FROM EFL TEACHERS

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning environment in secondary schools by focusing on the experiences of EFL teachers. Thirty EFL teachers were surveyed using a ten-item questionnaire.
Results showed that 73.3 percent of teachers identified lack of vocabulary. Speaking difficulties came next reported by 56.7 percent. Lack of student motivation was mentioned by 46.7 percent. Remediation practices ranked highest with 70 percent of teachers citing them. Group work was cited by 60 percent while additional exercises were considered effective by 53.3 percent. Despite these beliefs 60 percent of teachers manifested their satisfaction with these methods.
Teachers showed the priority toward developing speaking skills at 50 percent. They valued the use of technologies and generative artificial intelligence at 43.3 percent.
It is crucial to strengthen the connection between the goal of communication and actual classroom practices. This includes training in many domains.

Keywords: *EFL teaching; Senegal; secondary education; speaking skills; vocabulary; motivation; digital technologies; artificial intelligence.*

Résumé

Cette étude explose l'environnement d'enseignement et d'apprentissage de l'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) au niveau secondaire au Sénégal du point de vue des enseignants. Trente enseignants ont été sondés à l'aide d'un questionnaire de dix questions concernant les difficultés à vaincre chez les apprenants, les stratégies pédagogiques utilisées, leur efficacité perçue, l'usage des outils numériques et leurs besoins de formation. Les enseignants rapportent que le manque de vocabulaire (73,3 % des cas) est le problème le plus couramment rencontré, suivi des difficultés de l'expression orale (56,7 %) et du manque de motivation (46,7 %). Les stratégies d'enseignement les plus utilisées sont la remédiation (70,0 %) et le travail en groupe (60,0 %), suivies par les exercices additionnels (53,3 %). En revanche, 60,0 % des enseignants les jugent moyennement efficaces. La formation à l'expression orale (50,0 %) et aux outils numériques et à l'intelligence artificielle générative (43,3 %) sont en tête des besoins de formation à satisfaire.

Mots clés : *enseignement de l'EFL ; Sénégal ; enseignement secondaire ; expression orale ; vocabulaire ; motivation ; technologies numériques ; intelligence artificielle.*

1. Introduction

English is an important subject in schools because it facilitates international communication, access to higher education, employment opportunities, scientific exchange, digital technologies, and information. In Senegal, English is taught to secondary-school students as a foreign language. Learners are expected not only to acquire knowledge of the language but also to develop the ability to use English effectively in spoken communication. Developing learners' communicative abilities has therefore become a central objective of English language teaching (ELT). The shift towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents a crucial pedagogical development in pursuing this objective

(Diallo, 2014). However, this shift needs to be examined within the educational context in which teaching and learning take place, as pedagogical approaches do not operate on isolation. They are shaped by material resources, instructional policies, instructional practices, and social conditions.

The difference between knowing grammatical rules and using English properly in communication received considerable attention following Hymes's (1972) idea of communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) subsequently, developed a framework that incorporated grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions of competence. These contributions widened the understanding of language proficiency beyond grammatical knowledge and highlighted the importance of using English correctly in communicative contexts.

From a pedagogical perspective, Richards (2006) describes Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as an approach that values interaction, learner participation, and the use of language for meaningful purposes. Developing communicative competence therefore involves more than learning grammar. Learners also need opportunities to use English in authentic communicative situations, including contexts related to academic and professional life.

However, establishing communication as a central instructional objective does not necessary guarantee that learners will develop communicative competence effectively. Secondary-school students may encounter difficulties

related to vocabulary, speaking, motivation, fear of mistakes, and limited opportunities to practice English outside class. Limited vocabulary can restrict students' abilities to understand messages and express their ideas effectively. Insufficient opportunities for spoken interaction may reduce their exposure to meaningful language use and limits the development of speaking proficiency. Motivation may also influence learners' willingness to participate in classroom activities and persist when faced with learning difficulties

The developments of digital technologies has created new opportunities for teaching and learning English. Search engines, online books, digital dictionaries, learning platforms, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), mobile phones, computers, and new emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can provide opportunities for listening, practicing, chatting, and getting feedback. At the same time, the use of these technologies may present challenges, including unequal access, excessive dependence on technology, inaccurate or unreliable information, academic misconduct, and the need for appropriate teacher guidance. Digital technology can therefore support EFL teaching and learning, but its educational value depends largely on how it is used into pedagogical practices and the specific teaching and learning context.

These issues create a tension for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in Senegalese secondary schools. On the one hand, building communicative competence has become an increasingly important goal of teaching English.

On the other hand, teachers continue to report linguistic, motivational, teaching, technological, and contextual problems that may hinder the implementation of communicative approaches. Examining this relationship, is important because the adoption of communication objectives does not automatically demonstrate how these objectives are translated into classroom practices.

