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Editorial

Dear Colleagues and Readers

It is my pleasure to present Volume 8, Issue 4 of the *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies* (IJHCS). As usual, the journal included many articles dealing with interdisciplinary issues written by authors from different countries and different disciplinary affiliations. The contributions of our authors enormously enriched the content and perspectives of the IJHCS.

I sincerely thank our respected authors for selecting the IJHCS, our reviewers for reviewing the selected articles for this issue and the Administrative Board for its contribution to helping the IJHCS achieve this success. The next issue will be published in June 2022 and your valuable contributions are welcome till 25 May 2022.

With Best Regards,

Dr. Hassen Zriba
Editor-in-Chief

The International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)

La Conception du Mariage Africain : Une Lecture de *Riwan Ou Le Chemin De Sable* par Ken Bugul

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the various socio-cultural practices and experiences relating to marriage with a critical view of polygamy, as seen in some traditional Senegalese societies. The study employed the framework of feminism. A critical reading of the selected novel – Riwan ou le Chemin de sable par Ken Bugul was done. Existing literature, interview with the author was reviewed using. an inventory of discourse and structure in novels upholding polygamy, on one hand, denouncing patriarchy on the other hand. The results revealed that though, the author tries to present an angelic image of polygamy and virginity being held in high esteem, the underlying messages stigmatizing arranged and early marriages, Marriage which was established by God as a means of bringing comfort to the couple has now become a source of woe to many traditional African societies. Manners failed in achieving the aim for which it was established. In many African cultures, marriage has become a source of trauma for many women due to the patriarchal system practiced by many cultures. The female author surprisingly presents a positive image of polygamy by saying that it should not be a dreaded relationship but that enlightened women folks should reconsider their stand.

Keywords: Polygamy, African marriage, tradition, feminism.

INTRODUCTION

On ne peut pas parler aujourd'hui du mariage en Afrique sans évoquer les horreurs, l'image souffrante et le sort misérable de la femme qui est la préoccupation principale de bon nombre d'écrivains, Le Nigérian Chinua Achebe, dans le *Monde s'effondre* présente des femmes qui sont battues par leur mari, Okonkwo. On se souvient de Kany dans *Sous l'orage* dont la famille veut qu'elle quitte l'école pour épouser un vieux commerçant qui a déjà plusieurs femmes. Fatou Kéita aussi se soulève contre les mœurs rétrogrades qui poussent l'héroïne à fuir le foyer de son époux indésirable. Aduke Adebayo (2000) décrit la préoccupation principale du camerounaise Calixte Beyala comme étant la démystification de l'ordre patriarcal et la crucifixion littéraire de mâle tout en explorant les paroles considérées comme tabou pour les femmes. Selon Adewuyi et al (2017), plusieurs organisations féminines ont démontré leurs amertumes contre le traitement malsain du sexe faible. Certes, ces œuvres parmi tant d'autres exposent et critiquent le fait que les communautés africaines sont fortement structurées sur le système patriarcal.

Sur le plan juridique, le mariage est l'union légitime résultant d'une déclaration reçue en forme solennelle par l'officier d'état civil qui a reçu auparavant les consentements des futurs, en vue de la création d'une famille et d'une aide mutuelle dans la traversée de l'existence. Le mariage désigne aussi l'acte juridique créateur de l'union et qui soumet celle-ci à des règles permettant aux époux de réaliser les buts de leur union. Le mariage est généralement considéré comme l'union entre un homme et une femme. Signalons toutefois que la dégradation sociale fait que de nos jours, dans certaines sociétés, deux personnes du même sexe peuvent le célébrer. Il y a cependant de différents types de mariage à savoir, le mariage civil, le mariage traditionnel et le mariage religieux. Cette union peut aboutir au mariage monogamique dans lequel un homme se marie avec une seule femme, la bigamie dans lequel un homme se marie avec deux femmes en même temps l'union polygamique dans lequel un homme se marie avec plusieurs femmes, on ne peut que mentionner la polyandrie dans lequel une femme se marie avec plusieurs hommes. Bref le mariage selon *Petit Robert illustré* (2009) est comme un solennel par lequel un homme et une femme établissent entre eux dont les conditions, les effets et la dissolution sont régis selon les dispositions juridiques en vigueur dans leur pays par le code civil, par les religieuses ou par la coutume. Le mariage a été depuis des siècles une des institutions sociales qui réorganisent la société. Ici, en Afrique, on voit plus le système traditionnel du mariage qui se caractérise par la polygamie, le mariage précoce ou arrangé et l'importance de la virginité, toutes choses qui s'opposent quelque peu au système moderne actuel de la conception du mariage.

Le thème de ce travail qui a toujours tiré notre attention à travers la fiction ne nous est pas venue à l'esprit naturellement. Après avoir lu *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* de Ken Bugul, l'idée de consacrer cette étude qui a pour objectif de voir comment cette écrivaine a décidé de soutenir l'univers haineux du mariage et surtout de la polygamie que la plupart des critiques ont souvent le souci de remettre en cause nous, a été la source de notre focalisation. Le but de notre travail de recherche est de montrer le système du mariage dans la culture africaine à travers l'étude du roman *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* de Ken Bugul. La littérature étant le miroir de la vie des sociétés, ce roman nous montre ce qui se passe à propos du mariage particulièrement le

système traditionnel en Afrique en général et au Sénégal en particulier. Sur ce, nous le considérons nécessaire de jeter un coup d'œil sur la vie de l'auteur et son œuvre.

PRÉSENTATION ORIENTÉE DE KEN BUGUL ET DE SON ŒUVRE

Ken Bugul dont le vrai est Mariétou Mbaye Biléoma est un pseudonyme qui signifie en wolof : « personne n'en veut » — est née en 1947 à Malene Hodar dans le Ndoucoumane, au Sénégal. Après quelques années d'école primaire dans son village, Mariétou Mbaye entreprend des études secondaires au lycée Malick Sy de Thiès, puis passe une année à l'Université de Dakar où elle obtient une bourse d'études qui lui permet de se rendre en Belgique. De 1986 à 1993, elle est fonctionnaire internationale, successivement basée à Nairobi (Kenya), Brazzaville (Congo), Lomé (Togo) comme Chargée de Programmes dans la région Afrique d'une organisation non gouvernementale internationale s'occupant de programmes et projets de planification familiale (International Planned Parenthood Federation IPPF Africa Region). Depuis 1994, elle se consacre principalement à ses activités d'écrivaine et son ouvrage, *Riwan et le chemin de sable* a été couronné du prestigieux "Grand Prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire" en 1999. La même année, elle affirmait lors d'une interview organisée à l'occasion de la sortie de son troisième roman: «... j'écris et je m'occupe d'une PME qui fait la promotion et la vente d'objets d'art, d'œuvres culturelles et d'artisanat y compris la gastronomie africaine. » Elle a aussi publié d'autres romans tels que *le Baobab Fou* (1948), *Cendres et Braises* (1994), *La folie et la mort* (2000). *De l'autre cote d'un regard* (2003), *Rue Felix-Favre* (2005). *La pièce d'on* (2006). *Mes hommes à moi* (2008). Veuve d'un médecin béninois. Ken Bugul a aménagé une galerie d'art, à Porto-Novo, au Bénin dans l'ancien cabinet de son mari. Tout en continuant ses activités d'écrivaine, elle est aussi animatrice d'Ateliers d'écriture en milieu formel (académique), informel (groupes sociaux) et en milieu défavorisé (réhabilitation, valorisation, estime de soi, intégration). Elle travaille également à la promotion d'œuvres culturelles, d'objets d'art et d'artisanat.

En ce qui concerne sa vie privée qui est d'ailleurs la source de l'œuvre, Après avoir vécu en France pendant plusieurs années, Ken Bugul est revenue dans son village. Sans mari et sans enfants, elle n'y a pas sa place car elle avait été maltraitée par le blanc avec qui elle vivait. Elle y retrouve un marabout qui était un ami de sa grand-mère, qui finit par lui redonné confiance dans un milieu où tout le monde l'avait rejetée. Là, elle passait toutes ses journées chez lui et rentrait chez elle le soir, Sa rencontre et son union avec le Serigne, haut responsable du mouvement religieux mouride et homme d'une grande spiritualité, dont elle devient la 28^e épouse. C'est ainsi qu'elle fut réhabilitée.

De manière succincte, dans le résumé de *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, la narratrice qui est devenue la 28^e épouse d'un grand Serigne (un grand Serigne spirituel influent dans les communautés musulmanes Sénégalaises), raconte sa propre expérience. Après avoir fait le tour du monde, elle est revenue au bercail. *Riwan et le chemin de sable* est le troisième roman autobiographique de Ken Bugul après *Baobab fou* et *Cendres et braises*/. Dans ce récit, la narratrice apporte un regard inattendu et choquant sur la polygamie. C'est ainsi qu'elle prend très vite d'amitié et passe ses après-midis aux genoux du Serigne, marabout très renommé et respecté, à converser sans tabou sur différents sujets. Elle assiste à la façon dont il guérit un homme fou chargé de chaîne, Riwan, qui va devenir son serviteur, le seul autorisé à aller dans la

partie de la maison réservée aux femmes. Elle considérait ce dernier comme un ami et un confident. En se rendant tous les jours dans la demeure du Grand Serigne, avec une grande surprise elle découvre dans le cour du Serigne de nombreuses femmes, âgées, adolescents, vieilles, belles, bruyantes, timides, altères. La plupart de ces femmes ont été données au Serigne par leurs familles comme un signe d'allégeance. Elle nous fait part de la vie isolée mais vivante que menaient les femmes du Serigne et également des conditions dans lesquelles elles vivaient. Etant donné sa célébrité et son aisance, le Serigne ne cessait d'être l'objet de convoitise de tous les hommes qui ne manquaient de lui donner leur fille en signe d'allégeance. Car le Serigne en a plus de vingt, et tous les deux ans il en épouse une nouvelle. Nous suivons le destin d'une d'entre elles, Rama. Et puis un jour le Serigne décide aussi d'épouser la Narratrice, qui sera sa 28eme épouse. Bablio (2012) fait le sommaire du récit en ces mots...

Dans un récit bouleversant et puisé aux sources d'un vécu authentique, ce livre raconte des destins croisés de femmes africaines prises dans des relations monogamiques "modernes" ou polygamiques "traditionnelles". Intellectuelle, "évoluée" sans vraiment être heureuse de l'être, malgré de grandes illusions initiales.

La narratrice nous raconte également l'expérience de Nambo Samb, son ami d'enfance qui a eu un mariage de rêve et Rama, fille de Mbos Samb qui était donnée au Serigne. Malgré l'éducation ou l'instruction de la narratrice, elle aime son rang de 28^e épouse du Serigne et également la polygamie. En conclusion, l'auteur nous montre comment se déroule le mariage dans son pays tout en jetant de la lumière sur le mariage arrangé, la virginité et l'honneur qui y est attaché.

LES DIFFERENTES CATEGORIES DE MARIAGE OU DES LIENS DE MARIAGE DANS LE ROMAN

Le mariage traditionnel est une affaire qui ne doit pas être prise à la légère car une fois contracté, il est difficile de le rompre. Dans le système traditionnel, la contribution de chaque membre de la famille s'avère indispensable et les anciens sont des guides pour la jeune génération. Le mariage traditionnel en Afrique se caractérise surtout par un mariage arrangé dans lequel les fillettes sont obligées de se marier à un homme qui pourrait parfois avoir l'âge de leur père. Dans ce cas, on met fin à l'éducation formelle de ces fillettes. Ce n'est pas normal de forcer une jeune fille à se marier à un tel âge au détriment de son éducation? Nous verrons également l'importance de la virginité qui est aussi remarquée dans ce roman et de même que la possibilité de mariage entre des cousins. Bien sûr, ce récit se veut une grande source d'information au lecteur en ce qui concerne le mariage dans certaines sociétés du Sénégal en particulier et en Afrique en général. Les caractéristiques du mariage traditionnel telles que décrites à travers le roman *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* par Ken Bugul expriment à la fois la richesse de la culture africaine et certaines pratiques odieuses de cette même culture.

Chez les peulhs la main des filles n'est pas donnée en mariage aux personnes qui ne sont pas proche à la famille. Il y a le mariage entre cousins, comme le cas de la première et de la

deuxième femme du Serigne, « L'une des femmes qui semblait la plus âgée et qui était de passage en ce moment-là fut la première épouse était de la même lignée maternelle que le Serigne » (p.33). On constate aussi que chez la narratrice, quand il s'agit du mariage, il y a des classes. Il y a des groupes de familles qui peuvent se marier entre eux. On recommande les unions entre les familles royales et les familles d'érudits pour assurer le bien être la continuité du rang social. Elles se marient entre elles pour se compléter en matière de conseils, prières et protections spirituelles chez les familles d'érudits et les espaces nécessaires, moyens confortables, épouses et liberté de culte chez les familles royales.

« Les unions entre les familles royales et les familles d'érudits avaient de tout temps été recommandées. Les uns prodiguaient conseils, prières et protections spirituelles, les autres donnaient espaces nécessaires, moyens confortables, épouses et liberté de culte » (p.33).

Le mariage étant une des alliances les plus importantes de la vie sociale, politique, économique et mystique chez les familles religieuses et traditionnelles, on s'assure que les choix soient bien faits. Par exemple, on ne recommande pas un type d'homme à une femme parce que la femme est considérée comme un symbole, le symbole cosmique, la matrice, celle qui reçoit et rend, un élément fondamental, essentiel de la vie. On consulte les augures pour s'assurer que les deux gens sont faits l'un pour l'autre. Le mariage dans ces sociétés est souvent arrangé car il n'était pas d'usage de faire cour à la fille. Comme le cas de Rama, la Badiène servait d'intermédiaire et le contrat est fait. Ainsi la plus grande des filles en âge de se marier n'avait de souci et de se soumettre à la volonté de la famille. « N'est-ce pas pourquoi on disait que la lassitude physique et émotionnelle d'une jeune fille destinée à un homme qui était pour son père la garantie du paradis... » Voici pourquoi Rama, était obligée de se rendre chez « le Serigne pour travailler et gagner le paradis par la soumission » (pp.58, 195). C'est pourquoi les conseils de et les recommandations incessantes continue à retentir. « N'oublie pas que tu es la propriété du Serigne. Sois correcte avec les autres épouses. Là-bas il n'y a pas de rivalité... Sous sourde, muette et aveugle. N'oublie pas, soumets-toi à sa volonté. C'est ainsi que tu auras la Baraka, ce sera ton droit d'entrer au paradis » (pp.56-57).

LE DÉROULEMENT DU MARIAGE ET L'IMPORTANCE DE LA VIRGINITÉ DANS LE ROMAN RIWAN OU LE CHEMIN DE SABLE PAR KEN BUGUL

La cérémonie du mariage dans les sociétés sénégalaises comme on le constate dans le roman, est divisé en deux étapes: la cérémonie de déballage et la nuit de noces. La première étape est la fête qui est organisée chez la mariée dans un lieu de culte où seuls les hommes y assistent.

« Dans la famille de la nouvelle mariée, on commençait à vivre dans l'angoisse. La première étape avait consisté à célébrer le mariage, à une certaine heure, dans un lieu de culte, entre les hommes. Les femmes ne participaient pas à cette cérémonie du moins pas dans ces sociétés-la. » (p.45).

La deuxième étape est la nuit de noces qui est la plus délicate. Cette étape a été chargée à la Badiène, c'est-à-dire, la sœur du père de la mariée. C'est elle qui pose à la mariée des questions si elle est sûre d'elle-même parce que cette nuit de noces est faite pour vérifier la virginité de la jeune épouse. C'est la Badiène qui prend soin de la mariée, elle la prépare pour cette nuit. On utilise une chambre chez la mariée où on voit soit un matelas soit une natte soit un tapis ou une moquette posé à même le sol parfois. Ce matelas est couvert d'un drap tout blanc immaculé. La Badiène lave la fille et la mariée porte un vêtement, un pagne tout blanc. Cette cérémonie a lieu dans la deuxième moitié de la nuit. Cette nuit est très délicate car si la mariée n'est pas trouvée vierge, la honte qui sera la conséquence n'est pas pour elle seule mais pour sa famille qui peut pousser la famille à l'exil ou la jeune mariée au suicide.

C'est toujours la Badiène qui vérifie la virginité à la première lueur de l'aube à la recherché d'une tache, d'une goutte colorée, d'une trace de sang sur le drap ou le pagne. « Aux premiers lueurs de l'aube ou avant, dès que l'homme ouvrait la porte, la Badiène se ruait dans la chambre nuptial pour chercher avec frénésie une tache, une goutte colorée, une trace de sang sur le drap ou le pagne » (p.48). Nous constatons ici que lorsque le mari sort, il exprime sa satisfaction par la tristesse ou par la joie qui s'affiche sur son visage. « Dans certains cas, l'homme, en sortant de la chambre nuptial exprimait sa satisfaction ou sa déception par un bref commentaire ou une brève allusion, telle que: « “Je l'y ai trouvée”, ou, comble de Malheur “je n'y ai rien trouvé” » (p.48).

Puis, c'est le *sarxolé* et le youyou qui, selon que la fille soit une vierge ou pas sont chargées d'annoncer la bonne ou triste nouvelle. Dans le cas où la fille s'avère être vierge, c'est une excellente nouvelle. Toute la famille de la fille est honorée et c'est un bon exemple pour les générations futures. La joie est beaucoup plus remarquable chez la mère de la fille, en ce sens que c'est elle qui est chargé de l'éducation stricte de sa fille. Notons aussi que la virginité de la fille permet à sa mère d'avoir un certain respect dans la famille de son mariée. « La mère de son côté, remerciait en silence tous les deux, tous les saints et ancêtres qu'elle connaissait: elle pouvait conforter sa place dans la maison familiale » (p.49). Dans le cas où la femme n'est pas vierge, elle inflige à sa famille un déshonneur, une honte immense. « Le déshonneur pouvait aussi contraindre toute une famille à l'exil ». (p.49).

Ce phénomène de la virginité est très important dans ce système traditionnel. Si une fille est vierge, il y a des festivités qui suivent le lendemain de sa nuit de noce qui peuvent durer plus d'une semaine. On propose divers mets tels que les viandes de bœufs, des moutons, des chèvres, des coqs grillés, rôtis, ou sautés, « Des bœufs, des moutons, des chèvres, des coqs furent égorgés, puis grillés rôtis ou sauté » (p.49). En plus, on donne à la fille beaucoup de cadeaux (dans les valises) qu'elle apporte chez son mari. « Que de jeunes filles avaient rêvé de la valise de la jeune mariée trouvée vierge! Et Nabou Sambo, elle avait eu droit à sept valises! Valises » (p.118). Nous constatons aussi qu'après la nuit de noces, on suit la fille chez son mari. Le convoi compose de youyou, les griots de la famille et de quelques amis qui suivent la femme chez son mari. Ici, c'est toujours dans la nuit que la femme va chez son mari. « Elle était arrivée la nuit. C'était toujours la nuit qu'une épouse rejoignait le domicile conjugal ». (p.118).

Nous voyons également le rôle de la sœur du père qui s'appelle Badiène ; qui aussi suit la nouvelle épouse chez son mari. Cela se remarque parfois dans le cas de Rama. Puis avant que la

femme aille chez son mari, celui-ci choisit une fille dans sa famille toujours une belle sœur qui joue un rôle d'accompagnatrice au foyer qui est appelé à y rester jusqu'à ce que femme ait son premier enfant. « La nouvelle mariée était attendue par la première belle-sœur désignée par le mari. C'était elle qui devait accueillir la mariée » (p.119).

Signalons qu'il y a un rituel qui s'appelle le xaxar qui est « institué pour exorciser dès le départ des démons de la haine et de la jalousie » (p.116). Il permettait aux femmes de vivre ensemble sans heurt. Le xaxar s'applique lorsqu'une femme arrive chez son mari qui a déjà d'autres femmes, c'est-à-dire quand une femme rejoignait le domicile conjugal et y trouvait déjà d'autres épouses, elle devait subir l'épreuve du xaxar. Notons aussi que dans certaines familles, même si la femme est la première épouse, on pouvait lui appliquer le xaxar, mais ce xaxar était moins violent. Il se fait par rivales potentielles. Grâce à ce rituel, les sociétés traditionnelles établissaient des règles strictes servant de garde-fous aux individus et limitant leurs déviations. « Habituellement, quand une femme rejoignait le domicile conjugal et y trouvait déjà une autre épouse, elle devait subir l'épreuve du xaxar » (p.118). Il y a certains comportements qu'on exige à la femme. La mère dit à sa femme d'avoir un bon comportement chez son mari. Elle doit être soumise et obéissante. Il y a toujours beaucoup d'aspiration chez la femme dans le mariage. « Les recommandations résonnaient encore dans ses oreilles. Comporte-toi bien... Sois une femme soumise » (p.115).

Juste après le mariage, la jeune fille change les vêtements au moins trois fois la journée. Ceux du matin signifient l'innocence et la pureté, la sensualité et le désir, ceux d'après-midi qui signifient qu'elle est maintenant une femme et ceux de la nuit représentent la sorcellerie et la sagesse. « La jeune mariée changeait de toilette au moins trois fois dans la journée. » (p.21).

Il y a également une tradition pendant laquelle les amis du mari qui veulent voir le visage de la mariée le premier jour doivent donner de l'argent. « Les amis du mari devaient même donner de l'argent pour voir le visage de la mariée le premier jour. » (p.22). Signalons en outre que dans le système Sénégalais, on voit que parfois si un homme a beaucoup de femmes, il loue une maison pour chacune d'elles et leur rend visite tour à tour comme l'exemple de Nabou Sarr. La partie qui suit porte sur l'âge que la main peut donner la main d'une fille en mariage.

LE MARIAGE PRÉCOCE OU ARRANGÉE

Bien que le Code civil fixe l'âge minimum pour se marier à 18 ans pour les garçons et à 15 ans pour les filles, la plupart des sociétés de l'Afrique, célèbre le mariage sous le droit coutumier. Le plus souvent les filles sont livrées contre leurs volontés aux hommes qu'elles n'avaient jamais connus ou aimés Selon un rapport de l'UNICEF, 'en Afrique subsaharienne, 40% des femmes mariées sont avant l'âge de 18 ans. Ceci a un effet nauséabond sur l'éducation, la santé, y compris la santé sexuelle et reproductive, et le développement général des adolescents et des jeunes. Adewuyi (2017) a élaboré les conséquences de ce fléau qui brise les rêves de bon nombre des filles du continent. C'est également l'avis d'Adedoyin et Adetoro (1989) et de Raj A et al.,(2010) qui ont jeté un regard critique sur la misère aboutissant à la mort chez les filles mariées et enceintes à un bas âge.

Dans le roman soumis à notre analyse, nous avons des cas de mariage précoce où des filles qui ne sont pas en âge de se marier qui sont livrées contre leur gré au mariage car faire la cour à une fille est une pratique récente. Le mari de Nabou Samb avait des enfants plus âgés que sa jeune épouse et cela importe peu. On dirait que ces jeunes filles sont ignorantes car elle préfèrent ceux d'un certains âges perçus comme doux, compréhensifs et généreux. En outre la narratrice montre aussi que le mariage entre une femme âgée et un jeune homme est aussi recommandé en Asie il y a longtemps, ce qui est méprisé en Afrique. C'est une vieille pratique et elle est beaucoup plus répandue dans certaines régions. Dans cette conception, l'éducation de la fille n'est pas du tout importante parce qu'on dit toujours que la place d'une femme se trouve au foyer. Dans ce système, leurs sentiments sont inutiles, elles doivent se soumettre aux décisions de leurs parents contre leur volonté. « Nabou Samb avait été à l'école jusqu'au niveau du secondaire. Mais pour remplir son rôle, fabriquer son destin, faire sa vie, elle avait accepté de renoncer sans regrets à ses études pour se marier » (p.118). Dans ce roman, certaines femmes ont été données au Serigne comme un don comme si elles étaient comparables à des objets. Nous avons aussi des cas où un père donne sa fille précieuse à un homme qui peut être son père. Par exemple, Rama. « Don, don d'une personne. Don de sa famille bien-aimée. Don total, don fatal; don sans partage; Rama avait grandi à Mbos où elle avait vu le jour, à peine un peu plus de seize ans auparavant »⁷

Ensuite on voit le mariage arrangé entre le Serigne et Sokha Mama Faye. Son éducation a été interrompue à cause du mariage. Dans ce cas, l'amour n'est pas du tout important. Les deux ne se connaissent pas avant leur mariage. On croit que l'amour grandira avec le temps, « L'épouse du Serigne appelé Sokhna Mama Faye était arrivé ici, une dizaine d'années plus tôt. Son oncle maternel, qui était aussi son père adoptif, l'avait remise au Serigne en signe d'allégeance. Elle allait à l'école quand un jour, son oncle l'avait remise au Serigne, le Grand Serigne. Cella mit fin brutalement à ses études » (p.23). Certes, on ne peut pas parler du mariage sans faire allusion à la dot, une pratique très ancienne qui ordonne aux parents de donner une part de leurs biens à leur fille lors de son mariage

Chez les sénégalais exposée par Ken Bugul, la dot est une chose qui est très importantes pour consolider un mariage. C'est symbolique. Selon *Le Petit Larousse illustré* (2009), la dot est l'ensemble des biens qu'une femme apporte en se mariant. En Islam, la dot ou douaire est appelée en arabe « **mahre** ». De nos jours, elle a perdu sa valeur sacrée car la plupart des parents considèrent la fille comme un moyen de s'enrichir. La dot varie selon les régions. Dans certains cas, ce sont les hommes qui versent la dot tandis que dans d'autres communautés, ce sont les femmes qui la paie. Ken Bugul présente dans l'œuvre que la dot est donnée par le futur époux. Cette dot valorise la jeune convoitée. La dot est généralement une somme d'argent liquide et les matériels comme une radio, une montre ou machine à coudre et ainsi de suite.

« L'importance de ce don valorisait la jeune fille convoitée. Cette dot était essentiellement constituée d'une somme d'argent liquide, accompagnée de certains dons matériels. A cette époque-là, la mode était d'offrir une radio, une montre, parfois une machine à coudre ou tout cela en même temps. » (p.44).

La dot est parfois un signe de d'ostentation par laquelle le mari éblouit la famille de l'épouse. C'est le cas Nabou Samb.

« Les festivités organisées pour Nabou Samb le lendemain de sa nuit de noce durèrent plus d'une semaine. Des bœufs, des moutons des chèvres, de furent égorgés puis grillés, rôtis ou sautés. L'homme de la ville n'avait pas lésiné sur les dépenses... Des vêtements, des bijoux, des grosses sommes d'argent avaient été distribués aux parents, aux proches, aux amis, aux griots de la famille et aux autres griots » (p.77).

Dans le système traditionnel, la distribution du cola est le symbole traditionnel des liens. C'est une griotte qui est attachée à la famille de la jeune fille qui va de porte en porte dans le quartier, « Le cola était le symbole traditionnel des liens... Dès que le cola est distribuée le mariage était célébré » (p.45). Voyons ensuite un aspect important du système de mariage dans le roman à savoir, la virginité.

LE DÉROULEMENT DU MARIAGE RIWAN OU LE CHEMIN DE SABLE

On a assez parlé du mariage dans le système traditionnel. L'auteur nous raconte aussi le système de mariage dans le monde occidental; le cas de ses amis (Sebastien avec Dorothea). On voit qu'ici le père relève les défauts et les qualifiés de leur fille avec les bras chargés de vin de France. Le lendemain, la mariée va à l'église vêtue d'une longue robe blanche avec une bouteille de vodka a la main et les pieds sans chaussures. Aussi organise-t-on de veillée entre des amis et on se partage du fromage accompagne de la vodka dans un cadre fantastique. «Je ne regrettais pas d'avoir fait le voyage en Pologne pour assister au mariage de mon ami Sébastien avec la belle polonaise Dorothea» (p.23). En observant le mariage traditionnel et le mariage occidental, on a constate le relativisme dans la culture, la diversité des pratiques culturelles concernant ce phénomène. Selon Charybde (2013) La femme décrite est manifestement une blessée, aigrie, qui a subit surement - on le lit entre les lignes - une vie amoureuse chaotique lors de sa vie en Europe, et elle retrouve un second souffle en se réfugiant dans sa culture. De fait, on a l'impression qu'elle en sublime même les aspects les plus rétrogrades!

LE FONCTIONNEMENT DE LA POLYGAMIE DANS RIWAN OU LE CHEMIN DE SABLE SERIGNE: UN CAS AVERE DE LA POLYGAMIE

Le Petit Robert illustré (2009) définit la polygamie comme le fait d'être marié à plusieurs conjoints. Cette pratique est appelée « polygynie » dans le cas de l'homme et polyandrie dans le cas de la femme. En effet, cette union date depuis l'avènement des Blancs. En Afrique, être polygame était un signe de richesse comme on le voit dans les œuvres de Chinua Achebe. Suite aux mésententes qui proviennent de ces familles, bon nombre d'écrivains vilipendent cette pratique. Mais Ken Bugul apporte un regard inattendu sur la polygamie. C'est pourquoi beaucoup de lecteurs sont choqués par l'apologie de la polygamie qu'elle fait au nom des traditions. Toutefois, on finira par en faire une réconciliation. Voyons quelques images séductrices que présentent cette femme apparemment déçue. La famille du Serigne est un

exemple typique de polygamie en ce sens que nous remarquons que le Serigne a épousé plusieurs femmes de différentes tribus. Parmi ces femmes, il y a des jeunes, très jeunes, des enfants qui ne sont pas en âge de se marier. La monogamie n'est vue qu'une seule fois ici dans le cas de la nièce du narrateur Fatou Siene.

Dès sa rencontre avec la cour du Serigne, la narratrice exprime son exaspération sur l'abondance des femmes par ces phrases poétiques sans verbes :

« Des faces. Des visages. Des faces de femmes. Des visages de femmes. Des femmes assises, des femmes debout. Des femmes qui allaient, des femmes qui venaient, des femmes qui étaient couchées. Des femmes partout. Rien que des femmes. » (p.26).

Il y avait des femmes très âgées, vieilles même et des femmes très jeunes, des enfants mêmes". Cette famille a une particularité en ce sens que, contrairement aux autres familles polygamiques, force est de constater qu'il y a la paix et l'harmonie entre les femmes. Cette ambiance paisible et enviable au niveau de ces femmes est exprimée en ces phrases interrogatives.

« Comment deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six sept, six, sept huit, dix douze, dix-huit femmes peuvent-elles appartenir à un seul homme et vivre ensemble unies à lui par les liens immémoriaux du sang et du sexe? Le sang et le sexe! Que de compromise et de compromissions depuis toujours ...C'est la première fois que je voyais autant de femmes ensemble (...) je les voyais belles et sereines, heureuses ... Ce qui me frappait ici dans cette cour, c'était l'apparente sérénité qui y régnait...Comment ces femmes, la plupart belles, jeunes, pouvaient-elles vivre ensemble dans la même cour ? » (pp. 32,35, 36)

Son apologie choquante pour la polygamie se révèle aussi à travers la sexualité, un discours qui était un tabou en Afrique baptisé l'indécence par Gassama (1995).

« Ah je me sentais bien. Depuis que je suis revenue dans ce village, c'était la première fois qu'un homme m'avait touchée et caressée les bouts de mes seins. Depuis longtemps que je cherchais, c'était la première fois qu'un homme m'avait l'amour avec tant de tendresse. Moi qui croyais que c'étaient les autres s'y connaissaient. Tout ce que je savais c'était de l'amour discuté, expliqué, analysé planifié...La sensation de mon corps et le plaisir du moment me semblaient une première. « p.165».

Comme on le voit dans l'illustration ci-dessous la joie de la narratrice se constate par le fait que des femmes lettrées sont ensorcelées par le Serigne ; une femme émancipée se laisse prendre.

« Et moi qui étais directement impliqué, directement concernée, je n'étais pas contre cette union. Le Serigne me plaisait, je m'entendais bien avec lui. Je le trouvais intelligent et évoluée. Je voulais devenir son épouse. » (p.154). « Sokhna Mame Faye n'était pas la seule épouse instruite du Serigne. Le Serigne en avait une qui est avait été jusqu'à l'université et je faisais une des femmes de ma génération à avoir épousé un Serigne, un vrai Serigne. «p.171».

Comme l'a signalé Biblio (2013) toutes les 28 femmes semblent "parfaitement heureuses de leur sort. C'est pourquoi Jean-Mari Volet a observé que Ken Bugul a en son prix pour son apologie de la polygamie et la vaillante défense de la tradition qu'elle propose. D'ailleurs L'auteure elle-même a soutenu son point de vue dans avec le magazine *Enquete* (2012) « La gent féminine ne doit pas craindre outre mesure la polygamie, qui peut se révéler comme une des voies par lesquelles les femmes peuvent passer pour se réaliser et se valoriser. » Etant donné que la société mise au contact des mœurs occidentales, comment une femme qui est bien formée et a beaucoup voyagé peut-elle présenter un univers paradisiaque de la polygamie.

Après cette peinture émouvant de la polygamie, voyons-en, le côté négatif que la narratrice ne peut s'empêcher de mettre en exergue. La famille polygame est souvent un terrain de bataille à cause des querelles incessantes entre les épouses. Être la favorite du mari engendre la jalousie. Il y arrive des fois que les rivales se rendent chez les charlatans pour nuire à leurs adversaires. Un exemple typique se trouve dans la famille de Sokhna War qui avait connu de batailles rangées en violences de toutes sortes. Elle avait vécu dans la haine pendant un demi-siècle avec ses co-épouses. Malgré l'ambiance chaleureuse qui règne dans la concession du Serigne, On n'arrive sans faire de gros effort, à dresser chez lui une liste des problèmes de la polygamie. Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de querelles incessantes entre les nombreuses femmes du Serigne, la jalousie parsème les pensées des épouses. En voici quelques-uns.

Dès sa rencontre avec la concession du Serigne, elle jette un regard douteux sur la situation des femmes qui ont accepté leur sort. Chez le Serigne les femmes sont enfermées pour ne pas séduire les personnes qu'elles croisent. « Les épouses du Serigne ne devraient pas sortir et elles ne sortaient presque jamais ...et elles ne peuvent pas poser des questions au Serigne sur des choses les gênant» (pp.89, 127). En outre les plaisanteries sur les maris sont interdites car le mari est considéré comme un dieu. Chaque épouse docile qui veut aller au paradis est censée attendre impatiemment d'être appelée par le Serigne pour la nuit conjugale. Celle qui est appelée sans doute rend les autres jalouses. Les illustrations ci-dessous mettent en exergues la frustration et l'obsession de Skhna Rama.

« Depuis plusieurs jours, elle attendait le petit signe qui la solliciterait...L'arrivée de la petite effrontée ne l'avait pas gênée mais l'avait dérangée. Le Serigne semblait l'avoir oubliée. Le Serigne semblait avoir oublié son petit pagne, ses petits pagnes, oui surtout le blanc brodé de petites étoiles rouges qu'elle avait faire par Skhna Mame Faye » (p.139).

« Ces femmes, souvent plus jeunes, étaient pour moi des rivale, pas de redoutables rivales, mais quand mêmes de rivales. Cela je ne pouvais pas le nier...Je ne me contrôlais pas quand une femme s'approchait de l'homme avec qui j'étais... Ce que je ressentais à présent, je ne savais pas si c'était de la jalousie ou si c'était la déception ou de la tristesse Jalousie parce qu'une nouvelle était arrivée. Déception parce que je l'avais su par la mauresque. Tristesse parce que le Serigne qui était mon ami, ne m'en avait pas parlé, lui qui ne me cachait rien » (pp.173, 179, 190).

D'ailleurs, l'infidélité et la promiscuité au niveau des femmes polygames sont inévitables étant donné que chaque épouse est obligée d'attendre des semaines avant d'être appelée pour le devoir conjugal. Cela se manifeste avec le désir violent de Rama qui voulait coucher avec le jeune homme grand et mince :

« Ayant fini d'uriner, l'homme qui ne se rendait pas compte qu'on l'observait, secoua son sexe et Rama jouit presque, car elle sentait déjà ce sexe en elle... Rama était de plus en plus envahie par cet homme...bénéficiant d'un moment de répit, de calme et de somnolence dans la concession seulement tenaillé par son désir violent s'étaient arrangée pour rencontrer l'homme grand et très mince dans cette fameuse petite cour intermédiaire, et sans un mot l'un l'autre se retrouvèrent dans l'enclos » (p.207).

En outre chaque nouvelle épouse au début est liée au mari, mais elle ne tarde pas à être abandonnée. Ceci en effet rend celle qu'on vient d'abandonner jalouse et psychologiquement malade. N'est-ce pas pourquoi Rama fait recours à la promiscuité et finit-elle par fuir le foyer de son mari. La paix on peut le l'affirmer est souvent loin d'une famille polygame. Bien que Ken Bugul compte faire une apologie de la polygamie, elle peut ne peut que révélera le visage hideux de cette qui annihile la paix familiale au sein des foyers.

CONCLUSION

Dans ce travail, on voit la littérature africaine surtout la littérature sénégalaise et puis la place du roman *Riwan ou Le Chemin de Sable* dans la production romanesque. Le thème dominant dans ce roman est le mariage dans lequel on peut retenir le système de la polygamie, les possibilités de mariage entre cousins, le mariage arrangé ou précoce, et le phénomène de la dot autant de pratiques' observe dans la culture sénégalaise mais qu'on ne retrouve pas forcément dans la culture occidentale. Il faut aussi retenir que la virginité revêt une grande importance dans la vie d'une jeune fille qui est en âge de se marier.

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La Marginalisation de la Femme Maghrebine à la Lumière de *Les Yeux Baissés* De Tahar Ben Jelloun Et D'ombre Sultane D'Assia Djébar

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Abstract

Many women in all societies of the world suffer as victims of tradition and patriarchal powers. This work, which attempted to analyze the marginalization of the Maghreb woman, examined the pathetic fate of the fairer sex of the area, under the yoke of their silence and discussed the points of convergence and divergences in Tahar's Lowered Eyes Ben Jelloun and Shadow Sultana by Assia Djébar. This study is framed by feminism and sociology of the Maghreb world. A critical study of the chosen works has been carried out. An inventory of structures denouncing the oppression of the weaker sex was drawn up for our analysis. Our work is based on religious and socio-political beliefs bearing on the central theme, namely the confinement of women which makes them perpetually in a state of dependence. On this, we have seen the denunciation of these retrograde powers as well as the proposal of our authors with regard to the freedom of women. This study revealed that our two writers questioned the deplorable fate of women, the degrading state of their country as well as the awareness of the people to put an end to these powers which enslave the fatherland. We concluded by arguing that education plays a major role in the liberation of the masses. Of course, literature and the power of language have been established as viable tools to highlight the messages and worldview of authors who serve to expose the vices of our societies.

Keywords: Marginalization, women, the Maghreb, patriaracat, confinement and shadow.

Résumé

*Bon nombre de femmes dans toutes les sociétés du monde souffrent étant victimes de la tradition et des pouvoirs patriarcaux. Ce travail qui a tenté de faire une analyse de la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine a examiné le sort pathétique de la gent féminine de la zone, sous le joug de leur silence et a discuté les points de convergence et divergences dans *Les Yeux baissés* de Tahar Ben Jelloun et *Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djébar. Cette étude a pour cadre le féminisme et la sociologie du monde maghrébin. Une étude critique des œuvres choisies a été réalisée. Un inventaire des structures dénonçant l'oppression du sexe faible a été dressée pour notre analyse. Notre travail s'appuie sur les croyances religieuses et sociopolitiques portant sur le thème central, à savoir l'enfermement de la femme qui les rend perpétuellement en état de dépendance. Sur ce, nous avons vu la dénonciation de ces pouvoirs rétrogrades ainsi que la proposition de nos auteurs en ce qui concerne la liberté des femmes. Cette étude a révélé que nos deux écrivains ont mis en cause le sort déplorable de la femme, l'état dégradant de leur pays ainsi que la sensibilisation du peuple pour mettre fin à ces pouvoirs qui asservissent la patrie. Nous avons conclu en soutenant que l'éducation joue un rôle prépondérant dans libération des masses. Bien sûr, la littérature et la puissance de la langue ont été établies comme des outils viables pour mettre en évidence les messages et la vision du monde des auteurs qui servent à dénoncer les vices de nos sociétés.*

Mots clés: Marginalisation, femme, le Maghreb, patriarcat, enfermement et ombre

1. INTRODUCTION

Le sort misérable de la femme en générale a été sans doute l'objet de critique dans les œuvres des écrivains négro-africains et maghrébines d'expression française. Nombreux sont les chagrins du sexe féminin qui sont exposés par les romanciers et romancières doués et talentueux.. Elles sont souvent reléguées au second en toute circonstance par les hommes. Les efforts des femmes ne sont jamais appréciés. On peut comparer l'image de la femme à la statue d'une femme érigée à Terminus au centre de Jos, la capitale de l'État de Plateau du Nigéria. Elle est enceinte. Elle porte un enfant au dos et tire un autre à la main. Au-dessus de tout, elle porte un gros panier sur la tête.

La littérature est un instrument essentiel qui aide à élaborer et interpréter les réalités, les expériences socio-politiques et économiques de toutes les sociétés du monde. Comme œuvre d'art, la littérature est un portrait imaginaire des hommes qui prennent contact les uns avec les autres. Selon Balzac, « la littérature est un miroir de la société. » (In <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/realisme-art-et-litterature/2-litterature>). En outre, la littérature sert à éduquer le public et à protester contre l'injustice de l'époque. Le rôle des écrivains dans la prise de conscience du peuple peut donc ne pas être pris à la légère. La littérature africaine et maghrébine sont basées sur la condition l'homme noir avant et après et son contact avec l'occident. Il s'agit d'une littérature de dénonciation et de combat et d'engagement. Semblablement, le monde maghrébin dont il s'agit dans cette étude est aussi confronté à plusieurs vices socio-politiques, traditionnels ainsi que religieux. Bon nombres d'écrivains démontrent leurs dégouts contre ses expériences néfastes. C'est contre ses injustices socio culturelles que plusieurs écrivains se soulèvent. Nos romanciers voient de manière critique les problèmes de migration, de racisme, et ceux qui sont liés à l'islam leur religion, voire la société phallogratiquement façonnée. Ces expériences horribles ont bel et bien alimenté les œuvres des auteurs à travers le continent africain. Pareils sont leurs douleurs et plaints mis en exergue dans leur vision du monde.

