



**Exploring Moroccan Teachers beliefs
about multilingualism**

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ABSTRACT

In this study I tried to explore the beliefs some Moroccan teachers working in the delegations of Safi and Youcefia hold about the usefulness of first and second languages in learning the third language . More specifically , I attempted to see the extent to which these teachers believe that a first and second language can serve students in learning a third one . The first language in this context is Arabic , the second is French , and the third is English. The teachers' beliefs were gathered through a questionnaire that was addressed via Google Forms . Then , the results were analysed using the same application . It was found that teachers are positive about the usefulness of the first and second language in learning the third one , but most of them rarely use in a conscious way activities that serve this purpose .

Key words : Multilinguism ; / L1 Arabic / L2 French / L3 English ; teachers beliefs .



1-Introduction :

It is common among scholars that multilinguism has become the norm in the world . For instance , Cenoz et al (2001) assumes that bilinguism is more frquent than monolinguilism . And there are reasons behind that . For example , the number of small linguistic communities is increasing . More than that , national and international languages are spreading , and there is a wide-scale movement amongst language borders . Such a spread of bilinguism pushed linguists to carry research on this phenomenon so as to deconstruct its inner structure and specify its marking characteristics . One of the specifities of bilinguism where scholars focused interset is L3 learning or third language acquisition . Cenoz (2003) as reported in Hawkins (2015) defines L3 learning as ‘ the acquisition of a non-native language by learners who have previously acquired or are acquiring two other languages .’ The same concept is defined by Anderson (2005) as ‘ conscious actions learners take to improve their learning ‘

Hawkas (2016) believes that good learning of a third language is attained when the learner is consciously aware and uses some strategies to help him achieve that goal . And there is no contributor other than the teacher who can help the learner achieve this goal . In other words , the teacher can play a crucial role in enhancing L3 learners’ strategies to make learning much more fruitful . This can be done by boosting learners prelinguistic knowledge in a conscious way so that the learner can make profit of it in his learning of L3 .

The teacher being a major contributor in the abovementioned respect made scholars focus on the latter’s beliefs and attitudes on L3 learning . To put it in more specific terms , what beliefs do teachers have about the role L2 and L1 can play in learning L3 ? Do these languages play a boosting or a hindering role in L3 learning ?

The present study aims to analyse Moroccan teachers beliefs and attitudes on the role L1 Arabic and L2 French can play in learning L3 English in the Moroccan context . The study seeks , thus , to respond to the following research quetions in relation to the research aim abovementioned .

- 1- Does the proficiency of teachers in Arabic and French affect their beliefs about The usefulness of L1 and L2 in L3 learning ?
- 2- How knowledgeable are Moroccan teachers about the usefulness of L1 and L2 in learning L3 ?
- 3- Does a language other than English hinder or boost L3 learning ?
- 4- Do teachers use activities that boost multilinguism in the classroom ?
- 5- Can Arabic and French aid in learning English in Morocco ?
- 6- Does prior Linguistic knowledge affect learning ?
- 7- Do Moroccan teachers encourage students to use languages other than English to learn English ?



8- Do Moroccan teachers use activities that promote multilinguilism in the classroom ?

The study is outlined as follows . The second section displays the methodology followed in the work . Section 3 pesents the literature review . The results of the study are advanced in the fourth section . Section five discusses the results . And the last section concludes the study .

2-Methodology :

A questionnaire composed of 16 questions was sent to some English teachers working in the delegation of Safi and Youssefia via google forms application . 66 of them responded to this questionnaire . Then , their responses were statistically organised and analysed to respond to the research questions mentioned earlier . The results of the responses were changed to percentages , a possibilty provided by Google Forms . After that , the results of these answers were numerically analysed so as to get an idea about teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of L1 and L2 in learning L3 . The study was mainly quantitative .

3-Review of the literature :

Hawakas (2015) studied Norwegian teachers beliefs about the usefulness of multilinguilism . More specifically , the author gathered data via a group discussion from 12 teachers (French , German , Spanish) using quantitative content methodology . The study found that teachers see bilinguilism as a positive asset in L3 learning . They also responded that students make use of Norwegian and English to learn L3 and also found L2 learning is differsnt from L3 learning .

Another work which tried to explore teachers beliefds is Lendberg (2019) who explored the use of multilinguilism by teachers in Swedish primary schools .The study targeted fourteen teachers .It concluded that teachers beliefs were mostly welcoming to bilinguilism .

Daniel (2010) investigated the Moroccan context and its language diversity . More specifically , the author tried to study the Moroccan cultural context and how it is affected by geography , colonization periods , and history . The study concluded that an educational model that requires linguistic ' complexity and local goals is recommended .' (Daniel ibid).

To the best of my knowledge , the above study is the only study that targeted the Moroccan context . As for the teachers beliefs on the use of multilinguilism in L3 learning , research in this topic is still scarce in Morocco . Thus , it is of much practicality to address it in this work .