Therefore, this study examine EFL teaching practices and student-related challenges in Senegalese public secondary schools from the perspective of English teachers. The study focuses on the difficulties identified by teachers, the strategies they use, their perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies, their use of digital technologies, and their professional development and research priorities.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the main difficulties faced by EFL learners according to teachers' perceptions?
2. What strategies do teachers use to address these difficulties?
3. How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of these strategies?
4. How frequently do teachers use digital technologies in their classrooms?
5. What professional development and research priorities do teachers identify in the field of EFL?

The study is primarily informed by the concept of competence. Vocabulary, speaking, motivation, student participation, teaching strategies, and digital technologies

are considered interconnected dimensions that contribute to the development of and implementation of communicative language teaching.

The article is organized as follows. The next section presents the theoretical and conceptual framework focusing on communicative competence, vocabulary, motivation, student participation, digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence. The third section describes the methodology, including the research design, participants, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The fourth section presents the findings. The fifth section presents the findings within the theoretical framework and the context of the system of education in Senegal. The sixth section deals with the implications of the findings in EFL teaching. The seventh section concentrates on the limitations of the research presented. The last section is the conclusion, which summarizes the research findings and suggests recommendations for further investigations.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Communicative competence and EFL teaching

Competence is the main theoretical perspective underpinning this study. Earlier approaches to language ability tended to emphasize linguistic knowledge and structural accuracy. However Hymes (1972) argued that knowing a language also involves knowing how to use it appropriately in particular social contexts. Communicative competence therefore extends beyond knowledge of

grammatical rules to include the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in communication.

Building on Hymes's contribution Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a framework that comprising grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic dimensions of communicative competence. Their framework broadened the understanding of language learning by emphasizing that effective communication involves more than linguistic accuracy.

This perspective has implications for EFL teaching. These ideas shape the way approach teaching is carried out. If language learning aims to develop the ability to communicate classroom practices must provide opportunities for learners to use language meaningfully. Richards (2006) similarly emphasizes communication, interaction and functional language use within communicative language teaching. It also requires learners to use language appropriately in different social contexts and to employ strategies to overcome communication difficulties.

In the context this theoretical orientation raises an important practical question: to what extent can communicative objectives be implemented under the conditions experienced by teachers and learners? Difficulties related to vocabulary, speaking, motivation, class size, resources, opportunities, for language use, technology, and assessment may influence the extent to which communicative principles can be translated into classroom practice.

Communicative competence is therefore treated in this study as the theoretical lens through which the reported learner difficulties and teaching practices are interpreted.

2.2. Vocabulary, motivation and learner participation

Vocabulary is an essential component of language learning a language and communicative ability. Nation (2001) emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge is central to understanding and speaking language. Learners need sufficient vocabulary to understand what others say, express their own ideas, participate in conversations and to construct meaning in communication.

Limited vocabulary can make it difficult for learners to speak and participate actively in classroom activities. A learner may have knowledge of grammatical rules but still struggles to express an idea because the right words are unavailable. This suggests that vocabulary is not about learning single words. It is also about developing the lexical resources needed to use language effectively in different communicative situations.

Motivation is another crucial dimension of language learning. Dörnyei (2001) argues that motivation influences learners' engagement and persistence. What drives learners can depend on their goals, classroom experiences, teaching practices, types of learning tasks, and the overall classroom environment.

Another factor that may affects participation is the fear of making mistakes. In speaking activities, learners are

expected to use language even when their knowledge is incomplete. When students worry much about errors they may avoid participating in oral activities. In contrast, a supportive classroom environment can make learners feel more comfortable taking risks. Such an environment allows them to experiment with the language and participate without excessive fear of failure.

In this study, vocabulary, motivation and learner participation are considered interconnected dimensions of communicative competence. Each dimension may influence the others collectively contribute to learners' ability to communicate effectively.

2.3. Digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence

Digital technologies open up opportunities for language exposure, practice, and access to learning materials. Tools like dictionaries, educational websites, online platforms, mobile applications, and computer-assisted language learning resources can help learners expend their learning beyond the traditional classroom.

However, the mere availibity of technology does not necessary lead to improved learning outcomes. The educational value of digital tools depends on instructional design, teacher support, learner engagement, accessibility, and the extent to which the resources are aligned with learning objectives.

In years generative artificial intelligence has introduced additional possibilities for language learning. GenAI tools may support, speaking practice, feedback, personalized learning activities and opportunities for learners to produce language. Jeon and Lee (2025) point out that GenAI is becoming increasingly important in language education.