Notre souci dans ce travail est de faire une lecture critique de deux romans du monde maghrébin à savoir, *Les Yeux baissés* de Tahar Ben Jelloun et *Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djebar, pour en dégager à partir des inventaires relatifs à la marginalisation et à la condition pitoyable du sexe faible. Nous nous proposerons ainsi d'adopter le féminisme comme théorie littéraire qui servira de modèle à notre analyse. Certes les deux œuvres se veulent les représentations intensives de la situation précaire de la femme maghrébine dans son milieu où elle est sous-estimée et à l'Etranger où elle est affaiblie par la xénophobie, le racisme, voire les exigences de la grande ville. En outre le travail consistera essentiellement à faire ressortir de ces œuvres la volonté de personnages féminins à sortir de leur silence en défiant les mœurs, la religion et l'orgueil de l'homme qui les obligent de se voir comme êtres inférieurs. Pour être plus précis, nous allons nous lancer dans les deux textes pour en dépouiller les exemples que nos deux romanciers font usage pour exprimer leurs idéologies.

1.2 Problématique

Selon Olademo (2011), la sélection des travaux antérieurs est dirigée/contrôlée par le problème et l'objectif d'une recherche. Sur ce, nous allons, avant d'aborder le problème, tenter de faire un parcours des travaux antérieurs portant sur la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine dans les œuvres soumis à notre étude.

Depuis quelques décennies, le problème de la femme dans les pays du Maghreb a occupé une place importante dans les narratives littéraires. Beaucoup de romanciers, de critiques et de chercheurs ont fait usage de leurs plumes pour décrire les réalités du rôle que jouent les femmes dans ces milieux patriarcaux. Notre intérêt portant sur la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine nous mène à aborder une œuvre chacune d'un romancier et d'une romancière qui été objets d'études.

Ajah et Ugwumba (2016) ont mis l'accent sur la différence de la nature docile de la vieille génération et de la jeune génération, comme Fathma et Dalila, des héroïnes rebelles dans *Les Yeux baissés*, et Fatima et les femmes Algériennes *au square*, qui s'acharnent contre les autorités patriarcales. Les deux œuvres se sont servies de la théorie féministe pour lancer un défi aux traditions phallogocentriques et présenter la France comme lieu qui fournit la liberté pour leurs rébellions.

Eldjemhouria Slimani (2013) a mis en exergue les éléments qui constituent l'enfermement de la femme maghrébine. Le Harem selon lui est un espace défensif, défendu, inviolable qui ne doit pas se confondre avec une maison le harem puisque c'est le territoire réservé à la femme. C'est donc un espace protégé, dont l'accès (pour un étranger) est réglementé (voire interdit) de façon très stricte ». Certes, la femme enfermée vit au dépend permanent du mari. Assia Djebar y est présentée comme une avocate pour la libération de la femme Algérienne.

Dans son article, *Études littéraires Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djebar et les « Forces de la littérature », Kesereka Kavwahirehi (2001) aussi attirée par une voix féminine essaie d'élaborer l'œuvre d'Assia Djebar sur son engagement en tant que « femme d'écriture » pour qui la langue est moins « un moyen de communication » qu'un « moyen de transformation 2 ». La langue française est comme élément communication est ciblée comme outil de d'écriture visant à libérer la femme arabe.

Selon Kangni Alemjrodo (2008), le Maghreb (Algérie, Maroc, Tunisie) et l'Afrique noire sont-ils des entités distinctives complémentaires, ou identiques ? Puisque notre étude sera basée sur la situation de la femme maghrébine, la question que nous pouvons nous poser est « Y-a-t-il de rapports entre l'image de la femme présentée par les auteurs qui viennent des différents pays mais même zone avec des cultures identiques. Ceci dit, nous allons, dans notre travail essayer d'exposer les aspects de la société qui servent de moyen pour asservir et faire taire les femmes.

On peut ainsi affirmer que bon nombre de chercheurs ont fait des études portant sur la littérature de l'Afrique du nord. L'islamisation de la région a eu une influence remarquable sur

leur culture. Maintes activités littéraires de la région sont souvent focalisées sur l'image de la femme. En d'autres termes, Le sort misérable de la femme en générale a été sans doute l'objet de critique dans les œuvres des écrivains négro-africains et maghrébins d'expression française. Cependant, il n'y pas eu beaucoup d'études faites en ce qui concerne l'analyse comparative des deux romanciers basés surtout sur les techniques utilisées pour faire le portrait des femmes dans la région. Donc notre travail va combler cette lacune en explorant la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine en se servant de deux œuvres choisies à la lumière du féminisme islamique et postcoloniale. Nombreux sont les chagrins du sexe féminin qui sont exposés par les romanciers et romancières doués et talentueux. En outre, pareils sont leurs douleurs et plaintes mis en exergue dans leur vision du monde. Ceci dit, il s'avère indispensable de jeter de la situation precitaire de la femme africaine et du monde maghrébine.

1.3 La femme Assujétie.

Bon nombre des sociétés en Afrique sont patriarcales et par conséquent, elles considèrent l'homme comme le sexe supérieur. En effet, les femmes sont les victimes de cette situation par laquelle les femmes sont traitées comme des esclaves. Les traditions voient la femme comme une machine à faire des enfants ou bien un objet sexuel dont le devoir est de mettre au monde, élever les enfants et travailler autour et à l'intérieur de la maison. Comme la mère de Kany dans *Sous l'orage* de Seydou Badian, elle est mise à l'écart lors des réunions qui ont à faire des décisions importantes. Elle n'a pas de parole dans la famille. Chez certains peuples, seuls les hommes peuvent hériter des propriétés quand le mari ou les parents meurent. Chez les Igbo, comme on le remarque dans *Le Monde s'effondre* de Chinua Achebe, les femmes ne peuvent pas semer l'igname car c'est le produit mâle. Elles peuvent seulement faire la culture des légumes et des piments qui n'ont pas la même valeur comme l'igname. En outre, plusieurs femmes sont livrées aux maris comme le cas de Ramotoulaye dans *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* de Sembène Ousmane, sans connaître ce partenaire au préalable. Le choix du futur conjoint est donc l'affaire des parents. Il s'agit du mariage arrangé et forcé. A vrai dire, cette pratique qui est considérée comme rétrograde a ses côtés avantageux. Comme l'observent les parents de Kany dans *Sous l'orage* de Seydou Badian, la jeune génération manque de bon jugement en faisant le choix d'un futur conjoint car les anciens auraient fait une enquête désirable avant d'accepter une union entre les deux familles en question. Par conséquent, ils seront prêts à résoudre le conflit du couple.

Les religions aussi relèguent les femmes à une position de citoyen de seconde classe. Dans la Bible, quand Jésus a nourri quatre mille personnes, le narrateur dit : « *Ceux qui avait mangé était quatre mille hommes sans les femmes et les enfants (Matthieu 14 :21)* » (Louis Segond 1910). Selon Prince Bola Ajibola, (1978), jadis, la prière matinale des garçons en Israël était '*Blessed art thou who has not made me a gentile, a slave or a woman*'. « Soit béni pour ne m'avoir pas créé un païen, un esclave ou une femme. Voilà pourquoi Anne à prier pour que Dieu lui donne un garçon au lieu d'une fille. Le Coran autorise le musulman à battre sa femme : « *Les hommes ont autorité sur les femmes en vertu de la préférence que Dieu leur a accordée sur elles... Admonestez celles dont vous craignez l'infidélité ; reléguez-les dans des chambres à part et frappez-les...* » (Coran 4 :34). Par ailleurs, la femme dans l'Islam compte pour moitié. « Voici

ce qu'Allah vous enjoint au sujet de vos enfants : au fils, un part équivalent à celle de deux filles. » (Coran Sourate des femmes- verset 11). Deuxièmement, dans le témoignage en justice, le témoignage de deux femmes équivaut à celui d'un seul homme.

Demandez le témoignage de deux témoins parmi vos hommes.

Si vous ne trouvez pas deux hommes, choisissez un homme et deux

femmes, parmi ceux que vous agréez comme témoins, en sorte que si l'une d'elles s'égare, l'autre puisse lui rappeler. (Sourate 2 :282).

Toutefois, il y a aussi des avis qui sont contre la maltraitance des femmes au sein de la religion. Par exemple, dans la Bible, Paul dans Corinthiens voit la femme comme le sexe faible et encourage qu'elles soient choyées et traitées délicatement. Au niveau de l'Islam aussi. D'après Mohammed Ben Jamil Zino (1997), il est du devoir de l'émir de croyants de diriger la prière commune et de mener les guerres. La femme est incapable de mener de telles responsabilités, et c'est pour plusieurs raisons. Son émotion et sa tendresse, sa faiblesse physique, son passage en période de grossesse, de menstrues et autres cycles naturels, que l'homme ne subit pas, peuvent l'empêcher de prendre les bonnes décisions. De plus, il est interdit à la femme de diriger la prière.

Ceci nous amène à élaborer la soumission de la femme traditionnelle. Comme l'exige la tradition, elles sont résignées à leur sort. Quoique chagrénées, elles ne se plaignent pas. Les maris sont nos maîtres absolus on doit leur obéir. Elles préfèrent de continuer à souffrir dans le foyer à cause des enfants. La mère de Rama dans *Xala* se demande ce que va devenir les enfants si elle quitte le foyer et où va-t-elle trouver un homme encore célibataire à son âge ? Par exemple, dans *L'harmattan* de Sembène Ousmane, Ouhigbé déclare :

Ne dis rien. C'est ton père...c'est un homme. Nous les femmes, c'est notre lot d'être battues. Aucune femme ne peut vanter de ne jamais être battue par son mari...tu te rappelles la dernière fois qu'il m'a frappée ? Je suis restée trois jours couchés, dit la mère les yeux rivés sur la fille. (Ousmane Sembene, *L'Harmattan* 1966).

En conséquence, la plupart d'entre elles disent vau mieux d'être mal mariée que de rester célibataire. De nos jours, l'on rencontre dans la société des femmes émancipées comme le protagoniste du roman de notre étude qui se soulèvent contre la maltraitance des femmes.

A l'instar de la situation piteuse de la femme traditionnelle africaine, la femme maghrébine dont il s'agit dans notre étude est victime de l'oppression de l'homme par l'homme et surtout la violence sous forme physique verbale et psychologique faite à la femme. Les cruautés dont les femmes sont victimes à savoir, la polygamie, l'enferment, la violence domestique et l'exclusion de l'éducation sont mis en exergue. Il y aussi a situation précaire des

femmes de sa société qui les rend incapables de se défendre. Leurs problèmes sont semblables et proviennent de la méchanceté de l'homme. On ne voit que des personnages féminins qui ne sont pas permis de contribuer aux décisions importantes du foyer. On ne peut qu'ajouter les exigences de l'islam qui asservissent la femme de la société maghrébine. Ceci dit posons-nous d'abord la question de savoir comment ces auteurs ont réalisé leur but. Quels sont les engagements littéraire et idéologique des deux auteurs ? Comment les femmes sont-elles marginalisées dans les deux œuvres ? Quels sont les moyens de présentation de la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine dans les deux œuvres ? Quelles sont les influences de l'école en ce qui concerne l'émancipation de la femme maghrébine ?

2. L'IMAGE DE LA FEMME DANS LES DEUX ŒUVRES

Certes, maintes études portant sur le sort de la femme à travers le monde, nous avons l'intention d'axer notre recherche sur des auteurs maghrébins. Comme l'a constaté Kangni Alem (2008:3), la réaction fortement teintée de racisme, les préjugés à l'égard des arabes, de l'islam voire et le fait que la plupart des étudiants préfèrent baser leur travail sur les auteurs négro-africains pour pouvoir vite trouver des documents et de directeur de mémoire, sont à la base de la rareté de travaux sur la littérature maghrébine dans ce coin de l'Afrique. Nous allons ainsi déclarer de prime abord que ce travail va élargir le champ d'étude sur les auteurs maghrébins.

La lecture des œuvres de Tahar Ben Jelloum et d'Assia Djebar n'est pas fortuite. Le Maghreb recèle de nombreuses valeurs dont les structures ont été bouleversées par la rencontre d'abord avec la conquête de l'islam et puis avec l'occident qui a détruit la civilisation de leur milieu qui se reposait sur des fondations de fierté. Il convient de signaler que la femme en milieu maghrébin se voit privée de sa dignité. Bref, elle se voit marginalisée. Si on arrive à situer l'importance de notre étude dans ce fait, nous devons reconnaître le rôle et l'effort menés par notre auteur et écrivaine pour condamner l'emprise coloniale et l'oppression de la femme. Ayant le souci de remettre en cause l'oppression des femmes à travers les institutions nous montrerons la vision du monde des deux romanciers qui mettent en relief le sort misérable de la femme maghrébine. Ainsi, cette étude va-t-elle mettre de lumière sur la dénonciation de la condition féminine. Outre le vaste panorama féministe que ce travail propose, il tentera aussi d'exposer l'univers culturel et romanesque de la littérature maghrébine. Les deux ouvrages retenus ont été sélectionnés à dessein pour montrer les points de convergence et de divergence dans le cheminement de la dénonciation de la relegation de la femme maghrébine ainsi que la colonisation qui a fortement ébranlé les principes de la société traditionnelle.

Selon Kangni Alem (2008), le Maghreb (Algérie, Maroc, Tunisie) et l'Afrique noire sont-ils des entités distinctes complémentaires, ou identiques ? Puisqu'il ne s'agit pas de d'étude comparative littérature africaine/littérature maghrébine, pour notre part la question générale que nous nous posons est « Y-a-t-il de rapports entre l'image de la femme présentée les auteurs, issus de la même zone et ayant des cultures semblables. Sur ce, nous allons ensuite

essayer d'exposer les aspects de la société qui qui servent de moyen pour asservir et faire taire les femmes.

2.1 La marginalisation de la femme dans *Les Yeux baissés*

Peut-on pas parler de la marginalisation sans élaborer le mot patriarchie? Ce terme est un système dans lequel les hommes sont vus comme des êtres supérieurs par rapport aux femmes au sein de la société. Les hommes sont favorisés dans les communautés et les femmes sont moins considérées car leurs avis ne comptent pas. Elles sont interdites de contribuer quand les hommes prennent des décisions qui leur concernent. On va examiner les représentations des femmes dans cette œuvre.

Au sein de la famille où la patriarchie est pratiquée, la manière dont on traite un fils est différente de celle d'une fille. Dès la naissance, cette sorte de société crée l'impression que les hommes sont supérieurs par rapport aux filles.

Selon Atilade et Gbadamosi (2012), la religion est discriminatoire, l'éducation, la politique, le travail et même la migration sont tous ségrégationnistes dans leur peinture de la société maghrébine dans *Les yeux baissés* par exemple, l'aveuglement du maître religieux en tant que vieil homme, est à la fois stylistique et symbolique. Habituel dans les romans de Tahar Ben Jelloun, ceci signifie que tous ceux qui sont extrêmement religieux sont malheureusement aveugles spirituellement parce qu'ils font des mauvaises interprétations et représentations de la religion (Ibid. : 148) La manière dont l'auteur crée ce personnage (comme aveugle) subvertit la religion dans la société maghrébine et met en évidence l'esthétique du féminisme islamique. C'est-à-dire, il fait une satire de l'ignorance des hommes religieux.

Depuis la création du monde, les hommes ont eu le désir d'adorer Dieu. Chaque communauté a sa manière de louer le créateur des cieux et de la terre, les gens croient à Dieu. La religion qui détermine le comportement des gens est aussi un autre thème dans le roman. Comme on l'a signalé dans la section de sociologie du monde maghrébin, cette société est principalement islamique. Ils suivent les commandements d'Allah. Ils fréquentent les mosquées chaque vendredi et prient cinq fois par jour selon les ordonnances du Coran. « On accrocha au mur des photos de la Mecque, des calligraphes du nom d'Allah et du prophète Mohammed. Tous les vendredis soir, on y faisait brûler de l'encens du paradis » (Sourate : 102).

À part les traditions rétrogrades en ce qui concerne le traitement des femmes, la religion est également un moyen de la dégradation des femmes par les hommes. L'auteur n'est pas content face à l'état des femmes. On utilise la religion pour justifier la ségrégation des femmes. La religion est utilisée comme une arme d'oppression des femmes. Les gens interprètent la religion à leurs faveurs. Les hommes peuvent avoir plusieurs femmes qu'ils n'entretiennent pas. Ils prennent des femmes comme si elles sont des propriétés. « Le paysan était un paysan qui avait fait coup sur coup plusieurs héritages. Il avait trois épouses et vingt-sept enfants » (Jelloun, 1991 :136).

La religion a également contribué à la dégradation et la marginalisation des femmes par les hommes. Selon Wumi Olayinka (2017), la religion subjugué et asservit les femmes. Les gens

se servent des doctrines de la religion pour assujettir les femmes. En effet, chaque religion a ses commandements. Selon les croyants de la religion islamique, une femme ne peut pas jeûner quand elle fait sa règle. Cette période est associée avec la saleté et l'impureté. « Tu n'es plus une enfant. Tu dois jeûner comme nous. Le jour de sang, tu as le droit de manger. Il faut aussi te remettre à la prière. Sinon ton jeune ne sera pas valable » (Jelloun, 1991 :108). Les écrivains féministes essaient de démystifier ce concept. Ils essaient de montrer que la règle n'est pas associée avec saleté mais un phénomène biologique.

Lorsque la petite fathma a eu ses premières règles, de manière crue l'auteur remet la narration dans la bouche de la petite fille ; c'est sale. On peut remarquer ceci dans le roman africain *Johnny Chien Méchant*.

J'eus mes premières règles le jour du retour de ma mère, je dormais lorsque je sentis un liquide chaud s'échapper entre mes cuisses. Je n'étais pas vraiment prévenue, mais je savais qu'on devenait femme ainsi. Je décidai que je n'avais pas besoin de ce signal pour être femme; je l'étais déjà par tout ce que j'avais appris, connu et aimé. (Jelloun, 1991: 87).

Selon le féminisme islamique, l'islam ou la culture islamique est basée sur les enseignements du Saint Coran. Les Hadiths du prophète Mahomet et endosse l'égalité des deux sexes (Kynsiletho :2008). Les romans de Tahar Ben Jelloun comme ceux d'autres embrassent le besoin de la transformation de la culture musulmane afin que les pratiques musulmanes soient conformées aux enseignements du saint coran.

Dans le roman, on remarque que les femmes sont marginalisées dans le système éducatif. Ici, les garçons ont le privilège de fréquenter les écoles tandis que l'on pense que pour les femmes, ce n'est pas nécessaire. C'est pourquoi on ne permet pas aux femmes de fréquenter l'école coranique. Elles sont rejetées par le fqih et le système éducatif. L'école comme une institution religieuse et centre d'éclaircissement réservée aux garçons est discriminatoire contre les filles. Comme le dit Fathma : « Il y avait une école coranique dans l'unique petite mosquée. Mais les filles n'y avaient pas droit. Mon frère y allait » (Jelloun, 1991 : 27). Le fqih l'a rejetée en lui donnant un coup sec sur la tête. Le fqih associe les femmes à la saleté et moins importantes dans la société jusqu'au point qu'il les déteste. « Le fqih me donna un coup sec sur la tête. Je poussai un cri et partant en courant. J'entendis le vieillard dire « Aveugle, certes, mais pas bête...Les femelles, je les repère, elles sentent mauvais...Continuons » (Jelloun, 1991 : 27). Voici pourquoi Fathma n'aime pas le système éducatif. « Je rageais, je piétinais le sol en maudissant le sol en maudissant l'école et le vieux fqih aveugle » (Jelloun, 1991 : 27).

Selon Weiss dans *Rousseau, Antifeminism and women's nature* (1987), les femmes devraient être confinées au rôle des femmes et déterminées par leur biologie. Il atteste que la raison n'est pas nécessaire pour les femmes car la nature a déjà déterminé leur destin. Le mouvement féministe est contre cette assertion car les femmes sont bien capables de raisonner.

Les femmes qui se trouvent dans cette situation cherchent des moyens pour révolter contre ce système et ceci se trouve dans le cas de notre protagoniste Fathma. Pour agir contre le système, Fathma vole une ardoise coranique à laquelle elle écrit des lettres étrangères. Elle a des signes qui lui appartiennent, elle les comprend seule. « J'avais une planche coranique, volée bien sûr, sur laquelle j'écrivais des lettres qui n'étaient ni berbères ni arabes ni étrangères. C'étaient des signes qui m'appartenaient ; j'étais seule à en connaître les clés, le sens et la destinée » (Jelloun, 1991 : 31). Elle crée des choses imaginaires dans la roche pour se pacifier. Cette place représente une deuxième maison pour elle. « C'était cela, mon jardin secret, mon école coranique, ma maison illuminée » (Jelloun, 1991 : 31).

Pareillement, dans le roman, *Partir* de Tahar Ben Jelloun, on remarque aussi que l'on ne donne pas l'importance à l'éducation d'une femme dans le cas de Malika, son père voit l'éducation de la femme comme un gaspillage de temps. Une autre illustration odieuse se fait remarquer par le fait que les fils sont considérés plus importants que les filles. On va défier les représentations de la femme en tant que « Autre », en tant que « manque », dans le cadre de la « nature ». D'abord, quand le père de Fathma écrit une lettre, il ne mentionne pas les noms de femmes, juste les noms des hommes sont mentionnés et ceci montre l'importance que la société attribue à l'homme vis-à-vis la femme. « Tous les cousins vous saluent, Omar, Brahim, Mohammed, Kaddour. Saluez toute la famille » (p.28).

La patriarchie est bien forte dans ce roman. On défie les représentations stéréotypées des femmes et comprend aussi l'étendue du patriarcat dans la famille, la joie est plus forte quand un enfant mâle est né par rapport à la naissance d'une fille à cause de l'importance attachée aux fils dans la société Maghrébine. « Dans une famille, il n'y a plus cher qu'un premier garçon » (Jelloun, 1991 : 39). Chez les Maghrébins, la mariée doit respecter les membres de la famille de son mari comme le fait la mère de Fathma à sa belle-sœur Slima. On place les hommes au-dessus des femmes ; ceci montre aussi la représentation des femmes. Une jeune mariée ne doit pas regarder le visage de son mari quand ce dernier s'adresse à lui.

Gazelle, princesse, baisse les yeux, ne regarde pas en face tu es couverte d'ornement de diamants, tu dois rougir et même pleurer de bonheur lorsque ton homme viendra à côté de toi, ne le regarde pas, garde les yeux baissés, car tu es fille de la pudeur et de la vertu. Si tu t'évanouis, nous sommes là pour te ranimer. C'est bien, une fille qui s'évanouit, cela prouve son innocence et pureté. (Jelloun, 1991 : 266).

On remarque aussi que la mère de Fathma est docile dans le roman comme c'est noté dans la citation qui suit. Elle se tait toujours, elle ne parle pas et l'on se demande pourquoi elle se comporte comme cela mais selon la loi du patriarcat, le rôle d'une mère est relégué dans cette société. On ne la permet pas à prendre les décisions sur ceux qui concernent sa fille. Le pouvoir du patriarcat est bien montré ici dans la vie des femmes dans le roman

Elle cherchait à la provoquer, ma mère ne dit rien, se leva et murmura en sortant de la pièce quelque chose comme une prière du génie...Ma mère ne disait rien. Elle évitait l'affrontement avec cette mégère. Elle restait étrangère à la tribu et préférait se taire et ne pas réagir sachant de quoi était capable de sa belle-sœur. (Jelloun, 1991 : 25-29)

Par ailleurs quand il s'agit de la représentation des femmes, les hommes quittent le village pour la recherche d'une meilleure vie tandis que les femmes sont laissées au village parce qu'elles sont le sexe faible qui sont semblable aux enfants et aux anciens. « Notre village devrait être une erreur. Loin de tout, il n'était accessible qu'à dos de mulet. Les hommes étaient tous partis soit en ville, soit à l'étranger. Il n'y avait que des femmes, des enfants et quelques vieillards » (Jelloun, 1991 : 26).

On constate aussi que dans *Au pays* de Tahar Ben Jelloun, on y voit la docilité au part de la femme de Mohammed. Les femmes ne parlent pas. Leurs maris prennent les décisions par rapport à leurs enfants. On voit facilement l'avis de Tahar Ben Jelloun sur ce système odieux, le patriarcat dont la racine est la culture et la religion qui met la femme en position d'agneau domestique. L'écrivain féministe cherche à utiliser ses personnages pour démontrer ce sujet et la plupart de temps la révolte des femmes est toujours la conséquence. Ceci est élaboré par le comportement et la parole qu'il met dans la bouche de ces personnages. Les femmes n'aiment pas ce système et elles deviennent des rebelles. Fathma l'héroïne du roman qui devient une femme émancipée commence à revendiquer l'égalité des hommes et des femmes. Elle ne croit pas dans l'expression, « les yeux baissés ».

Il me veut les yeux baissés comme au temps où la parole de l'homme descendait du ciel sur la femme, tête et les yeux baissés, n'ayant pas de parole à prononcer autre que : « Oui, mon seigneur ! » Il appelle ça de la pudeur, moi je dis que c'est de la bassesse, de l'hypocrisie et de l'indignité. La pudeur, c'est regarder l'homme en face et confronter nos désirs et nos exigences. Si aujourd'hui encore, l'homme monte sur le mulet et la femme suit à pied, si tout le monde trouve cela normal, pas moi. (Jelloun, 1991 : 274).

Toute la personnalité de Slima, la tante démontre le soulèvement contre le système patriarcal. Elle est décrite comme une femme stérile, vieille et laide qui n'a aucun élément de gentillesse qui est la nature de la femme car elle veut toujours la violence. Son mari l'a abandonnée. Sans cesse a-t-elle exposé les problèmes de sa famille en public. Elle n'avait aucune honte à évoquer ces problèmes intimes devant la famille » (Jelloun, 1991 : .29). Elle est une femme vraiment bizarre « Seule ma tante avait une chambre, pas très grande, mais assez confortable. Ce devait être le lieu secret où elle préparait les combinaisons et mélanges mortels. Elle s'enfermait là et ne permettait à personne d'en franchir le seuil, pas même (surtout pas) à ma

mère. C'était la seule pièce de la ferme qui avait une porte en bois avec serrure et clé (Jelloun, 1991 : 25).

Le mari de Fathma est un homme qui aime le patriarcat.

Lui qui a toujours parlé et défendu le droit à la différence, lui qui a milité pour que la femme arabe, berbère, musulmane ne soit plus maltraitée par la loi des hommes, lui qui donne tant d'importance aux principes, il s'est trouvée face à une femme qui ne cesse de cultiver sa différence de classe, de race et de culture, qui revendique un statut d'égalité à l'homme. (Jelloun, 1991 : 273).

2.2 La marginalisation de la femme dans *Ombre sultane*

Assia Djébar présente aux lecteurs les expériences de la femme Algérienne. Ces œuvres démontrent qu'elle est engagée à plaider le sort de la gent féminine de la société maghrébine. Notre auteure « prend fait et cause pour toutes les femmes de sa société, cloîtrées et emmurées dans le silence » a affirmé Diana Labontu (2006). Manque d'éducation, maintes d'entre elles sont perpétuellement esclaves et anéanties par les dogmes de l'islam, l'hégémonie masculine voire, la tradition patriarcale. Sommairement, Assia Djébar, présente dans ces œuvres, des femmes marginalisées qui ont besoin de liberté. Comment ces éléments sont-ils mis en œuvre dans *Ombre sultane*, le roman soumis à notre étude?

Au premier abord avec le titre du roman « *Ombre sultane ; ombre derrière la sultane...* » (p. 9), le lecteur ne tarde pas à percevoir les lamentations de la femme condamnée à se taire « dans l'ombre, l'ombre de son vêtement, de son voile, l'ombre des hommes, l'ombre des coutumes. La femme qui n'a pas droit à la parole, à l'amour choisi, pense au fond d'elle-même : » (Catherine Réault-Crosnier 2006). Toutes les activités quotidiennes des femmes sont tissées pour satisfaire aux besoins des hommes, des pères et des fils desquelles elles dépendent au sein du foyer. Il est nécessaire de signaler que beaucoup de critiques s'accordent sur le fait que les personnages féminins d'Assia Djébar sont victimes de l'enfermement. Dans sa thèse 'Contexte et production de sens dans *Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djébar,' Slimani, Eldjemhouria' a mis en lumière l'état piteux de la femme algérienne. Les idées ci-dessous se veulent une illustration succincte de leur situation.

La mise en exergue de cet espace de confinement est en fait mise en scène du sort fait aux femmes. Corps voilé, momifié, interdit de regard, interdit de parole et regard réprobateur de la société sur toute femme. Qui ose braver l'interdit. Ce qui peut expliquer le choix du titre « Toute Femme s'appelle blessure ». Cet espace est également mis en texte d'une revendication féministe : comment se libérer du joug d'une société patriarcale ? Tout simplement en franchissant dans un premier temps le « Seuil », ce qu'Assia Djébar appelle « la rupture » (p.10) qui

est assimilée à la prise de conscience de la femme qui « sort », signifiant par cet acte la prise en charge de sa propre personne au niveau physique et de sa destinée. (Eldjemhouria, 2013 :15)

Dans ce roman, on constate que la représentation des femmes dans la société d'Assia Djébar est traversée par la question de la libération de la femme arabo-musulmane de la domination masculine. La société a confiné le rôle et l'influence des femmes à la maison et dans la sphère privée. Les quatre murs de la maison sont un symbole de limitation pour les femmes car elles ne sont confinées qu'à cet espace. Voici pourquoi la narratrice lamente : « Ici, sur cette terre, on vous tue en vous enfermant derrière des murs et des fenêtres occultées. » (Djébar, 2006 : 122).

Dans l'espace public, les hommes n'ont aucune restriction, mais l'espace domestique est réservé aux femmes et elles ne peuvent pas en sortir sans la permission des hommes dans leurs vies. Il y a des yeux qui assurent que les femmes ne sortent pas à savoir, ceux des vieilles femmes qui gardiennes de la culture. Par exemple, Lila hadj « son œil [...] se posait sur elles toutes, les fugueuses, les évadées masquées, les fugitives d'une heure ou d'une journée, les demi entravées » (Djébar, 2006 : 120). C'est pourquoi Isma montre son dégoût en disant « Un homme ivre a le droit de dériver, mais une femme qui va « nue », sans que son maître le sache, quel châtement les transmetteurs de la loi révélée, non écrite, lui réserveront ils ? » (Djébar, 2006 : 132). En conséquence, une femme qui sort sans la permission est considérée comme une rebelle qui doit être châtiée. Lorsque l'homme découvre les sortis d'Hajila sortait, il voit cela comme un acte de désobéissance et il l'a jugé sévèrement:

Il interrogeait, procureur de la nuit et des autres. Il te demanda de t'asseoir, sur un ton ostensiblement calme, tu ne bougeais pas; tu ne comprenais pas. Il te harcela dans un flot soudain, à peine véhément: « Qui allais-tu rejoindre dehors, avec qui parlais-tu dans les squares, Quel inconnu, quel ami ancien ou nouveau t'accompagnait et dans Quelles promenades?... Quel fard choisissais-tu, quelle jupe sous le voile portais-tu et pourquoi, quelle robe de couleur violente? » Tu rétorquais par bribes, déçue peu à peu de ne pas pouvoir inventer. L'aventure qu'il créait, les possibles que son discours faisait naître. (Djébar, 2006 : 121).

Le mari peut finir par battre la mère de ses enfants. L'auteure jette également un regard critique sur les ordres et invectives envers les gens féminins. Par exemple Salim a donné des ordres à Dalila avant les fiançailles. Cette violence domestique est mise en exergue dans les lignes ci-dessous.

Pour toi aussi, ce fut trop tard. Il te frappe au visage tu n'esquives pas le coup. Il prend une bouteille vide, il la brise sur le revers de l'évier, il gronde en écoutant sa grandiloquence. - Je t'aveuglerai

pour que tu ne voies pas ! Pour qu'on ne te voie pas ! - Quand son bras lève la bouteille brisée, invoquant le Prophète, tu te protèges les yeux, il te blesse au bras, le sang jaillit de l'entaille et l'homme demeure bras tendu à fixer le sang... (...) Te briser les pattes, pour que tu ne sortes plus, pour que tu restes rivée à un lit, pour que... Tu l'entends là-haut, à une altitude démesurément élevée, tel un orage déchaîné sur les cimes. (Djebar, 2006 : 122-123,131).

Nous avons la dichotomie et la ségrégation des espaces dans cet endroit. Ses valeurs ne sont pas ancrées dans la sphère publique. Cette espace confinée est une limitation pour des femmes dans cette œuvre. Elles communiquent leurs conditions par des larmes (sanglots, soupirs). Elles n'aiment pas cette condition et elles veulent révolter.

L'homme est vraiment sorti ; l'homme, tous les hommes ! [...] Quant à l'homme qui sort, qui va et vient, qui entre pour donner des ordres, pour exiger la table basse servie, l'homme, tous les hommes, il faut les nourrir de nos mains pleines, de nos lacérations de voix, de nos sursauts de patience, chaque jour puis a l'approche de chaque nuit, leur céder notre corps soudainement las, qui aspire à l'instant même où il sera laissé en paix, au lac de prières d'avant l'enfouissement ultime....nourrir les fils le jour, nourrir l'époux la nuit, et qu'ils puissent tous boire la lumière du vaste jour. (Djebar, 2006 : 17, 170-171).

Pour la société, elle n'a pas grand-chose à offrir à l'extérieur et son rôle dans la vie est de porter des enfants, de changer de chouchou et de vivre pour ses enfants toute seule, sans affecter le monde. « Ma fille aura de la place pour tout dans cette cuisine ! » (Djebar, 2006 : 25), a exprimé Touma dans son ignorance. « Les ventres des femmes enfantent, leurs bras s'activent, leurs visages s'approchent des braises pour attiser la flamme sous les chaudrons fumants » (Djebar, 2006 : 170). Cela devient agaçant quand le rôle d'une femme est simplifié pour la seule sphère privée et qu'elle a une voix, mais cette voix est réduite au silence par les traditions. Le sentiment est grave car il arrive à un point où elle commence à se sentir moins d'elle-même et elle veut juste se révolter et veut simplement se faire entendre. « Voix qui perle dans la nuit, qui se désole dans l'éblouissement du jour. » (Djebar, 2006 : 9).

Dans le roman, la chambre est une espace pour les femmes un lieu à être seule pour lamenter leurs chagrins et pour pleurer quand tous les hommes sont déjà partis. Même à l'intérieur, il y a la division entre l'espace des hommes et celles des femmes. Les hommes ont leur place en bas tandis que les femmes ont leur place en haut dans la cuisine.

Dans le coin de la terrasse protégé par le jasmin, peu avant le crépuscule, on allumait d'énormes braseros, rangés en file, et sur lesquels fumaient bientôt des marmites pleines à ras bord de ragoût divers... Des femmes, tout autour, s'affairent, se courbent. De longues

nattes de jais battent les reins; leurs bras sont nus, leurs pommettes rougies. Elles s'activent, s'encouragent les unes les autres, elles conjuguent leurs efforts sans hâte, elles n'en peuvent plus de tant d'invités à nourrir. En bas, dans les pièces du rez-de-chaussée qui donnent sur le patio, au dallage en damier noir et blanc, se presse une foule d'hommes drapés de laine ou de soie [...] Là-haut, les ménagères s'affairent, vont et viennent de la terrasse à la buanderie ou à la cuisine. Leurs gestes se chevauchent, les ordres se précipitent. (Djebar, 2006 : 17, 64-65).

La vie que mènent les femmes est monotone et c'est comparé à celle d'un esclave parce qu'elle est comme un objet acheté pour le plaisir de son mari. Elle n'a que la valeur domestique. Hajila, tel un robot dès le matin, va d'une chambre à l'autre.

Aucune ne s'est révoltée? Les autres esclavages ne suffissent-ils pas, les travaux de jour qui ne cessent pas, les maternités qui se succèdent? Toutes laissaient entendre, te semblait-il, que la vie des femmes commençait comme une fête? Une fête brève, que suivait certes la soumission aux inévitables tristesses! Mais quand annonçait donc l'allégresse, quand goutait-on l'ivresse, même réduite à une seule journée jour. (Djebar, 2006: 90).

Leurs mains ne sont pas utiles dans le monde de travail. On constate aussi la situation pitoyable de la femme maghrébine qui travaille du matin au soir sans être appréciée par l'homme qui ne fait que l'inviter au lit. « Finis vite ta vaisselle... Viens te coucher! (Djebar, 2006 : 121) » Comment une personne qui s'épuise au cours des travaux domestiques, une épouse qui est chargée d'apporter un « cendrier » au mari, une commission qui devrait être réalisée par les enfants, peut être utile pour elle-même. Hajila fait la remarque:

Tu débarrasses la sur laquelle a été servi le petit déjeuner... Tu plies la nappe, tu essuies le bois clair de la table; tu poses le chiffon humide, tu regardes tes. « Tu regardes tes mains vides, tes mains de ménagerai active ... Dès le lever du jour tu titubes dans le demi-jour jusqu'à la cuisine. L'odeur du pain grillé réveille les enfants; le lait réchauffé pour l'homme qui arrive le dernier, se déverse sur le feu de la cuisinière malgré ton semblant d'attention... L'époux se fait servir l'en hâte; tu t'attardes devant l'évier, tu prépares le café. Il boit debout, sans remercier. Il part. Te voilà seule jour. (Djebar, 2006 : 15, 78).

Les femmes sont toujours au travail, pendant la journée, elle nourrit ses enfants et pendant la nuit, son mari est là. Le mari ne voit le corps de sa femme que pour satisfaire son

désir sexuel. En tout cas, le mari doit être respecté. La narratrice vocifère contre cette vie dégoûtante:

Jusqu'à quand, ô maudite, cette vie de labeur? Chaque matin, chaque midi et chaque soir, mes bras s'activent au-dessus du couscoussier! La nuit, nul répit pour nous les malheureuses! Il faut que nous les subissions encore, eux, nos maîtres, et dans quelle posture – la voix sursaute, l'accent se déchire en rire amère –, jambes dénudées face au ciel jour. (Djebar, 2006 : 112).

En outre, Assia Djebar jette un regard critique sur le droit conjugal. Signalons d'abord que la consommation du mariage est vue comme une intrusion sur le droit de la femme. Sur ce, il convient de signaler le concept du viol soulevé par Assia Djebar. La tradition ne croit pas qu'il y a le concept du viol dans le mariage étant donné que les femmes appartiennent à leurs maris. On voit la nuit de nocce comme « une union consommée comme dans un rapt, avec la brutalité du viol » (Djebar, 2006: 128). On voit le mariage comme « Quel masochisme, alors que le destin, déjà si sévère pour les femmes, sauvegardait au moins l'éclat du jour des nocces ! Ce mariage s'annonçait enfler des prémices du deuil » (Djebar, 2006 : 133). L'écrivain essaie d'éveiller notre conscience au viol marital dans ce roman.

Le viol, est-ce le viol? Les gens affirment qu'il est ton époux, la mère dit « ton maître, ton seigneur » ... Toi, tu t'es battue dans le lit en te découvrant une vigueur insoupçonnée. Sa poitrine t'écrase. Tu te glisses, tu tentes d'échapper au poids, tes bras serrent spasmodiquement contre les flancs, tu te fais de plus en plus raide à l'intérieur de l'étreinte. Les bras de l'homme enserrent, se desserrent, tu plies les jambes sans oser frapper, sans tenter de fuir. La lutte est circonscrite au matelas, aux draps froissés qui s'enroulent...L'homme a éteint, profitant d'un suspens, d'une accalmie. Tu fermes déjà les yeux. La conclusion approche, tu reprends la résistance. L'homme halète contre ton cou; il semble rire, à demi surpris: C'est bien, tu ne veux pas mais c'est bien. Il te mordille le lobe de l'oreille, la base du cou; il hale ton torse, tire en arrière la tête. Le moment approche où il te faudra plonger. Te fermer, yeux, oreilles, le fond du cœur. Te laisser couler! [...] Quand le phallus de l'homme te déchire, épée rapide, tu hurles dans le silence, dans ton silence: « non!... non ! » Tu te bats, il te fouaille, tu tentes de revenir à la surface [...] Le phallus demeure, la brûlure s'avive, dans le noir qui tue en toi les images de défense. [...] Le mâle s'est détaché, tes jambes pendent, lamentables; [...] les yeux en larmes, tu considères le flot de sang qui coule sur les draps, sur le matelas dénudé. (Djebar, 2006: 82-83).

Dans cette situation, les femmes se voient comme elles sont comme des objets, mais elle n'ose pas se plaindre en public. Etant donné que c'est ce qu'exige les traditions, elles font part de leur chagrin dans leur monologue intérieur:

Les femmes n'aiment pas le droit conjugal parce que ça ne se fait pas normalement. Les femmes voient cette situation comme elles sont usées comme des objets. « Maintenant qu'il n'est plus lié, chaque nuit sera-t-elle pour moi une épreuve ? » te demandes-tu, interdite, devant cet océan de miasmes. « Le coït, est-ce vraiment cela, cette douleur de la chair, pour toute femme ? » Aucune ne s'est révoltée? Les autres esclavages ne suffisent-ils pas, les travaux de jour qui ne cessent pas, les maternités qui se succèdent?... De chaque jour s'ajoute, la nuit, une autre tâche mal supportée par le corps féminin déjà fatigué. Le devoir conjugal évolue en un acte qui ne laisse aucun moment de tranquillité au corps féminin et qui noircit encore cette existence féminine dénoncée comme « maudite. (Djebar, 2006: 71-72,82).

