The Implementation of Co-teaching Model within the Moroccan TEFL Classroom-Moroccan Teachers Trainers’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Despite the high prevalence of co-teaching in EFL classes around the globe because of its numerous advantages, it is noticed that its implementation is below the expectation in the Moroccan context because of various reasons. This article’s fundamental objectives are twofold: It investigates the successful implementation of this approach from teacher trainers’ perspectives and the appropriate model that can be applied smoothly and successfully in the Moroccan EFL context. An online questionnaire is used to collect data about teacher trainers’ attitudes toward the suitable model that can be applied in the Moroccan English classes. The preliminary results of this article unveil that teacher trainers have a positive attitude toward the implementation of co-teaching. Nonetheless, there are some individual, psychological, and institutional constraints that impede its implementation. Therefore, getting rid of individual culture and encouraging the habit of co-operating among pupils along with recruiting more professional teacher trainers to raise teachers’ trainees and experienced teachers’ awareness of the importance of this approach are the most effective solution to apply it successfully in Moroccan EFL classrooms.

Keywords: collaboration, co-teaching, implementation, teacher trainers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Co-teaching though seems a new practice in general education, it has a long tradition in special education. Co-teaching as an instructional delivery method came to provide instruction to diverse students in special education with a particular focus on each case’s needs. In general education co-teaching models are adopted to meet diverse students’ needs. It has been established to foster new values in the classroom, namely collaboration and participation. This meant transforming the classroom into a space for mutual participation and partnership generating. Thus, co-teaching refers to two teachers who share the responsibility of co-planning, co-instructing, and co-assessing learners in one single class (Richards & Farrell, 2005). However, this art in Morocco is hardly to be noticed owing to a good number of factors ranging from lack of resources, materials, culture and more. To respond to this gap in the literature, our study meant to look into the best ways of implementation of co-teaching models by exploring trainer teachers’ perspectives on co-teaching within the TEFL context in Morocco.

Co-teaching is a teaching method deeply ingrained in the sociocultural theory initiated by (Vygotsky, 1978). The fundamental premise of this theory revolves around the importance of interaction between the individual and the learning environment. No doubt, co-teaching is advantageous for both learners and teachers as it caters for different learners’ learning needs, enhances their academic accomplishment, and increases teachers’ collegiality and reflective practices (Hongfield & Dove, 2008; Graziano & Navarrete, 2012; Boland et al., 2019). Despite the co-teaching benefits, it is observed that its application within the Moroccan EFL classrooms is regrettably missing and if it exists, it is below expectations due to myriad challenges.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Definition of Co-Teaching

Co-teaching can also be called co-operative, team teaching, and collaborative teaching and thus all those concepts are going to be used interchangeably in this study. However, the literature provides various definitions for team teaching. For example, Gurman (1989) defined team teaching as “an approach in which two or more persons are assigned to the same students at one time for instructional purposes” (p. 275). Similarly, Easterby-Smith and Olve (1984) conceptualized: “Team teaching involves two or more teachers collaborating over the design or implementation of the same course” (p. 221). Nonetheless, Hatcher et al. (1996) considered team teaching as “two or more instructors collaborating over the design and/or implementation and evaluation of the same course or courses” (p. 367). Anderson and Speck (1998) further claimed that “the disparate definitions of team teaching are a cacophony of voices arising from different contexts” (p. 672).

Based on literature, there are various models of team teaching. Investigating these models display different similarities and differences between them and various levels

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of collaboration. It is very important to notify co-teaching models initially used in inclusive education (Cook & Friend, 1995). However, these models can be used in EFL classes. Baeten and Simons (2014) differentiated between five models of Team teaching.

1) The Observational Model which is also called the “one teaching, one observing” model (Graziano & Navarette, 2012) or the “participant observer” model (Helms et al., 2005). The observer’s passive role does not allow him or her to interfere with the teacher’s performance, but still debriefing task is attached to this model where teachers get together for more reflection.

2) Coaching model, which is extremely different from the observational model, the observer obtained more responsibilities, in addition to observing, the observer has to provide suggestions, guidance and backup. Thus, this model can also be referred to as the “Consultant” model (Austin, 2001) or “Collaborative Consultation” (Nevin et al., 2009).