However, the use of GenAI also raises concerns about the accuracy of generated content, learner dependence, academic integrity, originality of student work, the need for critical thinking, and unequal access to these technologies. In this study, GenAI is viewed as a pedagogical tool whose usefulness depends on its careful integration into teaching and its adaptation to the learning context.

2.4. Conceptual synthesis

The conceptual framework can be summarized through the following relationship:

Communicative competence

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Vocabulary and speaking

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Motivation and learner participation

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Teaching strategies and opportunities for meaningful practice

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Digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence

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Teacher professional development and contextual conditions

This representation does not aim to show a linear cause-and-effect relationship. Rather, it illustrates the interconnectedness of the different dimensions. Communicative competence constitutes the theoretical goal, while vocabulary and speaking, motivation and participation teaching strategies, digital technologies, professional development and contextual conditions all connect to communicative language teaching.

This conceptualization also gives a basis interpreting the findings. Vocabulary and speaking difficulties are examined in relation to communicative competence. Motivation and fear of mistakes are considered in relation to learner participation. Instructional strategies are viewed as teacher responses to perceived learner difficulties while, digital technologies are viewed as resources that can provide additional opportunities for language exposure and practice. Teacher professional development and contextual conditions are considered factors that may influence the implementation of communicative teaching practices.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study employed an exploratory survey design.

The exploratory approach was chosen because the study wanted to find patterns in teachers' perceptions and the practices they reported rather than establish causal relationships or produce estimates representative of all EFL in Senegal.

The survey enabled the collection of information on perceived learner difficulties, teaching strategies, perceived effectiveness, the use of digital technologies, professional development needs, and research priorities.

3.2. Participants

The study involved 30 English teachers. Four participants had less than five years of teaching experience, three had ten years of experience, and six had more than fifteen years of experience, indicating that most participants had substantial teaching experience.

Overall, 26 participants (86.7%) had at least five years of teaching experience.

Regarding teaching levels, eight teachers reported teaching at middle-school level, eight at high-school level and fifteen reported teaching at both levels.

These categories were cumulative than mutually exclusive, as some participants had experience at both levels.

The participants' teaching experience provided a useful basis for examining the classroom experiences and practices they reported.

However, given the small sample size, the findings cannot be considered as representative of all EFL teachers in Senegal.

3.3. Instrument and Data Collection

The study used a ten-question questionnaire administrated to English teachers. The questionnaire collected information

about the participants' teaching background, including their years of teaching experience and the educational levels at which they taught. It also addressed teachers' perceptions of learner difficulties, their assessment of learners' English proficiency, the teaching strategies they used, their perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies, and the frequency with which they used digital technologies, their professional development needs and areas requiring further research.

The questionnaire included both closed-and- open-ended questions. Some questions required participants to select a single response, whereas others allowed them to select multiple responses. Consequently, for multiple-response questions, the percentages for some answers can go over 100% when the responses are summed because participants could select more than one option.

3.4. Data Analysis

Responses to the closed-ended questions were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. For the multiple-response questions, percentages were calculated based on the total number of participants, which was 30.

The open-ended responses were analyzed thematically by identifying common ideas and grouping them into larger themes. Since the ended answers differed in length and detail, and because the study was exploratory rather than intended to measure the prevalence of specific themes, the analysis focused on finding repeated patterns instead of giving percentages to each theme.

The results reflect the teachers' reported perceptions and classroom practices. They do not provide direct evidence of student performance or objective evidence of teaching effectiveness.

4. Results

4.1. Experience and teaching levels

The distribution of professional experience indicates that most of the participants were not inexperienced teachers. Twenty-six participants, which is 86.7 percent had least five years of teaching experience.

Regarding teaching levels, eight teachers reported teaching at the middle school level, eight at the high school level and fifteen reported teaching at both levels.

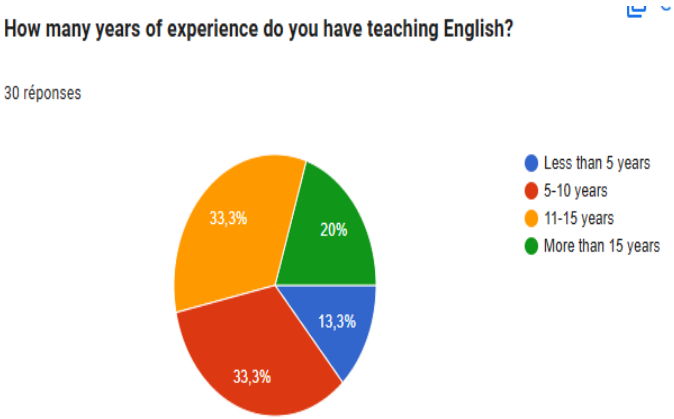


Figure 1. Teaching experience of the respondents (N = 30)

The participants' professional experience provides useful context for interpreting their views on learner difficulties and instructional practices. However the small sample size limits the extent to which findings can be generalized to the wider population of EFL teachers in Senegal.