En outre, l'abondance de ces actes indécents dans *Ombre sultane* montre le soulèvement de notre auteure contre l'insensibilité des maris envers les femmes qui s'étant épuisées par les travaux domestiques finissent par se livrer pour satisfaire le désir sexuel incessant de patron de maison. En voici ci-dessous quelques exemples qui illustrent les tabous abordés par Assia Djebar :

- i. Tu entrais dans cette chambre...Tu étendais ton corps près de l'autre corps. Tu prenais soin de ne rien frôler. Dans le noir, une main tâtait tes seins, puis ton ventre contracté. Tu suspendais ton souffle. Tu attendais sans dormir. Tu te levais peu après dans le noir pour t'allonger plus bas, sur le matelas posé à même le tapis, au pied du lit moderne. Dans le sommeil qui enfin te saisissait, tu te voulais ailleurs, non pas dans le bidonville, non pas dans la chambre où dormaient à cette heure ta mère et ta sœur [...] Non, ailleurs, égarée, « une caille battant des ailes », aurait dit la mère, dans une grotte ou au cœur d'une mer opaque. (Djebar, 2006: 29).
- ii. Les rêves persistaient dans les patios. Aucune n'avait osé avouer. « Le sang pue entre vos jambes. Chaque nuit, l'écorchure se creuse, vous serez les dents de longues minutes tandis que le souffle mâle au-dessus de votre tête n'en finit pas. (Djebar, 2006: 91).
- iii. J'enlève mon corsage de manière habituelle; mes mains s'élèvent au-dessus de ma tête. Je jette vêtements de soie ou de flanelle; mes coudes devant les seins masqués de dentelle, redessinent deux arcs alternés vers les hanches, les paumes suivent les jupes glissée le long des jambes. (Djebar, 2006: 93).

Comptent tenu de ces actes ci-dessus, on peut déclarer que les femmes représentent des objets sexuels, pondeuses voire des étables de bébés, à des fins de plaisir et elles sont obligées de se soumettre totalement à leurs maris. Les deux illustrations ci-dessous mettent en exergue le corps souffrant de femmes. Bon nombre de femmes se plaignent de ne pouvoir sortir de cet état par lesquels elles sont vues comme des bêtes.

iv. Le couple avait sept ou huit enfants. A mi-voix, l'on surnommait la femme « pondeuse », non pour l'importance de sa couvée, assez banale ma foi, mais pour le peu d'intervalle qu'elle traverse entre ses accouchements. Sa fille aînée avait quinze ans, tout aux plus seize ans. (Djebar, 2006: 176).

Selon un article sur sciences.jrank.org (consulté le 12 Septembre 2018) ' Féministe théories and rites challenge valorisations of motherhood Foster, éd. *conservatives* », (Les théories féministes et les écrivains défient la valorisation de la maternité favorisée par les conservateurs. {Notre traduction} Il y a une croyance en Afrique que si une femme est stérile, sa féminité sera douteuse. Dans cette œuvre, on démontre la condition des femmes sans enfants, quand une femme n'a pas d'enfants, elle n'est pas du tout considérée dans son mariage. Ce traitement des femmes n'est pas si bon parce que parfois le problème de la stérilité peut venir de l'homme mais les femmes en sont toujours des victimes. « Tu le sais, les vieilles, chez nous, ne te considèrent pas sous la protection d'un homme si tu ne portes pas de lui un enfant ! » (Djebar, 2006 : 102).

Cette situation est bien remarquée dans *Fureurs et cris des femmes*, Rodani dit « une femme, encore aujourd'hui, ne suscite la considération de son entourage que par sa maternité » (Angèle Rariwi. 1989 : 91). On constate que dans *Ombre sultane*, quand une personne meurt, il n'y a que les fils qui assistent aux funérailles. Dans ce cas, les grandes filles restent à la maison alors que les petits garçons peuvent y aller. Ceci montre que les filles ne sont pas si valorisées. « Aucune des filles n'y était allée seulement Touma et le petit Naseer » (Djebar, 2006 : 88).

Par ailleurs, habituellement, les maris ont le droit absolu sur leur femme. « L'homme écoute, lui qui a droit de vie et de mort ». Par conséquent, les épouses n'ont pas le droit de contribuer concernant certaines décisions importantes de leur vie. Elle vit pratiquement non seulement pour le mari mais pour les hommes dans leur vie. Mentionnant le mouvement du droit de la reproduction des femmes de nos jours qui prône le fait que les femmes ont le droit sur leurs corps et leurs maris ne peuvent pas être intimes avec elles sans leurs permissions. La voix des femmes est importante pour nous l'humanité, mais quand cette voix est réduite au silence et qu'elles se sentent reléguées, elles deviennent impuissantes. « Ce chœur de soumissions prêtes à la révolte, (...) en somme la parole drapée du malheur restait reléguée, aussi voilée que le corps de chacune au-dehors. » (Djebar, 2006 : 119).

Dans cette œuvre, on constate la supériorité des hommes. Les femmes sont toujours sous la protection ou doit donner allégeance aux hommes dans leur vie. « Que toute femme voilée a un père, un mari, mais beaucoup, beaucoup de fils » (Djebar, 2006 : 52). Pire encore, le fils est

plus estimé que la fille. Par exemple, quand un fils est né, il y a beaucoup plus de joie au niveau de la famille. Mais la naissance d'une fille fait grelotter de peur la femme. Les féministes veulent l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes dans tous les domaines de la vie.

Le couple de paysans se mit à attendre l'enfant, l'héritier de leur héritier. J'ai accouché de toi ! disait la mère. Les vieux n'ont même pas voulu envoyer un message au fils! Une fille, à quoi bon...Que Dieu la reprenne! ...S'il est écrit que son destin se raccourcisse! Qu'avons-nous affaire avec une femelle au teint jaune. (Djebar 2006:85-86).

Ce traitement spécial de l'enfant mâle est également élaboré dans le roman *Fureurs et cris des femmes*, quand Rekia, une petite fille de douze ans roua de corps farouche son cousin qui a dit que son père préfère les fils plus qu'elle et la grand-mère fait cette remarque « de quel droit te permets-tu de frapper cet enfant ? N'oublie jamais que ces deux enfants ont dans cette maison plus de droit que toi » (Angèle Rariwi. 1989: 59).

Cette marginalisation de la femme est reflétée au niveau de l'éducation. Les féministes mènent une lutte acharnée contre ce comportement des parents qui entrave l'émancipation des femmes. Dans cette œuvre, l'importance est donnée à l'éducation des fils plus que les filles.

Chez nous, nos hommes étaient lettrés, tant en arabe qu'en français! Nos fils n'allaient pas à l'étranger quêter les diplômes, mais à quoi servait de s'en enorgueillir si les femmes, pendant ce temps, tremblaient en villageois ignorantes? ... Ma tante n'avait alors caché ni ses pleurs ni sa peine impuissante-Eduquer? Avait-elle marmonné. Est-elle un homme? Hélas tout change de nos jours, tout va à l'inverse aujourd'hui! (Djebar, 2006 : 163, 175).

Selon l'observation de Pretty Zinta, protagoniste du film hindou, *Veer Zaara* (2004) :

Education makes men capable of facing the challenges of life. With education, women can outdo men and walk shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Women who are kept out of the class room are disabled, for they remain illiterate and unpolished. The society should stand against those who say what use is education for the local women because are only taught to look after the household.

L'éducation donne aux femmes la puissance de faire face aux défis de la vie. Grâce à l'éducation, les femmes peuvent dépasser et marcher

côte à côte avec les hommes. Les femmes qui sont mis à l'écart de l'école demeurent illettrées et handicapées; Les femmes peuvent rivaliser avec les hommes quand elles sont instruites. La société devrait se soulever contre ceux qui disent à quoi bon sert l'éducation pour les femmes car elles sont enseignées à faire les travaux domestiques. (Notre traduction).

Réault-Crosnier (2006) a observé que cette voix parle d'une femme qui passe de l'enfance à la vie d'esclave par un mariage imposé, de l'innocence des non-dits à la tragédie muette, de la rébellion étouffée à la recherche de son moi enfoui sous le poids des contraintes et des traditions : « Tombe la flaque des vêtements arrachés, lorsque le soir revient. (...) » (Djebar, 2006 : 61). Il est donc nécessaire de mettre fin à la vie de malsaine des voiles, des haïks des traditions, comme celle du hammam :

Hammam, refuge du temps immobilisé. L'idée même d'air close, et donc de prison, se dissout ou s'émiette. (...) Hammam, seule rémission du harem... (...) Dissoudre la touffeur de la claustration grâce à ce succédané du cocon maternel. (Djebar, 2006: 217,218).

Cette expression montre les difficultés des femmes dans le texte. Leur existence semble sans valeur à cause de ce que la société a fait d'elle : « (...) j'entrevis le pas de mutilation écrasant les pousses du jardin des rêves. » (Djebar, 2006 : 182). Les femmes dans cette société ont déjà accepté cette condition sans questionner la raison et elle passe ça à une génération à l'autre, aux filles dans la société. « Un homme est un homme ! Qu'il travaille pour sa femme et ses enfants, et qu'il demeure sur la voie de Dieu, cela seul est une chance au mariage ! » (Djebar, 2006 : 135). A cause de la société dont les femmes se trouvent, elles ont la limitation en s'exprimant ce qu'elles veulent malgré le fait que certaines choses sont bien mais elles se trouvent mal. Les femmes ont perdu leurs droits de l'expression dans cette œuvre. « Tu t'es dite honteuse puis humiliée, que saluer un homme au-dehors est coupable » (Djebar, 2006 : 33).

On démontre l'ignorance des femmes dans cette œuvre. C'est agaçant que même certaines femmes dans cette œuvre aient déjà accepté la tradition et croit absolument dans la supériorité des hommes. Les femmes n'ont pas le pouvoir du choix dans cette œuvre de l'homme qui lui plait. Ça devient agaçant que les gens justifient la subordination des femmes par la religion et ce que Dieu veut.

Ainsi commentaient des compagnes qui se voulaient complices, elle a pleuré parce que la marie ne lui plait pas !

-Ne lui plait pas?

-Elle l'a trouvé petit, lourdaud, et probablement sans finesse!

-Sans finesse ou sans tendresse ?

-Qu'est-ce que la tendresse chez un homme? ricana une voix mauvaise. Savent-ils même ce que c'est, eux les maitres, puisque Dieu nous a faites, nous, jeunes ou vieilles, belles ou laides, comme un troupeau sous leurs talons ! (Djebar, 2006: 169).

Isma est éduquée, En conséquence, elle connaît ses droits et elle est capable d'aider Hajila qui est faible. L'éducation informe les femmes dans la société. Sur ce, il convient également de soulever l'évènement de révolte dans *l'Ombre sultane*. Hajila qui un personnage féminin qui est enfermée sort lorsque le mari n'est pas à la maison. Les hommes ne sont pas interdits de sortir. « La rue vous attend vous vous présentez au monde. Vous les bienheureux. Chaque matin de chaque jour, vous transportez vos corps dans l'étincellement de la lumière, chaque jour qu'Allah a créé (p.17) a déclaré la narratrice. Elle a osé même lever le voile. La fréquence lexicale des mots sortir et dehors relevés dans les pages (17, 44, 47, 62, 70, 78, 81, 82, 99, 101, 103, 104...) démontre l'amertume de la romancière. En voici quelques illustrations de la lutte contre les traditions.

- i. Tu vas « sortir » pour la première fois. Hajila. Tu portes tes babouches de vieille, la laine pèse sur ta tête ; dans ton visage entièrement masqué, un seul œil est découvert, la trouée juste nécessaire pour que ce regard d'ensevelie puisse te guider Tu entre dans l'ascenseur, tu vas déboucher en pleine rue, le corps empêtré dans les plis du voile lourd. Seule au dehors tu vas marcheras. (Djebar, 2006 : 31).
- ii. Tu à marchais l'ombre ; tu vas au soleil. Si les rayons t'enveloppent les bras, te pénètrait aux aisselles si... Sous la laine usée du haïk ta robe de Cotton mauve est achetée jusqu'à la poitrine... Tu t'enforcies dans une ruelle entre des rangés de maisons avec des jardins ceinturés de hauts murs. « Après ! » Là, tu te décides avec violence : « enlever le voile. (Djebar, 2006 : 46).
- lii Chaque jour donc, tu t'échappes. Tu apprends à connaître les squares, les places de ce quartier. Pour te diriger, tu te rappelles la veille, l'avant-veille, ainsi de suite.... Dehors tu ne te laisses pas de marcher ; tu apprends à découvrir. Choses et personnes se diluent en toi. (Djebar, 2006 : 60).

La sultane que sont les femmes entend trouver un moyen de s'enfuir et veut être totalement à l'abri de ces chaînes d'esclavage par les hommes dans sa vie. Elle veut se faire entendre et s'exprimer pleinement et donne plus de sens à sa vie sans craindre d'être jugée. L'ombre, c'est aussi la nuit, la nuit des femmes quand elles voient le monde à travers un coin de tissu, seule ouverture sur le monde. L'œil seul regarde alors un lieu étriqué alors que leur corps

enfoui, annihilé sous l'épaisseur des vêtements n'a pas droit au soleil, n'existe que pour le plaisir d'un homme : Il est temps que les femmes comment à regarder le soleil en face, c'est accéder à la lumière, ceci représente l'espoir : « Regarder d'un premier regard. » (Djebar, 2006 : 224). Mais où est la liberté ? Les femmes en raison de leurs expériences ont droits à la liberté. « *La sandale de la liberté laisse sa trace dansée sur le sable, ou sur le roc.* » (P. 227).

Les femmes droites à une réévaluation de leur identité. La soif de liberté est une soif énorme pour les femmes marginalisées dans ce texte.

Sitôt libérées du passé, où sommes-nous ? (...) Le présent se coagule. (...) Sourire fugace du visage dévoilé ; l'enfance disparue pouvons-nous la ressusciter, nous, les mutilées de l'adolescence, les précipitées hors corridor d'un bonheur excisé ? (Djebar, 2006 : 228).

« Nulle tradition ne me servait de phare » (Djebar, 2006 : 95). Isa est un exemple d'une fée qui veut la liberté. Parce qu'elle veut la liberté, elle est soumise à des choses ridicules « Je baise front, paupières et poignet de l'époux... Le visage baigné de larmes, je ne taris pas : mots hagards d'une sœur hagarde, supplication d'amour, je m'excuse, je m'accuse... » mais elle s'en fou « j'ai vécu cinquante débuts, cinquante instructions de procès, j'ai affronté cinquante chefs d'accusation ! Je m'imaginai, comme toi, les avoir provoqués. J'ajoutais des propos que je croyais provocateurs ! » Isma est un exemple d'une femme qui veut la libération sans penser. « Après trois ou quatre réunions chez l'avocat (celui-ci réaffirme mes droits), le père se résigne ». Elle est contre la tradition qui lui contrait.

Isma est une femme qui sait qu'il y a vraiment une vie au dehors de quatre murs de la maison « J'avais besoin de réfléchir, pour cela, être dehors ! De marcher, de dévisager des visages inconnus. J'avais besoin d'être dehors, mais qu'on m'oublie ! [...] - Ici, sur cette terre, on vous tue en vous enfermant derrière les murs et des fenêtres occultées. A peine fais-tu le premier pas au-dehors que tu te sens exposée ! Là-bas, personne ne regarde, personne n'a vraiment d'yeux ! J'expliquai que j'avais dû travailler, enseigner, surtout avoir du temps à moi !

Elle fait pour sa fille pour changer le narratif de ce qui se passe avec les femmes.

Que m'importe si, par malheur, je devais trouver prise dans l'interdit, me renfoncer sous le haïk de la tradition ? Je tiens la main de ma fillette, je la tire au soleil, je l'aiderai, elle, à ne pas s'engloutir ! (...) Je me mis à marcher dans la ville. Depuis l'aube jusqu'au milieu de l'après-midi, à l'heure où ma fille sort de l'école. Revenir en sa compagnie chez la tante, dans la médina. Ce retour à

deux devient mon but. [...] J'étais de retour, par un sursaut de solidarité avec la petite. [...] je crains désormais tout voyage. Je désire m'enfoncer, à mon tour. A ma manière, me revoler... reculer dans l'ombre; m'ensevelir. (Djebar, 2006: 165-166).

Les féministes s'opposent aux traditions rétrogrades et culture qui relèguent les femmes dans la société. Dans le narratif féminisme, le rôle des hommes est important pour faciliter ceci. Le père de Isma est un homme qui est important dans la libération des femmes « Adolescente, je me disais à tout instant que mon père m'avait libérée du harem. Par la suite, j'ai vagabondé le plus longtemps possible dehors » (Djebar, 2006 : 145). Assia Djebar avec son style empreint de poésie, termine son livre en nous montrant la cruauté même de la liberté lorsqu'elle reste déchirure d'un vécu omniprésent, angoisse de l'avenir :

Ô ma sœur, j'ai peur, moi qui ai cru te réveiller. J'ai peur que (...) nous nous retrouvions entravées là, dans (...) ce lieu de la terre ou si lentement l'aurore a brillé pour nous que déjà, de toutes parts, le crépuscule vient nous cerner. (Djebar, 2006: 229)

Il y a quelque chose d'important à noter ici, en particulier Isma qui essaie d'aider Hajila de la même manière que l'histoire de Sheherazade et Dinazade représente pour moi un renforcement des femmes qui soutiennent les femmes afin d'avoir une solidarité plus puissante pour cette cause. Cela peut être qualifié de projet féministe, l'idée d'une femme qui se défend contre l'inégalité sociale et l'injustice. Dans le roman Hajila dans sa révolte sultane va oser jeter le voile, pas seulement d'une manière concrète, dans la rue mais aussi changer de manière de penser, libérer peu à peu son esprit de son aveuglement, apprendre à réfléchir par elle-même, à marcher dans la rue sans honte, à rire, agir cheveux au vent, à vivre en tant que femme même si elle connaît le risque quand son mari est jaloux et saoul. La liberté de la femme algérienne est illustrée par la sensibilisation du peuple. Assia Djebar a développé le concept de sororité, un sens de solidarité entre Isma et Hajila, l'identification comme des sœurs, comme un moyen de résistance. Regarder le soleil en face, c'est accéder à la lumière, ceci représente l'espoir: « Regarder d'un premier regard. » (Djebar, 2006: 224).

Mais où est la liberté ? Les femmes en raison de leurs expériences veulent la liberté. « *La sandale de la liberté laisse sa trace dansée sur le sable, ou sur le roc.* » (P. 227). Les femmes veulent une réévaluation de leur identité. La soif de liberté est une soif énorme pour les femmes marginalisées dans ce texte.

Sitôt libérées du passé, où sommes-nous ? (...) Le présent se coagule. (...) Sourire fugace du visage dévoilé ; l'enfance disparue pouvons-nous la ressusciter, nous, les mutilées de l'adolescence, les précipitées hors corridor d'un bonheur excisé ? (Djebar, 2006 : 228).

Dans ce chapitre, nous avons analysé la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine dans *Les Yeux baissés* de Tahar Ben Jelloun et *Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djebar. A partir du thème du patriarcat et du point de vue féministe. On observe que les mœurs de ce milieu sont profondément ancrées dans l'islam qui accorde peu d'égards au sexe féminin. Aussi la religion et la culture sont les instruments forts pour la dégradation des femmes dans la société. On peut remarquer que certaines femmes qui devraient lutter contre la discrimination des sexes ont déjà accepté leur sort. Il faut qu'il y ait un changement dans cette orientation, il faut un changement, les femmes peuvent avoir une grande influence pour changer le monde au lieu de devenir seulement les manufactures des enfants. Il faut qu'il y ait une nouvelle orientation par rapport à la tolérance religieuse, la religion est l'une des racines de guerre dans ce monde, il faut qu'il y ait l'amour entre les gens malgré leur différence religieuse. L'éducation, quant à elle est un thème par lequel le romancier met à la disposition du protagoniste le courage de questionner les tabous de son milieu.

CONCLUSION

.Nous nous sommes donnés dans cette étude la tâche d'analyser la marginalisation de la femme maghrébine dans *Les Yeux baissés* de Tahar Ben Jelloun et *Ombre sultane* d'Assia Djebar. Dans les deux œuvres, il y a la marginalisation des femmes par la société. Le concept de la voix est un instrument fort dans ces œuvres. Les femmes sont reléguées au fond. Dans *Les Yeux baissés*, les femmes comme la mère de Fathma n'ont pas de voix. Elle se tait, elle est docile parce que les avis des femmes ne comptent pas dans cette société tandis que dans *Ombre Sultane* aussi, les femmes devraient être dociles aussi dans la famille et la société. La sphère publique n'est pas pour elle. A cause de ces effets, les femmes dans ces œuvres sont amères et font des choses pour agir contre les lois patriarcales. Par exemple dans le cas de Fathma dans *Les Yeux Baissés*, elle vole une ardoise tandis que Hajila enlève la voile. Dans la relation entre le mari et sa femme, dans *Les yeux baissés*, les femmes ne peuvent pas regarder le visage de son mari tandis que dans *Ombre Sultane*, un homme a le droit absolu sur sa femme.

Dans les deux œuvres, l'importance est donnée aux filles plus qu'aux fils. Ce qui marque la représentation des femmes qui sont inférieures et les hommes qui sont supérieurs. L'importance de l'éducation et l'instruction est bien remarquée dans ces œuvres. L'éducation ouvre les yeux des femmes à leurs droits fondamentaux et elles peuvent se défendre. Fathma à cause de l'instruction peut se défendre contre les lois patriarcales dans *Les yeux baissés* et même Isma à cause de son instruction a pu aider Hajila. L'inégalité de sexe dans la littérature maghrébine et l'étude de la société maghrébine d'où sont issues nos écrivains prolifiques. On remarque l'influence de l'éducation qui devient une force de changement pour un villageois. L'éducation a changé son comportement et son perspective de la vie.

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Language, Communication and Education for Africa's Transformation

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Abstract

For over five century, Africa has been a continent of horror. Intra tribal wars were followed by the nasty colonial exploitation. The advent of Independence which ought to be a prelude to better transformation ushered in despotic military and civilian leaders who have no love for their countries. A chaotic society cannot thrive economically and politically. A war turn zone cannot experience development. Undoubtedly, no society is totally free of crises. From the naïve hamlets to the most complex city of Africa, there have always been records of incessant conflict needing urgent intervention. The memories of Ebola virus are still causing nightmare in many West African countries. The massacre perpetrated by terrorist organizations like Maitacine, Boko Haram and Al Shabab have become source trauma to many powerful Nations of our the black continent. The terrorist attack of 14 November 2015 in Abuja that claimed over hundred lives is fresh in our memory. The most heartless are moved with pity when they watch the horrifying experience of Migrants. This paper therefore sees language use, communication and education as powerful weapons in conflict resolution and transformation. While the communication received can guide or mislead an individual, proper education can perpetually lead him out of poverty. In other words, this paper looks at the manner communication and education can be used as a mean of fostering peace at all levels of human engagements, with special reference to the mass media.

Keywords: Language Communication Education Transformation Africa.

Introduction

The world is today filled with incessant pandemonium, fear, anxiety, famine and wars. Every day, new heart throbbing tumults occur in every continent which needs man's urgent intervention in order to make the globe a conducive place to live in. One can easily think of the horror of the terrorist attack against Washington D.C. and New York. The Israel-Palestine conflict is escalating day by day. According to Jonathan (2012), for thousands of years, military engagements between opposing nations and societies have had important effects on all aspects of human civilization. While the most direct and recognizable impacts of war are the victories and defeats that shape the course of history, warfare also affects human culture in ways that are not always appreciated or understood.

Today, man is so treacherous and mischievous that through technological advancement, he has produced weapons capable of totally destroying the globe. Political and religious crises have rendered many nations a wasteland. Moreover, international contests have continually threatened the world peace and consequently making man to live in constant fear. War, no doubt, begets misery and ruin. All these nasty occurrences have devastating effects of the third world, especially Africa whose standard of living is dwindling at an alarming rate.

Adesola and Adediran (2015) describe the early man of Africa as pathfinder for he embarked on the organization of social life through which communities came into existence. His discovery, invention, mastery and use of iron technology transformed not only the man himself but also his environment. Africa no doubt, grew as a continent where ancestral relationships are anchored on traditional values of family solidarity. African culture can be traced to their language, festivals, ideology, belief and occupation. Integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief and behaviour that is, both as a result of integral to the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generation is being referred to as culture (Adolf 2009).

Africa's contact with the western world caused a lot of setback in the continent. Slave trade that took away hundreds of millions blacks to the western world, colonization with its total domination and intensive exploitation of the land, as well as the independence which brought to power, despotic African leaders to direct the affairs of African nations, came one after the other. Consequently, the traditional African values are today bastardized and eroded by a number of factors which include poverty and corruption at all levels of the society. Nigeria for example, has been declared as the most corrupt country Africa because the leaders both present and past have looting the treasury of the nation.

Moreover, diseases like HIV/AIDS and Ebola claimed numerous lives. According UNAIDS (2015), an estimated 25.5 million people living with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. From 1976 (when Ebola was first identified) through 2013, the World Health Organization reported a total of 1,716 cases. The largest horror of Ebola is the 2014 West Africa outbreak, which affected Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria. As of 26 August 2014, 3,069 suspected cases resulting in the deaths of 1,552 have been reported. A great deal of negative impact this has had on education. Children are forced to abandon schools because sick parents can no

longer afford the fees. Qualified teachers are reducing by the day leading to a gloomy school environment. Many who should be in schools have ended in refugee camps.

Worse still, terrorism has incessantly rendered many Africans homeless. The Chibock girls' trauma is still fresh in our memories. According to eastwest.eu/en/opinion/.../terrorism- since 2006 attacks in Africa increased by 1,000% "Over the last decade, terrorist activities in Africa grew by 1.000%, it was due to youth employment. No, wonder many young Africans travelled to Malasia and other Asian countries to sell one of their kidneys after which they return to the country to ride in very expensive cars. In this wise, arms cannot be folded and there is need for transformation at all levels in the society. The researcher therefore sees language use and education as having a great role to play in checking these anomalies and bringing a long lasting peace, thereby enhancing the economic power of the society. In addition, communication can also serve as a means of transformation defined by businessdictionary.com as a basic character and little or no resemblance with the past configuration or structure.

The Role of Language in Fostering Societal Peace

Language is a system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area. It is a means of conveying ideas to others. This can also to a certain extent be done by the use of gestures and signs. Language is a natural phenomenon and it is as old as the existence of man on the earth. According to Owolabi (2007), language is a system of communication consisting of a set of small parts and a set of rules which decide the ways in which these parts can be combined to produce messages that have meaning.

Language is different from signs and gestures because it employs sounds which have meaning for the users as well as the hearers. It is not therefore surprising that some people are so moved by what they hear to the extent of engaging themselves in suicide missions. While examining the importance of language, Olaoye (2015) asserts that language is an index of identity which serves as a repository of a people's culture, industry and exploits. Fabarebo (1999) sees the power of language through insult among the Yorubas as a weapon of socio-cultural orientation. No doubt language is an indispensable element of our society without which we cannot live together in an organized way. Considering the importance of language, Breckenridge and Vincent (1965) define it as: *a primary means of social intercourse, being used not only to relieve people's own views, but also to awaken a response in other people and to influence their attitudes and behaviour.*

Language as a tool has frequently been considered as an integral part of nation building. Since July 31, 2007 the United Nations has four purposes:

1. To keep peace throughout the world
2. To develop friendly relations among nations
3. To help nations work together to improve the lives of poor people, to conquer hunger, disease and illiteracy and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedom.

4. To be a Centre for harmonizing these goals.
5. These purposes to maintain peace in the world.

Language is one of the defining features of our species; yet when it comes to international and local development discourse, language is often left on the periphery. We know, however, that language as a cross-cutting issue is inextricably tied to all aspects of human development. Development is all about sharing experiences and ideas to find better ways of working together as humans, and thus the languages of initiative, of education, of trade, of creative expression, of justice and of peace building, are so crucial to sustainable development. (www.britishcouncil.com/sn/en/programmes/language-development-conference-2017).

The role played by language and communication in peace settlement all over the world cannot be overemphasized. The way people react depends on how they perceive communication because language influences the behaviour and attitudes of the individual. Language has the power to transform the most gentle of persons into a wild being. It is also able to make an angel out of a devil. That is why one can conclude considering the assertion of Fadokun and Adewuyi (2012), that

Language is a means of communication used to express one's mind, thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions, beliefs, opinions and attitudes. Language is the main tool used for interaction in every society. Without it, the whole process of human development and emergence of better and progressive citizens would have been difficult.

It cannot be disputed that language plays a vital role in the co-operation existing between nations of the world. In the case of Africa, a multilingual continent with over 10000 indigenous languages, each country has to solve the national language so that the minority group will have easy access to language of education and promote peace. Promoting the language of the colonial masters in Africa would mean slowing down the pace of progress of Africa in solving the needs of our society through science and technology. In addition, Africa where there are a number of official languages of the colonial masters, there should be continuous interchange of French, Portuguese and German Students in Nigerian Universities and countries' learning English for the language immersion programme. By so doing, there will be stronger ties between the nations involved. This of course, will lead to transformation of rural societies in Nigeria. Another obvious fact observed is that Hausa-man has the tendency to be friendlier with a Yoruba man that speaks his language. That is why the Hausa trader will sell his commodities cheaper to the Yoruba woman who understands his language. Every child should be encouraged to learn at least one other indigenous language other than his.

According to Edema (2004), effort should be geared towards translation of local terms into European languages from concepts that are peculiar to Africa languages and vice-versa. This has to do with cultural terminology created in the sector of modern techniques such as

radio, television, medicine, mechanics or electricity. Ogunsiji (2007) defines language as the cement of the society which enhances our living together. The mother tongue of Africans should play a major role in changing their behaviors, attitudes and practices in relation to evil practice. Right from the early stage of life the child will be taught to have a transformed life so as to shun the vice such as cyber-crime, drug trafficking, cultism, robbery and terrorism associated with the youth.

The Role of Communication in Fostering Societal Peace

Just like language, communication can be a means of unifying the community. Communication can be defined as a medium of transferring a message or information from one person to another. According to Akinseye (2009), communication is a means of using language as a tool to persuade to appeal to an individual and consequently modify the behaviour of the reader or the listener. When language is properly exploited, communication is enhanced to play a key role in nation building. On the other hand if it is not properly used, it leads to break down of law and order. The Yoruba people say “*pẹlẹ’ní akọ ó sì ní’abo*”. (soft spoken words pave the way for hospitality whilst abusive words stir emotions).

This brings us to the role of the media in relation to the way they read out to the public in order to keep peace. This channel of communication is a basic necessity to human existence. Adeniran (1980) and Folarin (1993) in their researches have presented the mass media as having a great role to play in the socio-economic and political life of the society. Out of several functions of the mass media we can highlight these:

1. To enlighten and educate the public about events happening far and near.
2. To give proper orientation to the public and objectively mobilize them to achieve a peaceful society.

The question that comes to the mind of many right thinking persons is how well and how effectively do the mass media play this role? As noted by Kimble (1962), of all the weapons in the educator’s armory, none has a wider appeal than the mass communications media. Since most of these media houses are owned by private individuals or political groups, they have to satisfy the interest of the owners. He who plays the piper dictates the tune. Consequently, they chant the praises of the politicians and arouse the tension of the masses in times of crisis. The press has been guilty of excesses. At the moment, most state radio stations spend a lot of time relating the exaggerative achievements of the governors of the winning party.

If the mass media is to work objectively for societal peace, the announcers, the producers and the editor must note that:

1. They should stop being the mouthpiece of politicians
2. They should see themselves as agents to objectively influence and mould public opinion.
3. The press should not be spectators of political evolution; rather, they should take an active part in it.
4. Readers and viewers should exhibit a reasonably balanced opinion on affairs.

5. The press should not be found to be supportive of a religious group.
6. Provocative journalism should be highly discouraged.
7. The press should be more to quicken the pace of nationalism

Education: An Agent of Transformation, A Weapon Against Poverty, A means of Promoting Peace

. Many great educators of the past have expressed their views on education. Plato stated in unequivocal terms that education is supposed to be a powerful instrument for the reconstruction of the state and for social, political and economic development. Aristotle advocated that all children should be educated by the State so as to develop their potentials to the fullest capacities and make them become good citizens. Dewey felt that education should be used as an instrument to solve the problem of life.

Building on the experience of the old, educators of our days also see education as a process of perfecting the human self through enlightened living; the application of skill and knowledge in such a way to find solution to whatever problems confronting man. Education is geared towards helping an individual to develop his whole being, physically, mentally, morally and to enable him function in the society. Adele (2001) stated that education provides the manpower needed for the development of various sectors of the economy. Education is so indispensable to economic and social development that various governments fashion their philosophy to suit this purpose. For example, the philosophy of Nigerian education aims at a just egalitarian society and a great and dynamic economy.

Education allows every human being to acquire the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to shape a sustainable future and positive societal transformation. It also helps to promote key issues into teaching and learning (e.g. Climate change, disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction, biodiversity, sustainable consumption, gender equality etc.). (UN Document on Education for Sustainable Development, 2004-2014). Schultz (1973) quoted by Mimiko says:

The prosperity of the U.S. cannot be explained merely by its Natural resources and its physical plants. The money and effort that had been put into education over a long a time must explain a large part of the otherwise inexplicable gap between the U.S and other countries”.

The role played by international bodies in bringing long lasting peace to the world cannot be overemphasized. The United Nations was formed after the Second World War to give renewed hope to the world communities. Its major purpose was to keep peace and promote human welfare. It has kept several peace treaties since its formation and has continuously campaigned that everyone has the right to education.

It is obvious that, education, apart from being a tool of nation building, also enhances upward social mobility. However little it may be, any additional educational achievement of any individual will help improve his standard of living. It will help reshape some negative values that oppose progress. Some societies need to revisit their cultures and belief. By so doing they can alleviate the misery of their people. Education should teach us to tolerate one another when it comes to issues on which we have diverse opinions. Conflicts are resolved when group interests supersede those of the individual. According Ondimba (2016),

L'éducation, ce n'est pas seulement lire, écrire et compter. C'est aussi l'apprentissage du vivre ensemble dans un monde de plus en plus interconnecté et une planète fragilisée dont les ressources se raréfient. Pour créer les citoyens de demain, c'est donc la philosophie même de nos systèmes éducatifs qui devra s'adapter aux besoins les plus pressants de nos sociétés futures.

Education is not only being able to read, write and count, it also learning how to live together in a world more or less interconnected and a fragile planet which resources are becoming rare. To create the citizens of tomorrow, it is therefore even the philosophy of our educative systems that will be able to adapt themselves to the most pressing needs of our future societies.

Today many activist groups have utterly condemned the fact that women are relegated. Many societies and religion do not encourage the education of women. This should be discouraged as some chaotic situations arising as result of poor finance will be avoided. Such women also refuse to be seen as objects of reproduction. They kick against having a large family, which they will not be able to cater for. Koppell (2016) of the United States Agency for International Development, better known as USAID, even called female education a “silver bullet” for empowerment and progress. There are lessons to be learnt from Rwanda where most men were killed during the homicide. The country which had always relegated women has to be controlled by a few women who have the opportunity to be educated. Many are the advantages of offering quality and universal education to young girls; these include increased literacy, Human Trafficking, Political Representation, Thriving Babies, poverty reduction among others. According to Obama (2012), the sustainability and progress of all regions depend on the success of women across the globe. “The future must not belong to those who bully women. It must be shaped by girls who go to school and those who stand for a world where our daughters can live their dreams just like our sons.”

So far we can affirm that education plays diverse different roles in the tackling the maladies that impeded positive transformation in the continent. Apart from literacy campaigns, which aim at rendering people literate in foreign and indigenous languages, more topic having to do with positive societal transformation has to be integrated into the curriculum programmes at all levels of educational systems: the Primary School, Secondary Schools and Tertiary Institutions. Formal and non – formal education should be of top priority especially for the age group of greatest risk of becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. There is the need to create through it awareness for the general public on how to avoid contract Ebola. The youth should be taught to value life and refuse to join terrorist groups.

The adult who are the leaders and politicians should imbibe the spirit of patriotism and stop embezzling public fund. When there national budget give priority to education, more citizens will become literate which will make easy to reach a larger public. In addition, apart from the role effective role of the media, churches and mosques can serve as sources of sensitization; health talks, symposium could easily capture the mind of people in a worship environment.

When knowledge points the citizens to the creator, several problems are solved. We therefore have to turn to God for solution to man's problems. No wonder a communist nation like Russia ended up breaking up because it did not give a room to God. Leaders in the third world have allowed themselves to be led by devilish advisers thereby creating untold hardship to the citizens. The Bible says righteousness exalts a nation while sin is a reproach to God. We can then commend the United States of America who says in God we trust. They have grown prosperous and even use their wealth to aid other people and settle conflict all over the world.

Conclusion

Education has been said to be the panacea to most human problems. It has helped many individuals for effective citizenship. It also helps to restructure our society to make it different from that of animals. Similarly, communication when properly channeled can calm tension. Personal interest will be put aside if members of our society are given the proper awareness. Consequently, the society will be rid of internal conflicts, diseases, illiteracy and malnutrition. If peace is to reign all over the world especially in Africa, communication and education must be geared towards achieving national development.

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Understanding the importance of parental involvement in the education of Children at home and school: a study of Abou Lkacem Chebbi's Primary School, Douz

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Abstract

Because of the positive role of parental involvement on youth academic achievement, many parents and school teachers desire more collaborations between the family and the school. However, obstacles often arise prohibiting such positive interactions. In this study, Douz's inhabitants, a town situated in the south of Tunisia demonstrated their strong involvement in their children's education by helping them with their homework. Moreover, parents and teachers at Abou Lkacem Chebbi's Primary School completed an in-depth interview and a structured questionnaire regarding the barriers to involving parents in their children's education. Parents and teachers identified barriers that fit into three descriptive categories: (a) time poverty/work commitments, (b) lack of communication (lack of cooperation), and (c) lack of awareness. Suggestions for decreasing barriers were also discussed. Findings suggest that taking families' needs and sharing decision-making responsibilities into consideration during the planning phases of school-based programs and events improve parental involvement. Furthermore, results strongly revealed that giving parents more meaningful roles, keeping them informed and presenting opportunities for them to support educational and developmental progress at home and school can be effective in increasing parental involvement among these inhabitants. Implications and recommendations for practitioners are discussed.

Keywords: Education, parental involvement, language teaching, school-based programs.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the study

Children have two main educators in their lives, their parents and their teachers. Parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond. The need for strong family involvement is clearly stated by Easterbrooks and Baker (2002, p. 84) who argued that "successful children come from committed parents". The authors (2002, pp. 26, 36) proposed that communication is learned and shared within the cultural contexts of the family, and that it will not develop normally without these social contexts in place. Their focal point is that families are an integral part of language development. Parents represent the child's first and foremost means to access language. Therefore, 'families are the first educators of their children and continue to influence their children's learning and development during the school years and long afterwards' (Jennings & Bosch, 2011: 1). In other words, parental involvement in the education of children begins at home with the parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support and a positive attitude about school.

In addition, Gunning (2007) reiterated this point by claiming that achieving education outcomes cannot be done only at school. He maintained that it is a responsibility shared by all citizens and, most importantly, "parents need to become partners in their children's lives" (p. 13). This reveals undoubtedly that education starts at home and parents need to be actively involved in their children's education as parental involvement in children's education has long been noted for its effectiveness in the child's academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003, 2005; Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2005). No less important, schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among children, parents, teachers and the community has been established (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009).

Although it seems that parental involvement is the researched topic of many studies (Hill, N.E, 2004; Sanders, M. 2006; Epstein, J. L 2002, Turnbull, A (2011), there is still little concern regarding parental involvement and what constitutes effective parental involvement in the education of children. One of the major objectives of the present study is therefore to show that the home environment and its resources present the first setting where parents can interfere to help their children in their education (parental involvement at home).

Despite the benefits of parental involvement in children's education, most educational interventions have ignored this educational constituency emphasizing pedagogic issues. Yet as argued by Ballantine (1993:95): 'Schools have a role to play in making it possible to involve parents...there are constructive ways to involve parents both in the education of their own children and in the school programs'. As truly put out by Every Child Matters (2003) in Peters, Seeds, Goldstein and Coleman (2007: online) (Cited in M, O & Makuba, E. 2013):

Research suggests that parenting appears to be the most important factor associated with educational achievement at age 10, which in turn is strongly associated with achievement with later life. Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence in education than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers.

There is no clear line to show where the parents' input stops and the teachers' input begins. Instead, schools and parents have crucial roles to play and the impact is greater if parents and schools work in partnership. When parents and schools work together, children have higher achievement in school and stay in school longer (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2002; Reynolds & Clements, 2005).

Similarly, Everard, Morris and Wilson (2004) state that problems concerning behaviour and school-related outcomes are easier dealt with if parents and teachers work together and there is a positive correlation between parental attitudes and their children's academic performance. Education is, therefore, a shared responsibility of parents, schools and teachers and various institutions in society. Another main objective of the present article is to help consolidate school-family partnerships to increase parents' interventions in their children's education. The study is then guided by the following questions.

- How are the parents involved?
- How do parents help their children in education (e.g., doing homework, visiting libraries, reading books...etc)?
- What do teachers understand by the concept of "parental involvement"?
- What is the importance of parental involvement in children's schooling?
- What are the barriers associated with involving parents in their children's education?
- What strategies/measures can school and teachers use to ensure that parents are actively involved in their children's education?

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Parental involvement:

1.2.1.1 Definition of parental involvement:

Various definitions of parental involvement have been proposed. Broadly, it can be defined as parental behaviour with, or on behalf of children, at home or at school, as well as the expectations that parents hold for children's future education (Reynolds & Clements, 2005) (Cited in Berthelsen, D & Walker, S, 2008). Ho and Willms (1996) defined parental involvement through 4 constructs: home discussion, home supervision, school communication and school participation. Parental involvement can therefore be categorised into 2 broad strands: parents' involvement in support of the individual child at home and parents' involvement in the life of the school. In this context, parental involvement means parents' interventions in their children's education both at home and at school.

Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) in Jennings and Bosch (2011: 3) view parental involvement as '...enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning'. This involvement represents a shared approach to the education of children. This means that children's education is successful when it is the result of a partnership between parents and teachers. For the present study, the author chooses both strands to discuss parental participation at home and at school to support their children's learning outcomes. Both strands recognize parents' active engagement at home and school.