3) The Assistant Teaching model is synonymous with “one teaching, one assisting” (Cook & Friend, 1995), “one teaches, one guide” (Badiali& Titus, 2010), “tandem model” (Smith, 2004), “monitoring teacher” (Al-Saaideh, 2010), “supportive co-teaching” (Nevin et al., 2009) and “complementary co-teaching” (Nevin et al., 2009). In this model, one teacher is taking the lead while the other assists mainly through mentoring, circulating between rows and supporting learners to achieve the course’s objectives. However, in these three teachers’ models, there is only one leading teacher while the others observe, coach, or offer back to learners. Teachers have to swap roles to experience different roles and fully benefit from the experience (Helms et al., 2005).

4) In the Equal Status model, as the name implies, the two teachers assume the same responsibilities and have equal status. The model is shaped by three types:

4.1) Sequential teaching: the two teachers teach the same course, yet each teacher teaches a particular part of the course (Dugan & Letterman, 2008).

4.2) Parallel teaching means that teachers divide the class into subgroups and each teacher is responsible for a specific group to catch up with the learners’ learning style and their pace.

4.3) In Station teaching, teachers split learners into subgroups and each teacher is in charge of a course section and a group of students (Cook & Friend, 1995).

5) The Teaming model where teachers share the same responsibilities: they co-plan, co-perform, and co-assess their learners. For example, one explains a concept while the other demonstrates a model. They take turns in explaining and helping their pupils. It requires a high degree of harmony and collaboration between the two teachers (Nevin et al., 2009).

In a nutshell, the four first models of teaching display a low level of collaboration between the teachers. They are more hierarchical in nature. In other words, one teacher has a leading role in controlling all the teaching activities while the other teacher’s role is restricted to observing or coaching or offering assistance. However, the last model exhibits a high level of collaboration between the teachers as they share planning, performing and evaluation of students learning.

B. Pros and Cons of Co-Teaching

Baeten and Simons (1998) pointed out that Team teaching has four main benefits for prospective teachers: “1) Increased support; 2) Increased dialogue about learning and teaching; 3) Professional growth; 4) Personal growth” (p. 95). The four advantages will be discussed in detail in the coming paragraphs.

Team teaching is useful for student teachers. During team teaching, student teachers undergo emotional and professional support (Bullough et al., 2002, 2003). Team teaching partners and peers assist in overcoming stress, frustration, and fears (Birrell & Bullough, 2005). This peer-to-peer model can be a source of input for student teachers, mainly during planning and teaching (Birrell & Bullough, 2005; Kamens, 2007). Besides, Team teaching strengthens the student teachers’ friendship and collegiality (Kurts & Levin, 2000).

Dialoguing is one of the main advantages of Team teaching. For instance, peers have more opportunities to exchange feedback, along with teaching materials and knowledge (Birrell & Bullough, 2005). Dialogue allows peers to know each other more deeply and be more open to each other’s points of view (Roth & Tobin, 2001). Moreover, peer dialogue is more fruitful, directive, and affluent than that mentor dialogue which is considered to be more pragmatic and lacks problem-solving tasks (Gardiner & Robinson, 2009).

Team teaching also increases student teachers’ professional practices. On a professional level, student teachers develop didactical and pedagogical competencies and classroom management skills via peer planning, peer teaching and peer feedback (Vacilutto & Cummings, 2007). When student teachers observe each other, they learn different teaching styles by rectifying their teaching, or they adopt new teaching styles. In this sense, they are considered models for each other (Birrell & Bullough, 2005). Peer feedback along with the mentor’s feedback is an ample opportunity for student teachers to be exposed to a different perspective (Dee, 2012) and new learning. Gardiner and Robinson (2009) further argued that peer feedback is more candid and straightforward than that of mentors.

Additionally, peer feedback is less stress-free and less threatening than mentors’ feedback. Individually, team teaching develops student teachers’ self-confidence (Birrell & Bullough, 2002) and self-efficacy (Gardiner, 2010). Because of their high level of self-esteem and self-efficacy, student teachers are likely to accept the criticism and suggestions of others (Vacilutto & Cummings, 2007).

Gardiner and Robinson (2009) stated that co-teaching assists prospective teachers to assume more responsibilities.