4.2. Perceived Learner Difficulties

Limited vocabulary was the most frequently reported learner difficulty. Twenty-two respondents (73.3%) listed it among the three main difficulties faced by learners. Speaking difficulties ranked second, with 17 respondents, (56.7%), followed by lack of motivation, and reported by 14 respondents, (46.7 %).

Other difficulties reported included fear of making mistakes identified by 12 respondents (40.0 %), lack of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom (11 respondents, 36.7 percent) and large classes (10 respondents, 33.3 percent). Grammar difficulties were reported by nine respondents, 30.0 percent. Writing difficulties followed, with eight respondents, 26.7 percent. Listening difficulties were reported by seven respondents (23.3 %) while reading difficulties were reported by five respondents (16.7 %).

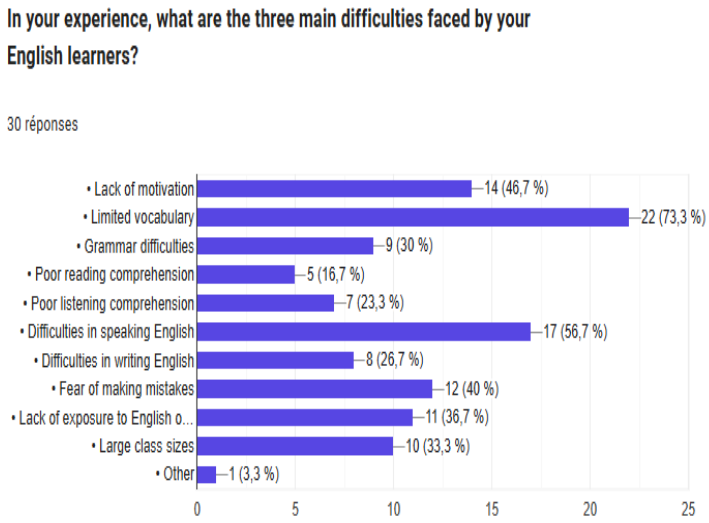


Figure 2. Main difficulties faced by learners according to EFL teachers (N = 30)

When participants were asked to identify the single most serious learner difficulty, limited vocabulary was selected by eight respondents (26.7%). Lack of motivation was identified by six respondents (20.0%) while speaking difficulties were selected by five respondents (16.7%). Fear of making mistakes and large class sizes were each identified by three respondents (10.0%).

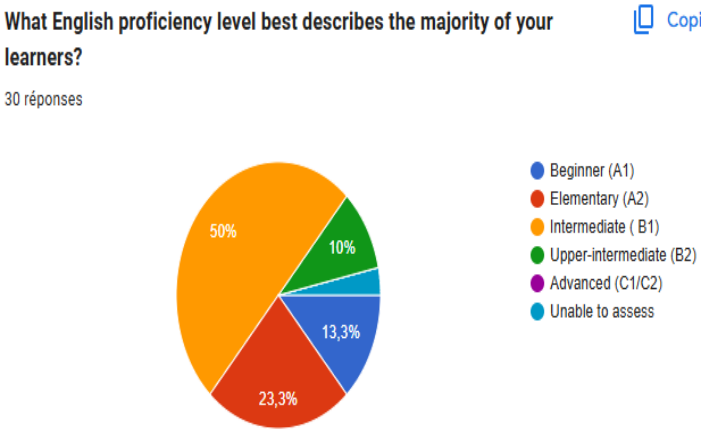
Overall, the reported difficulties appear to be closely related to learners' linguistic resources, oral communication, and engagement in the learning process.

4.3. Perceived Learner Proficiency

Fifteen participants (50.0%) reported that most of their learners were at the level B1. Seven participants (23.3%) considered the majority of their learners to be at A2 while

four (13.3%) reported that most of their learners' level to be A1. Three (10.0%) reported that most of their learners were at B2. One participant (3.3%) indicated that they did not have an idea of the learners' level.

The results reflect teachers' perceptions of learners' proficiency and should not be interpreted as standardized



assessments of actual language proficiency.