4-Results :

The results of the questionnaire carried about the usefulness of multilinguilism amongst Moroccan teachers came with the following results . 71,9% of the



respondents were high school teachers , while 28,1% were secondary school teachers .

A question concerning the level of the respondents as concerns Arabic and French revealed that 17,2% are excellent in the mastery of these two languages . 53,1 % said that their level is good , and 27,7% believe that their level is satisfactory . No respondent declared that his level is weak in these two languages .

The second question was given to assess the respondents beliefs about the effect of multilinguism on learning EFL . 85,9 % of the respondents see that it has an effect , while just 14,1 % see that there is no effect of multilinguism on L3 learning .

As concerns the question which seeks to see if they believe that a language other than English boosts or hinders L3 learning , 68,8 % believe that it boosts learning . 25 % see that it hinders learning . The rest , ie , 7,2 % are neutral about this question .

The next question was to inquire about the teachers ' use of activities that promote multilinguism in the classroom . 42,2 % responded that they use them . The same percentage said no and 15,6 % said that they rarely use them .

The teachers were also asked if they compare languages in the classroom . 37,5 % said they do compare them . 21,9 % said they don't compare languages in the classroom . The rest , ie , 40,6 % said they compare languages in some specific instances .

Another question that teachers were requested to respond to is if they agree that Arabic can help in learning English . 12,5 % of the respondents strongly agree , and another 45,3 % agree . 15,6 % responded that they don't agree , and 9,4 % strongly disagree . 17,2 % of the respondents were neutral about this question .

The same question was asked about French . 12,7 % answered that they strongly agree , and 52,4 % agree . 11,1 % responded that they disagree , and less than 4 % said that they are neutral about this question .

The next question was whether Arabic can be used in the classroom . 31 % strongly agree , 48 ,4 % agree . 18,8 % strongly disagree . 29,9 % are neutral about this question .

The same question was asked about French . 43,8 % agree that French can be used in the classroom and 4,6 % strongly agree . 21,9 % disagree and 7,8 % strongly disagree . 21,9 % of the respondents are neutral about this question .

One more question was about the effect of students' prior linguistic knowledge on L3 learning . 45,3 % strongly agree that this knowledge has an effect on L3 learning , and 45,3 agree . 7,8 % are neutral about this question . Just 1,6 % either strongly disagree or disagree .



The respondents were also asked if students should be encouraged to use languages other than English to understand English . 28,1 are neutral . 29,7 % disagree and 31,3 % agree . 9,9 % of the respondents either strongly disagree or strongly agree .

The next question was whether Arabic helps students understand English . 9,4 % strongly agree and 46,9 % agree . 18,8 % disagree , and 3 % strongly disagree . 21,9 % are neutral as concerns this question .

The respondents were also asked if French can help in understanding English . 10,9 % strongly agree and 48,4 % agree . 3,2 % strongly disagree and 14,1 % disagree . The last 23,4 % are neutral concerning this question .

The last question was whether activities that promote multilinguism should be used in the classroom . 34,4 % are just neutral . 14,1 % disagree and 39,1 % agree . 6,2 % strongly disagree and 6,2 % strongly disagree while 6,2 % strongly agree .

5-Analysis and Interpretation :

As concerns the level of proficiency of teachers in Arabic and French , it ranges between excellent and satisfactory . No one of the respondents declared that his Arabic or French is bad . It can , thus , be inferred that the two languages proficiency cannot be a hinderance in front of the teachers if they opt for bilinguism as a pedagogical tool to help students understand English . More specifically , if a teacher opts not to use this pedagogy , it cannot be traced back to their level of proficiency .

The study also found that the great majority of teachers questioned believe that bilinguism can be of an effect in L3 learning . Not only that , but they also believe a language other than English can boost the learning of English . However , when teachers are asked whether they use activities that promote multilinguism in the classroom , the majority responded either they don't use them or rarely use them . Contrasting the results of this latter question with the earlier ones , namely whether teachers believe that multilinguism can affect L3 learning and if a language other than English can boost Learning English , it is difficult to come up with precise conclusions . How can teachers who don't use multilingual activities in the classroom believe that multilinguism can be an asset in L3 learning ? It seems a bit contradictory . For instance , not making profit of these activities will push us to raise some questions here . Why do most teachers in the questionnaire do not opt for these activities ? Is it a conscious choice or a choice imposed by other factors or limitations ?

The next question teachers were asked is if they compare languages in the classroom . When asked whether Arabic and French can be used to learn English , the respondents answers were as follows : the majority of respondents agree that Arabic can be used to learn English (57,8 %) and a greater majority (65,11 %) agree that French can be used in this respect . This means that teachers see that if



a language is to be used by learners , it is preferably French . Such a result pushes researchers to focus on why teachers consider French to be a better tool in learning English .This question gains more credit when we look at the percentage of teachers who are neutral as concerns the use of these languages to learn English . 17,2 % are neutral when it comes to the use of Arabic while just 4 % are so when it comes to the use of French .This , as I said , earlier might push one to posit that language typology can be a reason for the choice of the language to learn L3 .

