

## **The Obstacles Encountered By Teachers During The Exercise Of The Profession In The Tunisian Context.**

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**Abstract:** *While teaching the French language, teachers encounter several obstacles. These pitfalls prevent the pupil from taking advantage of language lessons and demotivate them. This study aims to present an inventory of the difficulties encountered by French teachers in Tunisia. The problem therefore consists in tackling the obstacles encountered and the causes of the dysfunction during the job performance. To do so, we conducted 5 focused surveys. Each group is made up of 5 teachers. This qualitative study made it possible to identify several blemishes, among which, we can mention the teachers' insufficient training and the difficulties linked to the explanation of the cultural referent.*

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### **I. Introduction**

In a world made a small village thanks to the means of communication, television and new social medias, language learning is becoming more and more an emergency to integrate and develop one's linguistic, socio-cultural skills and knowledge. Teaching is not an easy task. Several teachers talk about the difficulties encountered in French class to inculcate cultural skills. These growing difficulties are a source of weariness (Laugaa, 2004; Rudow, 1999). To understand the obstacles, we conducted a qualitative survey made up of 5 "focus groups". The total number of teachers is 25 including the average age ranging from 30 to 58 years old. The 5 groups each met on different dates. They discuss and answer 12 questions according to Krueger (1994: 54).

For this, we have prepared the adequate conditions for them to "*feel comfortable, expressing not only their point of view. [...] With complete peace of mind*" (Baribeau (2009: 13) Indeed, the choice of the qualitative survey comes from our desire to draw up an inventory of the obstacles encountered by Tunisian teachers. We then started with an analysis and then a categorization of the comments collected, to finish with discussing the results.

#### **1. Analysis of the results**

Allowing to identify the different opinions concerning the teaching practice, learning foreign languages and especially interculturality, the populations surveyed spoke well of the pitfalls encountered.

##### **1.1. Being a French teacher is not "a source of well-being".**

From the outset, it should be noted that the choice of profession is not a choice assumed by most of the participants. In fact, 15 present teachers said that being a French teacher depends on several external factors. Indeed, this result has several impacts on the relationship between the teacher and his student. Eight participants spoke of the importance of maintaining a relationship of empathy with this audience with specific needs. In this sense, empathy is a psycho-affective factor guaranteeing the success of the teaching practice according to two teachers; but it is, among other things, a source of well-being for all teachers in the 5 focus groups.

In short, experienced discomfort and disillusionment expressed by teachers is a factor in the dysfunction of the language inculcation process.

### **1.2. Unsuccessful university education and insufficient professional training.**

In addition to this negative image of the French teacher's career, we would like to note that the present population believes that training at the faculty is not successful. In this sense, she finds herself academically unprepared for professional life. Confronting students and solving class difficulties is not an easy task. The 25 teachers said they did not receive didactic education at university. Training teachers by providing them with didactic means and educational strategies is far from the objective of university training, which aims, according to 10 speakers, to the student's literary, historical, syntactic and lexical training.

Moreover, all the participants in groups 1, 2, 4 and 5 criticized the transmissive and expository university methods of the courses received at the university. In addition, training by inspectors is limited and does not target problems related to mastering new didactic approaches such as the intercultural approach, the action-oriented approach and learning by doing.

### **1.3. Confusing the intercultural approach with the cultural one**

Between the intercultural and the cultural approaches, the teachers in focus opted for the latter one. This choice is the result of an amalgam noted by teachers who speak of developing the ability to "describe a cultural referent, a monument or an event. Indeed, building a relationship with others, the representation of another culture is not important for the majority of interviewees who affirm that "describe and narrate" is the objective of the course.

### **1.4. The teaching of literary text and the curricula's urgent reform of**

Since the texts presented in the textbooks are old and out-of-date literary texts, the teachers are seeking solutions. Indeed, some (9 teachers) claim to change the literary texts by others manufactured. Others (3 teachers) suggest replacing them with modern and easy texts. Others (13 teachers) suggest replacing the literary texts with others made according to the needs of the students.

## **II. Discussion**

### **2.1. Empathy, a determining factor for a successful job**

The representations that teachers have of their profession impact the course of the lesson. According to Marcel Postic, Le Calve, George Serge Joly and Farid Beninel (1990: 26) "*These are the existent teaching function representation elements, both in the social and in the socio-emotional field (contact with young people, relationship with a person who is self-building)*". In fact, to get the learner to like the material and to be motivated, the teacher must be empathetic. In this sense, Rogers (1980: 23) states: "*To be empathic is to perceive the internal frame of reference of others as precisely as possible with the emotional components and the meanings which belong to it as if we were that person, but without ever losing sight of the condition of "as if".*"

Furthermore, to acquire the capacity to be empathetic and help the learner to be motivated, the teacher needs much training to control his emotions. Moreover, according to Gaglar and Foucaut (2012: 278) they must have "*This ability to control one's feelings and emotions and those of others, refer to what psychologists call "emotional intelligence."*

In short, empathy, this innate ability in some and acquired in others, is of great importance in the success of the linguistic and cultural acquisition process.

### **2.2. The importance of university and professional teacher training**

In order to meet the needs of a class, the teacher must be well trained. Thus, the university must harmonize with the job market by preparing the teacher pedagogically and didactically. The sudden break between a fundamentally literary university course and the needs of the students and the class is a failure that needs to be overcome. As a result, Tunisian university education is required to prepare the teacher by providing

them with the pedagogical, technical and strategic means. Moreover, according to the Tunisian didactician Miled (1996: 27): "the discomfort expressed by the student teachers and the lessons going through adaptation problems is due, in large part, to a sudden transition from the university cycle to a classroom practice. "

### **2.3. Difference between the cultural and intercultural perspective**

According to the surveys of interest, all the teachers confuse the cultural approach with the intercultural one. Thus, to properly separate the wheat from the chaff, we specify that, for Abdellah-Preteuille (1996 a: 26) the cultural approach is "a descriptive approach, objectified [failing to be able to guarantee objectivity, which] remains external to individuals. " In other words, "The Other is then apprehended only through speech and does not constitute the interlocutor. It is object and not subject and is often used as a foil." (1996a: 27) Furthermore, the intercultural approach is quite the opposite since it is the relationship with others that is privileged. It is "an interactive process of assimilation and differentiation where the definition of self constantly interferes with the definition of the Other" according to Camilleri, Vinsonneau, (1996: 2). Indeed, the cultural approach makes others a simple holder of cultural information while the intercultural approach makes them the learning center. Indeed, several advantages and benefits are gained from interculturalism such as: tolerance, solidarity, peace and the improvement of linguistic, cultural and socio-cultural skills and openness to the world.

### **4.4. The literary text: a human and intercultural reservoir**

We noticed during the discussion on interculturality that literary texts are considered as obstacles. The present sample calls for replacing the current texts of Tunisian textbooks with texts made to the proper needs and expectations of the learners. The literary text is a vivid testimony of the concerns of others on another plot. It accounts for the cultures of others, human feelings, the struggles experienced and gives the learner a broad experience of life. Besides, according to Zarate (1993: 93): "*The civilization's task cannot be limited to the study of documents, or to the comprehension of texts*". Thus, learning literary texts is very important in the student's semantic and cultural enrichment process.

## **III. Conclusion**

Through this exploratory work, we presented an inventory of the obstacles encountered by French teachers during their job's performance. It is thus clear that the urge to train this framework is a must, according to the 5 focused surveys.

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