At home, a close-ended questionnaire has been distributed to parents whose children are enrolled in Abou Lkacem Chebbi's Primary School to investigate the importance of parental involvement in children's education. Parents/careers were asked about the frequency and how confident they feel when helping their children with homework. In addition, parents were fairly divided on whether a child's education is primarily the parent's or the school's responsibility. Parents were also asked about the barriers which hinder them from getting more involved in their child's school life. Finally, parents were asked about the activities that might be considered involvement.

At school, an open-ended interview has been administered to teachers to generate their opinions about parental involvement. By the same token, teachers' perceptions about the meaning of "parental involvement" were first generated. Then, teachers were asked about the

barriers associated with involving parents in their children's education. Finally, teachers were invited to offer suggestions on how to help consolidate parental involvement and school-family partnership. All the instruments used for the current study and the reasons behind their selection will be described in later sections in more further details

1.2.1.2 The importance/the benefits of parental involvement in the education of young children

This section discusses how parental involvement benefits children in their learning. It is certainly worth noting that research reveals many benefits for school systems and parents to become involved in their children's learning. According to Angelica Bonci (2003) "parents often begin their participation doubting that their involvement can make much difference, and they are generally very gratified to discover what an important contribution they can make". In the author's view, school people and parents need to be aware that parental involvement supports students' learning, behaviour, and attitudes regardless of other factors such as parents' income, educational level, and whether or not parents are employed.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and many other studies show that students show a better ability to read when their parents are involved in their education and when the parents themselves value reading. According to the PISA, certain activities are more strongly related to better student performance than others. For example, reading books to children when they are just beginning primary school benefits children because it shows them that reading is something that their parents value. Children of parents who are involved in their education in these ways are generally found to be more receptive in their studies and individual projects. It should also come as no surprise that parents who read to their children, have books available, take trips, guide TV watching, and provide stimulating experiences which contribute to student achievement.

Involving parents in their children's literacy activities not only benefits their children but also parents themselves. Numerous benefits have been reported for the parents, including greater skill acquisition, greater confidence and self-esteem, a better child-parent relationship and increased engagement with learning (Cited in Bonci, A. 2011). Similarly, in response to parental involvement, Bastiani (2003) identified several benefits accruing from involving parents in their children's education. Some of these benefits are:

- A greater willingness of parents and schools to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage.
- Parents' active encouragement and support for children's learning produce tangible academic benefits that last throughout a child's school.
- More positive pupils' attitudes and behaviours.

Moreover, the importance of parental involvement in children's education is clearly stated by Arita (2012: online) (Cited in Mafa, O. & Makuba, E. 2013) who argue that:

In addition to improving academic progress, parental involvement pays off in other significant ways. Numerous studies have shown that parents' involvement is a proactive factor against adolescent tobacco use, depression, eating disorders, academic struggles and other problems. By staying involved with their child/teenager, parents can be a source of support, create a climate for creating a tough issues and serve as role models for responsible and emphatic behaviour.

As clearly stated above, parental involvement not only improves children's academic success but also reduces problem behaviours. Parents and schools agree on goals both behavioural and academic which serve as a form of social constraints that reduces problem behaviours.

Furthermore, parents who maintain frequent contact with the school have higher achieving children than parents who have infrequent contact. In turn, schools that are well-connected with the community tend to have higher achieving students than schools with fewer ties. Parents who become involved in their children's schooling tend also to develop positive attitudes towards their children's teachers. They rate teachers higher in interpersonal and teaching skills, perceive them as wanting them to develop their children and as very helpful in suggesting ideas for home activities (Epstein, 1987). Parents' degree of involvement is also likely to be affected by the school itself. If teachers care about the welfare of the child, show respect and trust for parents, and develop communication ties with families, parents are more willing to become actively involved in their children's schooling (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Therefore, to increase parental involvement, schools need to provide a welcoming climate where the school staff is respectful and responsive to parents (Wherry, 2009).

Involved parents tend also to enlist the support of others, become actively involved in community issues, and further their education (Becher, in Hemderson, 1987). Children whose parents are involved in these ways are generally found to be more receptive to language, show a better ability to read and learn when their parents are involved in their education and when the parents themselves value reading. Additionally, children of involved parents are motivated to learn for learning's sake, and have more control over their academic performance because they adopt their parents' positive attitudes towards school and learning. They know, too, that they can obtain guidance from their parents on how to navigate school and its challenges. Remember that children learn more by imitating their significant adults.

Desforges and Aboucher (2003), however, found that parent-child conversations in the home were more valuable, in terms of encouraging children's school achievement than parents' involvement in school activities. In other words, schools should encourage parents to talk to their children about school activities at home. This suggests that parent-child conversations at home about school activities are directly linked to parental involvement. For example, if teachers assign homework, parents who are actively involved in their children's education are undoubtedly encouraged to talk about the homework and offer help where possible. Parental involvement must, therefore, not only be viewed in terms of parents coming into the school to talk about their children or to perform certain activities. Helping children with their homework is parental involvement. On the whole, children have positive attitudes towards homework and feel that it is important to help them do well at school. Positive attitudes to homework are associated with positive attitudes at school. Pupils, as a result, tend to learn better when they hold positive attitudes about schools and teachers (Cited in Angelica Bonci, 2003). Remember that involving parents in their children's literacy activities not only benefits their children but also parents themselves and school in general.

Despite the benefits underscoring parental involvement many families, however, require assistance in providing the basics of a supportive home learning environment. Many types of parental involvement that are associated with better student performance require relatively little time and no specialized knowledge. What matters is genuine interest and active engagement. What children need is to see their significant adults value their education and care about what they are doing at school. The most important factor is communicating with the child. It opens the door for better parent-child discussion, dialogue and involvement.

Other reasons include improving school climate and school programs, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community, and assisting teachers in their work. All these reasons emphasize the importance of parents playing an active role in their children's education and keeping a strong and positive relationship with schools (Epstein, 2001, 2009).

The following section discusses, therefore, different forms of parental involvement that may be beneficial for children, parents and schools as well.

1.2.1.3 Types of parental involvement

Although most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support, they may be increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, be models for, and guide their children. The following are types of parental involvement developed by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment in 2012. Many types of parental involvement that are associated with better learners' performance require relatively little time and no specialized knowledge. What is important is parents' active engagement in their children's education.

- **Show your children that you value reading**

Parents significantly influence their children's learning. Young children pay very close attention to what they see their significant others do and imitate them. For example, children may see their parents read. Not surprisingly, children whose parents consider reading a hobby enjoy going to the library and spend time reading for enjoyment at home and are more likely to enjoy reading themselves. This is because their parents' habits and attitudes towards reading, school and learning are positive. This indicates clearly that children are more likely to enjoy reading when their home environment is conducive to reading. Moreover, children of parents who read and enjoy reading themselves absorb their parents' interest in reading and enjoy reading too. What is perhaps more important is for parents to show their children that reading is a daily, enjoyable, valuable activity, and that it is made even more beneficial when people discuss what they have read with others. Therefore, parents have to begin reading to their young children as essential as feeding and clothing them. Parents who do not have enough time to read can still encourage their children to read by, for example, offering books as presents. By doing so, parents help to sensitize their children that reading is a valuable activity worth striving for. Children, in turn, adopt their parents' positive attitudes towards reading and schools. These activities could also be viewed "protective" factors in reducing the incidence of special educational needs because children whose parents engaged regularly in home learning activities were less likely to be at risk for special educational needs (SEN) (Sylva et al., 2004).

Therefore, parents' reading habit emerges as an important type of parental involvement. In other words, reading with the child is parental involvement. As PISA and many other studies show, children exhibit a better ability to read when their parents are involved in their education and when the parents themselves value reading.

- **Get involved at school because you want to not because you have to**

When parents take the time to meet their child's teachers, or when they volunteer for activities at school, they signal to their children that they value education. Parents can also be involved in their children's education by participating in activities at school, such as meeting with teachers to discuss children's progress or volunteering at school. These types of activities show children that their parents value learning and education, and it shows schools that these

parents care about their children's education which, in turn, might prompt teachers to devote more attention to these children. Parents need also to contact their child's school through conferences, notes, and volunteering.

- **Read your children a story, too:**

Parental involvement in a child's education should start at birth and never stop. Results from PISA show that some types of parental involvement when children are entering primary school are strongly associated with reading performance and even more instilling a sense of enjoyment of reading in children. These types of involvement emphasise the value of reading and using words in contexts-such as reading books or talking about what the parent had done rather than treating words and letters as isolated units-such as playing with alphabet toys (p. 18). It is neither difficult nor time-consuming to help children begin to develop these cognitive skills early in their lives. All it requires is for parents to read with their children a story and discuss what they have read.

Adult-child shared storybook reading is a context that is naturally occurring for many children and is viewed by many theorists as particularly potent in stimulating emergent literacy as well as speech, listening, and other developmental skills important for academic success (Bus, 2001; Clay, 1998; Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Interactive and reflective conversation during book reading can impact how children think and how they use language. Keeping the conversation open encourages children to reflect on what they want to say, put their thoughts into a logical order, and find the words to communicate their thoughts. A major purpose of discussion between adults and children about story content is to develop young children's ability to make sense of and respond to decontextualized language (McKeown & Beck, 2006, p. 287). Parents, therefore, can support their children with meaningful questions and comments to make meaning from the decontextualized text to focus them on important story ideas and encourage them to reflect on these. For this particular reason, shared book reading with young children is known to foster the type of language development that is linked to literacy at school (eg, Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). For the above reasons, parents are urged to read with their children from infancy (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2010).

- **Talk with your children about the world around them:**

One place this kind of engagement can occur easily and naturally is at the table, over daily meals about TV programmes and films, for example. This kind of conversation will become a habit, something that everyone in the family looks forward to, no matter how old they are. It becomes a welcome even necessary opportunity to express oneself, to connect deeply with other family members, to feel close, cared for and respected.

Desforges and Aboucher (2003), however, found that parent-child conversations in the home were more valuable, in terms of encouraging children's school achievement than parents' involvement in school activities, suggesting that schools should encourage parents to talk to their children about school activities at home. This suggests that parent-child conversations at home about school activities are directly linked to parental involvement. For example, if teachers assign homework, parents who are actively involved in their children's education are undoubtedly encouraged to talk about the homework and offer help where possible. Parental involvement must, therefore, not only be viewed in terms of parents coming into the school to talk about their children or to perform certain activities. Helping their

children with their homework is basically parental involvement. Homework is known for its effectiveness on the child's education and future. It is the key link between home and school as it enriches and broadens a child's knowledge. For the present study, parents are asked about the importance of helping their children with their homework, as helping children with their homework is a crucial predictor of parental involvement.

The activities listed above are types of parental involvement that not only present perfect opportunities for parents to provide support for their children but also help to consolidate school-family partnership and collaboration. Although the main focus of this report is the importance of parental involvement in the education of young children, it is certainly worth noting that research reveals many benefits for school systems and parents to become involved in their children's learning. School-family partnership is also of great interest in this study.

1.2.1.4 Determinants of parental involvement: Parental beliefs and the nature of parental involvement

How parents feel about schools and the emotional connections that they had to school may influence the kinds of attitudes to school and the learning that their children assume. Parents' cognitions about their role have been identified as a major contribution to their willingness to engage in supporting parenting. Durisic, M. and Bunijevac, M. (2017) focused on three forms of parental cognition: parents' aspirations concerning their children's future occupations, their self-efficacy in reading and educating their children and their perceptions of the school (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, Okagaki & Frensch, 1998). Parental aspirations refer to the idealistic hopes or goals that parents may form regarding future attainment. Parents who hold high aspirations for their children's future are likely to be more willing to exert more effort to ensure that those aspirations are realized. Parenting self-efficacy refers to parents with high self-efficacy who are generally more optimistic, authoritative, and consistent in their interactions with their children than those with lower parenting self-efficacy. Perceptions of the school refer to parents' degree of involvement that is likely to be affected by the school itself. If teachers appear to care about the welfare of the child, communicate respect for parents and develop effective means of communicating with families, parents are more willing and able to become involved in their children's schooling (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Similarly, Berthelsen and Walker (2008) distinguished two other types of feelings. These feelings may be positive or negative depending on the nature of those previous experiences. Negative feelings about schools may prevent parents from making connections with their children's schools. Positive feelings about schools experiences are likely to enhance parental involvement.

Additionally, the expectations that parents hold for their children's future achievement are important. If, for example, parents expect high levels of parental achievements and commitment to schooling, the child is more likely to adopt these positive attitudes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Remember that children learn by imitating their significant adults. There is also a need to understand how parents construct their involvement and the way they understand their involvement. Parental participation may be active because parents believe that they hold the primary responsibility for children's educational achievements and the school is only one of the many places where children learn. In other words, these parents assume their responsibility in helping their children to succeed at school. Other parents may hold a notion of partnership with schools that responsibilities for children's learning are

shared between parents and schools. Still, other parents may not believe that they should take responsibility/for an active role or may lack the confidence to be involved. For these latter parents, developing personal self-efficacy beliefs that can be effective in supporting children's learning at home and at school requires encouragement from teachers and schools (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Sometimes, parents are reluctant to offer to help their children with school work because they feel ill-equipped to do so. They fear that they have forgotten what they had learned as students, or they worry that they had never studied and can be of no real help. Teachers can help to support families/parents by ensuring that all children have some kind of individualized attention. Teachers can also encourage parents to play a more active role in their child's education by emphasizing that schools are only one of the many places where children learn. What is perhaps more important is parent-teacher consultation and collaboration which create the climate for maximum realization of a child's potential.

1.2.2 The importance of school-family partnership

In this context, Sharifah, Nor Jennifer and Wee Beng Neo (2011) argued that "the education system in the new millennium should encourage all schools to promote and adopt partnership among educators, parents and families, communities business and corporate organizations in their improvement efforts". Moreover, Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) in Jennings and Bosch (2001: 3) view parental involvement as '...enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, teaching and learning'. This involvement represents a shared approach to the education of children. In response to parental involvement, Bastiani (2003) identified several benefits accruing from involving parents in their children's education. Some of these benefits are:

- A greater willingness of parents and schools to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage.
- Parents' active encouragement and support for children's learning produce tangible academic benefits that last throughout a child's school.
- More positive pupils' attitudes and behaviours.

Furthermore, Deborah Davis (2000) listed other benefits accruing from enhancing communication with families:

- A feeling of community: Parents feel that they are part of the school community, as they are kept aware and informed of school events and other important school information.
- Clear information: Parents learn about the school's curriculum, assessments, achievement levels, and reporting methods.
- Parents receive information about how to support their children: Parents have the information they need to help their children thrive and achieve. When families are happy, children tend to do better in school.
- Relationships are developed: When schools and families share information and strategies, everyone feels connected to the school community.
- Positive outcomes: School staff realizes the positive ways that parents contribute to children success.

Effective communication with families means that the school welcomes and consistently supports families to support their children. Two-way communication about school programs and children's progress will result in better outcomes for children. It should also come as no surprise that frequent and positive communication helps teachers see the importance of using frequent, clear and positive communication strategies with parents. The more that parents and teachers share pertinent information about children, the better equipped they will be to help

those children become successful. In response, schools that are well connected with the community tend to have higher achieving students than schools with fewer ties. In this sense, student learning is most effective when it is the result of a partnership among the school, teachers, parents and the community. This suggests that parents need to feel welcome at their children's school to focus on appropriate signs and responsive staff. To do so, there exists a variety of techniques for involving parents in their children's education at school. In response, earlier research on parental involvement in education suggests that school-family partnership should be informed by Epstein's Six Types of parental involvement practices (Shaifah et al., 2001; Epstein et al., 1997). The proposed model is outlined below (Cited in Mafa, O § Makuba, E. 2013):

Type 1: Basic Responsibilities of Families

This refers to the basic responsibilities of families to ensure children's health and safety; to provide parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school and to build home positive conditions that support school learning and behaviour appropriate for each grade/level.

Type 2: communication: Basic Responsibilities of Schools

Type 2 refers to the communication from school to home about school programmes and children's progress. Schools should design effective forms of communication so that families could be informed about school programmes and children's improvement and success.

Type 3: Volunteer: Parent Involvement at School

It refers to parents, who come to school or support children's performance, to attend workshops or other educational programmes to improve themselves so that they are able and confident to assist and help their children in their learning.

Type 4: Home Involvement: Parents' Involvement in Home Learning Activities

This consists in instructions from teachers to parents to assist their own children at home or learning on learning activities that are associated with the children's class work. For example, if teachers assign homework, parents who are actively involved in their children's education are certainly encouraged to talk about the homework and offer help where possible. Parental involvement must, therefore, not only be viewed in terms of parents coming to the school to talk about their children or to perform certain activities (Desforges and Aboucher, 2003). Helping their children with their homework is undoubtedly parental involvement.

Type 5: School Governance: Leaderships and participation

It refers to parents and community activities in independent advocacy groups that monitor schools and works for school improvement.

Type 6: Collaboration with the Community

It refers to the school having connections with other business representatives and other groups that share responsibility for the children's education and future success.

Epstein (2001, 2009) argues that there are many reasons for developing and establishing a partnership between school, family and community. The main reason for such a partnership is to aid children in succeeding at school. Other reasons include improving school climate and school programs, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community and assisting teachers in their work. All these reasons emphasise the importance of parents playing an active role in their children's education and keeping a strong and positive relationship with schools (Cited in Masa, D § Mila, B, 2017).

While parental involvement in children's education has long been known to be effective, consistent parental involvement has not yet been achieved. Different obstacles have been

associated with parental involvement in children's learning. The next section is, therefore, designed to identify the barriers to parental involvement.

1.2.3 Barriers to parental involvement

While most teachers and school administrators are in favour of greater parent participation in children's schooling, some obstacles exist. Many teachers worry that parents, particularly low-income parents, may not have enough time, training, or education themselves to help their children with school work (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein and Becker, 1982; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987; Moles, 1982). Moles (1982) reports that many teachers also have low expectations that parents will follow through on commitments to help their children with school work. The time factor and communication problems are among the frequently mentioned problems that prevent parents from being actively involved in children's education.

According to Moles (1982), the time factor was associated with working parents, traders and farming parents. Burdened by the distractions and demands of daily life, some parents are unable to attend school activities or participate in the schooling of their children regularly (Ho, 2009).

Furthermore, Moles cite communication problems as another barrier to parental involvement in school. Some parents lack knowledge and are uncooperative. Parents of such children hardly respond positively and hardly attend consultation days. In addition, it is well documented that parents who themselves did not enjoy school, or had a bad experience at school, may have difficulties communicating with teachers, which may affect their level of involvement as well as their beliefs and expectations. Nevertheless, as Seeley (1982) argues, parents' involvement might be facilitated if the relationships between parents and teachers become a true partnership based on mutual sharing, helping and accountability. He contends that as long as schools see the parents' role as one of background support (i.e., providing food, clothing and shelter), the current relationship between parents and teachers will remain unequal and based on assumptions of power.

In favour of the barriers to parental involvement, Nancy E. Hill and Lorraine C. Taylor (2004) identified other obstacles that have been associated with parental involvement. Parents' psychological state influences parental school involvement. For example, depression or anxiety presents barriers to involvement in schooling. Studies consistently show that mothers who are depressed tend to be less involved than non-depressed mothers in preparing young children for school and also exhibit lower levels of involvement over the early years of school. Self-perceptions also affect parents' school involvement. Negative feelings about themselves may also hinder parents from making connections with their children's schools. Parents' confidence in their own intellectual abilities is the most salient predictor of their school's involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). A factor that may be especially important in this regard is the experience of poverty. Poverty exerts direct effects on parents' mental health and self-perceptions through increased stress resulting from the struggle to make ends meet. Parents' own experience as students shapes their involvement in their children's schooling. As a parent prepares a child to start school, the parents' memories of his or her own school experiences are likely to become reactivated and may influence how the parent interprets and directs the child's school experiences (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, in press). Memories of supportive school experiences are likely to enhance parents' involvement and comfort (Cited in Nancy E. Hill & Lorraine C. Taylor, 2004).

Cooper and Crosnoe (2007) argued that the lack of money, time and energy limits economically disadvantaged parents' involvement in their children's education. Moreover, Lareau (2003) indicated that parents living in low-income neighbourhoods do not have access to the same financial and educational resources as their middle-class counterparts. Although many parents are required to balance their work-life with children's school, this may be especially difficult for low-income parents, who may have less flexible work schedules. Because of this, they may experience time poverty. Hill and Taylor (2004) assert that "parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face many more barriers to involvement, including non-flexible work schedules, lack of resources, transportation problems, and stress due to residing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods" (2004, p. 162) (Cited in Masa Durisic & Mila Bunijevac, 2017). Time poverty refers to the lack of poor working families' free time to dedicate to their child's educational concerns (Neuman & Chin, 2003). Coupled with economic disadvantage, being a single parent makes it more difficult to get involved. Single parents are less likely to be involved in their children's schooling because of other family or work obligations (Lee, Kushner & Cho, 2007; Smith-Battle, 2007). Families' socioeconomic status is beyond the scope of this research since parents from different SES have been considered. This is harmonious with the purpose of this study which seeks to generate parents' different perspectives and opinions about parental involvement in their children's learning.

To overcome the barriers preventing parental involvement, schools need to build a welcoming climate where the school staff is respectful and responsive to parents' needs because a key principle of an effective partnership is mutual respect.

1.2.4 Decreasing barriers to parental involvement and teachers' role in consolidating school-family partnership

Schools can help parents decide to be involved by offering a range of options for interactions that take parental needs into account. First, invitations to parents to be involved convey to parents that their involvement is welcomed and valued and provide motivations to be involved. Hoover-Dempsey and his colleagues (2005) argue that important invitations come from 3 sources: the schools, teachers and children themselves. A school climate that conveys to parents that they are welcome in the school is essential. Parents can also be kept well-informed about their children's learning and improvement. Second, the school staff can also show respect for parental concerns and suggestions. Such a school climate sets a strong foundation for involvement. Invitations from the teacher build personal trust that is the basis for creating a partnership around children's learning at home and school. Finally, invitations from children for help with their learning (for example, doing homework) can prompt involvement. Therefore, different forms of invitations guarantee trust, respect and help for parents to take part in their children's education.

Research indicates that pupils and parents consider homework or home learning to be an important part of school life and the evidence shows a positive relationship between time spent on homework and achievement at the secondary school level (Henderson and Mapp, 2002). On the whole, pupils have positive attitudes towards homework and feel it is important to help them do well at school. Positive attitudes to homework are associated with positive attitudes at school. As a result, pupils tend to learn better when they hold positive attitudes about schools and teachers. This can only be achieved in a home environment conducive to learning and reading.

Teachers need to form strong and trusting relationships with all parents, especially those who may be less willing to develop a partnership with schools. Teachers can encourage parents to play a more active role in their child's education by emphasising that schools are one of the many places where children learn. Teachers can also send notes for parents to be informed about their children's improvements at school. In turn, parents have to respond actively to their children's concerns and interests and show them that they care about what they are doing at school. This may, of course, encourage teachers to devote more attention to these children.

In supporting parental school partnership, Nancy E. Hill and Lorraine C. Taylor (2004) distinguished two mechanisms. The first is by increasing social capital. That is, parental school involvement increases parents' skills and information, which makes them better equipped to assist their children in their school-related activities. As parents establish social relationships with school personnel, they learn important information about the school's expectations for behaviour and homework. They also learn how to help with homework and how to augment children's learning at home (Lareau, 1996). When parents are involved in their children's schooling, they meet other parents who provide information and insights on school policies and practices, as well as extracurricular activities. Parents learn from other parents how difficult situations are handled successfully. In addition, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents' expectations for their children and their children's teachers. Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that compared with parents who were not involved, involved parents developed more complex strategies for working with schools and their children to promote achievement.

Second, Lee and Bowen (2006) and Dika and Singh (2002) cite social capital in families as being positively linked to their students' achievement, graduation rates, higher educational attainment, as well as motivation and involvement in school. Similarly, Ho (2009) discusses the benefit of parents' involvement in schools, noting that it helps parents overcome a lack of social capital. Likewise, Hill and Taylor (2004) assert that parental involvement in the school supports students' achievement by increasing the parents' social capital. (Cited in Masa Durisic & Mila Bunijevac, 2017)

To overcome the barriers preventing parental involvement, schools need to provide a welcoming climate where the school staff is respectful and responsive to parents (Wherry, 2009). Administrators and teachers must encourage respectful two-way communication between the school and home (Wherry, 2009). Bouie, an educational consultant stated, "The answer is to stop treating parents like "clients" and start treating them like "partners" in helping children learn" (as cited in Wherry, 2009). Schools need to make parents feel that their contributions are worthwhile, welcomed, interesting and valued.

Moreover, some school systems have employed parent involvement coordinators to lead and coordinate parental involvement activities and programmes within the system to overcome obstacles between the home and school (Epstein, 2001). Epstein (2009) described the role of parent involvement coordinators as a way of encouraging more parents to become involved in a variety of aspects of the school. Parent involvement coordinators often conduct workshops for parents to inform them of the school curriculum and remind them that they are their child's most important teacher (Epstein, 2009).

The essence of effective partnerships between parents and school staff was summarized in seven principles by Turnbull and colleagues (2011). A key principle of an effective partnership is trust. The teacher is required to have reliable, confidential, open and honest relationships with parents. Furthermore, the relationship must be based on mutual respect

which means respect for the opinions of others and respect for the dignity of others. Parents should be convinced of the persons who are professionally involved in the work of their children. Effective partnerships require two-way communication that will enable the exchange of knowledge and ideas between all parties involved. No less important is the imperative of protecting children, which is achieved through early identification of problems, their solutions, the identification of appropriate strategies and the promotion of knowledge about the protection of children. Interaction between the school and home needs to be more positive requiring teachers to contact families throughout the year and not just when problems arise. It may be beneficial for administrators and educators to attempt to involve all parents in the education of their children and make the educational experience more positive for everyone involved.

Furthermore, Machen and colleagues (2005) argued that school personnel should establish workable and realistic ways to involve parents in education. Eccles and Harold (1993) identified three ways to involve parents: give them more meaningful roles, keep them informed and present opportunities for them to support educational and developmental progress at school and home.

Graham-Clay (2005) reasoned that strong communication between parents and school personnel is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. Therefore, school personnel must continue to develop and expand their skills to maximize effective communication with parents. All these practices help parents as well as teachers to overcome the barriers preventing parental involvement.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this article is to understand the importance of parental involvement in the education of primary school children. The literature indicates that parental involvement in the education of children begins at home with the parents providing a safe and healthy environment, appropriate learning experiences, support and a positive attitude about school (Epstein, 2009; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Rumberger et al., 1990; Swap, 1993; Whitaker & Fiore, 2001). More importantly, this article recognises the important role that a strong and positive bond between homes and schools can lead to academic achievement for learners (children). Sanders and Sheldon (2009) maintain that schools become successful when a strong positive relationship among children, parents, teachers and the community has been established. Considering the importance of parents' participation and involvement in school activities, in this paper, we will shed light on the barriers preventing parental involvement. Because many families are faced with overwhelming and unpredictable schedules and circumstances while juggling schools, allowing minimal time to provide support in any one given area (Swap, 1993). In addition, we will conclude and make recommendations that are important for planning suggestions and programmes that are focused on the importance of parental involvement.

Towards the end, the article presents ideas on how teachers and families can be encouraged to work as partners to improve children's performance at school. This chapter describes also the research instruments used to analyse the data. Finally, the chapter concludes by examining the corpus itself and demonstrating the reasons behind its selection.

2.2 Participants

The participants involved in the present study are primary school teachers and parents of children who are enrolled in Abou Lkacem Chebbi's Primary School. The sample constitutes 35 parents and 15 teachers who volunteered to take part in this study. **Table 1** below provides the general profile of the teachers.

Table 1: Teachers' General Profile N= 15

Gender		Educational background		Teaching experience	
Male	Female	Diploma in teaching	Bachelor of Education degree	5-10 years	11 years plus
3	12	9	6	2	13

Teachers were selected randomly representing different teaching experiences and educational backgrounds. The majority of teachers have more than 11 years of teaching experience.

They were informed about the research and its purpose beforehand so that their answers would be informative and clear. We should make it clear that a formal letter has been written describing the study and its purpose. A formal consent has been received from the responsible authorities (the school's headmaster) allowing the researcher to contact teachers inside the school.

Parents as well were selected randomly from different socioeconomic statuses (SES) and educational levels. This is of course harmonious with the objective of this research which aims to study the importance of parental intervention in children's education. In other words, variable such as the SES variable is beyond the scope of this study.

2.3 Data collection instruments

Because of the immense amount of information and variables involved in the parental involvement theme, both qualitative and quantitative studies have been useful in the demonstration of understanding of the topic.

The interview allows the researcher to break down specific issues into detailed subgroups, using extensive information from observation and questioning to draw meaningful connections that may not have existed through strict statistical data (Deslandes and Bertrand 166). For example, Fan and Chen discussed the significant advantage of the qualitative methodology when they write about how it allows "more than a typology for parental involvement, it not only deals with specific types of parental involvement, it allows an attempt to explain why parents choose to be involved". This detailed investigation is only allowed through the observation and verbal discussion allowed within the qualitative analysis.

Although the majority of the research documented utilizes the qualitative forms of methodology, research-based on quantitative analysis also serves an important role in the overall understanding of the parental involvement sphere. Quantitative methods allow the researcher to use a much larger population in a much quicker manner.

The researcher began her study with a broad inventory survey to collect quantitative data on the everyday practices that parents employ to stimulate their child's academic achievement. Once this was completed, the researcher acknowledged the need for specific in-depth information and developed a complimentary qualitative interview in response.

The use of dual methodology not only made the information from each separate study more understandable and relevant, it allowed a scientific connection to be drawn between the two very different studies. This attitude is reiterated when Campell and Verna discuss their

satisfaction with the methods, “we found that our qualitative work fits nicely within the framework of the inventory. The blending of both quantitative and qualitative data helps to give our studies more substance” (Campell and Verna 509). Throughout an examination of research conducted within the realm of parental involvement, the most constructive and informative were those that were able to connect quantitative research statistics to meaningful qualitative information (Cited in Kristy L. O’Donoghue).

2.3.1 Parents’ Questionnaire

The first questionnaire created was for the parents. In the first part, the parents’ biological information followed by six different questions was created. Then, the biological section was excluded from the survey so that participants would not feel biased toward answering the questions. Remember that one of the major aims of the present study is to examine the extent to which parents were involved in their child’s education. Considering the literature regarding parental involvement, the more parents were involved, the more successful their children were. I wrote questions that dealt with the parents’ involvement at home. I asked the parents if they help their child with homework, the frequency of helping their child with homework and how confident they feel when helping their child.

Another relevant predictor of parental involvement is the expectations parents hold for their children’s future attainment. For this reason, I asked the parents about the child’s primary responsibility. Despite the overwhelming data that supports the need for the parent to get involved in the education of their children, multiple obstacles stand in the way of convincing parents to get involved in the education of their children. Therefore, any obstacles that may inhibit parents from actively seeking involvement in schools must be identified and addressed to build a positive relationship with the school system. Therefore, questions that dealt with the barriers associated with parental involvement were asked. In this section, parents are invited to choose the barriers that prevent them from being actively involved in their children’s education.

The last section in the survey was linked to school-family partnership and parental involvement at school. I write questions that dealt with the parents physically going to the school and meeting with the teacher to discuss the child’s progress or behaviour and volunteering at the school for extracurricular events.

2.3.2 Teachers’ Interview

Teachers’ interview allows the researcher to break down specific issues into detailed subgroups, using extensive information from observation and questioning to draw meaningful connections that may not have existed through strict statistical data (Deslandes and Bertrand 166). The teacher’s interview went through two drafts before I distributed 15 copies to primary school teachers. Teachers were first invited to define the term “parental involvement”. As such, we generate teachers’ perspectives about parental involvement.

Part two of the interview addresses the barriers which prevent parental involvement. Interviewed teachers explained the difficulties which most families suffer from when trying to be involved in their children’s learning or may lack the confidence to be involved.

Studies also indicated that parental involvement is most effective when viewed as a partnership between educators and parents (Davies, 1996; Emeag Wali, 2009). The last part of the interview was dedicated to encouraging teachers to offer suggestions and recommendations on how to help consolidate parental involvement at school and hence the school-family partnership.

2. 4 Data collection procedure

The first step of the research was spent reading about parental involvement, in general, to find out what areas of research to focus on. This study relies on a random sampling method in the sense that it involves parents from different backgrounds who are not made for the present research. They are pre-existing inhabitants of the country. The researcher requested that the parents' questionnaires should be completed by parents themselves who were, in turn, assured that the data collected was for the research purposes only and their confidentiality would be respected during the study. The survey was filled in by 35 parents who appeared to be informative, helpful and relaxed. It took approximately 15 minutes for every respondent to answer the questions.

As for the teachers' interviews, a letter has been written to the school head explaining the purpose of the study. The researcher received the school head's consent afterward. Primary school teachers were contacted by the school head who first introduced the researcher to the respondents and explained the purpose of the study. Teachers, in turn, appeared welcoming and enthusiastic about the topic. They complained that it is a hot topic which deserves much attention from three parties: parents, teachers and pupils as well. It took approximately 30 to 45 minutes for every teacher to fill in the interview. Some teachers appeared to be very talkative and had many things to say about the topic. Their responses reflect undoubtedly their opinions and their perceptions. This echoes with the aim of the interview which reflects the participants' inner opinions and perceptions. Teachers are also assured that their answers are to be treated in strict confidence and they are only used for the present study.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of the questionnaire data (parents' questionnaire)

Parents' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively. Quantitative analysis was done through a statistical analysis of data using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software, which is frequently used in Applied Linguistics and educational research (Dornyei, 2007). For example, the number of participants who selected each item was calculated using frequency, the results were analyzed and tabulated and then they were converted into percentages (e. g, to figure out the number of the participants who answered a particular item among the whole participants in the study). Qualitative analysis was carried out through the analysis of the results of the open-ended questions. It is used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and opinions of the teachers and to dive deeper into the problem.

This section represents the results of the questionnaire as well as the interview analysis. The questionnaire is divided into 4 main sections. First, part 1 deals with parental involvement at home. Part 2, however, addresses parents' feelings and expectations about parental involvement in the education of their children. Part 3 identifies the significant barriers to parental involvement. The last part examines parental involvement at school to help strengthen parental involvement.

• *Parental involvement at home*

Question 1 identifies whether parents help their children with homework or not. In response to this question, all participants indicated that they helped their children with homework at home. Question 2, however, deals with the frequency of helping with homework. Responses to this question are better explained in the following table:

Table 2: Frequency of helping with homework

Frequency of helping with homework	No. of mentions (N= 35)	Percentages (%)
Every time	24	68%
Most times	2	8%
Occasionally	1	2%
Never	0	0%
When the child asks for help	8	22%

As the above table clearly shows, the majority of parents reported that they helped their children with homework every time at home. However, few parents helped their children only when the child asks for help. There were also only 2 parents who indicated that they helped their children most time with their homework. This suggests that the majority of the participants are aware of the importance of parents' involvement in the education of their children. Helping children with their homework reinforces children's positive opinions about school and education. It also shows children that their parents value what they are doing. Their parents' support, guidance and help guarantee success at school.

- **Parental feelings and expectations**

Consistent with parental involvement is how parents feel about schools and the emotional connections that they had to school. As for parents' feelings about school, parents are asked about their feelings when helping their children with homework in question 3. Parents may feel confident when helping their children with homework because of those previous experiences at school. On the contrary, other parents may feel less confident to help their children with homework because they feel ill-equipped to do so or they have forgotten what they have learned or they fear that what they know could not be of real help. Differences in parents' feelings are clearly explained in the following table.

Table 3: Parents' feelings when helping their children with homework

Parents' feelings	No. of mentions (N= 35)	Percentages (%)
Always confident	15	42%
Never confident	1	2%
Confident most of the time	9	25%
Confident some of the time	10	28%

According to table 3, almost half of the parents feel always confident when helping their children with homework which can indicate their positive feelings about school experiences that are likely to enhance parental involvement. No less important are parents who feel confident most of the time. However, only one parent is reluctant to offer to help his/her child because he/she feels never confident to do so.

There is also a need to understand how parents construct their involvement and the way they understand their involvement. Question 4 asked parents about the child's primary

responsibility. Table 4 below shows the difference in parents' opinions about their involvement at school.

Table 4: Parents' beliefs and expectations

Parents' beliefs and expectations	No. of mentions (N= 35)	Percentages (%)
Wholly the parents' responsibility	0	0%
Mainly the parents' responsibility	5	14%
Both equally	27	77%
Mainly the school's responsibility	3	8%
Wholly the school's responsibility	0	0%

Parents' responses to this question revealed that the majority (77%) of parents hold a notion of partnership with the school that responsibilities for children's learning are shared between parents and teachers (schools). Other parents, however, argued that children's education is mainly the parents' responsibility. These parents believe that they hold the primary responsibility for their children's educational achievements and the school is only one of the many places where children learn. In other words, these parents assume their responsibility in helping their children to succeed at school. Still, other parents (8%) may not believe that they should take responsibility/for an active role or may lack the confidence to be involved. These parents believe that children's education is mainly the school's responsibility. While most parents are in favour of greater parent participation in children's schooling, some obstacles exist. Therefore, the next table addresses the barriers that prevent parents from being actively involved in their children's education.

• *Barriers to parental involvement*

Table 5: Barriers associated with parental involvement

Barriers to parental involvement	N. of mentions (N=35)	Percentages (%)
Lack of awareness	4	11%
Work commitments/lack of time	29	82%
Communication problem (Lack of cooperation and partnership)	2	7%

According to the table, the great majority of parents (82%) reported that they are unable to balance their work-life with their children's school due to the lack of time. Time poverty refers to the lack of ...families' free time to dedicate to their child's educational concerns (Neuman & Chin, 2003). However, only four parents reported that the lack of awareness/care is another main reason which limits parental involvement. In other words, these parents are not aware of their responsibility in helping their children to succeed at school. Perhaps

negative feelings about themselves may hinder these parents from making connections with their children’s schools. In other words, these parents may lack the confidence to offer their children help. Remember that parents’ confidence in their own intellectual abilities is the most salient predictor of their school’s involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996).

Another reason that has been identified as a serious obstacle to parental involvement is communication problems. Some parents lack knowledge and are uncooperative. Parents of such children hardly respond positively and hardly attend consultation days, for example. This may affect their level of involvement as well as their beliefs and their expectations about their children’s school achievements.

Apart from the three mentioned reasons, some parents argued that other reasons have been associated with parental involvement. They reported that “*a factor that may be especially important in this regard is the experience of poverty*”. Poverty exerts direct effects on parents’ mental health and self-perceptions through increased stress resulting from the struggle to make ends meet. For example, disadvantaged parents do not have access to the same financial and educational resources as advantaged parents, especially traders and farmers.

To overcome the barriers associated with parental involvement, there should be a welcoming climate where the school staff and parents work in partnership and cooperation. Parents have to be partners in all educational activities. The goal is to establish a partnership model in which teachers and parents share expertise and control to provide the optimum education and success for children, each contributing different strengths to the relationship (Hornby, 2011). In this respect, the purpose of the next section is to show parental involvement at school which provides an important opportunity for schools to enrich current school programmes by bringing parents into the educational process.

• **Parental involvement at school**

Table 6: the activities parents do to help their children at school

Parental involvement at school	N. of mentions (N=35)	Percentages (%)
Discussing child’s progress	18	51%
Volunteering at the school for extracurricular events	2	5%
Visiting the child’s class	7	20%
Attended a school event in which a child’s participated	5	14%
Talking to parents of other children	3	8%

According to table 6, the great majority of parents go to school to discuss their children’s progress with teachers. This step is relevant to school-family partnership. It allows parents as well as teachers to share information and tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage. Being involved in their children’s education allows parents to be part of the school community as they are kept well informed of the school’s curriculum and reporting methods. Consequently, pupils’ attitudes and behaviours about school are enhanced because their significant adults care about their education and what they are doing at school.

No less important, some parents indicated that visiting the child’s class is significantly another form of parental involvement. By doing so, parents receive information about how to support their children in their learning. Parents have the information they need to help their

children thrive and achieve as they share the information and the strategies with each other. Consequently, relationships between families and schools are developed. The main reason for such a partnership is to help children succeed at school. Other reasons include improving school climate and school programs, developing parental skills, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community and assisting teachers in their work as well.

Another relevant predictor of parental involvement at school is volunteering for extracurricular activities at school. Parents' responses to this question revealed that they do not have time to come to school to attend workshops or other educational programmes. This implies that some parents need to be aware to make the balance between their work on one hand and assisting their children in education on the other hand. Schools, in turn, should design effective forms of communication so that parents could be informed about the school's programmes and their children's improvements.

3.2 Analysis of the interview data (Teachers' Interview)

This section includes teachers' interviews. Primary school teachers were first invited to define "*parental involvement*". As a response, the majority of teachers view parental involvement as "guidance, support and help... more than teaching itself". They argue that parents need always to be involved in their children's education so that we (teachers and parents) tackle misunderstandings and problems at an early stage. "*Parents need to visit their children's school regularly so that we would be informed about their children's difficulties from the onset and we give their parents suggestions on how to navigate the school its challenges*", one teacher asserted.

Other teachers, however, maintain that parental involvement can be viewed as positive and negative involvement. Parents who are positively involved in their children's education tend to share information, guide and support their children's learning. On the contrary, parents who are negatively engaged, lack the confidence and knowledge to assist their children. They rarely come to consultation days at school or visit their child's class to discuss his/her progress.

Interviewed teachers suggested that one way parents can contribute positively to their children's education is to assist them with their academic work at home. Parents who read to their children, assist them with their homework, and provide tutoring using resources provided by teachers tend to do better in school than children whose parents do not assist them. Furthermore, teachers indicated, "*the level of parental involvement is associated with academic success*". In other words, children whose parents are actively involved in their schooling benefit better than children whose parents are passively involved. Specifically, teachers explained, "if parents attend teachers' conferences, accept phone calls from the school and read and sign messages from school, their children will benefit academically more than children whose parents do none of the above activities". Overall, primary school teachers concluded, "*children's educational achievement is enhanced when it is the result of a partnership between children, parents and teachers. All these partners need to work together for the child's sake to guarantee success and achievement*".