When asked whether Arabic and French can be used in the classroom , 79,4 % agree that Arabic can be used , while only 48,4 % agree that French can be used in the classroom . So , the great majority believe that Arabic can be used in the classroom if compared to French . Do teachers consider in their response students' level in French ? Or is it a conscious choice based on a belief about Arabic ? Or is a stereotype about Arabic and French ? These questions can serve for future research as the scope and time of the study doesnot permit for such a research .

The great majority of respondents agree that students prior knowledge has an effect on L3 learning . This means that teachers are aware of the usefulness of prior linguistic knowledge in L3 learning . The next question was about which prior knowledge they need more : Arabic or french . Although a majority of teachers agree that Arabic can help students learn English , a greater majority see that French can do the job better (59,3 % for French and 56,3 % for Arabic) . However the percentage of teachers who strongly disagree or disagree is not to forget . For instance , there is still a wide proportion of Moroccan teachers who see that there is no use of either Arabic or French to learn English . This means that they still hold the view that a language other than English cannot be used to learn or understand English , maybe as an effect of the audiolingual philosophy which sees no use of another tongue or another language to understand English .

6-Conclusion :

In this study I tried to investigate some Moroccan teachers beliefs about the usefulness of L1 and L2 in learning L3 . The study is important as it targets an important link in the chain of language learning , namely , teachers . For instance any theoretical framework which does not consider the teacher is doomed to failire since the teacher is the last station whose contribution finally implements the premises of that theory . Exploring teachers beliefs is also important for it gives textbook designers an idea about the inclinations and choices of an important contributor in the teaching/learning context .

The study concluded that the teachers are mainly positive about the usefulness of L1 and L2 in learning L3 , but they don't translate that into a systematic use of techniques that make profit of such a tool to help students in their lrearning . It was also found that more teachers believe that French can serve better than Arabic to help in learning L3 . The results also indicate that teachers believe that students prior linguisti knowledge can serve as an asset to learning .



The findings abovementioned can be of use , as far as I am concerned , to syllabus designers and textbooks writers when deciding about what techniques to suggest in these books . For instance , textbook writers shouldn't forget that L1 and L3 can be of use in l3 learning and , hence , their activities should reflect that in the textbooks . In other words , when designing textbooks , the role that should be given to students prior linguistic knowledge is not to minimise . It is , however , an important factor in L3 learning .

Teachers belief about the usefulness of L1 and L2 in L3 learning is one aspect of reseach in the field of multilinguilism . This is such a rich field that invites more research from part of scholars so as to enrich research in ELT . For intance , investigatong students beliefs can also be an attractive field of research . Students beliefs should also be explored as they constitute the corner stone of ELT learning .

To conclude , this part was an attempt to display the major findings in the study and an invitation for more research in the field of ESL given the fact that the more the process of lanuage teaching is systematically carried , the more fruitful the learning is , and by consequence the more able our students are to communicate and integrate in so rapidly- changing a world .



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APPENDIX

A survey to record teachers' beliefs about the use of L1 and L2 in teaching L3

I am Radouane Belkhadir , and I am a high school teacher , I am conducting some research on teachers' beliefs about the effect of L1 and L2 on teaching L3 . This survey is meant for research purposes . You are , thus , kindly requested to answer the questions hereafter . Neither your identity nor your personal information will be revealed .

While responding , accept my sincere expressions of respect .

***Please tick or circle your response .**

Q1: Are you a high school or secondary school teacher ?

- High school teacher
- Secondary school teacher

Q2 : What is your level in Arabic and French ?

- 1- Excellent
- 2-Good
- 3-Satisfactory
- 4-weak

Q3: Do you have an idea about the effect of multilingualism on learning EFL?

- 1-Yes
- 2-No

Q4 : *Does the use of a language other than English boost or hinder its learning?*

- 1-Boost
- 2-Hinder
- 3-Don't know

Q5 : *do you use activities that promote multilinguism ?*

- 1-Yes
- 2-No
- 3-Rarely

Q6 : *Do you compare languages in the classroom ?*

- 1- Yes
- 2-No
- 3-In some specific instances .



Q7 : If your answer is 3 , specify these instances:

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	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Q8: Arabic can help in learning English.					
Q9:French can help in learning English.					
Q10:Arabic can be used in the classroom .					
Q11:French can be used in the classroom .					
Q12:Students prior linguistic knowledge affects L3 learning .					
Q13: Students should be encouraged to use languages other than English to understand English .					
Q14: Arabic can help students understand English					
Q15 :French can help students understand English .					
Q16: Activities that promote multilinguilism should be used in the classroom .					