Indeed, team teaching might have some drawbacks for student teachers. The first disadvantage is the lack of compatibility between peers. For example, peers might have different teaching styles, and perspectives about teaching or a prospective teacher may be better than the other, and therefore the weak one may rely on the brilliant one (Gardiner, 2010). Sometimes peers are not qualified to give constructive criticism and feedback. Parson and Stevenson (2005) added that it is very tough for peers to provide trustworthy and straightforward feedback as they are more sensitive to emotions. Along with that, the increased
workload also hinders the best implementation of the model. Designing lesson plans and reflecting on them with peers is time-intensive and time-consuming (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007) so to speak.

Co-teaching is very supportive for learners. By applying this opted approach, learners are likely to gain more individual attention (Murawski, 2006) and consideration from their teachers. Different scholars, namely (Hang & Rabren, 2009), argued that students who have been exposed to co-teaching increased their confidence, self-esteem, and academic performance. Co-teaching can cater for learners’ different needs; learners with different learning styles as some pupils are kinesthetic, while others are auditory or visual learners. Co-teaching is more practical in this context as it can effectively meet all these students’ expectations (Friend & Cook, 2007). Regardless of the abovementioned advantages of this teaching model, co-teaching might impose some challenges namely to the learner. For instance, learners might get confused when exposed to two contradictory explanations. When students receive special attention from a teacher might be a double edge sword which might increase their self-confidence, but this might turn students into more dependent learners (Schreiner, 2017).

C. Conditions for Implementing Student Teachers’ Team Teaching Successfully

Baeten and Simons (1998) proposed effective strategies for implementing team teaching successfully. They suggested four conditions for effective implementation of team teaching: “(1) Combining team teaching and individual teaching, (2) Preparing for the new roles, (3) Composing team teaching groups, and (4) Conditions for successful collaboration.” (p. 98). First, to overcome the drawbacks of team teaching, it would be advisable to combine team teaching with solo teaching (Goodnough et al., 2009). Second, mentors and student teachers need to be prepared for new roles to implement team teaching successfully (Walsh & Elmslie, 2005). They need to be trained in observation, coaching and collaboration skills (Britton & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, mentors and teacher educators need to carry out demo lessons and workshops to demonstrate to trainees and experienced teachers how better implement this model (Walsh & Elmslie, 2005). Also, teachers should be selected depending on the compatibility between peers which may include commonalities in beliefs and philosophy of learning and teaching. Besides, co-teaching necessities the administration’s support by providing the necessary facilities and recourses (Walsh & Elmslie, 2005).

III. METHOD

In this study, we tried to explore the Moroccan teacher trainers’ perspectives on the successful implementation of co-teaching within the Moroccan EFL context. The main research question is to what extent co-teaching can be implemented successfully within the Moroccan EFL context through Moroccan teachers’ perspective? For data collection, we opted for an open-ended questionnaire to deeply understand the conditions of successful implementation of co-teaching within Moroccan EFL classrooms from a teacher-trainer perspective. The data obtained from Moroccan teacher trainers (N=14) responses through an online questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section is devoted to demographic information (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2), while the second section is exclusively dedicated to open-ended questions about the advantages and drawbacks of co-teaching, including a question about the best practice of this model within the Moroccan EFL context.

The sampling consists of 13 Moroccan teacher trainers who belong to different regional academies of training and education in Morocco who filled in the online questionnaire. 30.8% of the participants are female, and 69.2% are males (see Fig. 1). Concerning the participants’ experience in teachers’ training revealed the following results: 7.7% of the participants have more than 20 years of experience, 23.1% have between 6 and 10 years of experience, and 69.2% of the interviewees have less than 5 years of experience (see Fig. 2).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

All the obtained data are analyzed manually. First, we carefully read the participants’ responses and identified the main themes. Then we assigned and classified codes to the main themes and finally, we integrated the themes into the result section for more elaboration.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. The Conditions of Implementing Co-Teaching in Moroccan EFL Classroom

Eight Moroccan teacher trainers were interviewed in this research. From the interview we carried out with Moroccan teacher trainers from different CEREMFS (teacher’s colleges) in Morocco, we sorted out the following themes

### Fig. 1. Participants’ gender.

- Male: 36%
- Female: 64%

### Fig. 2. Teacher trainers’ years of experience.

- 3-5 years: 21%
- 6-10 years: 72%
- > 20 years: 7%
which reflect the best practices for successfully implementing co-teaching within the Moroccan TEFL context.