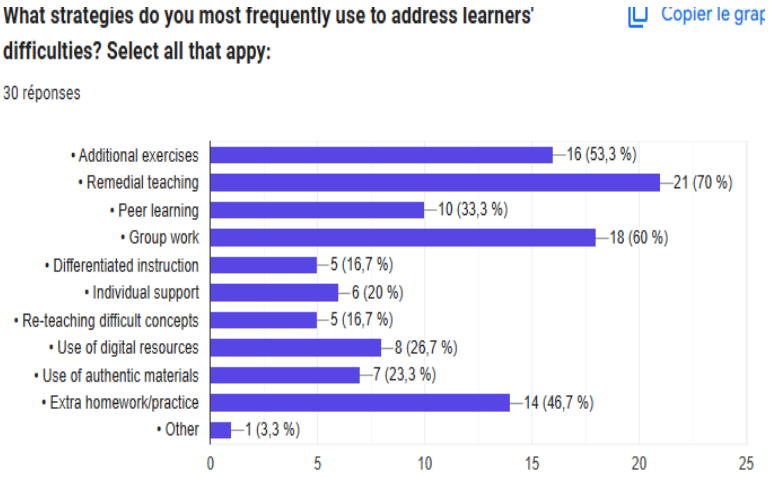
Figure 3. Teachers' perception of learners' majority level (N = 30)

These results reflect the teachers' perceptions rather than direct measures of learner ability. The reported proficiency levels should therefore not be interpreted as assessments of learners' actual language skills.

4.4. Teaching Strategies

Remedial instruction was the most commonly reported strategy, used by 21 participants (70.0%). Group work was reported by 18 participants (60.0%), followed by additional exercises, reported by 16 participants (53.3%).

Fourteen participants (46.7%) reported providing they gave homework or practice, while 10 (33.3%) used peer learning. Eight (26.7%) reported using digital devices and seven (23.3%) reported using authentic materials. Six participants (20.0%) reported providing individual attention.



Differentiated instruction and re-teaching problematic concepts were each reported by five participants (16.7%).

Figure 4. Teaching strategies frequently used (N = 30)

The commonly reported strategies were mainly focused on remediation, collaboration, and additional

practice. These figures reflect what teachers reported using and do not indicate how effective the strategies actually were.

4.5. Perceived Effectiveness of Current Strategies

Eighteen teachers (60.0%) reported that their teaching strategies were moderately effective. Seven (23.3%) considered them effective, while one (3.3%) considered them very effective.

Three teachers (10.0%) reported that their strategies were very ineffective, while one (3.3%) considered them ineffective.

In total 26.7% of teachers considered their strategies were effective or very effective whereas 13.3% considered them ineffective or very ineffective.

The predominance of the "moderately effective" response suggests that most teachers perceived some value in their current strategies while also indicating that these strategies may not fully address the needs of their learners.

4.6. Digital Technology Use

The use of digital technologies in teaching was mostly occasional. Among the 30 respondents, 17 (56.7%) reported using digital technologies sometimes. Five (16.7%) reported using them used them rarely, three (10.0%) never, three (10.0%) often, and two (6.7%) very often.

Overall, 16.7% of participants reported using digital technologies often or very often, while no reported using

them always. These findings indicate that regular use of participants was relatively limited among the teachers surveyed.

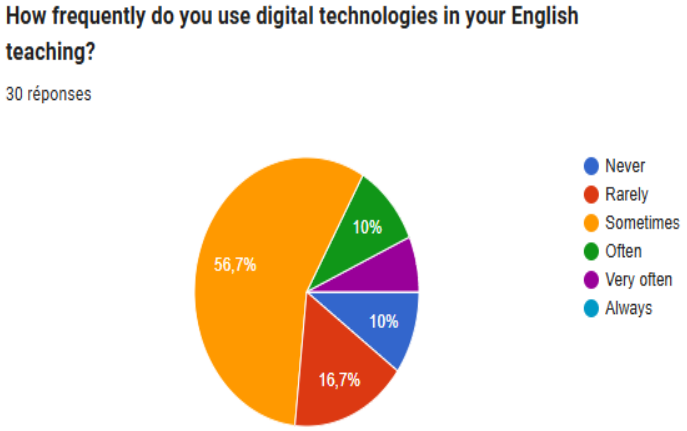


Figure 5. Frequency of technology use in English teaching (N = 30)

These results show that digital technologies were present in the teaching practices reported by the participants. However, their used was not regular or consistent in EFL instruction.

4.7. Professional Development Needs

Speaking was the most frequently identified professional development priority, selected by 15 respondents (50.0%). Digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence were selected by 13 respondents (43.3%) while writing was selected by 12 respondents (40.0%). Listening was selected by eight respondents (26.7%), and vocabulary by seven (23.3%). Grammar and assessment/feedback were each

selected by five respondents (16.7%). Reading and classroom management were each selected by four (13.3%). Remedial was selected by two respondents (6.7%), and differentiated was selected instruction by one respondent (3.3%).