Although parental involvement is recognized as being of significance in the education of children, there remains a great diversity concerning involvement. Among the barriers that interviewed teachers cite is a lack of time, money and communication. Today's parents, teachers asserted, "*are often preoccupied with the demands of daily life. Burdened by low-income, inflexible work hours, some parents are unable to attend school activities or*

participate in the schooling of their children on a regular basis". Other teachers indicated that "many parents suffer from low self-esteem and others did not experience success at school themselves and as such lack the knowledge and confidence to help their children". In general, interviewed teachers in this study believe that three areas are barriers to parental involvement: time poverty/work commitments, lack access or communication problems and lack of awareness. Johnson (1994) asserted "feeling of inadequacy, limited school background, or preoccupation with necessities may prevent parents from communicating with schools" (1994, p. 46). In the current study, parents and teachers agree upon the same reasons preventing parents from being actively involved in their children's education.

Findings from the last part of the interview addresses suggestions and ideas teachers offer to help consolidate school-family partnership to work in a mutual relationship full of respect, help and support. In this respect, teachers suggest that the involvement of parents should be viewed as a continuous process that has its evolutionary stages through childhood and adolescence, and is especially important in the periods of the transition of children from one to another level of schooling. The Partnership Model developed by Hornby (2011) is the most appropriate model one in which teachers are considered to be experts on education and parents are viewed as experts on the children (Hornby 2001). Furthermore, teachers suggest that reading events in public spaces, like libraries, are significant activities that children can attend with their parents. Schools need also to be more aware of involving parents in leadership and decision-making roles. By doing so, schools and teachers become aware of parents' perspectives and needs. Because when parents are involved in leadership and decision-making roles, they become more supportive of the school's efforts and they have a better understanding of school issues and priorities. This can perhaps be achieved by *creating flexible schedules and variable forms of communication that will also give parents the greatest opportunity for successful participation in their child's education*, as one teacher recommended. Another teacher added, "we may not be able to help every family to become more involved. There will always be circumstances and situations beyond our control that will prohibit certain parents from being able to find a way to participate in school life".

Overall, the interview's findings revealed that there are different and effective ways in increasing parental involvement. For example, giving them more meaningful roles, keeping them informed, and presenting opportunities for them to support educational and developmental progress at school and home represent effective and good practices that can help consolidate school-family partnerships.

4. Discussions and conclusions

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the importance of parental involvement at home and school since parents' contribution to children's education has long been recognized for its effectiveness in ameliorating children's school achievements. In the home context, a questionnaire has been distributed to 35 participants from different SES backgrounds whose children are enrolled in Abou Lkecam Chebbi's Primary School.

Findings strongly revealed that the majority of parents help their children with their homework. They always feel confident because of their previous experience with school. These involved parents tend to develop positive attitudes towards their children's teachers. They rate teachers higher in interpersonal and teaching skills, perceive them as wanting them to develop their children and as very helpful in suggesting ideas for home activities. This suggests also that these parents tend to maintain frequent contact with the school, have higher achieving children than parents who have infrequent contact. Additionally, these parents

expect high levels of parental achievements and commitment to schooling and their children are more likely to adopt these feelings. Remember that children learn by imitating their significant adults. Parents who are confident to be involved are developing high personal self-efficacy beliefs that can be effective in supporting children's learning at home and school.

What remains are reluctant parents who are rarely encouraged to offer their children help with their homework. They cite insufficient financial resources and lack of educational attainment as barriers to parental involvement. They believe that education is mainly the school's responsibility. Parents who may lack the confidence to be involved, developing personal self-efficacy beliefs that can be effective in supporting children's learning at home and school, require encouragement from teachers and schools. Teachers can also encourage these parents to play an active role in their children's learning and remind them that schools are one of the many places where children learn. The home environment and its resources serve as an important influence in the development of children's education.

Despite the benefits underscoring parental involvement in increasing children's success, enhanced parent and teacher satisfaction, and improved school climate, there remains a great diversity concerning involvement. In this article, surveyed parents often mention the lack of financial resources, lack of communication and time poverty due to distraction and demands of daily life as barriers to parental involvement in school life. Most school personnel and teachers would like to involve families but do not know how to build positive and productive programs and are consequently apprehensive about trying (Epstein, 1995).

There should be workable and realistic ways to involve parents. Recent findings suggest that several approaches can be effective in increasing parental involvement. For example, Graham-Clay (2005) reasoned that strong communication between parents and school personnel is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. Therefore, school personnel must continue to develop and expand their skills to maximize effective communication with parents. Cohen, Linker, and Stutts (2006) noted, "an ideal collaboration on behalf of children should have participation from all parties which includes parents and school personnel at various levels".

Examining the barriers to parental involvement in schools from multiple perspectives allows researchers, parents and educators to identify the areas in which collaborations between parents, school personnel can be enhanced. However, earlier studies have focused primarily on parents' perspectives and have not included those of school personnel. In this study, we examined specific barriers to parental involvement from the perspective of parents and school teachers at Abou Lkacem Chebbi's Primary School. Parents, as well as teachers, agreed upon the same obstacles which prevent parents from active participation in their children's schooling. This similarity is better explained in the following diagram:

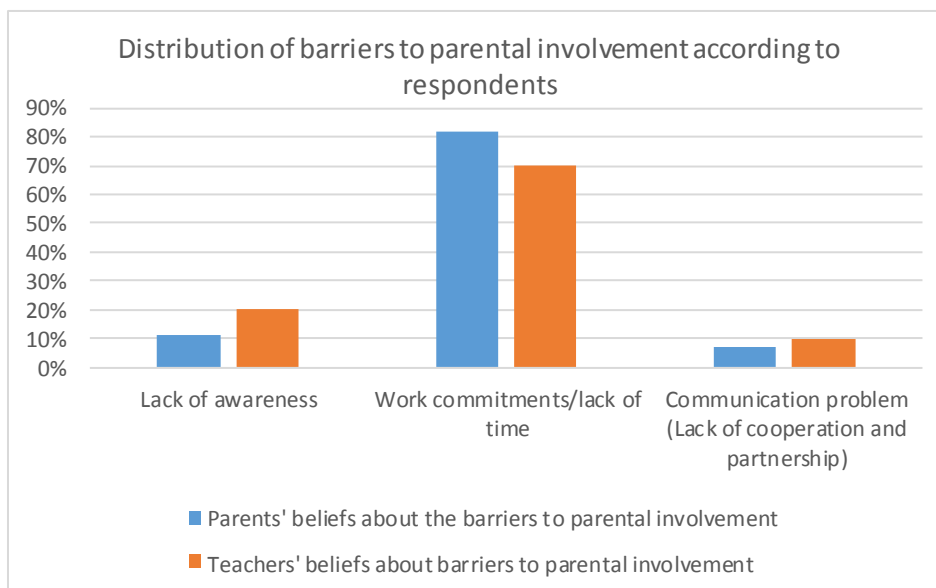


Diagram 1: Distribution of barriers to parental involvement according to teachers and parents

According to the above diagram, parents and teachers share the same barriers preventing their active involvement in their children's learning. The lack of time or work commitment is among the most important factor that parents suffer from. To overcome this barrier, teachers suggest that parents need to help their children by devoting more attention to schooling their children. Teachers on their part are looking for the most appropriate model one in which teachers and parents share expertise and control to provide the optimum education for children. Mutual respect, long-term commitment to a wide range of activities, and sharing of planning and decision-making responsibilities are the essential components for a true partnership between parents and teachers.

Teachers as well need to be aware that parental involvement provides an opportunity for schools to enrich school programs by bringing parents into the educational process. This echoes the Partnership Model developed by Hornby in 2011 in which teachers are considered to be experts on education and parents are viewed as experts on the children. Contrary to the Partnership Model, in the Expert Model, teachers consider themselves to be the experts regarding all areas of the development and education of children, whereas parents' views are given little credence (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). In other words, teachers maintain decisions overall decisions, while the parents' role is to receive information and instructions about their children.

No less important is the lack of awareness and cooperation between teachers and parents. Teachers argued that not all parents have equal capacities for fuller participation in all activities. They found that *"some parents suffer from low self-esteem and others did not experience success in school themselves and therefore lack the knowledge and confidence to help their children"*. Parents who did not experience success may view it negatively (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). These parents can be encouraged by assuring *"that every child has a kind of individualized attention and parents are the child's first and primary partner in the learning process"*, teachers contended.

In this study, we have also explored the kinds of activities parents engaged in to increase parental involvement at school. The following diagram explains the different types of activities parents do to strengthen their school contribution.

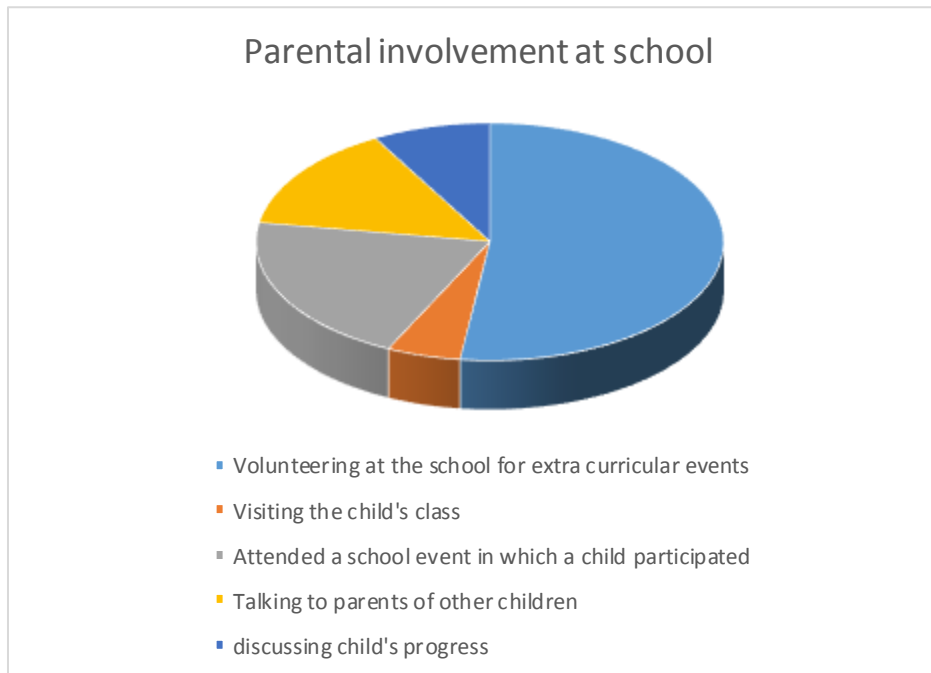


Diagram 2: Distribution of suggestions and ideas to consolidate parental involvement at school

Involved parents argued that discussing a child's progress with teachers is the most appropriate form of parental involvement. This suggests that these parents devote much control and attention to their children's schooling. They are more supportive of the school's efforts and they have a better understanding of school issues and priorities. In response, children of these parents will benefit academically more than children whose parents are not involved. Other school activities including attending a school event, talking to parents of other children and volunteering at the school for extracurricular events are among the least favored events that parents do. This may be explained by the fact that schools need to diversify the forms of involvement to cater to parents' time and interests.

Furthermore, parents offer other ideas on how to consolidate parental involvement at school and create a strong school-family partnership. For example, invitations to parents to be involved convey to parents that their involvement is welcomed and valued and provide motivation to be involved. Important invitations come from 3 sources: the school, teachers, and children themselves. A school climate that conveys to parents that they are welcome in the school is essential. Parents can also be kept well informed about their children's learning. The school staff can show respect for parental concerns and suggestions. Invitations from the teacher build personal trust that is the basis for creating a partnership around children's learning at home and school. Invitations from children for help with their learning can also prompt involvement.

The teachers also offered suggestions on how schools can get parents involved. These suggestions have been addressed in the last part of the interview. Here are some of the recommendations:

- Invite parents to an Open House (parents need to feel comfortable while exchanging talks with teachers)
- Have a parent visitation day
- Have an open line of communication with parents
- For parent-teacher conferences, have the teachers contact all of the parents by phone or letter before conferences, also provide some incentive to students to get their parents to come to conferences,
- Provide child-care for parents during parent-teacher conferences and meetings
- Publish a school calendar of events
- Create a school improvement team that includes parents
- Keep parents informed about their child's academic success through progress reports and report cards
- Assign homework that requires parental supervision and participation
- Create a daily assignment notebook, agenda book that teachers and parents can respond in, these are sent home once a week and are reviewed and signed by the parents
- Teachers need to make sure they show appreciation to parents for their support. This can be in the form of a note, for example.

5. Limitations and strengths of the study

This study is not without limitations. Future researchers might consider replicating the study with other populations, including children's perspectives and using a variety of methodologies (ethnographic methods and longitudinal designs to study the significance of parental involvement in the school setting). Furthermore, many of the participants' responses focused primarily on factors that affected parental involvement at school, but not necessarily outside of school. Future researchers might want to consider addressing circumstances that affect parents' ability to be involved with their child's education outside of school as well.

Despite the limitations, this study has several strengths as well. Study findings introduce barriers to parental involvement that have been rarely addressed, namely lack of awareness issues due to lack of correct contact information and children hindering home-school communications. Furthermore, this study included in-depth, rich perspectives and a variety of adults who play a major role in the home-school relationship. The mixed methodology allowed us to provide a more contextualized perspective of parental involvement. In particular, this study included school teachers as well as parents from different backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. Thus, this diversity of views presented a more representative understanding of how participants at this primary school and in this community defined parental involvement and described their interactions in given circumstances.

Furthermore, this study helps us to gain more insights into the significance of parental involvement not only for children's academic attainment but also for parents themselves. This study is also significant in the sense that it seeks to highlight the mechanisms through which involvement promotes academic achievement. When parents cannot become involved, how can schools compensate for the loss of benefits of involvement? Moreover understanding each family's unique barriers and resources is important for establishing and maintaining effective collaborations between families and schools.

In conclusion, the findings presented here add to the understanding of the importance as well as the barriers to parental involvement in education. Although some findings are consistent with previous studies, this study highlights additional considerations in working

with these families. In particular, by revealing a broader range of barriers to school access, both parents and teachers now have specific areas to focus their efforts to engage these parents in schools. Furthermore, detangling how parental lack of awareness hinders the involvement efforts challenges researchers and teachers to rethink how information and communication between the home and school occurs. It is probable that increasing the type and number of methods used to contact parents will foster more consistent parental involvement from a wider range of parents. Finally, including parents in the planning process, providing opportunities for involvement and offering incentives may further, enhance the home-school collaborations.

6. Conclusion

Many researchers have found that parental involvement in schools is an effective strategy for promoting children's achievement. Yet, schools struggle with the ways to recruit and involve parents. The barriers that discourage parents from participating in school are not insurmountable. This study presents specific practices that are effective at recruiting and working with typically hard-to-involve parents. For example, surveyed teachers encourage parents to visit the classroom, and to contact them with a question, comment, or concern. Invitations from schools or teachers convey to parents that their contribution is welcomed and valued. They emphasized that parents need to be informed about the curriculum being taught in the classroom. There should be a mutual partnership between parents and school if they want to enjoy the fruits of success and educational achievements.

The essence of effective partnerships between parents and school staff was summarized in seven principles by Turnbull and colleagues (2011). The principle of an effective partnership is trust. The teacher is required to have reliable, confidential, open and honest relationships with parents. Furthermore, the relationship must be based on mutual respect which means respect for the opinions of others and respect for the dignity of others. Parents should be convinced of the competence of persons who are professionally involved in the work with their children. Effective partnerships require two-way communication that will enable the exchange of knowledge and ideas between all parties involved. No less important is the imperative of protecting children, which is achieved through early identification of problems, their solution, the identification of appropriate strategies and the promotion of knowledge about the protection of children.

In 1981, Henderson concluded, "The form of parent involvement does not seem to be critical, so long as it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting" (p. 7). Henderson's argument still holds up quite well. It should be amended, however, to say that the form of the involvement does indeed seem to be critical. To involve the maximum number of parents in the education of their children, schools must understand the personal needs of those parents. Schools cannot understand their students' parents unless they are in two-way communication with those parents. Once teachers and children are talking, schools must then plan their interventions and programs to focus on parental needs.

There are two major mechanisms by which parental school involvement promotes achievement. The first is by increasing social capital. That is parental school involvement increases parents' skills and information (i.e., social capital), which makes them better

equipped to assist their children in their school-related activities. In other words, when parents establish relationships with school teachers, they learn important information about the school's expectations for behaviour and homework and how to augment children's learning at home (Lareau, 1996). When parents are involved in their children's schooling, they meet other parents who provide information and insight on school policies and practices, as well as extracurricular activities. Parents learn from other parents how to navigate the school and its demands and how difficult situations have been handled successfully. In turn, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about parents' expectations for their children and their children's teachers. For example, Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that compared with parents who were not involved, involved parents developed more complex strategies for working with schools and their children to promote school achievements.

Social capital is a second mechanism through which parental school involvement enhances achievement. Social control occurs when families and schools work together to build a consensus about appropriate behavior that can be effectively communicated to children at both home and school (McNeal, 1999). At school, parents are coming to know one another and agree on goals-both behavioral and academic-which serve as a form of social constraint that reduces problem behaviors. Consequently, when children and their peers receive similar messages about these appropriate behaviors across settings and from different sources, the messages become clear and salient and reduce confusion about expectations. Gaining both social capital and social control, children receive messages about the importance of schooling, and these messages increase children's competence, motivation to learn, and engagement in school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Overall, the main reason for a strong partnership between school, families and children is to aid children in succeeding at school. Other reasons include improving school climate and school programs, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting families in connecting with others in the school and the community, and assisting teachers in their work. All these reasons emphasize the importance of parents playing an active role in their children's education and keeping a strong and positive connection with schools.

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Into a Task-Based Language Teaching Approach to Raise EFL Students' Intercultural Competence: A study on Algerian EFL Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

With the increasing globalization and intercultural meetings, developing the intercultural competence for EFL learners is a necessity for guaranteeing effective and appropriate intercultural exchanges and communication. The current study aims to shed light on EFL teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the implementation of the TBLT approach in the EFL setting, and its effect on EFL learners' acquisition of intercultural competence. Accordingly, this study addressed middle school teachers of the English language in the Algerian context. Particularly, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to (60) EFL teachers to gather their views of the effectiveness of the TBLT approach, and to shed light on their teaching practices related to the notion of intercultural competence. The data obtained was analysed manually, and the findings were displayed via pie charts. The results indicate that EFL teachers had mostly positive attitudes towards the use of TBLT to raise EFL learners' intercultural competence. Moreover, based on their responses, the teaching practices adopted within the TBLT framework are likely to provide learners with an environment that supports their development of intercultural ability.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence, Communication, Task-Based Language Teaching, Algerian Middle Schools.

1. Context of the Study

1.1. Background to the Study

It is believed that learning a language should not be separate from its social context. Social awareness and knowledge, in addition to the skills that govern language use in its social context, should be considered (Pinto, 2018, p. 2). Recently, and due to the increasing effects of the globalized world, deciding about the real-world communicative situations to be considered when course design, as well as learners' needs in such contexts, has become a difficult task for teachers (Kramersch, 2014, p. 296).

The traditional conventions of teaching a foreign language view the target language as a mere system of linguistic items. Nevertheless, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) through form-based teaching approaches is no longer considered effective by current trends in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The Standards (2006; cited in Moeller and Nugent, 2014, p. 1) maintain that language goals are mainly concerned with the 5C's: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. This definition of the current language learning goals draws attention to the significant role of the language context in effectively acquiring and maintaining communication. Therefore, special focus should be given to the role of the intercultural aspect in language learning (Moeller and Nugent, 2014, p. 1).

Kramersch (2014, p. 301) contends that recent evolutions in language teaching trends (the 1970s and the 1980s) entail the teaching of language for use instead of the teaching of "(...) how to master the intricacies of the linguistic system". Accordingly, prevailing approaches to teaching EFL in the currently designed curricula mainly consider the contextual features that govern language use, which can give rise to interculturally competent L2 learners. As a definition to the latter concept, Moeller and Nugent (2014, p. 2) state that "an interculturally competent speaker of an FL possesses both communicative competence in that language as well as particular skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge about a culture".

Based on this definition, it is assumed that the current EFL teaching practices seek to develop EFL learners' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that ensure the appropriate and effective use of the target language. This is mainly because using the target language not only entails linguistic differences but also differences at the level of the target culture and societal norms. The teaching of the cultural aspect of the language is not necessarily limited to considering the target culture. Kramersch (2014, p. 302) specifies that language teaching now comprises the teaching of both "a global culture of communication for the sake of communication and local cultures of shared values". The tasks' major objective is to accomplish a non-linguistic activity, yet the use of certain linguistic items is not disregarded as they form the means that enable fulfilling such non-linguistic objectives (Pinto, 2018, p. 6). In brief, a task "(...) fournit un contexte, une raison "sociale" pour acquérir une langue" (Van Thienen, 2009, p. 60).

1.2.Statement of the Problem

Because of globalization, the English language has gained a significant role in enhancing interaction amongst people of different cultural identities and societal backgrounds. The English language has become the medium of interaction in today's globalized world. Students all over the world learn English for various reasons, but mainly for achieving the ability to communicate effectively in the target language, English. Indeed, "(...) with the recent influx of immigrants at home and the instant electronic access to other cultures abroad" (Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune, 1996, p. 99), teachers are required to go beyond the linguistic knowledge of the target language in order to ensure "mutual understanding" (Kramsch et al., 1996, p. 99).

It is assumed, thus, that teaching the foreign language should not be limited to teaching its linguistic structures. As such, people interacting with natives of the target language will be overwhelmed with a great number of misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Traditionally, the teaching of a foreign language has long focused on the linguistic and philosophical aspects of the language (Kramsch et al., 1996, p. 99). This led the traditional teaching approaches to neglect the societal and cultural facets of communication maintenance. Based on these arguments, it is argued that teaching the foreign language should involve raising factual awareness about the cultural norms and practices of the target society, the skills and behaviours that enable them to appropriately deal and communicate with others, and a positive attitude towards cultural differences. From this perspective, EFL teachers' perceptions of the role of implementing TBLT in teaching EFL and its importance in enhancing students' intercultural competence is the core issue investigated in the current article.

1.3.Research Objectives

Integrating the TBLT approach is deemed to be one of the various communicative approaches that can serve in raising EFL students' intercultural competence. Investigating this issue is the core objective of this research paper. In other words, the current paper seeks to spotlight the perceptions of Algerian middle school EFL teachers on the potential effectiveness of integrating TBLT in enhancing EFL students' intercultural competence to reach appropriate and effective communication in the L2. It also attempts to shed light on whether or not TBLT can enhance EFL students' positive attitudes towards the target culture, their knowledge of the target culture facts, their skills and behaviours in dealing with people with cultural differences.

1.4.Research Questions

This paper intends to investigate the following questions:

Q1. Do Algerian middle school EFL teachers view intercultural competence as necessary in EFL courses?

Q2. From the teachers' perspective, does the implementation of TBLT serve in enhancing EFL students' intercultural competence?

Q3. Do EFL teachers consider TBLT to be effective in fostering EFL students' ability to appropriately and effectively communicate with people from different linguistic, cultural, and societal backgrounds?

Q4. Do EFL teachers view TBLT as being supportive to building EFL students' attitudes, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are necessary to achieve intercultural competence?

2. Theoretical Framework

Although it was known for many years, the Task-Based Language Teaching Approach is increasingly gaining popularity in L2 teaching (Rodriguez-Bonces and Rodriguez-Bonces, 2010). In defining the concept of 'Task-Based Language Teaching', one needs to explain the core unit that constitutes this concept, 'Tasks'. Various definitions have been offered in an attempt to define 'tasks'. Different authors/researchers from diversified domains sought to define the concept 'Tasks' from their angle. Generally, a task is any piece of activity done by someone to serve a particular role in all life areas (Long, 1985, p. 89; cited in Nunan, 1989, p. 5). For the current paper, the major field of study is the language teaching and learning realm. In this context, tasks are meant to provide EFL students with communication opportunities that resemble those occurring in the real-life context (Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu, 2011). Bachman and Palmer (1996) claim that language tasks are goal-driven and are dedicated to serving EFL students' communicative competence. Briefly stated, Willis (1996, p. 23) maintains that the "activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) to achieve an outcome" are labelled tasks.

As far as TBLT is concerned, it is a teaching approach whose tasks are intended to integrate daily language use, and are deemed to serve the development of learners' communicative competence (Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu, 2011) and pragmatic competence (Ellis, 2003). According to Scarino and Liddicoat (2009), knowing the language itself, though not neglected, is not the central focus of TBLT. Rather, EFL students are supposed to perform certain tasks that require language use to establish and maintain communication in the target language.

Indeed, tasks in TBLT are of various kinds. For instance, some authors distinguish between focused and unfocused tasks. Although both types are meant to help EFL students convey meaning in the target language, focused tasks, unlike unfocused ones, are distinguished by their emphasis on a particular linguistic form that students should use to convey meaning (Nunan, 2004). Ellis (2003, p. 223) maintains:

Unfocused tasks are tasks designed to provide learners with opportunities for using language in general communicatively. Focused tasks are tasks designed to provide opportunities for communicating using some specific linguistic feature (typically a grammatical structure) (...) the target linguistic feature of a focused task is 'hidden' (i.e. learners are not told explicitly what the feature is).

A similar distinction, made by Estaire and Zanon (1994), states that communicative tasks, unlike enabling tasks, are dedicated for helping EFL students acquire the communicative competence through developing their ability to interact, understand, and produce the target language in settings simulating their real-life ones. Such kinds of tasks are content-driven. Enabling tasks, on the other hand, are meant to support communicative tasks (Etaire and Zanon, 1994). This distinction is similar to that made earlier between focused and unfocused tasks. The only difference here is that the authors (Etaire and Zanon, 1994) claim that enabling tasks, as the name denotes, is conducted before communicative tasks to endow EFL students with the linguistic forms they are supposed to use when expressing meaning during communicative tasks.

Furthermore, there is a difference between target tasks and pedagogical tasks. The former can be defined as “a piece of work undertaken for oneself or others, freely or for some reward” (Long, 1985, p. 89). Nunan (1989) adds that such tasks should involve language use so that they can be called ‘target tasks’. On the other hand, pedagogical tasks are carried out for the sake of serving language improvement (Nunan, 2004).

It is noteworthy that the classroom tasks that fall within the TBLT approach have certain hallmarks that characterize them from a simple classroom activity. Willis and Willis (2007) argue that communicative tasks have a primary focus on meaning, are goal-directed, have a clear outcome to be performed, serve learners’ communicative competence, and simulate real-life situations. Additionally, Ellis (2003) specifies that the discourse maintained when conducting tasks should be based on conveying a certain pragmatic function. Moreover, tasks are concerned more with language use in the context of communication, whereas simple classroom activities and exercises are meant to explicitly teach EFL students a certain grammatical rule (Sanchez, 2011).

Indeed, and in addition to the different types of tasks, the latter can have various shapes. Willis and Willis (2007) have proposed a set of task types that can be used in the TBL class. To mention a few, listing, ordering and sorting, problem-solving, matching, comparing, and sharing personal experience (Willis and Willis, 2007). Another typology has been suggested by Prabhu (1987). The author proposes that there are information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap tasks (cited in Nunan, 2004).

Indeed, certain components need to be considered when designing tasks. Nunan (1989, p. 47) maintains that any task should consist of “(...) the goals, the input (linguistic or otherwise), the activities derived from this input, and finally, the roles implied for teacher and learners”, in addition to the setting of task conduction (p. 48). Candlin (1987, cited in Nunan, 1989) adds that teachers’ facilitation, feedback, and assessment should be also considered when analysing tasks.

Task-phase in TBLT is generally divided into three major stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus (Willis, 1996). In the pre-task stage, learners are familiarized with the topic of the task through relevant vocabulary, pictures, videos, etc. They are also presented with task requirements. In the task cycle stage, learners activate their linguistic and background knowledge, plan for task conduction, and report their answers. The final stage of the task consists of focusing

on specific linguistic structures that are used previously to convey meaning in the previous stage. In this stage, the linguistic forms are studied within the context of communication (Willis, 1996).

As far as teachers' roles in TBLT are concerned, Van den Branden (2016) assumes that, first, the teacher needs to decide which tasks to include, and which are supposed to serve the objectives of the lesson. During task conduction, the teacher acts as a motivator, organizer, and a more knowledgeable, conversation prompter and partner (Van den Branden, 2016). As for the post-task stage, the teacher is supposed to assess their performance, reflect on their strategy use, and identify their learning hurdles (Van den Branden, 2016). Furthermore, the teacher can be flexible in deciding which tasks will better serve his/her EFL students' language acquisition and attainment of the more general objectives of the curriculum (Van den Branden, 2016).

Since TBLT is a learner-centred approach, learners assume different roles from those adopted in the traditional, teacher-centred EFL classes. As for the EFL learner, Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe that each EFL student, in TBLT, is a member of a collaborative work (group/pair). Learners in TBLT are also supposed to initiate their learning to try to comprehend and develop the target language. They create meaning instead of using their existing knowledge to do the task. Thus, they are innovators and risk-takers (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Indeed, implementing the TBLT approach can lead to enhanced intercultural competence. This claim is supported by Mezger-Wendlandt (2013, p. 2), who asserts that, since TBLT has a primary focus on meaning and on establishing interactions in the L2, this approach can be an intercultural-supportive environment. With the same token, Castillo Fuentes(2015) believes that TBLT environments can support the development of intercultural competence due to the roles the EFL teacher assumes in such learning contexts. The author specifies:

(...) the teacher's role is not so much to transfer students his/her knowledge of the TL but to assist them in communicative interaction while still keeping some kind of distance in order to facilitate independent language and intercultural learning through mutual cooperation (Castillo Fuentes, 2015, p. 28).

Therefore, it is assumed that the principles that govern the implementation of the TBLT approach can make it a suitable environment for teaching EFL students the intercultural competence that is necessary for achieving appropriate communication in the target language. In defining the concept of intercultural competence, the following lines seek to specify the constituting components and aspects of this, broader concept.

According to Barrett, Byram, Lazar, Mompoin-Gaillard, and Philippou (2014), to define the concept of "intercultural competence", several other concepts need to be considered. First, the person's identity is regarded as one of the leading concepts in talking about intercultural competence. Identity refers to one's descriptions for oneself, and to the awareness of the 'who am I?'. It can be personal identity (e.g., personality, relationships to others, etc.) or social (i.e., the social group to which a person belongs) (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 13). Another, constituting concept of the notion of intercultural competence is one's culture. The latter can be seen as the variety in

the beliefs, norms, behaviours, artefacts, religion, language, and many other aspects that might change over time (Barrett et al., 2014, pp. 13-14). However, “cultural boundaries are often very fuzzy” because “cultural affiliations are fluid and dynamic” (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 14). Accordingly, considering aspects of the local culture is vital for achieving intercultural competence.

The intercultural encounter is another aspect of intercultural competence. For the authors, it is defined as interacting, either in person or virtually, with people that belong to another culture (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 16). Accordingly, for effective interaction and appropriate communication with such people, intercultural competence is required (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 16).

Intercultural competence is a significant ability that EFL students should be endowed with. This notion is defined as the ability to appropriately and effectively communicate with people of different cultures and languages (Myles, 2019). Thus, it requires having adequate knowledge about others’ cultures and identities. In addition, being immersed in such cultural diversities is necessary to achieve intercultural competence (Page, 2020). More specifically, this concept consists of four major components: attitudes, skills, knowledge, and behaviours.

Having attitudes towards the other culture signifies learning about respecting and valuing diversity, possessing tolerance for and openness to other cultural aspects. To be interculturally competent, people also need to have the skills that would enable them to communicate with people from different cultures and transmit appropriate meaning, to adapt to the differences that exist between cultures, to be flexible when dealing with differences, to obtain and evaluate information about others’ cultures. Moreover, the knowledge that people are required to possess consists of knowledge of the cultural and linguistic aspect of the target culture, and knowledge of the conventions that govern language usage and communication in such cultures. The final constituent of the intercultural competence notion requires people to behave appropriately and flexibly with people from different cultural backgrounds (Barrett, 2011, pp. 2-3). By the same token, Barrett et al. (2014, p. 16) maintain that intercultural competence necessitates a set of considerations. Briefly, there is a need for comprehending and respecting people from different cultural backgrounds, establishing appropriate communication and constructive relationships with them, and being aware of the differences between one’s own culture and the others.

In order to investigate the role of TBLT, a teaching approach that, currently, governs the courses delivered in the Algerian middle school curricula, on promoting EFL learners’ intercultural competence, the present study was conducted. More specifically, gathering EFL teachers’ perceptions on the matter is the major procedure for achieving this goal. The next sections provide details of the methodology adopted to investigate this issue and report its major findings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The aim behind conducting the current study is to determine Algerian EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the TBLT approach to teaching EFL students effective communication through developing their intercultural competence. To investigate the research questions and to achieve the stated objectives, a questionnaire was designed and administered to (60) Algerian educators teaching English in middle school settings. The analysis of teachers' questionnaires has been carried out manually, through statistical calculations of the percentage, and a discussion of their responses to open-ended questions. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were deployed.

The questionnaire consists of six main questions, alongside three follow-up questions, that investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of TBLT and its potential effect on their learners' intercultural competence. The questions embedded in this questionnaire are both close-ended and open-ended. Types can be also divided into Likert scale, yes/no questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. Indeed, questionnaires "(...) can supply a considerable amount of research data for a relatively low cost in terms of materials, money and time"; they are easy to administer (Denscombe, 2010, p. 169). In other words, administering the current questionnaire online allowed the researcher to access more respondents, thus, "(...) collect a huge amount of information" (Dornyei, 2003, p. 9). The questions constituting the current study's questionnaire yield data about the participants' attitudinal information, as they express their evaluations of and opinions on a particular teaching approach, and behavioural information, as they report their actual teaching practices within the English course (Dornyei, 2003, pp. 8-9).

3.2. Participants

The participants involved in the current study were chosen on a convenience basis sampling method, which entails that "(...) a researcher simply collects data from those people or other relevant elements to which he or she has most convenient access" (Blackstone, 2012, p. 81). More specifically, the category targeted in this study is represented by middle school teachers of English that belong to different regions in Algeria. The sample consists of (60) teachers who responded to the online questionnaire. This sample is representative as it consists of teachers of various regional and cultural origins within the Algerian community. Therefore, a variety of insights can be obtained.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The data collection instrument used in this study consists of an online questionnaire administered to (60) middle school EFL teachers, who responded to the questionnaire in a period extended over a week. Data was collected online by the researcher and analysed quantitatively into a bar chart format that displayed quantitative data. The latter was analysed based on frequency distributions. Furthermore, open-ended responses were qualitatively interpreted.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

In the upcoming lines, the results obtained from the questionnaire, which was administered to (60) EFL middle school teachers, will be exposed in detail and interpreted. Later, their significance will be discussed.

As an initial question, the teachers were provided with three statements about the tasks in the TBLT approach, and they were asked the extent to which they agree/disagree with such statements. The following lines list these statements:

- a. Tasks are directed by communicative goals.
- b. Tasks focus primarily on meaning.
- c. Tasks simulate the students' real-world contexts and serve their needs to communicate in such contexts.

This question sought to highlight their views of whether or not the tasks in which their students engage are communicative. More specifically, this question sheds light on the nature of tasks implemented in the middle EFL classroom. For the first statement, the overwhelming majority of the participants (85%) strongly agree that the tasks are directed by communicative goals, 11.67% of the participants agree with the statement, and 3.33% of them are neutral. On the other hand, none of the respondents disagree/strongly disagree with the statement.

As far as the second statement is concerned, the majority of the respondent teachers (58.33%) strongly agree that meaning is the central focus of tasks in TBLT, and 26.67% of them agree with the statement. On the other hand, only a minority number of them are neutral (5%) and disagree (10%) with the statement, with several responses equal to three and six, respectively. However, none of the participants strongly disagree with the second assertion.

The third statement reveals the extent to which the teachers agree/disagree with the experiential nature of tasks. As Figure 1 below displays, the overwhelming majority of teachers strongly agree and agree that tasks in TBLT engage the students in communicative situations that simulate their real-life contexts, with several responses equal to 76.67% and 20%, respectively. None of the teachers is neutral about the matter, and none of them strongly disagree with the statement. Only 3.33% of the responses indicated that teachers disagree with the third statement.

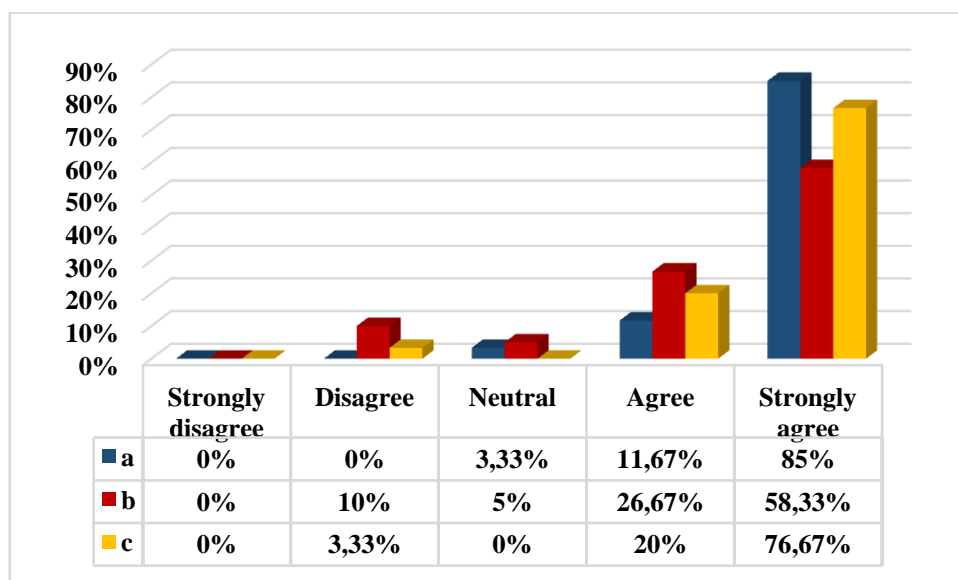


Figure 1: Teachers' attitudes towards the nature of tasks used in TBLT

The results obtained from the teachers' responses to this question indicate that TBLT is mostly perceived as consisting of tasks that direct L2 learning towards the delivery of appropriate meaning through authentic, real-life-like communication. Their view about TBLT is shared by many other researchers. Indeed, any teaching approach adheres to the principles of particular language theory and learning theory. For instance, Rhalmi (2018) contends that the theory of language underlying the design of a task-based course indicates that assessing the successful completion of tasks is primarily based on the appropriate and meaningful L2 outcome. Moreover, the conversation is vital for language acquisition. Therefore, in TBLT, both input and output are vital for the appropriate acquisition of the L2 (Rhalmi, 2018). In a similar vein, Rodriguez-Bonces and Rodriguez-Bonces (2010) assert that the reason behind the increasing popularity of TBLT is its shift of focus from the linguistic forms to communication and meaning negotiation, and its promising effects on EFL learners' natural acquisition of the L2. Moreover, the authors put forward that "(...) that tasks are goal-oriented (...)" (Rodriguez-Bonces and Rodriguez-Bonces, 2010, p. 166), which indicates that, in a language task, L2 is used "(...) for a communicative purpose (goal) to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 1996, p. 23). Therefore, it is assumed that the majority of the respondent teachers have a correct conception of the characteristics of the communicative tasks that constitute the TBLT approach they are currently implementing in middle school EFL classes. As a founding background to the TBLT approach, Ahmed and Bidin (2016; cited in Tawil, 2018, p. 203) state that this approach is influenced by the theory of John Dewey, who maintains that integrating the real-life experience into classroom education can lead to enhanced learning. Later on, these principles were translated to the communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which were applied by Prabhu and which led to the design of 'tasks' that do not emphasize the retention of grammatical chunks of the language (Ahmed and Bidin, 2016; cited in Tawil, 2018, p. 204).

Therefore, from the discussion held above, it can be asserted that the current study’s majority of participants are well aware of the basic underlying features of tasks carried out in the language classroom. Indeed, TBLT is perceived as an approach that grants EFL learners the opportunity for developing their language knowledge by understanding the socio-cultural norms and differences, which are necessary to be considered in using the target language (Tawil, 2018, p. 209). Accordingly, the next question is an attempt to refer to the respondents’ understanding of the ‘intercultural competence’ notion.

After having defined the concept of culture, the respondent teachers were asked about their conception of the notion of ‘intercultural competence’ (are you familiar with the meaning of the notion of Intercultural Competence?). In an article published by the Oxford University Press ELT (2021), developing EFL learners’ intercultural competence is significantly important in providing them with a view of the world from others’ lens, respecting and tolerating such differences, and, hence, ensuring the smooth dealing and communicating with people from the other cultures. The results to the second question, which seeks to highlight whether EFL teachers are familiar with this concept, are displayed in Figure 2 below.

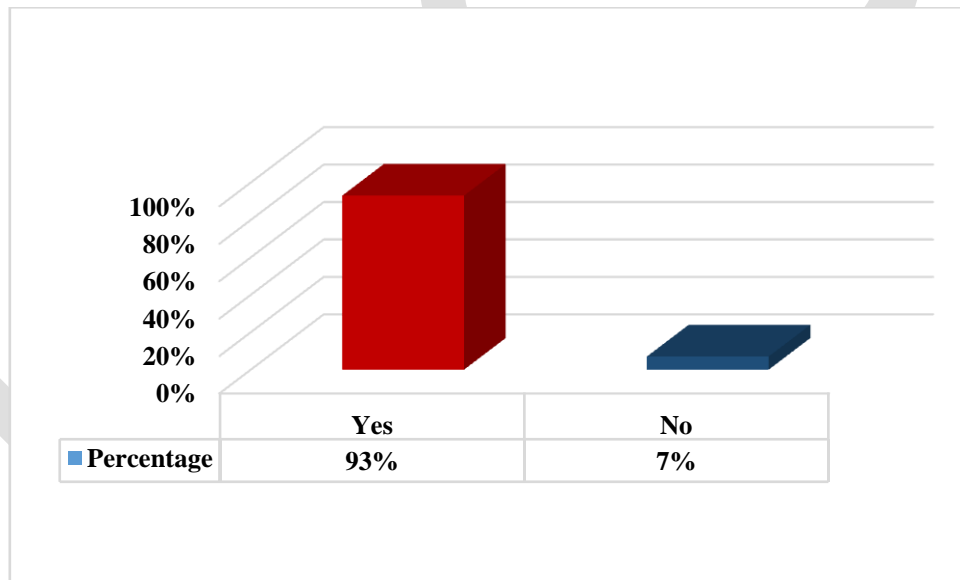


Figure 2: Teachers’ familiarity with the concept of ‘intercultural competence’

Indeed, the overwhelming majority of teachers indicated that they are acquainted with this concept, with a total percentage of (93%) of the responses opting for ‘yes’ and only (7%) opting for ‘no’. An open-ended, follow-up question (if yes, how do you define this concept?) was asked to highlight the respondents’ definitions of this concept. The answers are provided below.