1) Lack of academic and professional training to apply co-teaching

Out of eight interviewees, four attribute the failure of the co-teaching application to the absence of co-teaching courses in teachers’ education programs. Interviewee 1 stated, “our prospective teachers need to be exposed to a module that includes co-teaching so that they get acquainted with the first notions of collaborative teaching.” Interviewee 5 said, “How can I ask my trainees to implement co-teaching without exhibiting how to give a lesson based on the co-teaching method? It is important for mentors as well as teacher trainers to present classes based on co-teaching.” This finding is consistent with Chitiyo (2017)’s findings concerning co-teaching challenges. Additionally, the same finding mirror (Pancsofar & Petroff, 2013) who insisted that the implementation of co-teaching during the teacher’s practicum to get familiar with this method. Interviewee 3 pointed out that “prospective teachers must see co-teaching in practice.” They should be trained to adopt this method in their practice. Besides, the Ministry of Education needs to organize ongoing in-service training for experienced teachers for more co-teaching practices.

2) Teachers’ ego

In addition to the vitality of professional training for prospective teachers to implement co-teaching in their classrooms, teachers’ ego is considered one of the central themes deduced from the interview. Three interviewed Moroccan teacher trainers demonstrated their frustration with the lack of collaboration culture among Moroccan student teachers. For example, interviewee2 revealed that “despite our effort as teacher trainers to instill the habit of collaboration among prospective teachers, most of them persist in working alone.” We cannot change this habit suddenly, but we must teach our pupils using collaborative strategies in primary school to make our students familiar with collaborative learning and teaching. Likewise, interviewee 8 added, “The majority of teachers consider their classrooms as ships which should be sailed only by one captain. Having a co-teacher might dethrone him or her.” This finding is aligned with different studies, including (Chitiyo, 2017) who pointed out that teachers’ self-esteem might prevent teachers from applying co-teaching successfully. Similarly (Murawski & Swanson, 2001) highlighted that the teachers’ rejection of the co-teaching model is due to the teachers’ willingness to have mutual responsibilities.

3) Different teaching styles

Three of the participants in this research have discussed the different teaching styles as one of the most important factors that hinder the successful implication of co-teaching. Interviewee 2 argued that “it is very hard for our students to accomplish the lessons’ objectives if one teacher believes in a communicative approach while the other one is still using grammar translation method.” Interviewee 7 stated that “co-teaching requires a great harmony between the co-teachers in terms of the beliefs and the practices. Simply put, the lack of compatibility between peer teachers can break the effectiveness of co-teaching.” Likewise, many researchers displayed that differences between peers might include differences in personality (Sorensen, 2004) or disparity in conceptions of teaching (Bullough et al., 2002).

4) Large classes and the educational policy

Most of the participants agreed that neither the size, the architecture of the classrooms, nor the table arrangement would allow the smooth implementation of co-teaching. Interviewee 4 for instance demonstrated that “it is impossible to apply co-teaching in our schools because of the small classrooms where about 44 students are squeezed in them.” Additionally, interviewee 5 pointed out that “even the educational system cannot support this model because of the scarcity of teachers. All the English teachers have a full timetable (21 hours per week). Therefore, co-teachers need to have a low schedule so that they can mutually plan, reflect, and assess their learners.” Within the same context, the same classroom environmental constraints and the educational policy are reported by many scholars, namely (Chen & Chen, 2010; Walsh & Elmslie, 2005).

5) Administrative matters

One of the key factors that assist in the effective application of co-teaching in Moroccan classes is administrative support which can be achieved by giving teachers low-loaded schedules and providing them with the necessary resources. This finding is consistent with what (Friend & Cook, 1995) found out: “co-teaching to be more than an interesting option that professionals use when they like each other and when their schedules permit, strong administrative support also must be present” (p. 145). This quotation is similar to this interview’s three opinions. If we want to adopt such a teaching method, co-teaching, we must provide dual teachers with a weekly table that considers the extra time they spend in co-planning and co-reflecting.

B. The Best Model That Can Be Implemented in the Moroccan EFL Classrooms

The second research question was about rating the best co-teaching model that can easily and successfully be implemented in Moroccan classrooms from the teacher trainers’ perspectives. Most participants indicated that the observational and the coaching model, 75.8 and 65.2% can be easily adopted in the Moroccan context followed by the assistant teaching model, 25.5%. For the teaming model, only 15% think that his model can be easily implemented in the Moroccan teaching context.