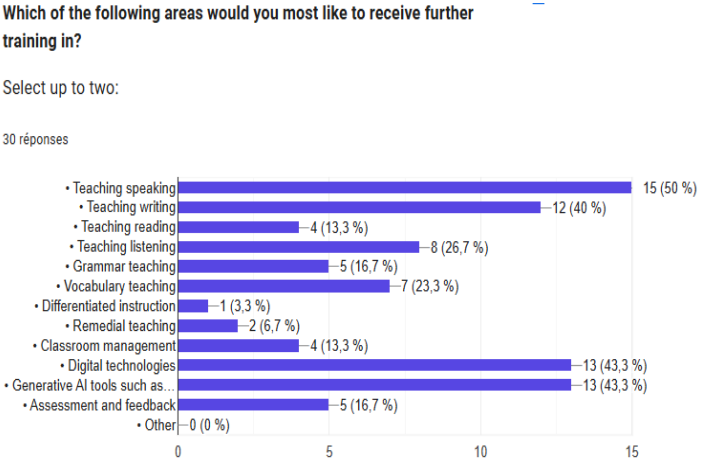


Figure 6. Priority areas for teacher development (N = 30)

The results show that speaking remains an area in which teachers require support. At the same time, growing interest in digital technologies and generative artificial intelligence indicate that these areas are becoming increasingly important for teachers' professional development.

4.8. Research Areas Highlighted by the Teachers

The open-ended responses identified several areas that teachers considered relevant for further research.

One of the main themes concerned speaking and communicative proficiency. Teachers emphasized the need

to improve learners' fluency in English and to provide them with more opportunities to speak and communicate in meaningful, real-life situations.

Another recurrent theme was learner motivation. Teachers indicated that English learning should be made more engaging and meaningful for students. They emphasized the importance of approaches that can increase learners' interest in English and encourage sustained participation in classroom activities.

Digital technology emerged as an important research area. The issues mentioned included information and communication technologies, Internet access, digital tools, and learning materials. One teacher mentioned the difficulties faced by learners in schools with limited Internet access or inadequate learning resources.

Generative artificial intelligence was also identified explicitly as a potential research focus. This finding is consistent with the result that 43.3% of respondents identified digital technologies and GenAI as important areas for professional development.

Assessment and testing were another recurring topic. References about the BFEM and Baccalauréat examinations reflected concerns about the influence of testing practices on classroom teaching.

Other areas mentioned included the use of authentic teaching materials teaching, effective vocabulary

instruction, differentiated instruction, teacher training, and communicative language teaching.

One response highlighted a gap, between official educational expectations and classrooms realities. This issue was connected to several other themes, including the implementation of communicative objectives, examinations requirements, limited resources and classroom management conditions.

5. Discussion

5.1. Vocabulary and Speaking as Challenges

Limited vocabulary was the most frequently reported learner difficulty. It was identified by 73, 3% of teachers. Speaking difficulties were reported by 56.7 % of respondents. Vocabulary was also identified as the single most serious learner difficulty by 26.7 % of participants.

These results are highly relevant to the theoretical framework. Vocabulary is a fundamental resource for communication. Nation (2001) points out the importance of vocabulary in learning and language use. Learners need sufficient vocabulary to understand messages, express their ideas, and produce clear and meaningful responses.

The close ranking of vocabulary and speaking difficulties suggests that teachers perceive both as challenges to students' communicative ability to communicate. However the data do not establish that limited vocabulary directly causes speaking difficulties. Rather,

they indicate that teachers frequently identify these two difficulties together.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight the value of combining vocabulary learning with opportunities for oral communication. Vocabulary can be introduced, practiced, and recycled through communicative tasks rather taught only as a separate subject. Pair work, group activities, role plays and other interactive tasks can provide learners with opportunities to use vocabulary in real meaningful situations.

5.2. Motivation, Fear of Making Mistakes and Learner Participation

Lack of motivation was reported by 46.7 % of teachers while fear of making mistakes was identified by 40 %. These findings indicate that learner difficulties are not limited to linguistic factors. They also involve affective and motivational dimensions that may influence learners' willingness to participate in English-language activities.

Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes the importance of motivation in language learning. Learners' willingness to participate may be influenced by goals, classroom experiences, teacher support, and the learning environment.

Fear of making mistakes is especially relevant to communicative language teaching because communication requires learners to use the language even when their knowledge is incomplete. A classroom environment perceived as overly judgmental may discourage learners from

participating in communicative activities and taking risks in using English. .

The findings suggest that communicative competence requires not linguistic knowledge but also opportunities and willingness to use language. Pair and small-group activities can provide learners with less intimidating settings in which to practise oral communication in front of the whole class. Likewise treating errors as a natural part of language learning can encourage participation and help learners develop greater confidence in using English.