From a total of (60) respondent teachers, (56), who answered affirmatively to the previous question, were asked to provide definitions for the ‘intercultural competence’ notion. Their responses were categorized, and similar ones were grouped to a general understanding. The following lines provide a brief categorization of their responses to this follow-up question. First,

it is noteworthy that six teachers skipped this question. The reason could be attributed either to their inability to provide a thorough description despite their understanding of the concept, or to their doubtful thinking about what the notion implies.

Starting with the simplest definition offered to the term, ten teachers argue that intercultural competence is the knowledge of the cultural aspects of the language studied. Moreover, (16) other teachers add that, in addition to the knowledge of one's and others' cultures, intercultural competence consists of competencies, or skills, that allow the learners to operate appropriately with others from a different cultural background. Four teachers state that interculturally competent students can distinguish between their and target cultures, and know when to use certain behaviours and when to avoid them when operating from people of another cultural background. Eleven (11) other respondents believe that intercultural competence is an integral skill that L2 learners should possess, which implies their ability to both operate and communicate appropriately with natives of the language they are studying. Finally, nine teachers assert that intercultural competence includes the belief that one should hold a respectful attitude towards the differences existing between the mother and the target cultures, and, accordingly, the L2 language should be used appropriately from a cultural viewpoint.

Regarding the definitions offered by the participants, they offer different perspectives to almost a similar view of what constitutes the intercultural competence notion. In defining this concept, Deardorff (2006) offered a table that illustrates the most commonly used elements that shape the notion of intercultural competence. First, intercultural scholars agree that the concept of intercultural competence consists mainly in the "ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 249). In addition to appropriate and effective communication, culturally appropriate behaviours should be adopted, even if the target culture's behaviours seem to be unfamiliar. In this regard, the adaptability and flexibility of behaviours should be highlighted. Overall, Deardorff (2006, p. 249) contends that intercultural competence entails behavioural appropriateness, cognitive awareness of cultural differences, and emotional readiness to accept and respect such differences. Accordingly, it is assumed that each set of respondents had a correct, although different, the perspective of defining the concept. Overall, the teachers referred to the communicative, behavioural, cognitive awareness, and emotional aspects of intercultural competence, which are all elements agreed upon in defining the concept.

The third question of the present questionnaire is intended to determine the level of importance of developing EFL students' intercultural competence from the teachers' perspective (how important do you think developing intercultural competence is necessary for EFL students?). The findings indicate that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (55%) believe that it is essential to develop EFL learners' intercultural competence, and 32% of the teachers agree that it is important to do so. On the other hand, only 3% and 10% of them are either neutral or believe in its slight importance, respectively. None of the respondent teachers (0%) believe that intercultural competence is not at all important for EFL students. The next figure (Figure 3) portrays these results.

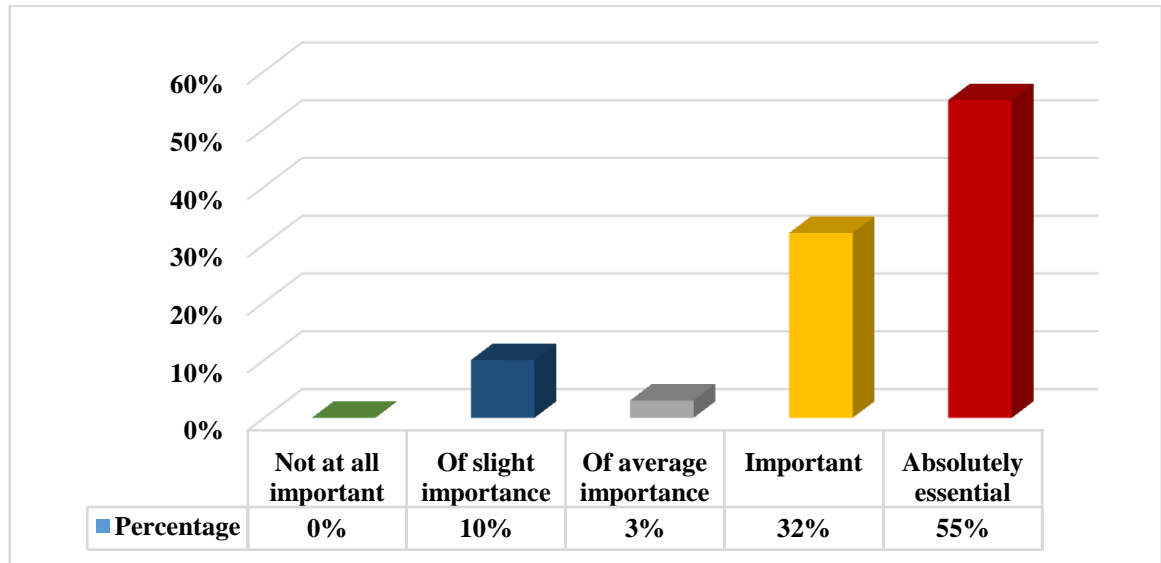


Figure 3: Teachers’ perceptions of the importance of teaching intercultural competence

Based on their responses to this question, many EFL teachers advocate and recommend the development of EFL students’ intercultural competence. This finding is in line with many other researchers. For instance, the participants in Karabinar and Guler’s study (2013) report that teaching cultural aspects to language learners is important because it is perceived “(...) as a means of accurate communication, and it helps acquire a wider perspective and culture-specific knowledge”, and a means to avoid misinterpretation of messages (Karabinar and Guler, 2013, pp. 1325-1326). From a general, professional perspective, Collier (n.d.) argues that employees should be interculturally competent as they should be able to appropriately interact and deal with “(...) co-workers, vendors or customers from different cultures and countries, and need to work productively with people who have been shaped by different values, beliefs, and experiences”. Therefore, EFL learners, viewed by future, professional lens, and considering such professional needs, are required to develop this competence. Additionally, Samovar, Porter, Daniel, and Roy (2017; cited in Ilie, 2019, p. 264) refer to the current world changes, such as migration, globalization, ICT, employment at the international level, programs of study exchanges, travelling, and tourism, and international economics are all among the factors that lead to a necessity in fostering the skills and knowledge of intercultural operations. In addition to such reasons, language use is governed by cultural values, norms, and attitudes (Ilie, 2019, p. 265). Therefore, it was found that the majority of middle school EFL teachers acknowledge the necessity of developing such competencies in their EFL learners.

The next question (do you, implicitly or explicitly, integrate the teaching of intercultural competence into your EFL classroom?) is intended to reveal whether or not the teaching of intercultural competence is emphasized in the language classroom by Algerian middle school teachers. The findings, as displayed in Figure 4, indicate that the majority of the respondents (80%) teach their EFL students intercultural competence, either implicitly or explicitly. On the

other hand, (20%) of the teachers do not teach intercultural competence. A follow-up question was targeted to those who answered affirmatively to seek further details of the types of teaching practices/tasks that encourage intercultural competence.

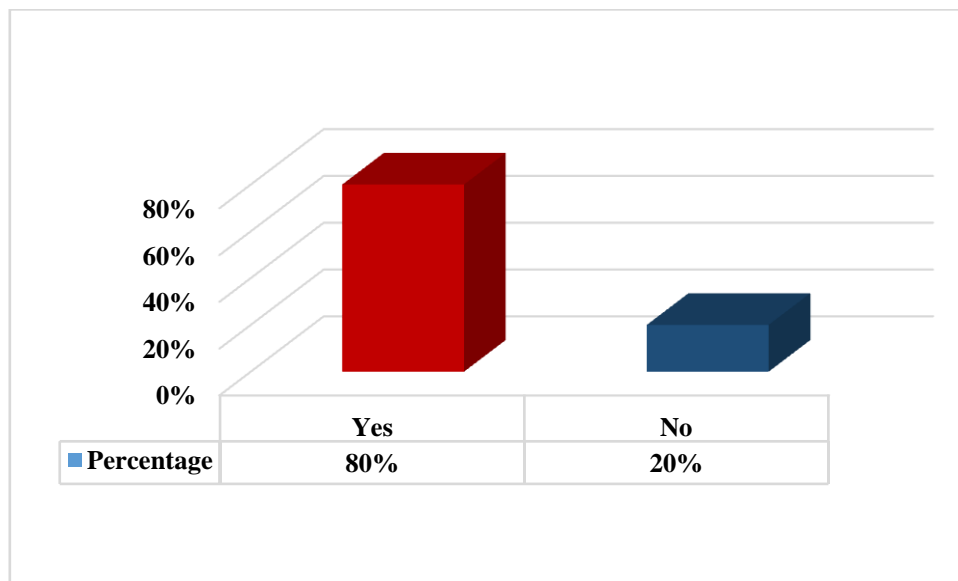


Figure 4: The teachers adopted practices in teaching intercultural competence to EFL learners

The teaching of cultural aspects in a language classroom, particularly in the traditional language education, is perceived as “(...) limited to the transmission of information about the people of the target country and their general attitudes and worldview” (Kramsh, 1993, p. 205). The author further adds that to teach culture, both the mother and the target culture should be dealt with. Moreover, teaching culture should adhere to the social constructivist view, which suggests that meaningful learning is a matter of social interaction and communication instead of rote learning of fixed facts (Kramsh, 1993, p. 205). Third, it should be made aware that, even within the same culture, varieties exist, and that a variety of other aspects should be considered to define cultural identity. Kramsh (1993; cited in p. 206) further contends that L2 teachers should broaden their knowledge base and not focus solely on the teaching of the linguistic aspect of the target language; rather, referring to the target society can motivate L2 learners to learn the language (Habinakova, 2015, p. 254). To shed light on the way EFL teachers present their learners with intercultural competence, the following sub-question was asked (if yes, please describe how -you can tick more than one option-).

This multiple-choice question asks the respondents who opted for ‘yes’ to the fourth question to select from among the list below the practices they usually adopt in helping their EFL students develop their intercultural competence. Below is a list of the choices provided for teachers.

- a. By devoting lessons that provide students with comprehensive facts related to aspects of the mother/target culture to be memorized (such as food, customs, manners, etc.).
- b. By briefly introducing L2 cultural facts when students come across them in the course.

- c. By requiring students to inquire about the cultural aspects, practices, and events and present them to their mates.
- d. By raising discussions in the L2 about cultural differences and similarities.
- e. By using materials (such as pictures, videos, movies, TV shows, etc.) that expose students to the target language, and, simultaneously, to aspects of the target culture and allow them to depict cultural diversity (i.e., differences in aspects of the culture).
- f. By involving students in communicative situations that deal with cultural themes and that require them to use appropriate communication to address others from a different cultural and societal background.
- g. By organizing cultural activities in the classroom (such as celebrating an event, etc.).
- h. By presenting culture-related expressions and lexical items.
- i. By involving students in performing real-life tasks in the classroom.
- j. By focusing solely on aspects of the mother culture.

Based on the findings displayed in Figure 5, the majority of the responses provided by teachers indicate that they opt to teach cultural aspects implicitly. This assumption is made as the minority of the responses (1.67% and 10%) indicate that they explicitly and directly teach cultural facts, either intensively or briefly. Moreover, only 11.67% of the responses refer to the direct presentation of the lexical items/expressions that are related to specific cultures. Additionally, 18.33% of the teachers require their learners to conduct cultural events as part of their language class. Only 25% of the sample opt to require their learners to research cultural matters to be presented to the class. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the respondents tend to integrate the teaching of both language and culture through their responses that indicate their attempts to encourage discussion between the learners (68.33%), to use authentic materials that provide learners with L2 input (58.33%), to foster appropriate communication related to cultural aspects (76.67%), and to provide authentic tasks that simulate learners' real-life situations (80%). As far as the cultural focus included in language courses, only 5% of the responses indicate that teachers neglect to teach aspects of the target culture. Such teaching strategies imply that teachers focus the goal of the lesson on developing EFL learners' communicative abilities, without neglecting the cultural aspect of the target language.

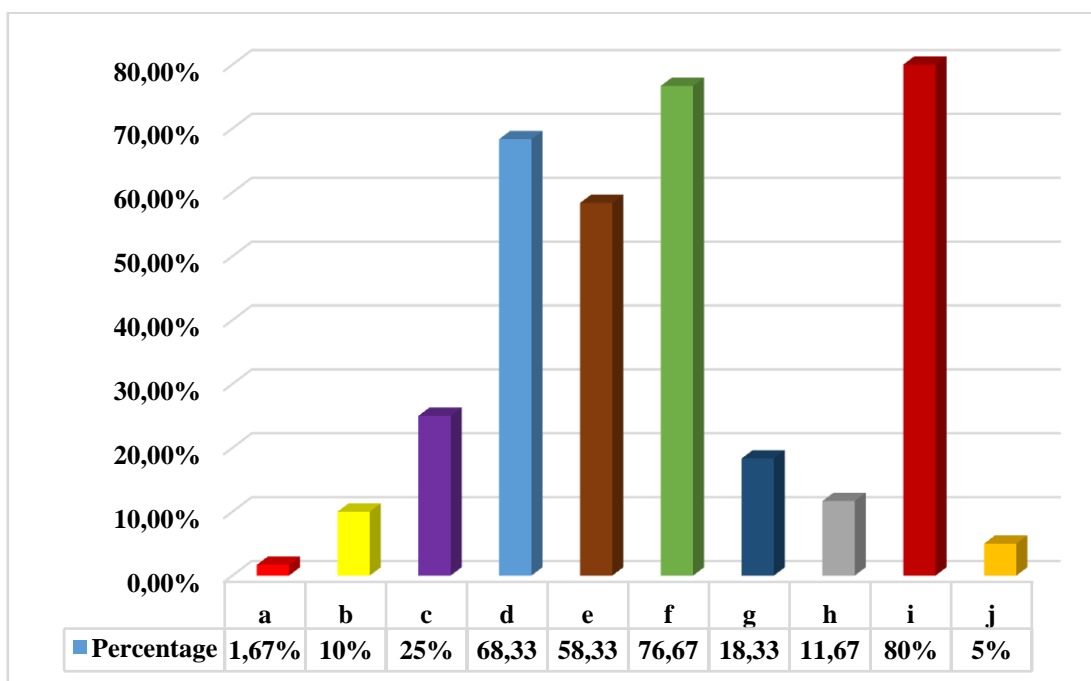


Figure 5: Teachers’ instructional practices to teach intercultural competence

Indeed, EFL teachers across various studies suggest different ways of teaching intercultural competence. In a study conducted by Karabinar and Guler (2013), the participants reported that they use aspects of the mother culture as a starting point when teaching the foreign language, then they shift to deal with cultural aspects derived from both the mother and the target cultures (p. 1326). They also indicated that they attempt to raise their learners’ cultural awareness and highlight cultural differences (p. 1326). Moreover, the results of the current study are consistent with the practice that teachers in Karabinar and Guler’s study (2013, p. 1326) adopt, which refers to their emphasis on both the L2 linguistic aspect and the cultural aspect of the social use of the language. This practice implies that these participants refer to the appropriateness and effectiveness of the communicative aspect from a cultural perspective. Karabinar and Guler (2013, p. 1326) further add that “the data obtained through the interviews also pointed out that to promote cultural interaction among learners in class, most of the participants benefit from various speaking activities such as discussions, role-play, competitions, and using visual materials like posters”. This finding echoes the responses provided by many EFL teachers in the current study, who opt for the use of such teaching activities as discussions, and such learning materials as pictures and videos, in order to serve the development of intercultural communicative competence. Such practices are significant in that, “when language skills and intercultural competency become linked in a language classroom, students become optimally prepared for participation in a global world” (Moeller and Nugent, 2014, p. 2). In addition to the teaching practices adopted by EFL teachers, the next question seeks to spot light on their assessment practices of the intercultural competence.

The fifth question of the current questionnaire (do you assess your EFL learners' intercultural competence?) sought to highlight EFL teachers' practices in assessing their learners' intercultural competence. Surprisingly, it was found that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (95%) do not assess their learners' intercultural competence. Only (5%), an insignificant portion of the population, do assess their learners' ability to be interculturally competent. These results are displayed in Figure 6 below.

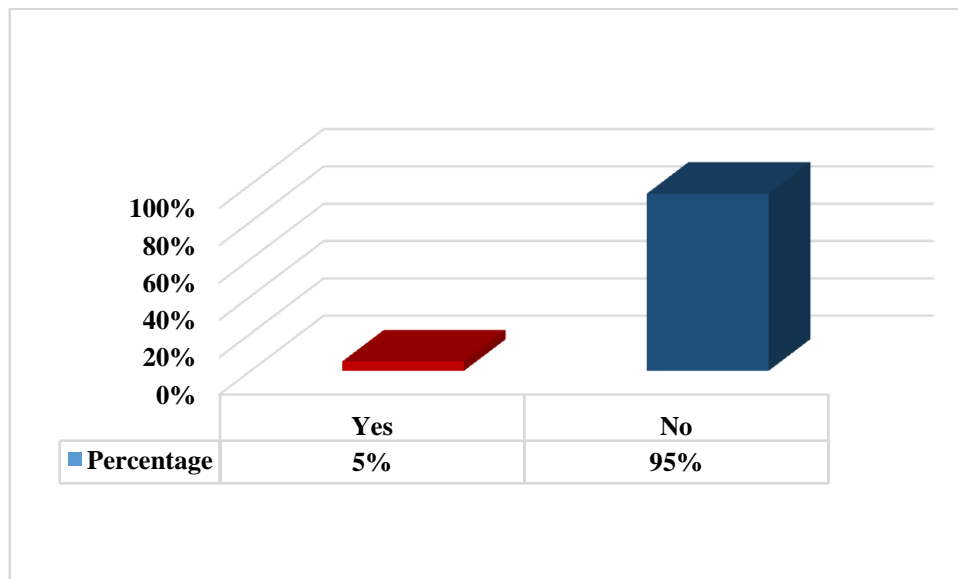


Figure 6: Teachers' assessment of EFL learners' intercultural competence

Based on such findings, it is assumed that assessing EFL learners' intercultural competence is not an emphasized goal in L2 educational curricula in the Algerian middle schools. However, Borghetti (2017) contends that teachers should adapt their teaching goals so that they can measure this concept because not only does teaching requires an assessment process, but also learning benefits from assessment. It can raise their awareness of their learning, their autonomy in acquiring intercultural competence, and their motivation to do so (Borghetti, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to raise EFL teachers' awareness of the significance of assessing their learners' intercultural competence, and of the principles and assessment tools that exist in order to maximize the benefits of the L2 course. A follow-up question was asked to depict the assessment procedures adopted (if yes, how?).

The three teachers opting for 'yes', and who represent (5%) of the respondents, suggested that, to assess their learners' intercultural competence, they use certain activities. Based on such activities, they form a general overview of their learners' level of intercultural competence. The suggested activities include: explaining the meaning of English proverbs and comparing them to proverbs found in Arabic to detect differences and similarities, ability to describe cultural events and to distinguish between those relating to their local culture and those that pertain to the target culture, and role-plays that address cultural topics using L2. It is believed that such activities, as

described by the three teachers, are likely to provide a general view for the teacher about his/her learners' intercultural ability. This assumption is based on the belief that more sophisticated and well-structured tools of assessing intercultural competence exist, and which adhere to a theoretical foundation of the concept. Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios, and Liu (2016, p. 7) maintain that the most predominant assessment tools for intercultural competence are surveys and portfolios. Yet, the importance of simulations (role-plays) should not be underestimated in assessing intercultural competence (Griffith et al., 2016, p. 14).

Lussier et al. (2007) contend that traditional procedures of assessing intercultural competence, such as using summative tests, can only provide information about the learners' cultural knowledge. However, as constituting dimensions of assessment, the authors argue that a student should possess, in addition to the cultural facts (*savoir*), their ability to use the language to communicate appropriately and adjust to social differences (*savoir-faire*), and their attitudes towards and critical awareness of cultural aspects (*savoir-être*) (p. 27). Based on these intercultural competence dimensions, Lussier et al. (2007) made a list of assessment methods. For instance, assessments of the intercultural competence should be formative and continuous (Lussier et al., 2007, pp. 29-30). In addition, assessment can either focus on cultural facts (assessing *le savoir* through indirect tests) or require students to perform a task related to culture (direct assessment), such as discussing one's beliefs and attitudes towards the culture (*savoir-être*), or acting in a role-play (*savoir-faire*) (Lussier et al., 2007, p. 30). Accordingly, EFL teachers should pay close attention to such dimensions and encourage the adoption of practical and relevant assessment methods. To investigate whether or not TBLT fosters EFL students' aspects of intercultural competence, the next question was asked.

The sixth question of the current questionnaire (to what extent do you agree with the following statements?) intended to capture EFL teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the implementation of the TBLT approach to foster EFL students' overall intercultural competence, concerning some of its constituting elements, such as awareness and knowledge, appropriate and effective communication skill, and behavioural considerations. The following lines list these statements:

- a. TBLT raises EFL students' awareness of their mother culture and the target culture.
- b. TBLT is effective in enhancing EFL students' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from an English-speaking country.
- c. TBLT enables EFL students to compare, evaluate and consider their own and others' cultures when communicative in English.
- d. TBLT encourages students to consider their societal and cultural behaviours when they communicate in English.

This first statement sought to reveal EFL teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of TBLT in raising their EFL students' knowledge of the mother/L2 culture. Indeed, developing awareness about cultural heritage is advocated. For instance, Kuo and Lai (2006, p. 1) state that teaching L2 learners knowledge about cultural diversities and the way potential cultural gaps should be dealt with is essential. The authors support the idea stating that the teaching of language and culture

should be inseparable in order to serve a better linguistic comprehension (Kuo and Lai, 2006, p. 2). The results, as shown in Figure 7, indicate that 38.33% of the respondents strongly agree that TBLT develops awareness of the mother/target culture; 33.33% of them agree with the statement, 23.33% are neutral, and 5% of them disagree with the assumption. On the other hand, none of the respondents (0%) strongly disagree with this statement.

Apart from developing EFL students' cultural awareness, an integral teaching goal of EFL is developing the learners' ability to communicate fluently and appropriately with natives of the language. Heidari et al. (2014) maintain that:

Language learners must know what forms are culturally appropriate to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone. They should realize that behaviors and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own discourse community may be perceived differently by members of the target discourse community.

Therefore, the second statement of the current question intended to spot light on the teachers' perceived effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing EFL learners' appropriate and effective communicative ability. The data displayed in Figure 7 show that the highest group of respondents (85%) strongly agree with this assumption. Only 8.33% and 6.67% of the teachers agree and are neutral with, respectively, the idea stating that TBLT can foster the quality of communication. However, none of the teachers (0%) expressed his/her disagreement (disagree/strongly disagree) with the statement.

The third statement is an attempt to investigate whether or not the respondent teachers view TBLT as a facilitator of acquiring the skill of cross-cultural comparison and evaluation, which contributes to the general development of EFL learners' intercultural competence, as stated by Barrett et al. (2014, p. 23). The data, as shown in Figure 7, portray that the highest rates of the responses of the participants (30% and 41.66%) strongly agree/agree, respectively, with the statement arguing that the acquisition of such skills is the result of implementing TBLT. A minority number of the respondents (11.67%) are neutral about the matter. On the other hand, another very small portion of the teachers (16.67%) disagree that TBLT is capable of encouraging EFL students to compare, evaluate, and consider cultural differences and similarities when using L2. However, none of the participants opted for 'strongly disagree' when asked about this matter.

Considering the societal and cultural behaviours during intercultural encounters, and being aware of the cultural appropriateness of some behaviours are important skills that need to be considered in the building of EFL students' intercultural competence. Basically, in order to possess intercultural competence, an individual's behaviours need to be adapted in favour of avoiding any potential of acting inappropriately in a culturally different environment (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 20). Therefore, this question seeks to investigate EFL teachers' views about whether TBLT provides students with the opportunity to acquire and to pay close attention to such behaviours when using the L2. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (43.33%) strongly

agreed with the statement indicating that students, in TBLT, get to consider their behavioural appropriateness when using the L2 to communicate. 28.33% indicated that they agree with the statement. Some of the respondents (21.67%) are, however, neutral about the matter. On the other hand, a minority of the respondents (5% and 1.67%) opted for ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’, respectively, to express their perceptions towards this statement. The findings are displayed in the following figure (Figure 7).

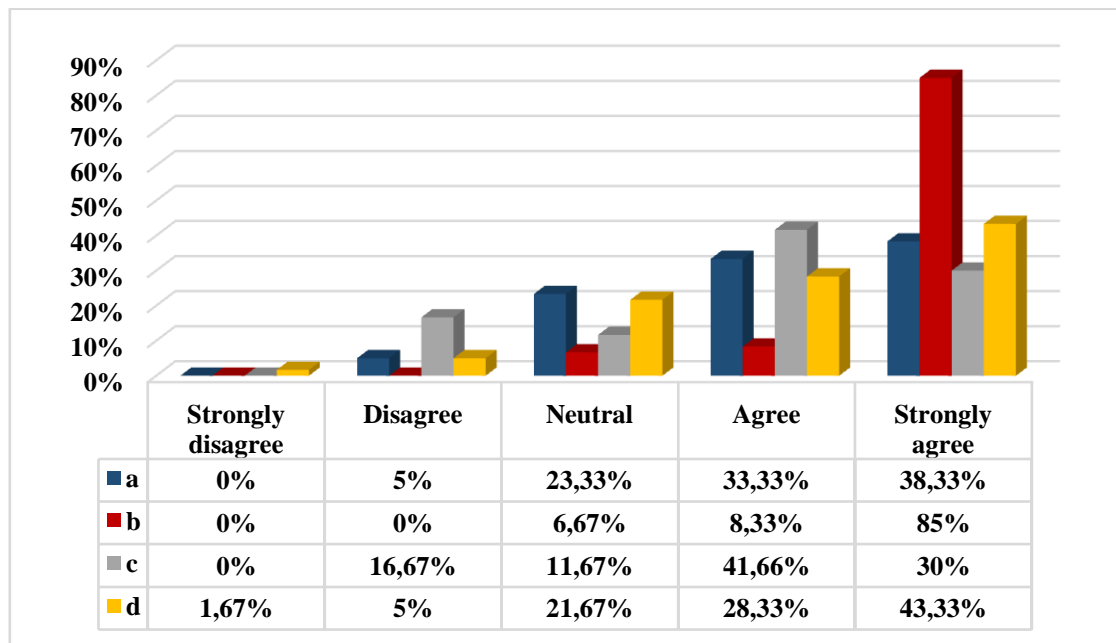


Figure 7: Teachers’ attitudes towards the use of TBLT to develop aspects of EFL students’ intercultural competence

Culture is defined as the “(...) ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a group of people in a given period; it is also the beliefs, values, and material objects that create our way of life” (Kuo and Lai, 2006, p. 2). Based on the assumption made by Rodriguez (2003, p. 69), the cultural aspect cannot be explicitly taught within the L2 classroom. Instead, the author suggests engaging EFL learners in a series of activities that deal with and discuss elements and events of the culture and whose goals serve the development of the L2 elements. Barrett et al.(2014, p. 25) state that direct intercultural exposure is not sufficient in teaching intercultural competence. Instead, they argue that this concept is acquired through a developmental process that consists of engaging in experiences and intercultural events, and through certain educational training. Indeed, it was found that, since cultural awareness cannot be taught explicitly, the implementation of communicative tasks can provide “(...) opportunities for exploration of the home and target culture” (Ramirez, 2009, p. 75). According to the author, the participants were able to develop their cultural awareness, though at a primitive level; they moved from forming superficial stereotypes about cultures to detecting differences between facts (Ramirez, 2009, p. 72). In a similar vein, Heidari, Ketabi, and Zonoobi (2014) add that such teaching approaches as TBLT greatly consider cultural awareness in teaching the L2.

Barrett et al.(2014, p. 29) assume that, generally, learners judge the unfamiliar as being awkward and bad. Accordingly, fostering cultural knowledge, which contributes to students' perceptions that no culture is better than the other, allows them to consider and respect cultural differences (Rodriguez, 2003, p. 70). Similarly, Barrett et al.(2014, p. 29) contend that, in order to develop the skill of effective comparison and evaluation of others' cultural affiliations, learners need to be encouraged "(...) to develop an understanding of how what is normal for them can be regarded as bizarre or uncivilised from someone else's perspective and vice versa", which, in turn, leads to their understanding of how others' different cultures are constructed. Based on teachers' responses, such skills can be fostered by engaging EFL learners in a task-based course when learning the L2. In addition to the skills discussed above, teachers were asked about the potential benefits of TBLT in developing EFL students' ability to appropriately communicate with the native of the L2, which is viewed as a component of the intercultural competence concept.

Indeed, developing the students' communicative ability is not limited to accurate and correct language use; rather, communicating is also a matter of appropriately conveying and negotiating meaning in a particular social context (Sun, 2013, p. 372). The findings obtained from this question are consistent with the study of Heidari et al. (2014), who assert that TBLT allows students to work collaboratively, to use authentic materials, and to be engaged in classroom tasks that serve their real-life language use. Therefore, developing appropriate language use, which constitutes the overall intercultural competence notion, can be achieved by integrating communicative tasks into language teaching.

The findings to this question indicate that EFL teachers view TBLT as a teaching approach that leads to EFL students' enhanced intercultural competence. Indeed, learning environments where lecturing is replaced by actively involving learners in a process of discovery, collaboration, challenge, and reflection can better encourage their communicative as well as intercultural abilities (Barrett et al., 2014, p. 30; cited in Castillo Fuentes, 2015, p. 28). This issue is investigated by various studies conducted on the matter. For instance, Wongwichai and Tachom (2021) found that students involved in a TBLT business class were satisfied with their development of intercultural email writing ability. The authors indicate that "in business writing class, learning intercultural communication is necessary for students to prepare for their future work in order to cope with problems when dealing with people from different cultures" (p. 348). Indeed, the nature of communicative tasks, which constitute the TBLT approach, can create an environment that is supportive to develop intercultural competence. Castillo Fuentes (2015, p. 29) states that tasks are likely to foster intercultural competence as they encourage students to "(...) express themselves, to share their knowledge and opinions, to interpret and compare other cultures concerning their own cultural affiliations and to reflect on their attitudes and feelings".

Another study was conducted by East (2012), it was found that TBLT is likely to encourage the study of the cultural dimension of the language; the author recommends teachers broaden their understanding of the necessity of developing intercultural competence in order to achieve a comprehensive communicative ability (p. 70). In a similar vein, Mezger-Wendlandt (2013, p. 2; cited in Castillo Fuentes, 2015, p. 28) states that "with their focus on meaning, interaction,

sharing and negotiating, tasks create an effective and motivating learning environment for intercultural learning”.

5. The Pedagogical Implications and Conclusion

Traditional conventions of second language acquisition (SLA) approaches have generally focused on the teaching of the linguistic aspect of the target language. Such trends have disregarded the significance of the social context features that characterize the setting of language use. With the current increasing process of globalization, cultural differences are increasingly emerging. Accordingly, current second language teaching approaches, such as the task-based language teaching approach, have attempted to consider the cultural and societal dimensions of the language learning process. This article attempted to highlight middle school teachers' perceptions of the use of TBLT to foster EFL learners' intercultural competence. To fulfill this aim, both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were conducted. Based on the findings obtained from such analyses, it was found that EFL teachers view TBLT as a fertile environment that encourages students' acquisition of intercultural competence. More specifically, through the data gathered, and from the teachers' perspective, EFL students' cultural awareness and knowledge, their skills and strategies for dealing with cultural differences through appropriate communication, and their attitudes towards cultural diversity can be fostered towards the achievement of effective intercultural exchanges. In this regard, misunderstandings that result from the misinterpretation of messages can be decreased.

The findings obtained from this study can be summarized in three major headings. First, TBLT can lead to developing students' intercultural communicative competence, which entails their ability to effectively and appropriately communicate with people belonging to the target culture. Second, using a task-based approach to teaching a second language can result not only in enhanced communicative ability, but also in better cultural understanding and adaptation, ability to deal with cultural differences, and consideration and respect of such differences in dealing with others holding a different cultural identity. This is mainly because TBLT not only focuses on the linguistic aspect of the language but also emphasizes the use of language in real-life contexts. Finally, EFL teachers' practices that target students' intercultural competence are primarily integrated with language use and reception through communicative tasks, provide real-life tasks, use the teaching tools that target cultural themes, and immerse students in cultural exchanges and adaptation of behaviour appropriate to cultural meetings. Nevertheless, intercultural competence assessment should be more emphasized and considered in the language classroom.

Accordingly, the use of communicative tasks, which constitute the TBLT approach, can have a significant impact on the intercultural dimension of using the L2. If well implemented, the communicative nature, real-life-connectedness, collaboration, and provision of authentic language tools can lead to enhanced intercultural competence in the language classroom.

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Binary Opposition of Life vs Death in H.C. Andersen's Fairy Tales

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Abstract

When analysing the binary opposition of life vs Death in the famous fairy tales of H.C. Andersen semiotic approach is used. The aim is to reveal how this binary opposition is used in fairy tales to create meanings, as it serves both as an element of the plot and as a means of expressing values. It has been observed that the conceptual opposition pair of Life and Death is often associated with Up vs Down opposition. The dichotomic category of Life vs Death in part of the fairy tales is presented in the context of religious themes. It turned out that Andersen followed the concept of death, considering it as a continuation of natural life, in many cases romanticised, more qualitative and happier than the real reality marked by scarcity and lack of love. Thus the boundaries between life and death are erased, giving life the connotations of death, and vice versa.

Keywords: H.C. Andersen, fairy tales, binary opposition, life and death, semiotic approach.

1. Introduction

In H.C. Andersen's oeuvre, letters and diaries, the theme of death is one of the dominant, thus there is found a constant recurring desire to be dead, usually determined by specific circumstances of the time (Gustaitiené, 2009). It should be noted that of his 156 fairy tales, even one-third, i.e. 56 stories end with the death of the main character, and the motive of death itself is found in a series of fairy tales.

The fact that Andersen often depicts death as a character or a plot element in his literary fairy tales is not unusual. Folk tales often depict death: the death of a negative character usually allows the positive character to feel happy and is presented as a victory of good over evil. However, during the period when Andersen wrote his works, there was a noticeable change in human attitude towards death. If, since ancient times, a person accepted death as natural and prepared for it, thinking about his or her life, sincerely remembering loved persons and things, apologising to all friends and finally addressing God, the changing consciousness gradually established a new perception of death as something wrong, painful and frightening (Gustaitiené, 2009).

Although death is depicted as a significant plot event in a rather sentimental and sensitive way, what was typical of Romanticism literature, according to D. M. Segabinazi & J. de Sousa Barbosa, "For children and even for adults, the narratives that talk about the theme of death, portray how it is an inherent part of life and how it is possible that there are so many considerations regarding its existence" (Segabinazi & de Sousa Barbosa, 2019). In his works, Andersen allows not only and not necessarily bad characters to die, thus death is not inevitably the end of the evil done by negative characters. In some fairy tales, on the contrary, death becomes a way out of difficult or disastrous living conditions, while the transformation it provides often shifts to a happier reality.

This article explores the role of the binary opposition of Life vs Death in Andersen's fairy tales through a semiotic approach. The article aims to reveal how this binary opposition is used in fairy tales to create meanings, as it serves both as an element of the plot and as a means of expressing values. It is assumed that binary oppositions are the bone of structural analysis of the stories and the key to decoding their meaning.

It was found that Life vs Death opposition depicted in Andersen's fairy tales lacks studies, which makes this publication original from a methodological point of view: the combination of semiotic and conceptual theoretical approaches reveals the dialectical relationship between the opposition concepts of Life vs Death in Andersen's fairy tales.

2. Literature review

The origin of the term 'binary opposition' is associated with the name of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of structuralism. According to Saussure, "binary opposition is how the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined in reciprocal determination with another term, as in binary code. It is not a contradictory relation but, a structural, complementary one" (Fogarty, 2005).

In other words, binary oppositions are pairs of opposite terms and concepts. From the point of view of the theory of structuralism, the individual elements of language in the process of perception have no absolute meaning or value, their meaning and value relate to other elements. It is not possible to analyse individual elements, regardless of the relation between them. To comprehend one element, we need to understand the whole system of relations, i.e. the structure. It is the opposition that represents the paradigmatic relation between language

units with different attributes. Thus, binary oppositions are one of the systems that enable the human mind to comprehend the meaning of a concept or idea (Barry, 2014).

As binary opposition is a phenomenon of human thinking, language is not the only area in which the principles of the theory of structuralism can be applied to the analysis. The French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss saw the paradigmatic pattern of binary oppositions in the forms of human culture: myths, fairy tales, rituals, primeval art. According to Lévi-Strauss, the myth or other narrative, like language, has its own structure, i.e. 'grammar'. By understanding this 'grammar' we will understand the 'message' the narrative communicates. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss was not interested in the sequence of the narrative, but in a structural pattern that gives it meaning. The model of binary opposition is the basic structure of the human mind, i.e. the structure that governs the way human beings shape their institutions, artifacts, and forms of knowledge (Selden et al, 2013).

The model of binary oppositions has been applied to the analysis of narratives in the works of representatives of the discipline of semiotics, such as Peirce, Barth, Greimas, Lotman and others (Danesi, 2009). Binary oppositions are certain conceptual mechanisms that carry an axiological load as they reflect the cultural values of our civilisation. Some of the key binary oppositions are 'up' and 'down', 'right' and 'left', 'near' and 'far', 'front' and 'back', while the directions 'up, right, near, front' are considered positive, 'down, left, far, back'- negative. This evaluation is influenced by our bodily and cultural experiences, e.g. we get up to live, we are in a horizontal position when sick or dead, we use the right hand more often than the left, 'close' implies something easier to get, more defined, and we interact with the world with our face turned forward (Kuczok, 2010).

For example, the opposition Up vs Down identified in music, when the concept of happiness is expressed in high tones, and sadness -in low tones. This Up corresponds to joy and happiness, and Down to the sadness in the entire cultural codes network. According to Grigoryeva (2014), the up-down dyad is a culturally significant metaphorical opposition, whose primary semantics are associated with the expression of spatial relationships, which are one of the main types of relationships perceived by people and reflected in language forms. Based on the structure of the human body, attention is drawn to the importance of the upper elements (eyes, head, heart, etc.) in classifying them as 'spiritual'. Thus, by associating the upper part of a body with positive connotations and the lower part with negative connotations, this principle is transferred to the external and internal world as well.

Opposition Up vs Down in linguistic consciousness is expressed as a special way of understanding the world, a certain measure of reality through which physical space is perceived and valued as good or bad. According to various sources, it can be said that the up-down dyad is based on the interpretation of emotional, ethical, religious, social, epistemological phenomena of life. The Up vs Down binary opposition's primary semantics is associated with the expression of spatial relationships. Metaphorically, being down is associated with the fall, death, matter, earth, lying position, depressed mood, low social layer and, similarly, the upper dimension is usually associated with life, ascent, heaven, standing position, elevated mood, high social status, etc. Based on Christian and pagan ideas, upward movement is seen as positive, and downward movement as negative (Grigoryeva, 2014). In connection with this vertical axis with religious beliefs, it can be said that Up is perceived as the heavenly abode of God, and Down as the abyss, hell. Thus, the movement of a soul after

death, according to the believers, is possible in two directions: Up as an ascension to heaven or paradise and Down like a fall, ending up in hell.

Although Andersen's oeuvre is renowned in many cultures and appreciated by many generations, there are still not many analytical scientific works devoted to analysing the role of binary oppositions in Andersen's literary work. Maria S. Draga-Alexandru (1999) has analysed binary oppositions in fairy tales from the value aspect. The author aims to show how the universal oppositions (good/evil, beautiful/ugly, true/false, etc.) inherent in folktales function in Andersen's fairy tales. At the same time, she revealed what symbols are used to represent them and what ethical values they reveal.

Life vs Death binary opposition in Slavic prosaic folk narratives (in fairy tales, proverbs, riddles, etc.) has been analysed by Naumova et al., who revealed the origin of this opposition in pagan Slavic culture. According to the authors, the dualism of the opposition is embodied by the personified figures of Baba Yaga and Koschei Immortal, the dual symbolism of water and dryness (Naumovska et al, 2021).

3. Methodology

Life vs Death binary opposition is analysed through a semiotic approach. Applying a semiotic approach to the analysis of selected fairy tales helps to identify the role of Life vs Death binary opposition in the whole meaning of creation allowing for a revelation of the deeper meaning of these fairy tales.

According to Putri and Sarwato (2016), "binary opposition is indeed indispensable and fundamental in every field of study including literature". On the one hand, the reconstruction of thematic binary oppositions allows the reader to recognise the implicated meaning of the text, to choose a variant of interpretation. On the other hand, the binary opposition allows the author to express his/her ideas in the text. Thus, binary opposition is equally important to both the author and the reader. For authors, binary oppositions help to establish, integrate, highlight ideas, decode the author's intentions, get a picture of the whole text, as well as understand what is happening in the text (Putri & Sarwato, 2016).

Four fairy tales of H.C. Andersen were chosen for semiotic Life vs Death binary opposition analysis: *A Rose from Homer's Grave*, *The Little Match Girl*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Child in the Grave*. In all these fairy tales, the theme of Life vs Death is dominant, thus it becomes not only the key for plot analysis of fairy tales but also provides a basis for culture-idea analysis. With the help of this opposition, symbols and signs, which embody human values accumulated in the process of mastering the worldview, are conveyed.