Generally, the teachers’ trainers that took part in this survey are positive about using co-teaching in the Moroccan TEFL classrooms. Most of the participants in this research agree about the utility and suitability of all the co-teaching models. However, this finding demonstrated that the observational model and the coaching model are selected as the most appropriate models to be applied successfully. This might refer to the low-risk interaction of such models. Indeed, in the equal status model and the teaming model, 7.7% and 15.4% do not see the applications of these two models will be successful in the Moroccan TEFL context. The first two models (observational and coaching models) represent the lowest mode of collaboration between co-teachers. Nonetheless, the other two models prototype the highest level of collaboration between the co-teachers. They need more interaction and collaboration between co-teachers. The
participants’ Moroccan teacher trainers in this study agree upon the fact that the observational and the coaching models are the most appropriate model that can be applied in the Moroccan environment. However, in the equal status and the teaming model, the highest level of collaboration is attained as some teacher trainers (20%) believe that it is very challenging to implement these two models as they entail more interaction and cooperation between co-teachers.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

The findings have demonstrated that Moroccan teacher trainers have a positive attitude toward co-teaching because of various factors that range from bringing joy, creativity, and synergy to the classrooms to assisting teachers to reflect on their pedagogical practices and updating their instructions mutually. However, implementing co-teaching in Moroccan EFL classes encounters many individual and institutional barriers. By way of illustration, personal obstacles related to the teachers’ ego, different teaching styles and beliefs and/or the absence of harmony between co-teachers and lack of pre-service and in-service training for teachers. On the other hand, administrative barriers include a deficiency of resources, teachers overloaded weekly schedules, overcrowded classrooms, and a sterile educational policy.

While co-teaching is advantageous for learners and teachers, its successful implementation still relies on various conditions and procedures. Teachers’ ego is seen as a major obstacle in the Moroccan context which hinders any smooth implementation of such a model. Most participants pointed out that there is a lack of a culture of collaboration and cooperation among Moroccan professionals though this is considered one of the essential skills of the 21st century that is needed in today’s education. Exposing teachers to the basics of co-teaching in their pre-service training might help in preparing teachers to be effectively engaged with this highly collaborative model. Developing this culture of collaboration should start at early schooling otherwise co-teaching implications would be hard to be implemented as this sense of collaboration would be lacking among adults. Reinforcing values of cooperation over competition in schooling is the first step to creating a cohort of teachers with readiness and high attitude for co-teaching best practices.

In the same way, Moroccan education policymakers need to positively take part in co-teaching design by recruiting sufficient teacher trainers with highly qualified professional and academic training, particularly those with previous expertise in collaborative learning. Since Moroccan Regional Academies have financial and administrative autonomy, they must provide the schools under their administrative control with the necessary logistics and facilities, including large classrooms and low-loaded weekly teachers’ timetables so that they can co-plan and co-reflect on their practices.

VII. CONCLUSION

Despite the numerous benefits of co-teaching for learners and teachers, the practice of this pedagogical instruction in Morocco is far beyond any efficiency. This is due to various individual and administrative hindrances. Indeed, this research paper tried to highlight the best practices of this co-teaching model in the Moroccan EFL context by investigating Moroccan teacher trainers’ perspectives. The finding displayed that Moroccan teacher trainers are optimistic about the application of co-teaching in Moroccan public schools. Like many other countries, co-teaching encounters many challenges, namely the scarcity of resources, availability of teachers and different teachers’ beliefs and philosophies about teaching and learning.

Nonetheless, this study raises an important issue, teachers’ “ego” that needs to be further investigated from a cultural and psychological perspective in the Moroccan context. The finding cannot be generalized because of the small number of participants and the qualitative research approach used. Therefore, more studies need to be carried out using different research methods, mainly mixed research design and incorporating other stakeholders, teachers, learners, administrators, and parents, so we would have reliable and valid results. Another vital issue that is aligned with the Moroccan context is the lack of teachers’ training in adopting co-teaching. More research is required to shed light on the reasons behind the absence of training in co-teaching in the CRMEF (Centre Regional des Métiers d’ éducation et de Formation) and Moroccan universities.

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CONFICT OF INTEREST

We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest.

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