5.3. Teaching and Perceived Effectiveness

Remedial instruction was reported by 70 % of participants making it the most frequently reported strategy. Group work (60%), additional exercises (53.3%) and additional homework or practice (46.7%) were also frequently reported.

The prevalence of instruction indicates that teachers are actively trying to respond to perceived learning difficulties. However the fact that 60 % of participants considered that their strategies only moderately effective is significant.

This result does not indicate that remedial teaching is ineffective. Rather, it suggests that teachers do not generally perceive the combination of strategies they use as fully effective. Several contextual factors may contribute to this perception, including class size, available instructional time, learner proficiency, and access to

resources, opportunities for practice and assessment requirements.

The findings suggest that remedial instruction may be more productive when it is informed by learners' specific difficulties and combined with differentiated learning activities. Nevertheless this study does not provide sufficient evidence to determine which specific remedial strategies are objectively most effective.

5.4. Communicative Language Teaching and Contextual Realities

The findings need to be interpreted in light of the shift toward Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Senegal. Diallo (2014) explains the change from traditional methods to communicative language teaching within Senegals schools.

The relatively frequent use of group work (60.0%) and peer learning (33.3%) indicates that some reported classroom practices are consistent with the principles of communicative teaching.. Authentic materials (23.3%) and digital devices (26.7%), however, were reportedly less frequently..

These results do not prove that teachers reject communicative language teaching. Instead they imply that teachers try to use participatory methods within the limits of their classroom situations.

These findings do not indicate that teachers reject communicative language teaching. Rather, they suggest that

teachers attempt to incorporate participatory practices within the constraints of classroom context.

The response highlights a gap between educational goals and classroom realities is particularly relevant. It points to a possible mismatch between curriculum expectations and the conditions under which teachers work. However, this mismatch cannot be established solely on the basis of the present survey. A more comprehensive examination would require analysis of curriculum documents, teaching resources, classroom observations, and assessment practices.

5.5. Digital Technologies and Generative Artificial Intelligence

The results show that digital tools are present but are not consistently used in the EFL practices described by teachers. 56.7 % of teachers reported using digital tools sometimes while only 16.7% use them often or very often.

The findings should not be interpreted simply as a refusal by teachers to use technology. How technology is used depends on several factors like access to devices and Internet, teachers' digital skills, the availability of appropriate resources, school support and the perceived usefulness of the tools for teaching.

The fact that 43.3 % of teachers identified digital technologies, and GenAI as priorities for professional growth is significant. It suggests that teachers recognize

the growing importance of these technologies and perceive for a need training for further training in their use.

GenAI may provide opportunities for language practice, feedback, interaction, vocabulary development, and more personalized learning activities. However, its use also involves risks, including inaccurate information, excessive learner dependence, academic integrity concerns, limited originality, and unequal access. Teacher guidance and supervision are therefore important for ensuring that GenAi is used appropriately in language learning.

In the Senegalese secondary school context, further research is needed to examine not only whether GenAI is being used, but also the pedagogical, institutional, and technological conditions under which it may contribute meaningfully and responsibly to language learning.

5.6. Assessment and Curriculum Alignment

Assessment emerged repeatedly in the teachers' open-ended responses. Participants referred to testing, evaluating, the BFEM, and the Baccalauréat exams.

This issue is important because assessment practices can shape the aspects of language that teachers emphasize in the classroom. When communicative competence is presented as an important educational objective, but examinations place greater emphasis on other aspects of language knowledge, teachers may face difficulties in balancing opportunities for oral communication with examination preparation.

The present study did not examine examination papers, curriculum documents, lesson plans or assessment instruments directly. Therefore, it cannot establish whether a mismatch exists between what the curriculum says and what the tests do.

Still teachers' comments give a starting point for more research. Future studies should compare school plans, test requirements, what teachers assess in class, lesson books and what actually happens in class to see how well they match.

5.7. Interpretation of the Findings

The most frequently reported learners' difficulties concerned vocabulary and speaking. These findings highlight the importance of both linguistic resources and opportunities for oral communication. Motivation and fear of making mistakes further indicate that learners' willingness to participate is also relevant to the development of communicative competence.

Teachers reported several strategies for addressing learner difficulties, particularly remedial instruction, group work, and additional practice. However, most teachers considered their strategies only moderately effective. This findings suggest that the effectiveness of teaching strategies cannot be considered independently of the conditions in which they are implemented.

Technology constitutes another dimension in this context. Although digital technologies were not used consistently by the teachers surveyed, a substantial

proportion identified digital tools, and generative artificial intelligence as priorities for professional development. This suggests that the integration of technology into EFL teaching remains an evolving area that requires further teacher support and investigation.