4. Results

4.1.A Rose from Homer's Grave

The rose, sprouted on the grave of the famous ancient bard Homer, becomes a symbol of life and vitality, expressing what is beautiful, passionate, and viable. Meanwhile, it is opposed to death, as the name of the fairy tale already includes the motif of the grave, thus the death category in this binary opposition contains such meanings as cold, stagnation, immobility, ugliness, etc. At the same time, one can talk about the idea of temporality, which is opposed to eternity, therefore the semantic field of the opposition of Life vs Death is expanded to include new meanings.

The symbolism of the red rose in this fairy tale can be interpreted in two ways, i.e. as a symbol of eternal love and at the same time in the context of Christian symbolism, the red rose conveys the allegory of sacrifice as shed blood and the wounds of Christ (Žvironaitė, 2005). After being picked and placed in Homer's book, as if placed in a sarcophagus, a rose becomes a symbol of life, sacrifice and eternal love.

Thus, in this narrative, the duality of life and death is expressed through the prism of love, as in a certain sense the fairy tale portrays the triangle of love: the rose dedicates its love to the famous poet, while the rose itself is loved by a nightingale. However, the rose does not answer the love of the bird, thus the bird dies of longing for love. The motif of the burial of a bird in the grave can be regarded as a manifestation of the notion that death is a journey down: And the nightingale sang himself to death. Then came the bearded camel driver with his laden camels and his black slaves. His little boy found the dead bird, and in pity buried it in the grave of the great Homer while the rose trembled slightly in the wind¹.

The second part of the fairy tale consists of the content of a dream of the rose and its transformation into reality: the poet from the Northern country picks the rose and puts her in a book written by Homer, like a souvenir and a memory of the famous place visited, i.e. Homer's grave. At the end of the fairy tale, the situation is established, emphasising the transition of the rose from the life dimension to the one of death:

The rose rests now like a mummy between the leaves of his Iliad, and as in her dream she hears him say as he opens the book, "Here is a rose from Homer's grave!"

This transition is based on the fact that being alive the rose cannot unite with the object of love, which is dead, thus the transition from life to death opens the opportunity to be closer to the object of her love. The rose is compared to the mummy, which becomes a conserved fine thing looking alive and remaining protected in the book as if in the sarcophagus.

Life vs Death binary opposition is also echoed by Vigilance vs Dreaming opposition, which is also mentioned in the fairy tale. Dead rose in a way is sleeping and dreaming, which alludes to a recognisable symbolic situation of being down. The rose is linked to the downward direction by the horizontal position of a sleeper, which is associated with the position of the deceased's body.

The fact that the rose is picked up and placed in a book like in a grave corresponds to the direction down, i.e. marking its physical death. The vertical axis can be seen in the episode when the bard from the North puts a picked rose into the Iliad book and takes it to his home country. From a cartographic perspective, the movement from Asia to the North symbolises moving upwards. Thus, the rose's afterlife being, i.e. immortality, is conceptualised upwards and acquires a positive meaning.

Another important theme of the fairy tale is the relationship between creation and related eternity. It is a creation that acts as an important factor, paradoxically turning the opposition of Life vs Death upside down, as deceased bards and poets acquire immortality through their creation, thus remaining living forever. The very concept of immortality is like a network of many assumptions and cultural meanings, in which the religious, philosophical, aesthetic and other dimensions of the concept of eternal life intertwine. The idea that works of art can be eternal and at the same time eternalising the artist himself and thus giving him the gift of immortality, is old and deeply rooted in our culture.

¹The Hans Christian Andersen Centre. https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/ARoseFromHomersGrave_e.html
Accessed on 15 August 2021.

The nightingale, by sacrificing her life for love and the act of creation, metaphorically combines the figures of the poet from the Northcountry and Homer himself, highlighting the idea of the immortality of artistic creation. Immortalised in this Andersen's fairy tale, she subsides in Homer's grave next to the poet. Therefore the divide between life and death is relatively erased with the help of art.

4.2. The Little Mermaid

The dramatic story of love and sacrifice, immortalised in the popular tale of the Little Mermaid, has captivated generations of readers. In a transformed version of Hollywood and other cinematographers, the little mermaid dies, turning into a seafoam. Since she does not win the prince's love and does not marry him, she has to die as such is her agreement with the witch. However, in the original version of H.C. Andersen's fairy tale, the end of this fairy tale is somewhat different, i.e. the fairy tale does not end up turning the mermaid into a seafoam. When the little mermaid undergoes transformation, she notices that she is surrounded by cute creatures, so-called daughters of the air. They explain to her that life after death does not end and that the little mermaid has the opportunity to obtain an immortal soul:

You, poor little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to do as we are doing. You have suffered and endured, and raised yourself to the spirit world by your good deeds, and now, by striving for three hundred years in the same way, you may obtain an immortal soul.

Since the little mermaid dreamed of an immortal soul while still living on the bottom of the ocean, and it was one of the motives that led her to become human, such a turn of destiny opens her way to the eternal life of the soul. Thus in this fairy tale, the binary opposition of Life vs Death is extended by Up vs Down binary categories (corresponding to the Up vs Down opposition), which form the basis for the entire semantic structure of the fairy tale.

Although in the fairy tale the underwater world is portrayed as beautiful and harmonious, being at the bottom dimension the little mermaid associated it with loneliness and symbolic death without finding love, meaning and purpose in life. The author expands the semantic field of the category of Life into the Non-life category, strengthened by the use of the category Down. Similarly, the episode of the drowning prince manifests the view that death is a movement down, and his rescue expresses the idea that going back to life is moving up.

The human world, which emerges on the vertical of the Up dimension, is not only a place of life and love but also a place of suffering. The little mermaid silently suffers pain while walking and dancing, she suffers seeing how the prince chooses another lady as his bride. However, the little mermaid must leave this dimension by experiencing the transformation that is assimilated to death. Becoming a seafoam would seem like losing her body, personality, and individuality.

However, the fairy tale is a fairy tale, thus the writer moves his protagonist to an even higher dimension, while returning her to life, thus the binary opposition of Death vs Non-death often varies, and the concept of life is extended to the category of eternal life. It is noteworthy that the writer deliberately chooses to end the work with a demonstration of infinite divine mercy, a paradox of mercy that is incomprehensible by the mind (Bøggild, 2005). That is why the narrative of the little mermaid is based on a two-way movement: the little mermaid goes on the path of defeat as she has to take it, and the next path is the path of salvation, and this is the path of victory. Therefore the mermaid resigns but has the opportunity to be saved, which follows the basic principle of the Christian worldview: a person is subject to insurmountable demands in life, but still awaits mercy and salvation, which depends on grace, and grace reaches man as a miracle, at the most unexpected moment. Nevertheless, the little mermaid

earns salvation as she herself demonstrates generousness and mercy: she saves the prince's life, even though she knows that for this she will have to sacrifice her own:

The little mermaid lifted her glorified eyes towards the sun, and felt them, for the first time, filling with tears. On the ship, in which she had left the prince, there were life and noise; she saw him and his beautiful bride searching for her; sorrowfully they gazed at the pearly foam as if they knew she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen she kissed the forehead of her bride, and fanned the prince, and then mounted with the other children of the air to a rosy cloud that floated through the aether.

In summary, it should be noted that in this fairy tale, the opposition of Life vs Death is presented as liquid, with both meanings overlapping. In other words, the little mermaid travelling up in the vertical is not fully alive or dead in either of the three dimensions. The undefined, lenient boundary between the two states reveals the diversity of the phenomenon what it means to be alive. The Christian worldview, which presupposes the idea that true and at the same time eternal life is achieved only after the death of the physical body, contributes to the idea.

From the perspective of the axiology of the Up vs Down binary opposition, the movement of the little mermaid upwards from the underwater world to the earthy, from the earthly to the celestial, corresponds to the Christian concept of spiritual growth, i.e. the renunciation of the bodily life for the salvation of the soul.

4.3. The Little Match Girl

Although considered very sad, this fairy tale is well known and is first analysed as an expression of social inequality in society, emphasising coldness, hunger, and loneliness. The storyline distinguishes several significant opposition pairs, such as Violence vs Love, Poverty vs Richness, Struggle vs Salvation and Life vs Death by presenting morals about social exclusion, religious faith and human relationships in their context (Sanders, 2016).

However, the binary opposition is Life vs Death is key, complementing the contrast between the detailed cold, uncomfortable and hostile reality to the girl, and the imaginary fabulous reality meeting her needs seen in her visions. The first vision, which appeared in the light of the match, satisfies the girl's need for warmth, which is closely related to the survival, comfort and physical safety that she most needed for that cold New Year's evening:

It was a warm, bright flame, like a candle, as she held her hands over it: it was a wonderful light. It seemed really to the little maiden as though she were sitting before a large iron stove, with burnished brass feet and a brass ornament at top. The fire burned with such blessed influence; it warmed so delightfully.²

The second vision satisfied her hunger and starvation:

On the table was spread a snow-white tablecloth; upon it was a splendid porcelain service, and the roast goose was steaming famously with its stuffing of apple and dried plums³.

In the light of the third match, the girl saw a vision that met the need for a cosy home, family and emotional security:

²Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen's Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

³Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen's Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

Now there she was sitting under the most magnificent Christmas tree: it was still larger, and more decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door in the rich merchant's house. Thousands of lights were burning on the green branches, and gaily-colored pictures, such as she had seen in the shop windows, looked down upon her⁴.

Finally, in her fourth vision, she was visited by her beloved deceased grandmother, whose the girl begs to take her along:

Oh, take me with you! I know you will disappear when the match is burned out. You will vanish like the warm stove, the wonderful roast goose and the beautiful big Christmas tree⁵!

Thus, the fourth and most important need that a girl feels is the need for care and love from her loved ones. Belonging and interrelationship are very important for the child's survival and happiness.

All these four needs express the conditions necessary for life, hence extending the semantic field of Life category, while at the same time drawing the line between life and death. Meanwhile, the lack of these conditions leads to death, which happens in the story physically. As in the above-analysed fairy tale, a clear parallel can be seen between the duality of life-death and Up vs Down opposition pair. This symbolic vertical axis separates the upward movement towards heaven as a metaphor for a full life and God's abode, thus ascending becomes an aspiration leading to love and interrelationship. While, the symbolic Down category is associated with aspects of poor earthly life, scarcity, and death:

And the matches gave such a brilliant light that it was brighter than at noon-day: never formerly had the grandmother been so beautiful and so tall. She took the little maiden, on her arm, and both flew in brightness and in joy so high, so very high, and then above was neither cold, nor hunger, nor anxiety—they were with God⁶.

The fact that death is identified with the direction upwards gives it a positive connotation, as it marks the end of the bodily life and the beginning of the life of the soul. The fairy tale is based on the premise 'life is a movement downwards as it is earthly, bodily life, which is consistent with the Christian view of earthly life as painful, sinful, and incomplete. Again, as in previous fairy tales, the category of Non-life is found here, i.e. when life cannot be called life due to physical reality limited by too severe shortages and unmet needs; in this way, death serves as a kind of transformation that allows the transition to a happier existence or better reality.

The opposition of Life vs Death in this fairy tale is additionally reinforced by Light vs Dark and Warmth vs Cold opposition pairs. While in Christian Western culture light is primarily a symbol of knowledge, spirit, morality, septic great virtues, as well as enlightenment (Ferber, 1999). It also symbolises holiness, goodness, truth and life (Robbins, 2017). In the fairy tale, there are several light motifs, i.e. stars and match's light, lights of the Christmas tree, fire in a large iron stove, and finally a glowing vision of the grandmother ("in the luster there stand the old grandmother, so bright and radiant"). All these motives together represent life, and when a new match is lit, the logic of a miracle begins to work, thus light, as the power of creation, gives the girl what she lacks the most. Light in this story contrasts with darkness, which

⁴Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen's Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

⁵Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen's Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

⁶Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen's Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

symbolically includes cold, poverty, hunger, and loneliness. Darkness, generally speaking, represents chaos, negativity, evil, and nothingness (Ferber, 1999). In the fairy tale, darkness and cold accompany the girl both on the street and at home: “Most terribly cold it was; it snowed, and was nearly quite dark⁷”. Thus the girl experiences transformation and with the help of a beloved grandmother, who even resembles the Virgin Mary in the vision, is transferred to the blessed kingdom of Heaven, which becomes a metaphor for fulfilling(eternal) life.

Therefore, it should be noted that in the fairy tale, the Death vs Life opposition is enriched with additional opposition categories, expanding the connotations of life and death and supplementing them with Christian symbolism and universal cultural meanings.

4.4.The Child in the Grave

This less-known fairy tale from the mother’s perspective conveys the pain of the loss of a child, whose burial is no longer a matter of reason but of emotion. Only due to magic means the mother got to know that death is not the endpoint and life continues, and the living must live (Gustaitienė, 2009).

In the fairy tale Death as a character is personified and described by certain symbols and details. It helps the mother meet the deceased child and understand the truths of eternal life. Death is also an event that led to the dramatic course of the plot.

The topic of life and death in this fairy tale is fundamental, as, on the one hand, the mother, who suffers from the pain of loss, renounces herself and chooses death instead of life; thus, in case of excessive scarcity, life again is understood as ‘Non-life’. Meanwhile, her deceased child, whom the mother meets in the grave, allows her to understand that life does not end with death, on the contrary, the afterlife is more beautiful and happier, which corresponds to the Christian worldview, thus the category of Death is transformed into Non-death category:

“My sweet, darling mother,” she heard the child say. It was the well-known, beloved voice; and kiss followed kiss, in boundless delight. Then the child pointed to the dark curtain. “There is nothing so beautiful on earth as it is here. Mother, do you not see them all? Oh, it is happiness indeed⁸.”

Thus this fairy tale, like the previous one, extends the boundaries of the connotative Life vs Death opposition, metaphorically portraying life as Non-life and Death as Non-death. All of this is associated with the concepts of quality of life and scarcity-abundance. For a mother, life without a beloved child becomes uncomfortable, and the scarcity and pain of loss lead to her symbolic death, which is expressed by her night journey to the grave of the child, confrontation with death and a journey down to the depths of the grave. A brief meeting with her son gives her knowledge that her son continues to live as a free happy soul whose life path goes on. This allows the mother to discover the meaning of her life again and to return to the reality of the family, i.e. her beloved husband and daughters.

As in other fairy tales, the Life vs Death binary pair is semantically linked to the Up vs Down binary opposition, traditionally depicting the vertical movement downwards as leading to death and fall, and ascent upwards as the movement bringing to life:

⁷ Andersen H. C. (2008). Andersen’s Fairy Tales. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1597/1597-h/1597-h.htm#link2H_4_0017

⁸ Andersen, Hans Christian, The Child in the Grave, <http://www.free-short-stories.org.uk/hans-christian-andersen-the-child-in-the-grave.htm> Accessed 22 September 2021.

An overpowering light streamed in upon her, the child had vanished, and she was being borne upwards. All around her became cold; she lifted her head, and saw that she was lying in the churchyard, on the grave of her child⁹.

The semantic category Down is characterised by the metaphor of the grave pit, with the keywords dark, night and depth. Thus the mother's journey downwards, into the world of death, is accompanied by the following signs:

The earth that covered it was drawn back like a floating drapery. She sunk, and the spectre covered her with a black cloak; night closed around her, the night of death. She sank deeper than the spade of the sexton could penetrate, till the churchyard became a roof above her¹⁰.

According to Thomas Finn, the journey to the Otherworld is characterised by three features: 1) it is associated with death; 2) it is difficult, limited in access, often going underwater or reaching underground, which often requires magical helpers; 3) the hero is often associated with fertility as a sort of antithesis to the Otherworld (Finn, 1997). All these elements are inherent in this fairy tale, further strengthening the mother's journey to the Otherworld and back to life, psychologically, emotionally and even physically reviving for further life and restoring the balance of scarcity-abundance.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the analysis of the main motives and details reveals that the archetypic opposition of Life vs Death is the dominant structural and thematic model. The journey of the mother as an archetype hero to the Otherworld marks her symbolic death; and meeting with a deceased son, the figure of whom also resembles the symbol of the reborn Christ, allows her to symbolically relive and return to life. In this case, the renunciation of earthly life is treated negatively, following the important Christian belief that there is a time for everything and that death cannot be chosen as it is a privilege of God.

5. Discussion

In the fairy tales analysed, it should be noted that the author develops the theme of life and death, expanding it with both plot and idea elements. Andersen is guided by the idea that death is at God's disposal and depends on His will, thus serving either as punishment for the wicked or as forgiveness and even salvation for the good-hearted from poverty and misfortune. The fairy tales reflect the Christian worldview that both life and death are gifts of God.

It should be noted that in Andersen's works the ideals of his Christian faith are assumed, and although the topic of death is closely related to pain and loss, the author writes dramatically and sensitively on these topics, primarily because of the prevailing Romanticism spirit (Segabinazi & de Sousa Barbosa, 2019). The dichotomic category of Life vs Death in part of the fairy tales is presented in the context of religious themes.

The analysis of fairy tales revealed the concept of death followed by Andersen as a continuation of natural life, in many cases romanticised, more qualitative and happier than the real reality, which is marked by scarcity and primarily scarcity of love. Thus the boundaries between life and death are erased, giving life the connotations of death, and vice versa.

Life vs Death opposition used in fairy tales encourages the reader to think about how to overcome the challenges of life when something valuable is lost and it needs to be learned to cope with the grief and pain of loss. Another meaning conveyed by this binary opposition is

⁹Andersen, Hans Christian, The Child in the Grave, <http://www.free-short-stories.org.uk/hans-christian-andersen-the-child-in-the-grave.htm> Accessed 22 September 2021.

¹⁰Andersen, Hans Christian, The Child in the Grave, <http://www.free-short-stories.org.uk/hans-christian-andersen-the-child-in-the-grave.htm> Accessed 22 September 2021.

the test of endurance in pursuit of your goals and practising goodness, which is inherent in most fairy tales. Despite fear and suffering, love is the main force pushing the protagonist towards his or her goal, as in the fairy tales of *The Little Mermaid* and *The Child in the Grave*. The journey to the Otherworld, as in these analysed fairy tales, occurs in most cases as a transformation of the physical body, except in the fairy tale *The Child in the Grave*. In this story, we find another important model used in mythological narratives: after reaching the bottom and directly or symbolically the deceased protagonist acquires new knowledge or new abilities and can ascend or be reborn through them. According to Campbell (2004), many cultural myths follow the same basic model of action, including separation, initiation and return. These three steps reflect the process of self-discovery, which leads to a transformation that usually involves the symbolic death and rebirth of the hero (Campbell, 2004).

The opposition of Up vs Down, which forms the basis of the Death vs Life binary opposition, reveals the axiological attitude of Andersen. Moving 'up' expresses a positive attitude towards the categories of this binary opposition, while the direction 'down' - negative. There was an ambivalent assessment of the concepts of life and death, which coincided with the paradox of the Christian worldview: the death of the body is the beginning of the new life of the soul. The axiological meaning of Up vs Down scheme ('up' is positive, 'down' is negative) reveals Andersen's Christian attitudes that determine the interaction between binary life and death oppositions in the context of fairy tales.

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(Un)Happy Endings of Andersen's Tales: a Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the exploration of the phenomenon of unhappy endings in famous tales of Hans Christian Andersen. The tradition of using happy and unhappy endings in fairy tales and other literary works is presented, highlighting the tendencies and general influences in literature. The era of Romanticism transformed unhappy endings of stories into happy ones and changed the way a child was regarded in general. However, not all of Andersen's tales, even though created in the spirit of Romanticism, have a traditional happy ending. Five of Andersen's tales were analysed in this study, by applying a semiotic approach revealing the ambiguity of the endings of H. C. Andersen's fairy tales and identifying the significant role of binary oppositions for interpretation of the narratives' endings.

Keywords: H. C. Andersen, fairy tales, happy ending, binary opposition, semiotic approach.

Introduction

Fairy tales are traditionally associated with happy endings, as are most literary works created for children. Nevertheless, some writers choose to break the established norms by giving their narrative an unhappy ending, thus setting these stories apart from what is seen as the traditional perspective. Among such authors is the well-known Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) whose fairy tales gave him a global reputation.

Andersen created a total of 156 tales, published in 11 volumes under the titles *Eventyr, fortalte for børn* (1835), *Historier* (1852) and *Eventyrog Historier* (1858). Interestingly, out of his 156 tales, 56 end with the death of the main character - this is considered an unhappy ending and is especially common in Andersen's last collection of tales which is primarily focused on an adult audience, the factor effectively determining the relevant content and underlying messages of the works. As Eitelgeorge & Anderson assert, it is quite unusual for a well-known author to end their tales with such tragic endings as H. C. Andersen does. His protagonists are frozen to death, burned in fire, dissolved into foam, or melted into a puddle. Namely, "Andersen broke through the boundaries of traditional folktales to move into new realms that contributed to the development of the fantasy genre" (Eitelgeorge & Anderson, 2004:37).

Andersen's tales are characterized by the fact that even if the content of the narratives ranges from simple to complex, to some extent they all contain a philosophical metaphorical meaning, an exaltation of goodness and condemnation of human limitations and weaknesses. Moreover, compared to the literary tradition of Andersen's times, his fairy tale style stands out as innovative and is based on colloquial language. The author introduced children to very complex, adult concepts by choosing serious themes, such as death and other tragic events. As Lewis notes (2002:680), Andersen incorporated dark undercurrents of fatalism and absurdity into his fairy tales that were influenced by the works of Charles Dickens and other - mostly German - writers, such as L. Tieck and E. T. A. Hoffmann, which in many cases led to unhappy endings of the stories.

By using a semiotic approach, this article explores the function of binary oppositions in H. C. Andersen's fairy tales with unhappy endings. The article aims to demonstrate how meaning is created in fairy tales by using binary oppositions which serve both as plot elements, as well as means of conveying values.

The semiotic approach to unhappy endings of Andersen's fairy tales employed for the analysis in this article has not been previously used in other academic publications, deeming this work originated from the methodological perspective: aiming to provide a new look into unhappy endings of fairy tale narratives, the application of semiotic approach reveals a dialectic relation of binary oppositions in Andersen's works.

Theoretical Assumptions about Happy and Unhappy Endings

According to J. D. Zipes, the assumption that fairy tales were first created for children and are largely the domain of children is far from the truth. Zipes states that originally tales were created to strengthen communal bonds in the face of inexplicable forces of nature. However, children enjoy stories mainly because of their hunger for change and independence (Zipes 2012:7). Thus, the origins of fairy tales for children date back to the late 17th century, when Perrault published the tales now called classical, distinguishing them from myths and folklore and laying the foundations for the development of a literary fairy tale.

The fairy tales are historically and culturally coded, and their ideological impact is significant for all generations. Originally, they were based on rituals designed to give meaning to the daily lives of community members. Additionally, their function was to explain natural phenomena or to celebrate holidays and ceremonies; and communal harmony was emphasized in most folk tales as the greatest value (Zipes 2012:10). Moreover, fairy tales are not universal or timeless; neither are they unaffected by history and politics (Teverson 2013:7).

It is commonly assumed that most fairy tales have a happy ending, and end with an expected cliché - *they lived happily ever after*. According to Zipes (1988:10), rarely do wonder tales end unhappily - in them, good triumphs over evil and life triumphs over death. Furthermore, it is the sense of wonder that distinguishes the literary fairy tale from the other modern short literary genres. In the same way, the logic of miracle is present in children's literary fairy tales, where – in line with the traditional expectation - good wins over evil causing young readers to experience relief and joy at the victory of good. In wonder tales, the universe works in such magical ways that anything can happen, and these happenings do not require a logical explanation. Thus, “fairy tales seek to awaken respect for miraculous living conditions and, in a religious sense, to evoke a deep sense of respect and fear for life as a miraculous process” (Ziper, 1988:11).

Even though many readers are used since childhood to expect a happy ending, especially when reading or listening to a fairy tale, Purnell and Bowman note (2014:179) that these “happily ever after” narratives of childhood form an illusion which, juxtaposed with real-life stories that sometimes just end, creates a dissonance between the desire for a positive resolution and the reality of a lived experience.

In comparison with the traditional storytelling folklore discourse of the world – where the fables of myths, legends, and fairy tales seldom end happily – the era of Romanticism, by re-evaluating folk creation and its value system, has effectively reconstructed fairy tale endings, transforming them into happy ones. In fact, numerous fairy tales originally were real “nightmares of senseless cruelty and violence” (Oates,1997:99). Starting with the Grimm brothers and other Romantic writers, the happy endings of fairy tales eventually became a trend, if not the rule, in popularizing the fairy tale genre. Until the late 18th century, the happy ending of fairy tales and novels were associated with compromise or subordination of desires to abilities by which the characters achieve a true balance of their abilities and will (Pape, 1992:184).

It should be noted that certain other factors, such as experiences or perceptions that seem to be inevitably associated with an unfortunate ending, are in fact even more important than the actual unhappy ending itself. Among these experiences or perceptions are self-sacrifice, rebirth, purification, etc. Thus, in a way, even without a specific happy ending, it may still be possible to say that “They have lived happily ever after”, if looking from a broader perspective (Raskin, 2003:2).

Both children and adults seek to curb world chaos in their longing for happiness. Freud, for example, argued that the pursuit of happiness was driven by the principle of pleasure. The changing concepts of happiness and the differences between the perception of happiness in adults and children also led to changes in their respective literature (Pape, 1992:186). A happy ending in a literature work assures the reader that, despite all calamities, diseases, losses, and hardships, a human being ultimately achieves happiness. It is therefore easy to understand the efforts to secure happiness for those who are not yet rational and therefore face dangers and difficulties, i.e., children.

According to Vaidik (2021:36), there is a particular connection between the psychological profiles of the protagonists and happy endings. He concludes that happy endings give an emotional relief to readers or listeners and deepen the personal connection of a reader or listener with the protagonist creating a psychological resonance.

Deficiency, deprivation, and prohibitions motivate people to look for signs of fulfilment and emancipation. In wonder tales, those characters who are naive and simple can succeed because they are pure, virtuous, and able to recognize the signs sent by destiny. They have maintained their faith in the miraculous power of nature, respecting all of its aspects. Unlike humble characters, criminals and villains are those who misuse others for their own benefit, control, transformation, imprisonment, and destruction (Zipes, 1988:12).

Another important aspect is that children and adults react differently to happy endings. If an adult reads a story with a happy ending, it conflicts with his or her experience, revealing the limits of a literary work in expressing reality. Furthermore, "ending a children's story in terms of grown-up happiness means promising a child a reward which is yet beyond his or her understanding and experience" (Pape 184). Thus, the promise of adult happiness is anticipated by happy endings for those who behave well and by unhappy ones for those who misbehave.

Furthermore, the happy ending no longer reflected the idealised idea of faith in God or the intervention of higher forces in the pernicious fate of man. As publishers and editors in the 19th century increasingly demanded that writers complete their stories happily, this eventually became a matter of obedience and humility to the needs of the literary market following the fundamental principle of pleasure (Pape, 1992:188).

Analysing Russian folk and fairy tales in his famous study "The Morphology of the Folk Tale", Vladimir Propp outlined the 31 basic functions that constitute the fundamental components of the model narrative (obviously, not all the functions need to be present in a fairy tale). Propp stated that at the end of a story the villain will be punished, and the hero will be rewarded, and these two functions at the least lead the fairy tale to a happy ending (Trinquet, 2010:45). Namely, the success of the protagonist generally leads to a) marriage; b) acquisition of money; c) survival and wisdom; d) any combination of the first three. If a story follows this pattern, then it is very realistic to expect a happy ending (Zipes, 1988:10).

In further developing Propp's ideas, Joseph Campbell's interpretation of the hero's journey is also relevant in this context of deep inner transformation shared by the main literary characters at any time and place, involving great movements of separation, descent, and return (Vogler, 2020:1). Thus, to understand the meaning created by the end, it is not enough to state that the main character dies, but it is also necessary to evaluate the ending of the tale in the context of the whole story, thus also expanding the analysis from the focus on the plot to the exploration of the meaning creation process.

In fact, the hero takes part in a physical, active journey to solve a problem or reach a goal. Still, the hero's journey is as important emotional or psychological as the physical. The actions and decisions of the character at different stages of the journey reveal the traits developed by the character and the growth phases that the character experiences throughout the story (Vogler 2020:1). Thus, the move from scarcity to abundance in terms of the main character's needs is an important indicator of a happy ending.

In a situation when the main character faces a conflict-loaded problem and takes on the challenge to solve it, his or her abilities, attitudes, or features become transformed. This is the most important aspect of the story because it allows the transmission of specific meanings. Consequently, every story reveals a message that is followed by a moral evaluation.

Thus, in assessing the role of an (un)happy ending, it is necessary to consider the stages of the whole narrative, as well as the initial situation and the scarcity that led the main character to move ahead with “crossing of the threshold” and embark upon a direct or symbolic journey (Kaufmann 29). To this point, the final stage of the journey, until the circle is complete, is the realization that the main character has the freedom to choose to live for himself or herself, acknowledging the nature of life.

Method

This article analyses the unhappy endings of Andersen’s tales using a semiotic approach, which opens the possibility of new perspectives on the analysed works and allows for finding deep connections of meaning between content-building elements and value structures. Semiotics “provides a set of assumptions and concepts that permit systematic analysis of symbolic systems” (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994: 466). Structural semiotics is mainly based on language or narrative analysis, revealing the interplays in sign systems and the meaningful connections between expression and content.

The application of the semiotic approach was aimed, firstly, at identifying the main binary oppositions allowing for a revelation of the deeper meaning of these fairy tales. Later, the plot of the selected tales was analysed from a scarcity-abundance perspective to assess the characters’ physical, as well as symbolic, journey towards their aspirations. Finally, the end of the narrative was assessed as either happy or unhappy in the context of the whole symbolic journey of the main character.

Identifying binary oppositions allows to gain a bigger picture of a literary text, as well as to profoundly understand the semantic layers of a literary work. This method provides a systematic foundation for understanding abstract and seemingly chaotic concepts by putting the ideas into complementary pairs, such as good and bad, up and down, truth and lie, living and existing, etc. (Putri & Sarwato, 2016:84). According to F. de Saussure, “binary opposition is the means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined in reciprocal determination with another term, as in binary code. It is not a contradictory relation but, a structural, complementary one” (Fogarty, 2005).

Five fairy tales were selected for this analysis: The Little Match Girl, The Steadfast Tin Soldier, The Red Shoes, The Little Mermaid and The Swineherd. The analysed works met the following selection criteria: they all have an unusual ending with either a protagonist dying or a romantic intrigue ending not with a wedding but with separation. Furthermore, these fairy tales are very well known. Some of them were adapted into films with quite primitive and limited interpretations of the unhappy endings, eliminating the religious interpretations originally suggested by the writer. Thus, this analysis suggests a new meaning of these stories by applying the semiotic approach.

Results

"The Little Match Girl"

The first fairy tale to be analysed is “The Little Match Girl” - usually described as a "story about a dying child’s dreams and hope", as well as about "poverty, hunger and helplessness" (Saputri, 2020:82). Andersen’s story tells of a poor girl who sits outside on a cold and snowy New Year’s Eve and hopes to sell matches but fails. She does not dare to return to her abusive house, which is not much warmer than the place in which she has settled on the street. Thus, she slowly freezes while sitting outside. She lights a match to get some

warmth and sees a vision. Next, she lights matches three more times, and sees more visions. For the last time, in the light of a burning match, she sees her dead grandmother, “the only one who had ever loved her, and who was now dead” (Andersen, 2016:307). At dawn, the girl is found dead.

At first glance, especially when evaluating its plot, this short story is naturally seen as having an unhappy ending. However, looking at this tale from a semiotic perspective, one can easily notice the contrast created by significant categories used by the author. The binary opposition forming the backbone of this tale is Life and Death. At the same time, the contrast is created by detailing the cold and uncomfortable existing reality that is hostile to the girl, and the imaginary or fabulous reality that satisfies her needs and nurtures her.

A closer look at the visions of the girl reveals the needs that are satisfied by the imaginary reality that she is entering through the light of a match flame. When she dared to light the first match, she saw it burning like a candle, prompting a vision of a large iron stove. In other words, this first vision provided her with warmth and coziness, comfort and safety – essentially, her most important needs on this cold winter evening.

In the light of the second match, she saw a nice room with Christmas dishes served on a decorated table. Thus, the second vision satisfied her need of food for overcoming hunger and starvation.

In the light of the third match, the little girl saw herself “sitting under a beautiful Christmas tree. It was larger and more beautifully decorated than the one which she had seen through the glass door at the rich merchant’s” (Andersen, 2016:308). New Year’s Eve is one of the most important festivals of the year, primarily associated with a cozy home and family, as well as with abundance that creates security for the child - the third need that the girl got satisfied in the vision.

Finally, with the fourth lighted match, her grandmother visited her. She was “clear and shining, yet mild and loving in her appearance” in front of the little girl. This point in the tale marks an emotional climax as the girl asks her grandmother to take her along: “O take me with you; I know you will go away when the match burns out...” (Andersen, 2016:308).

Thus, the fourth and most important need that the girl has, and which is also satisfied by the match light vision, is the need for care and love by loved ones. The sense of belonging is crucial for survival and happiness, especially for a child.

One more important binary opposition pair of significant categories emerges here, i.e. Up and Down. According to Grigoryeva (2014:33), the Up-Down dyad is a culturally significant metaphorical opposition, whose primary semantics are associated with the expression of spatial relationships, which are one of the main types of relationships perceived by people and reflected in language forms. Based on the structure of the human body, attention is drawn to the importance of the upper elements (eyes, head, heart, etc.) in classifying them as “spiritual”. Thus, by associating the upper part of a body with positive connotations and the lower part with negative connotations, this principle is transferred to the external and internal world as well.

This symbolic Up-Down movement creates a meaning pair where Up leads to Heaven as a symbol of life and the abode of God, and the ascension becomes an aspiration leading to love and belonging. Meanwhile, the Bottom or the symbolic category of Down is associated with the dimension of poverty, scarcity, and death.

The little girl noticed that “the Christmas lights rose higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky”. When one of them fell leaving a long line of fire, she thought

that someone was dying, as her old grandmother used to tell her. The little girl remembered her words “that when a star falls, a soul was going up to God” (Andersen, 2016:308).

The last sentences of this story highlight the contrast that contradicts the traditional thinking pattern: “The child still sat, in the stiffness of death, holding the matches in her hand, one bundle of which was burnt. “She tried to warm herself,” said some. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, nor into what glory she had entered with her grandmother, on New-year’s day” (Andersen, 2016:308).

Images of a new morning, the first day of the new year and the rising sun also stress a new beginning - this time, a spiritual one. From this perspective, the death of a frozen child as a fact is commonly evaluated as an unhappy ending. Meanwhile, from the perspective of a religious or believing mind, death as a transition to a happier further continuation, is a transfer into a better reality. In other words, the main argument for seeing the end of this tale as happy is the transformation that shifts the protagonist from scarcity to abundance, meeting the girl’s essential needs. Andersen clearly perceived himself as a religious person and this Protestant worldview is reflected in his works as well. According to him, God always helps a good person and life itself is one of the proofs of God’s existence (Gustaitiene,2009:62).

This is also supported by one of the most important symbols used in the fairy tale, namely, the match Light that builds an oppositional relationship with the category of Dark. When the match is ignited, the logic of the miracle begins to work and the light, as a creative force, provides the little girl with what she lacks the most. The light in this story is contrasted with darkness, which, in turn, symbolically encompasses the cold, poverty, hunger, and loneliness. Thus, it can be stated that Andersen, following Christian tradition, chooses to save his heroine from a poor and unhappy earthly life by transferring her to the blessed kingdom of Heaven.

“The Steadfast Tin Soldier”

This famous short tale tells a romantic love story that is also, at first glance, unhappy. The tin soldier is one-legged and therefore exceptional, and the challenges he faces are exceptional as well. His love for the dancer that lives in a castle and represents a higher social class seems impossible and creates dramatic tension in the story from the very beginning. However, the dancer is not far different from the soldier as she also stands on one leg - this adds an additional image of instability or, in other words, highlights the possibility of either falling or flying. At the same time, being grounded with only one leg also means being easier to get uplifted and spiritual, keener to fall in love.

The three main challenges that the tin soldier faces are all closely connected to the direction of moving down. In other words, the binary opposition of Up and Down is crucial in this narrative. The first challenge is presented when the soldier falls out of the window. His journey then sets further off as two boys find him and send him sailing on a paper boat. This part of the trip, involving underground waters and an encounter with a hostile rat, does not break the soldier’s courage. The second challenge is met when he reaches an even deeper dimension, going down under the water, eventually getting swallowed by an enormous fish. Still, the soldier remains calm and brave. The last and most severe challenge coincides with the climax of the story - the happy moment of emotional catharsis when the soldier, having returned to the same room from which he fell out of the window, felt the love of the dancer and was so deeply touched by the nicest feelings: “It touched the tin soldier so much to see her that he almost wept tin tears, but he kept them back” (Andersen, 2016:116) – during that happy moment one of the boys threw him into a stove.

All the three challenges happened as if by accident, although it is suggested they were most likely caused by the evil powers that the little black goblin represented. His words “wait till tomorrow, then” seem to be prophetic and fateful. Still, this story would be very sad and even tragic if not a sudden change in course of action. The little dancer flies into the stove fire, uniting with the tin soldier in the flames.

The unexpected ending of the story probably may leave the reader unsatisfied: “The tin soldier melted down into a lump, and the next morning, when the maidservant took the ashes out of the stove, she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. But of the little dancer nothing remained but the tinsel rose, which was burnt black as a cinder”(Andersen, 2016:116).

Still, looking from the perspective of the semiotic approach, some important points must be mentioned. As in the analysis of the previous case, the perspective must be divided into the real world and the fantasy world. In the real world, social rules are unbreakable, which makes love between the dancer and the soldier hardly possible. Thus, choosing to burn together also represents a choice to unite and stay together in the spiritual world.

The main character overcomes several limitations: firstly, finding love. The end of this story concludes with a heart, the main symbol of love, which reads as a sign that the soldier has indeed found love. The second limitation is the lack of stability caused by standing on one leg, and this is seen from the outset as a constraint that makes the main character different, a representation of otherness. This physical instability symbolically becomes the cause of falling out of the window and the category of the soldier’s inferiority. After all, it is not by accident that the boy happens to throw into the stove exactly this particular soldier. Yet again, at the end of the tale, this shortage is transformed into an advantage and abundance after the soldier’s unification with the little dancer, who also stands on one leg and who is therefore also carried away by the wind to the soldier while he is melting in flames.

Once again, as in the previous fairy tale, here we too see a transformation that is caused by the journey of the main character, moving him from the condition of scarcity to abundance and surplus, in this way meeting the essential need of the soldier - to love and be loved. The couple gets connected with the help of fire which is a fundamental element in all cosmological systems causing crucial transformations (Catana, 2016:59). Moreover, the fire as a symbol of life, passion, love, sexual energy, and purification moves the lovers to another eternal dimension that was important to the author as well. Thus, it can be surely stated that this tale has an untraditional happy ending where death functions as a condition to get united in love and move to a spiritual world.

“The Red Shoes”

Although the story of a little girl named Karen and her red shoes is somewhat less reminiscent of a fairy tale, it still presents the logic of a miracle and the magic works as a significant element of the fairy tale. Magical dancing shoes that symbolize vanity, sexuality and material values, turn an orphan girl into a never-ending dance that eventually exhausts her and makes her suffer.

Right away, the story details the protagonist’s state of poverty and emphasizes her wish to leave poverty for abundance, thus Abundance and Poverty are among the most prominent binary oppositions in this tale. Even though it could be said that later on, the little girl enters the category of abundance by living in her caregiver’s home, her desire for owning and only wearing the red shoes is still beyond the moral norms and common decency of the society at that time.

The conflict between spiritual and material values is highlighted here in the context of Christian morality, thus, another important binary opposition is Spirituality and Materiality. It is particularly this category that conveys the most significant transformation of the girl, both internal and physical, reflected in her words to the executioner: “Don’t cut off my head!” said Karen, “for then I could not repent of my sin. But cut off my feet with the red shoes.” (Andersen, 2016:292).

If at first the red shoes were an aspiration for the girl, reflecting her desire to live in abundance, then later they become an evil that has overwhelmed her and made her dance without having life anymore. The girl gave priority to the red shoes because it was something she always wanted, a desire that she has put higher than the human relationship and God.

In the terms of semiotics, the main character starts her symbolic journey by receiving the red shoes on the day of her mother’s funeral. Wearing red shoes is considered unsuitable for funeral or church but she does both, taking advantage of her caregiver’s lost ability to see colours. The attention Karen receives wearing the bright shoes feeds her wish for being noticed and seen as pretty.

It is important to acknowledge here that the perception of colours is a complex cultural construction, closely related to values, qualities and meaning; colours are also important communication agents. When it comes to colour archetypes, red is primarily associated with blood. It is argued that “it is archetypes that unite humanity in the primal experience. Potent, tangible and fundamental, it is the experience of red, that embraces blood so tightly as to become its archetype” (Pompas&Luzzatto, 2019:15). Consequently, it is the archetype of fertility and life itself. In addition, there is a strong connection between colour red and fire with destructive or purifying power, thus this colour creates meanings of destructiveness, destruction, aggression, and even death and Satan.

Red shoes is never neutral as a symbol - it combines literature, fashion and clothing, creating cultural and social meanings (Webster, 2010:164). Andersen’s story of the red shoes is much older than a story about Cinderella, which is why it preserved some horrible plot elements, such as cutting the feet off. The magical red shoes are depicted as requiring the commitment of their wearer to submit in behaviour, as they lead to wild dances that end in horrific suffering and death. In general, this story is about desire, jealousy, transformation, and the sin that the red shoes represent.

The story ends with a miracle performed by an angel who fulfils the protagonist’s wish to go to the church. The angel brings church to the little girl’s room, as if blending the spaces together so that the girl could finally be present in the place she was longing for in search of her peace of mind: “The church itself had come to the poor girl in her narrow room, or the room had gone to the church. She sat in the pew with the rest of the pastor’s household, and when they had finished the hymn and looked up, they nodded and said, “It was right of you to come, Karen.” “It was mercy,” said she” (Andersen, 2016:294).