Overall, the findings are consistent with the view that communicative competence extends beyond knowledge of linguistic rules. Its development involves vocabulary, opportunities for speaking, motivation, learner participation, teaching practices, teacher professional development, digital technologies, assessment, and the broader conditions in which teaching and learning take place. Communicative language teaching should therefore be understood not simply as the adoption of particular classroom techniques, but also as an approach whose implementation is shaped by multiple interconnected factors.

6. Implications for EFL Teaching in Senegalese Secondary Schools

The findings suggest several important implications for EFL teaching in Senegalese secondary schools. First, vocabulary teaching could be closely linked with activities that involve communication.

Second, speaking opportunities can be expanded through pair work, group discussions, role plays, information-gap activities, presentations and other communicative tasks.

Third, learner motivation and participation deserve greater attention. Relevant topics, learner-centred activities and supportive classroom environments may help create conditions in which learners feel more willing to communicate in English and participate in classroom activities.

Fourth, teacher professional development could place greater emphasis on speaking pedagogy, digital literacy, and the pedagogical integration of technology.

Fifth, professional development related to Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) could address the appropriate use, verification of generated information, academic integrity, learner autonomy, responsible use, and ethical considerations. These areas are relevant to the meaningful and responsible integration of GenAI into EFL teaching and learning.

Sixth, differentiated and remedial instruction could be strengthened to respond to differences in learners' needs and levels of proficiency. Such approaches may help address the range of difficulties in the study, particularly those related to vocabulary, speaking, and motivation.

Seventh, further research could investigate the alignment between curriculum objectives, assessment practices and communicative language teaching. Such research would help determine the extent to which learners are provided with opportunities to develop and demonstrate communicative competence.

Taken together, these implications highlight the importance of connecting language instruction, communicative practice, learner engagement, teacher professional development, technology integration, and assessment within the Senegalese secondary school context.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, it involved a relatively small sample of 30 respondents. The findings should therefore not be considered representative of all EFL teachers in Senegal.

Second, the study relied primarily on teachers' self-reports and perceptions. Reported classroom practices may not necessarily correspond to practices observed in real classroom setting.

Third, estimates of learners' proficiency were based on teachers' perceptions rather than standardized language assessments. These estimates should therefore be interpreted with caution.

In addition, the study did not include classroom observations, learner interviews, direct assessments of learner performance, systematic analysis of teaching materials, or examination-document analysis. The absence of these sources limited the possibility of triangulating the findings and obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of classroom practices.

Finally, the study adopted a cross-sectional design. It did not examine changes in teaching practices or learner development over time.

Given these limitations the study should be understood as an investigation designed to identify recurring patterns, perceptions and areas requiring further research rather than as a nationally representative assessment of EFL teaching, in Senegal.

8. Conclusion

This study examines the challenges and instructional practices associated with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Senegalese secondary schools from the perspective of 30 English teachers. The findings revealed that the most frequently reported students difficulties were limited vocabulary (73.3%), speaking difficulties (56.7%) , and lack of motivation (46.7%). Fear of making mistakes and limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom were also identified as important challenges

Teachers reported several strategies to address these difficulties, including remedial instruction (70.0%), group works (60.0%), additional exercises (53.3%), and increased homework or practice (46.7%). However 60.0% of the respondents considered their strategies only moderately or partially effective. This finding suggests that the teachers are responding to learners' needs while recognizing limitations in the effectiveness of their current instructional practices.

The use of digital technologies appeared to remain occasional. Even though 56.7% of the teachers reported using digital tools sometimes only 16.7% indicated often or very often use. Regarding professional development, 43.3% of the participants identified digital tools and generative artificial intelligence as important areas for professional growth, while speaking interaction was identified by 50.0% of teachers.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support the relevance of communicative competence as a framework for understanding teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Vocabulary, speaking, motivation, student participation, instructional teachings, digital technologies, professional development, and the educational environment can be understood as interconnected dimensions of communicative language teaching.

The findings also highlight the importance of examining communicative language teaching in its educational setting. The implementation of communicative objectives may be influenced by class size, available resources, opportunities for language use, teacher training, technology, and assessment practices. The repeated mention of testing and the connection between instructional objectives and classroom practices suggest important directions for future research.

More studies should include different groups of teachers and students and adapt multiple methods, including classroom observations, students' interviews, language

proficiency assessment, analyses of teaching materials, curriculum documents, and examination requirements. Such approaches would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communicative objectives are translated into classroom practice.

Overall, improving EFL teaching in Senegalese secondary schools requires a comprehensive approach that connects language development, authentic communication, learner motivation and participation, teacher professional development, appropriate use of digital technologies, assessment practice, and the broader educational context. These findings provide a basis for further investigation into the conditions necessary for strengthening communicative language teaching in Senegalese secondary education.

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