The end of this narrative is, however, ambivalent: “The organ played and the children’s voices in the choir sounded soft and lovely. The bright warm sunshine streamed through the window into the pew where Karen sat, and her heart became so filled with it, so filled with peace and joy, that it broke. Her soul flew on the sunbeams to Heaven, and no one was there who asked after the Red Shoes” (Andersen, 2016:294).

Given this context, the ending of this story can indeed be considered as a happy one because Karen’s heart broke full of “sunshine, peace, and joy” expressing her choice to reconnect with God and spiritual values. Her injured and crippled body had become a

limitation preventing her from being able to move and attend the church, and now the priority was given to the soul and its needs.

The third binary opposition used in this tale- and closely related with Spirituality and Materiality- is Life and Death, emphasizing the issue of quality and meaning of life. Living purely a material life and ignoring spiritual values is a death pathway, according to this story. And, on the contrary, dying does not necessarily mean an end to existence - because the soul reconnects with God and the spiritual life continues, especially, when the earthly life is too demanding and limited. In terms of a religious worldview, the existential issues are raised here, showing the right way to a happy eternal life in this didactic story.

“The Little Mermaid”

In a popular version of this well-known fairy tale, the little mermaid dies, turning into sea foam. She does not win the prince's love, does not become his wife and is destined to die. However, in Andersen's original version, the end of this tale is slightly different. When the little mermaid turns into sea foam, she notices that she is surrounded by daughters of the air – fair, ethereal beings – to one of whom she is converted too. The daughters of the air explain to the little mermaid that her life does not end yet and she has a chance to earn an immortal soul: “You, poor little mermaid, have tried with your whole heart to do as we are doing; you have suffered and endured and raised yourself to the spirit-world by your good deeds; and now, by striving for three hundred years in the same way, you may obtain an immortal soul.” (Andersen, 2016:75).

The tale ends with the little mermaid watching people on the board of a ship looking for her – the little mermaid says goodbye to the prince and his bride, and floats up to a pink cloud with other children of the air. From them she learns of the possibility to get into the kingdom of heaven even faster, without needing to wait for three hundred years: “After three hundred years, thus shall we float into the kingdom of heaven,” said she. “And we may even get there sooner,” whispered one of her companions...”(Andersen, 2016:76).

The ending of this fairy tale is commonly considered as unhappy. Understandably, such an assessment is determined by the failed love of the prince and the little mermaid, and her death by turning into sea foam. However, the semiotic approach broadens the understanding of this ending and opens up new perspectives for consideration.

At the beginning of the story, the main character was put in a scarcity situation and had three needs or desires for a meaningful life. Firstly, it was the need for love as she was dreaming of a beautiful prince while looking at a marble statue of a handsome boy. After having seen the prince, his love became her primary desire and need. Love and connection, as a unity between the male and female forces, reflect a process of unity when the psyche becomes harmonious, making this connection a symbolic expression of totality, health and ultimate happiness.

The second desire that the little mermaid had was a wish to live a human life that was represented by two legs. Lastly, the third longing that the little mermaid had was that for an immortal soul, a feature not possessed by beings living underwater, and only the little mermaid felt a desire to obtain it. This fascinated the little mermaid and she wholeheartedly longed to experience the physical and afterlife of human existence.

Reflecting on the ending of this fairy tale it is apparent that not all desires of the little mermaid were fulfilled. However, even if she did not get married to the prince and died, she gained experience of love, human life and she got a pair of human legs. Again, even if she did

not acquire an immortal life, her existence did not end with death as her soul continued its journey with the children of the air. The whole story ends with this possibility allowing the little mermaid to fulfil her desire and take part in bringing happiness to mankind, thus converting her into an immortal soul. In fact, this desire, as well as the value of spiritual life, is presented in the story as the main and crucial one.

This story is also about a sacrifice, i.e. the little mermaid sacrifices her beautiful voice for a pair of legs, she also sacrifices her life to save the prince's life, and her sisters sacrifice their hair to save the little mermaid. As is revealed at the end of the story, all these sacrifices lead to an unconventional happy ending. Surely this motif is related to the author's Christian worldview and highlights certain Christian values.

This idea is supported by the binary opposition between Up and Down, creating a three-dimensional perspective. The little mermaid lives deep under the sea and this underwater world is depicted as beautiful and harmonious: "We must not imagine that there is nothing at the bottom of the sea but bare yellow sand. No, indeed; the most singular flowers and plants grow there; the leaves and stems of which are so pliant, that the slightest agitation of the water causes them to stir as if they had life" (Andersen, 2016:57).

In this dimension that represents the category of Down, the life of the mermaid community is depicted as utterly happy and careless. However, for the little mermaid, this world is associated with loneliness and symbolic death, lacking meaning and purpose in living that way. Thus, another binary opposition present in this tale is Life and Death, relating closely to the opposition of Up and Down which traditionally connects the lower dimension with death and, analogically, the upper dimension with life.

The human world that appears at the Up dimension is not only a place for life and love but also for suffering. The little mermaid suffers with every step as walking or dancing are painful to her, she also suffers seeing the prince choosing another lady as his bride. Moreover, she suffers quietly without the ability to express her feelings. However, the human world presents more life and variety, and the little mermaid does not regret her choices and sacrifices. Nevertheless, she must leave this dimension as she dies.

A paradoxical situation arises here because instead of dying and turning into the sea foam, which would symbolically mean returning to the underwater world, the little mermaid rises and converts into the air element, becoming one of the children of the air. Thus, in that way she is rewarded for her good heart, sacrifices and choice of love over life. Consequently, moving higher up gives her even more life and the possibility to gain an immortal soul which is related to eternal life.

In conclusion, this interdimensional journey from the bottom up and the transformation of the little mermaid allows viewing the ending of this fairy tale as a happy one. Moreover, viewing from the perspective of scarcity and abundance, it is apparent that the little mermaid has not experienced the desired abundance either in the underwater, or in the human world, and only ascending even higher into the air dimension, or the spiritual world, brought her closer to the possibility of the desired abundance. Thus, moving Up gives more Life for the female protagonist and represents a certain hierarchy of Christian values.

"The Swineherd"

"The Swineherd" is one more of the famous fairy tales by Andersen that, instead of ending in a wedding of a prince and a princess, leaves both characters lonely: "And then he

returned into his kingdom and left her behind. She could now sing at her leisure: “A jolly old sow once lived in a sty, Three little piggies has she,” &c.” (Andersen, 2016:197).

This story tells of several disharmonious interactions between the prince and the princess. Firstly, the princess is disappointed and does not accept the gifts sent by the prince, thus in this situation she holds a power position. Yet later, the prince takes over the power position, as he creates and gifts to the princess artificial low-value items that reflect material values, in exchange for kisses. The prince maintains this power position at the very end of the tale, rejecting the princess because of her vanity and materialism.

All the items gifted to the princess by the prince were miraculous and special in some way. The first gift was magic rose from “a rose-tree, the most beautiful of its kind. It bloomed only once in five years, and then it had only one single rose upon it, but what a rose! It had such a sweet scent that one instantly forgot all sorrow and grief when one smelt it” (Andersen, 2016:193). The second gift was “a nightingale, which could sing as if every sweet melody was in its throat”(Andersen, 2016:193). In addition, there were two more magic things that the prince created and exchanged with the princess for kisses, i. e. a kitchen-pot and a rattle.

All these four magic things play an important role in the narrative as they move action ahead and represent opposite values. Further, with their help, the binary opposition of True and False allows questioning not only values but also the trueness of the princess: whether or not she is indeed a real and true princess or perhaps a fake one, as royalty is not only an external status but also bears the expectation of internal nobleness. At the same time, the swineherd can be perceived as fake because he is, in fact, a real prince, representing true human values.

This fairy tale can also be considered as an interaction between archetypal animus and anima, however, the unity of these two parts of the human psyche, in this case, is impossible and harmony is not achieved. The differences in value systems and true desires create obstacles that convert the story to a didactic narrative. The author does not follow the traditional model of plot development - on the contrary, the challenges become a lesson for the princess because she was giving her kisses away for nothing, thus demonstrating a lack of dignity and deeming her underserving of the princess' title.

To conclude, if the tale started from a position of scarcity, it has in fact ended with it as well: the prince lacked and pursued love but came to realise that the lady he chose was not a real princess. In other words, marriage to such a princess would not have moved him to a state of abundance. The transformation in this story is mainly related to changes in social status as the prince changed his to a significantly lower social position but later returned to the royal status, while the princess lost her noble status and became an ordinary girl after being banished from her father's empire. In this context, the ending of this story can be considered neutral, i.e. neither happy nor unhappy.

Conclusions

The proposed semiotic approach to analysing Andersen's well-known fairy tales revealed several important points. By identifying the main binary oppositions in the analysed fairy tales, it becomes apparent that they contribute strongly to the transformation of a seemingly unhappy ending into, in fact, a happy ending. The use of binary oppositions in observing the phenomena of reality helps to interpret them and to form an evaluation scale, increasing their symbolic meanings.

Notably, the most common key binary oppositions found in the analysed Andersen's tales are Up and Down, True and False, Life and Death, and Light and Dark. In most instances, several of them are used cohesively and result in forming an integral semantic system by associating the dimension of Up with those of Light, True and Life. In all of the analysed tales, these binary oppositions marked the protagonist's symbolic journey from scarcity to abundance, which, in turn, determined his or her inner – and sometimes physical - transformation.

For instance, the binary opposition of Up and Down that is at work in the stories of *The Little Mermaid*, *The Little Match Girl* and *The Brave Tin Soldier* is essential for the creation of meaning. The opposition of moral categories on the vertical axis is initially associated with religious beliefs and following Christian and profane views, upward movement is assessed as positive, whereas downward movement is perceived as negative. The lexemes used for naming top and bottom become symbols embodying the values that a human being has acquired in mastering the world. The identification of spheres in which the evaluative nature of the metaphorical Up and Down dyad manifests itself is important for understanding the complex mechanism of reality assessment, realising its complexity.

As for the before-mentioned fairy tales, namely, *The Little Match Girl* and *The Little Mermaid*, portray death as the only means allowing or enabling the main character to ascend to a higher dimension. The writer's deep faith in God and religious worldview justifies his choice as a presentation of a happy ending, without regard for death as a completion but rather seeing death as a natural transformation that does not end human existence. In comparison, the Up and Down opposition is employed somewhat differently in *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* where the downfall relates primarily to challenges, however, eventually falling is attributed meaning of self-destruction to become united - through fire and love - with the beloved one.

Another important aspect revealed by this analysis relates to the moment of reaching a state of abundance by the main character during his or her symbolic journey in the narrative. The transformation from a scarcity state to the achievement of abundance, as a reward for making the right choices or for resisting challenging temptations, is crucial in defining the type of ending as happy or unhappy. According to the twelve stages of the Hero's journey, preceding the last stage known as *the Return With The Elixir*, there is also a stage of *Resurrection* that indicates a physical or symbolic rebirth of the main character and acquisition of new abilities or skills as a result of overcoming obstacles. Forming the climax of the story mainly leads to a new state of abundance and accomplishment of goals.

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La discipline scolaire français en France et au Ghana : comment les sujets didactiques la reconstruisent ?

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Abstract

This article seeks to describe how French became a discipline taught in Ghana by focusing on how didactic subjects represent the discipline and comparing these representations to those of pupils in France to understand how the French discipline varies according to the teaching context. 88 questionnaires were administered to middle school pupils (in Ghana) and the second corpus of 130 questionnaires was also to CM2 pupils (equivalent middle school) in France. The notion of disciplinary awareness is the theoretical framework underlying this research. The results of the surveys show that the disciplinary status of French varies according to the linguistic landscape and in both teaching contexts, the pupils consider French as a plural discipline with fragmented content. Also, the level of investment in learning French is linked to specific purposes (academic, social, and personal) that students attribute to this discipline.

Keywords: French, teaching context, didactic subjects, disciplinary awareness.

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous cherchons à décrire comment le français est devenu une discipline enseignée au Ghana en nous intéressant à la façon dont les sujets didactiques se représentent la discipline, et à comparer ces représentations à celles des élèves en France pour comprendre comment la discipline français varie selon les contextes d'enseignement. Nous nous appuyons sur un premier corpus composé de 88 questionnaires élèves ghanéens au collège et un second corpus de 130 questionnaires élèves en CM2 en France. L'analyse de ce corpus est encadrée par la notion théorique de conscience disciplinaire. Les résultats des enquêtes montrent que le statut disciplinaire du français varie selon le paysage linguistique et dans les deux contextes d'enseignement, les élèves considèrent le français comme une discipline plurielle avec des contenus fragmentés. Également, l'investissement dans l'apprentissage du français est corrélé aux valeurs (scolaires, sociales et personnelles) que les élèves accordent à cette discipline.

Mots-clés : français, contexte d'enseignement, sujets didactiques, conscience disciplinaire.

Le français est une discipline enseignée au Ghana depuis les années 1980. Cet enseignement s'est reconfiguré pour répondre aux enjeux politiques et économiques en 2006, lorsque le Ghana signe le Pacte Linguistique de l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie en tant que membre associé¹. Cet enseignement facultatif au collège et au lycée est devenu une discipline scolaire dans un cursus secondaire (Klutse Doe, 2017mémoire master2). D'autres travaux tels que ceux de Yiboe (2010), Simire, (2008) Kodua (2012), Akakpo (2013) ont traité le sujet du français au Ghana dans une perspective située en didactique du Français Langue Étrangère (FLE). Dans cet article, il s'agit moins d'analyser le français comme langue étrangère enseignée dans un pays anglophone que comme une discipline scolaire dans un système scolaire particulier et de comprendre en quoi cet enseignement est spécifique de la discipline français telle qu'elle peut être enseignée en France et reconstruite par les élèves.

La réflexion que nous nous proposons se situe en didactique du français et dépasse les distinctions entre français langue maternelle (FLM) et FLE ou encore français langue seconde (FLS) pour se centrer sur la notion de discipline scolaire. Cette dernière est selon Reuter (2013, p. 81) : « une construction sociale organisant un ensemble de contenus, de dispositifs, de pratiques, d'outils... articulés à des finalités éducatives, en vue de leur enseignement et de leur apprentissage à l'école ». Ainsi, nous cherchons à décrire comment le français est devenu une discipline enseignée au Ghana en nous intéressant à la façon dont les sujets didactiques se représentent la discipline, et à comparer ces représentations à celles des élèves en France pour comprendre comment la discipline français varie selon les contextes d'enseignement.

Pour avancer des éléments de réflexion à cette question, nous nous appuyons sur un premier corpus composé de 88 questionnaires élèves ghanéens² et un second corpus de 130 questionnaires élèves³. Par ailleurs, cinq questionnaires administrés aux enseignants ghanéens et 10 entretiens menés en France⁴ complètent les données. Toutefois dans le cadre de cet article nous ne les analyserons pas précisément, ils seront convoqués pour expliciter des propos d'élèves quand cela nous semble nécessaire ou encore pour éclairer des différences ou des convergences entre les deux pays.

Notre propos s'organise autour de trois axes. Tout d'abord, nous présenterons l'émergence de la discipline français dans les deux pays (le Ghana et la France), puis le cadre théorique et le choix méthodologique effectués pour recueillir les premières données. Enfin, nous présenterons quelques résultats significatifs et les éléments de discussion qu'ils suscitent selon nous.

¹ Le Pacte Linguistique de l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) est un instrument contractuel conclu entre l'OIF et ses pays membres ou associés dont le français n'est pas langue officielle. Ce pacte symbolise une politique linguistique à la demande volontaire des États pour renforcer la promotion de la langue française. L'accès au statut membre associé répond à des conditions strictes. Il est réservé à des États et des gouvernements pour lesquels le français est d'ores et déjà l'une des langues officielles ou d'un usage habituel et courant, et qui partagent les valeurs de la Francophonie. Le dernier renouvellement de ce pacte a eu lieu en 2018 et valide jusqu'à 2022. Voir : http://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/modalite_adhesion_bucarest_2006-2-2.pdf https://www.francophonie.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/pacte_linguistique_ghana_2018.pdf

² Il a été construit dans le cadre du master recherche DEA (Didactiques, Enseignements et Apprentissages) de :

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³ Ce corpus a été constitué lors de la recherche sur les consciences disciplinaires menées sous la responsabilité de Cohen-Azria et al., (2013)

⁴ Entretiens menés par Dias-Chiaruttini (2007) dans le cadre d'une recherche sur le rapport à la discipline français.

1. Le français une discipline scolaire contrastée selon les pays

1.1. Situation linguistique et statut du français au Ghana

Le Ghana est l'un des cinq pays anglophones situés dans la zone de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. Géographiquement, il est frontalier du Burkina Faso au nord, de la Côte d'Ivoire à l'ouest, du Togo à l'est et du Golfe de Guinée, une partie de l'océan Atlantique au sud. Son paysage linguistique est particulièrement complexe à cause de la diversité des dimensions multiculturelles et ethniques⁵ (Ayi-Adzimah, 2010). Cela a évidemment des répercussions quant au choix de langue d'instruction et d'administration sur le plan politique, mais aussi sur le plan de l'éducation : quelle(s) langue(s) enseigner ? Ce phénomène n'est pas nouveau en soi. Les pays considérés monolingues aujourd'hui ont fait face, au cours de leur histoire, à une situation relativement identique à celle du Ghana. Par ailleurs, en Afrique cette situation est relativement partagée.

La situation de l'enseignement du français au Ghana a considérablement changé lorsque ce pays a décidé de rejoindre l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, en septembre 2006. Outre les orientations politiques de l'expansion sur le plan socio-économique, le Ghana cherchant de nouveaux partenaires en dehors de ses alliés coloniaux afin d'explorer et de profiter des occasions qui se présentent sur le marché économique, ce choix politique s'est inscrit dans une logique du renforcement effectif du multilinguisme. La visée était de promouvoir l'enseignement, l'apprentissage et l'usage du français dans les institutions éducatives du pays ainsi que dans la vie quotidienne, sans marginaliser ni la langue officielle (l'anglais) ni les langues nationales. De fait, le français occupe un statut de faible reconnaissance en tant que langue étrangère. Agbéflé (2014, p. 5-6) constate que : « rares sont ceux [les Ghanéens] qui parlent une autre langue internationale à part l'anglais ; ce qui dans une large mesure n'est pas le cas dans les pays francophones en général, et notamment dans les pays francophones voisins immédiats du Ghana où les gens peuvent 'glander' quelques phrases en anglais à la rencontre d'un étranger anglophone [...] à qui on peut répondre généralement aux besoins immédiats ». Ainsi, l'anglais demeure la langue principale de scolarisation et d'administration à côté des autres langues nationales enseignées comme une discipline scolaire de manière facultative. C'est dans une telle situation diglossique que vient s'ajouter le français comme discipline dans le programme scolaire rendant plus complexe son statut.

1.2. Une discipline dans un contexte complexe

Un sondage fait par Associates for Change (AfC)⁶ en 2010 pour étudier le statut de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage du français dans des institutions éducatives (publiques et privées) au Ghana montre que le français est enseigné à partir de Junior High School (collège) jusqu'aux institutions supérieures (universités, polytechniques, écoles normales ...) à l'exception des quelques établissements scolaires privés qui commencent un peu plutôt en classe de primaire, même si le programme scolaire prescrit commence à partir du collège. Les

⁵ Il y a à l'heure actuelle 75 ethnies et entre 36 – 50 langues nationales ou régionales (Ayi-Adzimah, 2010, p. 107).

⁶ Un rapport fait par Associates for Change (AfC) intitulé : *The Status of French Language Teaching and Learning across Ghana's Public Education System*. Voir : www.web.net/~afc/download3/Education%20Research/French%20Study%20Report/Final%20French%20Study%20Report%20November%202015.pdf.

données recueillies par le Ministère de l'Éducation (MOE)⁷ et l'établissement *West African Examination Council - Ghana* (WAEC)⁸ confirment qu'il y a des difficultés à recenser le nombre d'écoles qui dispensent le français comme matière au collège dans les dix régions du pays⁹. À l'issue du rapport en 2008, le Ministère de l'Éducation (MOE) affirme qu'entre 2007 et 2008 le nombre des lycées publics dispensant le français comme matière scolaire se trouvait entre 259 et 283 respectivement. En 2007/08 - 2009/10, il y a eu une croissance de nombre de lycéens de 38,827 à 71,768, pendant cette période 51% d'élèves apprennent le français à l'école publique. En revanche, seuls 9% des lycéens composent l'examen final.

Par ailleurs, Associates for Change (2010) souligne d'autres défis relatifs à l'enseignement et l'apprentissage : le manque de documents authentiques ou livres scolaires (manuels), le grand nombre d'élèves par rapport au nombre de professeurs disponibles et une disposition qui encourage l'enseignement dit frontal, transmissif, classique ou nonconstructiviste. Par rapport à la disposition de l'enseignement, Nutakor et Agbéflé (2016, p. 376 citant Casely-Hayford, Nutakor et al., 2010) notent qu'elle contribue aux problèmes d'enseignement du français puisque « la plupart des méthodes utilisées pour l'enseignement des langues (anglais et FLE) au Ghana sortent directement des maisons de publications occidentales et suivent des modèles pédagogiques de ces pays à caractère principalement monolingue [...]. En effet, ces méthodes importées ignorent dans la plupart des cas, les apports possibles des langues déjà parlées par les élèves ». Pour relever tous ces défis évoqués, l'Éducation Nationale au Ghana a renforcé le nombre d'institutions¹⁰ chargées de formation des enseignants de français et a aussi instauré le conseil nommé *National Council for Curriculum Assessment* (NaCCA) pour l'élaboration, la révision et l'évaluation régulière du programme scolaire.

1.3. Une discipline scolaire en France

En France, la discipline français a un tout autre statut, mais elle répond aussi à un projet politique, d'abord celui d'enseigner une langue unique, stabilisée sur tout le territoire pour en signifier l'unité politique, culturelle et linguistique. En tant que discipline, elle s'est constituée à partir de la laïcisation de l'institution scolaire dans les années 1880 (Chartier, 2008 ; Collinot, 1999). Pour autant, elle demeure une discipline aux référents instables, composites et hétérogènes (Reuter, 1992). Elle n'a jamais été une discipline unie et consensuelle et le terme désignant la discipline français est apparu bien plus tardivement que la discipline elle-même (Collinot, 1999). Cette terminologie s'est stabilisée après 1972 avec la Rénovation du français, elle disparaît en 1979 pour réapparaître en 1980 et trouver à nouveau une période stable jusqu'en 2002 où la dénomination du français disparaît au profit d'un nouveau champ : « langue française et éducation littéraire et humaine ». En 2005, la loi d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école n°2005-380 du 23 avril 2005 instaure la désignation : « la maîtrise de la langue française » et dans les programmes de 2008, la dénomination du français réapparaît (Dias-Chiaruttini, 2010).

⁷Ministère de l'Éducation, Ghana : Mandaté par loi (Civil Service Law 327 et PNDC Law 1993) pour pourvoir et rendre accessible l'éducation pour tout ghanéen. <http://www.moe.gov.gh/site/about>

⁸Une institution éducative à caractère transnational comportée de cinq pays anglophones sub-sahariens : Ghana, Nigéria, Sierra Léone, Libéria et Gambie.

⁹ Au moment de cette recherche, le Ghana se composait de 10 régions, depuis 2019 nous en comptons 16.

¹⁰ Hormis les trois écoles normales (Mount Mary College of Education, Wesley College of Education et Bagabaga College of Education) spécialisées dans la formation des enseignants, la majorité des universités publiques et privées comptent au moins un département ou centre de langues.

Ces contextes d'enseignement du français montrent sur le plan didactique la façon dont les disciplines scolaires émergent et répondent à des enjeux d'abord politiques, puis sociologiques et économiques. Par conséquent, enseigner le français en tant que discipline scolaire c'est aussi répondre à ces enjeux et son apprentissage n'en est pas exempté. Nous cherchons donc à comprendre comment selon ces contextes, la discipline français est conçue par les sujets didactiques.

2. Cadre théorique et choix méthodologique

2.1. Choix du cadre théorique

Plusieurs concepts s'offrent à nous pour étudier cela. Nous en distinguons trois : les représentations, le rapport à et la conscience disciplinaire.

Représentations, si nous nous en référons à la définition proposée par Cohen-Azria dans le *Dictionnaire des concepts fondamentaux en didactiques* (2013, p. 191) est un concept qui renvoie aux « systèmes de connaissances qu'un sujet mobilise face à une question ou à une thématique, que celle-ci ait fait l'objet d'un enseignement ou pas ». Ainsi, cette notion dépasse le cadre de l'enseignement et en même temps, il en modifie la conception dans la mesure où il « ne peut plus être conçu comme un simple apport de nouvelles connaissances puisque l'élève intègre ces nouveaux éléments en fonction de ce qu'il connaît déjà » (idem).

De son côté, Dias-Chiaruttini (2018, p. 13) a montré que la « configuration conceptuelle de la notion de conscience disciplinaire partage des liens importants avec l'usage » qu'elle propose de la notion de rapport aux savoirs disciplinaires ou à la littérature et à son enseignement. Ainsi, la notion de rapport aux savoirs disciplinaires (Dias-Chiaruttini, 2007) ou le rapport à la littérature et à son enseignement (Dias-Chiaruttini, 2018) permettent de mieux comprendre les pratiques enseignantes et certains choix conscients ou non conscients des enseignants. Toutefois, elle considère que cette notion reconstruite au croisement des approches sociologiques et psychologiques se distingue aussi du concept forgé en didactique de conscience disciplinaire qui pose centralement la question de la discipline. C'est pour cette raison que ce dernier concept nous semble être le plus approprié pour traiter la question de recherche, sachant que le questionnaire des élèves en France a été administré dans le cadre d'une recherche portant sur le concept de conscience disciplinaire (Cohen-Azria et alii. 2013). La définition que Reuter (2013) propose de la conscience disciplinaire renvoie à « la manière dont les acteurs sociaux et, en premier lieu, les sujets didactiques – élèves, mais aussi enseignants – (re) construisent telle ou telle discipline » (p. 39). Elle permet ainsi de souligner les particularités d'une discipline scolaire à l'autre et dans le cadre de cette réflexion elle aurait pu permettre de comparer les particularités de l'enseignement du français dans des contextes linguistiques différents. Chaque discipline scolaire est construite ou conçue différemment selon les pays, les époques et même les différents moments dans le cursus (maternelle, primaire et secondaire). Cette variation s'explique par le biais de différentes dimensions telle que : rapport aux contenus à enseigner et apprendre et les spécificités disciplinaires, la modalité organisationnelle et des facteurs psychologiques et socio-affectives (Lenoir, 2009). Par conséquent, on peut considérer que les formes de conscientisation de ce qui est enseigné et de ces finalités associées à une discipline aident en partie à mieux comprendre comment celle-ci est enseignée et apprise.

2.2 Choix méthodologique

Nous avons fait le choix de confronter des corpus de déclarations de sujets didactiques élèves. Le premier constitué dans le cadre du master 2 DEA (Didactique, Enseignement, Apprentissage) est un corpus exploratoire composé de 88 questionnaires élèves. Les questionnaires ont été distribués dans quatre collèges privés situés dans la zone urbaine au Ghana. Le choix des écoles a été fait sur les critères d'accessibilité et de disponibilité. Cela veut dire que tous les collèges enquêtés ont accepté de participer à la recherche et qu'ils ont des enseignants qui dispensent le cours de français. Pour respecter l'anonymat des participants à cette recherche, les quatre établissements scolaires enquêtés sont désignés par A, B, C et D. Le questionnaire prévoyait que les élèves répondent à titre individuel à toutes les questions (dix-neuf questions en total). Par ailleurs, le questionnaire a été rédigé en double version (français et anglais) pour faciliter la compréhension auprès des enquêtés. Ceux-ci avaient le choix soit de répondre en français ou en anglais. Une fois que tous les questionnaires ont été récupérés, ils ont été fidèlement traduits en français si les réponses n'avaient pas été rédigées en français.

Le corpus français a été élaboré dans le cadre d'une recherche sur la conscience disciplinaire des élèves (Cora-Azria et *al.*, 2013). Nous avons sélectionné les réponses concernant la discipline français en retenant 4 questions qui rejoignent celles posés dans le questionnaire traité au Ghana : D'après toi, à quoi sert le français ? Qu'est-ce qui est important, selon toi, pour réussir en français ? A quoi fais-tu attention en français ? Pour toi, dans ta vie en dehors de l'école, quand est-ce qu'il y a du français ?

2.3. Constitution du panel des enquêtés

Les élèves enquêtés au Ghana étaient soit en première, deuxième ou troisième année d'études au collège. La tranche d'âge des élèves était entre 12-13 ans. Tous les élèves étaient dans des établissements scolaires situés dans une zone urbaine où l'apprentissage du français est considéré plus ou moins obligatoire par l'école.

En France, nous avons retenu les questionnaires des élèves de CM2, âgés entre 11 et 12 ans, scolarisés dans la Région Hauts de France dans des établissements sociologiquement très contrastés, mais situés en zone urbaine.

3. Approches de la discipline français

Les discours sollicités des élèves nous permettent d'approcher ou de caractériser la discipline français dans ces deux contextes (Ghana et France) très contrastés à travers trois éléments qui nous semblent intéressants. Le français est tout d'abord une discipline ancrée dans un système scolaire et en relation avec d'autres disciplines ; elle a des finalités sociales ; et se caractérise par un ensemble de contenus disciplinaires.

3.1 Discipline et système scolaire

C'est évidemment sur cet axe que la discipline français varie le plus selon les deux corpus. Au Ghana, sans surprise, la discipline français apparait en concurrence avec l'anglais. D'une part les élèves comparent le statut des deux langues, mais aussi les difficultés d'apprentissage qui pour une majorité sont plus importantes en français :

(EG) : Oui, j'aime bien le français parce que c'est intéressant ; Mais, j'aime l'anglais plus que le français ; Le professeur de français doit être amical et doit prendre son temps dans l'explication pendant l'enseignement

(EG) : Je n'aime pas le français parce que mon professeur est ennuyeux et je ne le comprends pas quand il m'enseigne et m'explique des choses ; J'aime l'anglais plus que le français ; Le français est une langue étrangère, alors quand le professeur enseigne, il doit être patient avec nous [élèves]

Le français se trouve dans une sorte de concurrence et de rivalité avec la langue anglaise principalement à cause du statut dominant que cette dernière a en tant que langue officielle du pays. Il est intéressant de noter que même en classe de français, cette rivalité ne cesse pas d'émerger d'une manière ou d'une autre. Les déclarations des enseignants¹¹ eux-mêmes montrent que le français et l'anglais sont employés de façon interchangeable soit comme langue d'instruction ou langue de médiation en classe de français. Cela implique que l'enseignement du français se fait parfois en anglais.

Il nous semble que la co-habitation permanente du français et de l'anglais en classe de français soulève plusieurs questions : est-ce une source d'obstacle à l'apprentissage du français ou au contraire est-ce ce qui facilite à la fois son enseignement et son apprentissage dans la mesure où elle constitue un enseignement par analogie (plus ou moins pertinent) ? Par ailleurs, la discipline français au Ghana nécessite d'une langue de médiation pour être enseignée, ce qui la constitue comme une discipline scolaire à part entière avec son programme, ses activités, ses contenus, au même titre que les autres disciplines et non comme une discipline transversale. Statut qu'elle peut prendre en France, où le français joue ce rôle de médiation des autres disciplines. 10% des élèves interrogés le soulignent et surtout ils disent bien que l'apprentissage du français sert à apprendre dans les autres disciplines :

EF : Le français sert à écrire sans faute d'orthographe. Pareil que pour les autres matières sauf la science.

EF : Pour apprendre si on apprend pas, c'est comme ça, on n'arrivera pas avec les x et les - et les + [illisible]

EF : (le français sert) à savoir bien apprendre sa langue et les maths.

Les travaux de Lebouc (2020) ont éclairé la façon dont les enseignants du premier degré concevaient le français comme une discipline contribuant aux autres apprentissages. Notre corpus montre par ailleurs que les élèves interrogés en France font également des parallèles avec les autres disciplines scolaires :

EF : En français, on écrit, on réfléchit. C'est plutôt un travail de mémoire tout comme les autres matières. On reprend des choses qu'on a apprises auparavant.

Toutefois, la comparaison avec les disciplines reconstruit une hiérarchie implicite que nombre de travaux ont déjà éclairée. Dans notre corpus, les mathématiques et le français apparaissent comme des disciplines aux enjeux scolaires importants :

EF : À savoir bien écrire, savoir sa grammaire, bien parler, pas dire des gros mots, être comme les maths intelligent.

¹¹ Cinq enseignants avaient été interrogés, mais nous avons fait le choix dans le cadre de cet article de ne pas exploiter spécifiquement ce corpus.

EF : C'est un peu comme les maths ! Ça va beaucoup nous servir pour plus tard ! Pour envoyer des textes et beaucoup de choses comme ça ! C'est très important et c'est ma matière préférée !

Une hiérarchie des disciplines à laquelle les enseignants au Ghana font allusion, en considérant que les attitudes des élèves face à la discipline française sont liées aux valeurs qu'ils accordent à la discipline. Une enseignante déclare : « certains élèves n'ont pas d'intérêt pour apprendre le français ; la plupart des parents conseillent leurs enfants de concentrer sur les matières essentielles ; aussi, certains élèves pensent qu'apprendre le français est une perte de temps ». Ce que le discours de ces derniers confirme en avançant le statut « limité » de la langue dans le pays :

(BE10) : [...] parce que ce n'est pas tout le monde dans mon entourage qui comprend le français

(CE 11) : [...] parce que mes amis aiment parler en anglais

Des propos que nous ne retrouvons pas dans les entretiens menés avec les enseignants en France qui déplorent plutôt un défaitisme à l'égard de l'école en général plus qu'à l'égard de la discipline.

3.2. Les finalités

Comme l'indique ce dernier exemple, les élèves au Ghana comme en France associent bien souvent des finalités et des goûts, mais aussi goût et sentiment de réussite ou dégoût et sentiment de non-réussite.

EG : J'aime le français parce que j'adore voir mon grand-père fait l'enregistrement audio pour la BBC (média britannique) en français

EG : Non, je n'aime pas étudier le français parce que c'est difficile à comprendre

EG : Non, je n'aime pas le français parce que ce n'est pas facile de parler cette langue

Toutefois pour les élèves au Ghana (EG) comme en France (EF), la finalité la plus citée concerne la réussite scolaire et sociale. Apprendre le français sert à réussir à l'école et augure d'un meilleur avenir professionnel :

EG : Cela aide quand tu es en voyage dans des pays francophones	EF : (Ça sert) par exemple pour faire un curriculum vitae ou préparer un entretien ou un mémoire
EG : Pour trouver un emploi dans l'avenir	EF : Le français sert à connaître l'orthographe, etc. qui nous servira plus tard comme l'écriture.
EG : Pour pouvoir répondre à des questions posées pendant l'examen	EF : Pour avoir un bon métier plus tard
EG : Parce qu'on est censé l'apprendre à l'école	EF : Il sert à bien parler, à savoir écrire un texte. Et avoir un beau métier.
EG : Pour réussir l'examen du brevet des collèges et pour mon avenir	EF : (Ça sert) à bien écrire, faire des histoires car quand on sera grand il faut savoir s'exprimer et écrire tout seul, mais aussi pour le métier que l'on veut faire plus tard.

Toutefois, une différence non négligeable apparaît dans les discours des élèves ghanéens : le français est une discipline qui favorise les voyages ce qui contraste en partie avec les représentations des élèves français.

EG : Cela aide quand tu es en voyage dans des pays francophones

EG : Pour dialoguer avec les gens lorsque je suis en voyage

EG : Pour communiquer et travailler avec des francophones

EG : Pour être capable de parler lorsque je suis en voyage avec ma mère

EG : Pour communiquer avec des gens dans les pays francophones qui nous entourent

Ce dernier exemple reprend le contexte politique et économique de cet enseignement. Notons toutefois que la fonction communicative est aussi mise en avant par les élèves en France :

EF : On apprend le français pour bien parler comme un grand et pour mieux comprendre les autres

Et finalement le français se prolonge dans les activités quotidiennes extrascolaires :

EF : Les jours où il n'y a pas école je fais du français quand je parle avec des personnes, quand j'écris une poésie, quand je lis un livre

EF : En français quand j'entends des langues étrangères et je veux les apprendre

EF : (ça sert chez) l'ophtalmo

L'investissement dans l'apprentissage d'une discipline est corrélé aux valeurs que les élèves lui confèrent et à l'intérêt qu'elle représente à leurs yeux tant à l'école qu'au-delà de celle-ci. L'utilité et le domaine du monde auquel se réfère la matière sont des dimensions qui influencent le caractère positif ou négatif du vécu disciplinaire Reuter (2016). Ce résultat n'est pas nouveau, mais il montre que cela est vrai quel que soit le contexte d'enseignement du français et probablement quelle que soit la discipline.

Voyons à présent les contenus qui caractérisent la discipline français dans ces deux contextes d'enseignement.

3.3. Contenus disciplinaires

La discipline français au Ghana comme en France apparaît dans le discours des élèves comme une discipline plurielle, voire morcelée en diverses sous-disciplines. Les élèves des quatre écoles ghanéennes enquêtés distinguent divers contenus : la grammaire, la dissertation (l'écriture), les exercices de compréhension, la conjugaison, l'oral, ainsi que le vocabulaire. En France, les élèves de CM2 identifient les mêmes sous-catégories disciplinaires en désignant plus précisément la lecture et la compréhension. Dans les deux contextes d'enseignement, les élèves ont tendance à citer ces sous-domaines disciplinaires comme étant indépendants les uns des autres. Cela donne à penser que les contenus du français sont fragmentés selon qu'ils proviennent de tel ou tel sous-domaine. Ce sont les visées qui recomposent un semblant d'unité et d'identité disciplinaire : « ça sert à lire, à écrire, à parler... »

Enfin, en France comme au Ghana, les élèves mettent l'accent sur l'enseignement de la grammaire et de la conjugaison. À tel point que les élèves ghanéens ont une représentation du français comme étant un ensemble de règles. C'est par conséquent l'enseignement de la norme qui est privilégié et qui « s'est importé » au Ghana (et probablement dans d'autres pays).

(BE4) : J'aime étudier le français parce qu'il s'agit d'une application des règles grammaticales

(DE1) : Ce n'est pas difficile. Il suffit de suivre des règles pour répondre à des questions

Ce sont aussi ces règles que les élèves dénoncent et reprochent à cet apprentissage qui perd son sens à leurs yeux, puisqu'ils estiment qu'ils n'ont pas appris à parler la langue. Il y a ainsi une distorsion entre les visées reconstruites des élèves : la discipline apprend à comprendre et à parler français or le fonctionnement de cette discipline qui enseigne des règles.

En France, aussi, grammaire, orthographe et conjugaisons dominent le discours des élèves de CM2 de notre corpus. C'est d'ailleurs l'une des finalités régulièrement avancées : « ne plus faire des fautes en conjuguant des verbes au présent de l'indicatif, passé composé, au futur ».

Au Ghana, le français est globalement une discipline appréciée par les élèves interrogés, toutefois ceux qui sont en difficulté (face notamment aux règles de grammaire) éprouvent une forme de rejet. Il y a ainsi un lien entre la réussite des élèves, la compréhension des attentes et le goût pour la discipline. Plus l'enseignement de la discipline répond aux attentes ou aux compétences des élèves, plus ils l'apprécient voire s'intéressent à son apprentissage. Les résultats des enquêtes menées en France divergent assez peu.

Toutefois, la discipline n'est pas tout à fait la même. Un regard attentif aux intitulés des manuels scolaires montre que le focus des contenus d'enseignement est centré sur le développement de quatre compétences d'acquisition et d'apprentissage d'une langue selon le CECRL¹². Toutefois, la forme que prend l'évaluation en classe de français au Ghana est généralement du type : « question à choix multiples, exercice à trou et essai ». Ces exercices types montrent que l'évaluation porte essentiellement sur des savoirs acquis et moins sur le développement de compétences complexes tels que des productions ou des compréhensions de textes. Par ailleurs ces exercices révèlent également l'accent mis sur l'apprentissage de l'écrit et des normes de l'écrit au détriment de la compréhension orale et de la production orale. Cela nous permet de mieux comprendre les difficultés exprimées par certains élèves au niveau de la compréhension et la production orales en classe et en dehors de la classe.

4. Conclusion

Que ce soit en France ou au Ghana, les élèves désignent les composantes ou sous-domaines de la discipline français comme équivalents aux contenus enseignés et évalués, une distinction que font aussi rarement les enseignants. Dans les deux contextes d'enseignement, ces élèves citent sous-domaines disciplinaires comme étant indépendants les uns des autres, donnant ainsi une représentation de contenus fragmentés. De plus, ils mettent l'accent sur l'enseignement de la grammaire et de la conjugaison si bien que les élèves ghanéens ont une représentation du français comme étant un ensemble de règles.

Aussi, la discipline français, lorsqu'elle est perçue en concurrence constante avec d'autres langues comme c'est le cas au Ghana, pose des difficultés par rapport à son enseignement et à son apprentissage, surtout dans un contexte multilingue. Cependant, ce sont ces obstacles qui déterminent son statut disciplinaire vis-à-vis des autres langues. Dans le cas de la France, la discipline français bénéficie d'un statut unique et privilégié en raison du paysage linguistique

¹² Le CECRL (Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues) préconise quatre compétences – compréhension écrite et orale, production écrite et orale – menant à la maîtrise d'une langue.

dit monolingue dans lequel elle se situe. Ainsi, l'enseignement du français en France est moins affecté ou impacté par l'existence d'autres langues comme matière scolaire. Enfin, l'investissement dans l'apprentissage du français dépend des valeurs que les élèves accordent à cette discipline. D'après les déclarations des élèves interrogés, les finalités de la discipline français demeurent un point essentiel qui déterminent plus ou moins leur motivation d'apprentissage. En effet, enseigner le français en tant que discipline scolaire c'est aussi répondre à des enjeux scolaires, sociaux et personnels, ce qui constitue d'une manière d'une autre la conscience disciplinaire.

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