

**Investigating the Algerian Secondary School Learners' Attitudes and their Pedagogical Preferences Regarding Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study of First Year Pupils at Amalou Secondary School-Bejaia**

**Belit Brahim\***

brahim.belit@univ-bejaia.dz

**Aliouchouche Fadhila**

fadhila.aliouchouche@univ-bejaia.dz

LESMS Lab, University of Bejaia (Algeria),

Date of receipt: 31/01/2022	Date of acceptance: 17/04/2022	Date of publication: 30/12/2022
-----------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------

**Abstract :**

Recognizing the learners' beliefs and goals is at the core of learner-centred language education. To promote this idea, the identification of the learners' beliefs and preferences should be given its due attention by decision makers, practitioners and researchers in the field of language teaching. This study explored the attitudes and pedagogical preferences of the Algerian secondary school EFL learners in reference to their English classes. To this purpose, a case-study qualitative research design was adopted and a questionnaire was administered to 116 first-year pupils at Amalou secondary school in the year 2020/2021. The findings revealed that the learners have negative attitudes towards their English proficiency despite their positive attitudes towards the English language. Besides, the learners' pedagogical preferences are considerably divergent from the teachers' classroom practices. The learners tend to advocate a balanced instructional model that combines a variety of learning activities, teaching strategies and classroom interaction patterns.

**Keywords:**

English as a Foreign Language; English proficiency; Learners' attitudes; pedagogical preferences; speaking proficiency.

**Resumé**

Tenir compte des opinions et des objectifs des apprenants est au cœur de l'apprentissage des langues axé sur l'apprenant. Pour promouvoir cette idée, l'identification des attitudes et des préférences des apprenants devrait recevoir toute l'attention qu'elle mérite de la part des décideurs, des praticiens et des chercheurs dans le domaine de l'enseignement des langues. En effet, cette étude a exploré les attitudes et les préférences pédagogiques des apprenants de l'anglais comme une langue étrangère dans le cycle secondaire en Algérie concernant leurs séances de langue anglaise. À cette fin, un modèle de recherche qualitative a été adopté et un questionnaire a été administré à 116 élèves de première année du lycée Amalou au cours de l'année scolaire 2020/2021. Les résultats ont révélé que les apprenants ont des attitudes négatives envers leur maîtrise de l'anglais malgré leurs attitudes positives envers la langue anglaise. Par ailleurs, les préférences pédagogiques des apprenants divergent considérablement des pratiques pédagogiques des enseignants. Les apprenants ont tendance à préconiser un modèle d'enseignement équilibré qui combine une variété d'activités d'apprentissage, de stratégies d'enseignement et de types d'interaction en classe.

**Mots clés**

Attitudes des apprenants ; compétence langagière ; compétence orale ; l'anglais comme une langue étrangère ; préférences pédagogiques.

\* Corresponding Author:

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The reform of the Algerian education system in 2002 has brought about a new perspective of teaching English as a Foreign Language in secondary education. The new Competency-based teaching principles have resulted in deep changes

concerning the emphasis laid to the different aspects of language and the pedagogical tools used in language instruction and assessment. The old syllabuses focused mainly on grammar, reading and writing at the expense of the skills of listening and speaking (Department of Secondary Education, 1993). On the contrary, the designers of the new programs of the English language have attempted to maintain a certain balance between the written and oral forms of language and between building accuracy and fluency in the target language (Direction de l'Enseignement Secondaire. Commission Nationale des Programmes, 2005, 2006, 2007). Thence, the reform of the English secondary school curriculum was meant to remedy the deficiencies of teaching English in the Algerian secondary education.

However, after a few years of implementing the new curriculum, a theory-practice gap has been reported in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language to the Algerian secondary school learners. According to the ministerial circular N° 321 of July 25th 2013, the teaching of oral communication skills lags behind the instruction of the other components of language proficiency (Ministry of National Education, Sub-Directorate for Educational Documentation, 2013, p. 149). In the same line, Omari (2017) conducted a study about the challenges of teaching speaking under the CBA; she concluded that the principles of the English curriculum were not reflected through the teachers' classroom practices. She reported that most of the teachers' attention was devoted to the teaching of reading, writing and grammar in the Algerian secondary school EFL classrooms. Accordingly, Belit and Aliouchouche (2021) investigated the teachers' attitudes and practices of speaking instruction in secondary education; they concluded that the teaching of speaking is not accorded its due attention in the classroom.

According to Omari (2017, p. 29), one of the challenges that hinder speaking instruction is the lack of the learners' motivation to practice and develop their oral communication skills. Omari explains this lack of interest by the current evaluation system and the Baccalaureate examination which focuses mainly on reading, writing and grammar.

Since the available research works on the issue rely mainly on the teachers' voices, the inclusion of the learners' voices in future research would bring more insight into the implementation of Competency-based Language Teaching in Algeria. According to Bloemert et al (2020, p. 01), the exclusion of the students' voices from ELT research leads to an incomplete picture of the reality of language education. Hence, the present study draws on the learners' voices in a bid to bring a new perspective on the teaching of English in the Algerian secondary education. This case study investigates the attitudes and the pedagogical preferences of the first-year EFL learners at Amalou secondary school- Bejaia, Algeria; in reference to learning and teaching the English language in the classroom.

The purpose of the present study is twofold. Firstly, it aims to examine the attitudes of Amalou Secondary School's freshman students towards English language learning and their English proficiency. Secondly, the inquiry attempts to explore the learners' pedagogical preferences in relation to the learning and teaching of English in their classrooms. Investigating the learners' attitudes and preferences would bring the learners' voices into the spotlight and provide more insight into the current state of EFL teaching in the Algerian secondary schools. The learners' attitudes and preferences will also be mirrored against the teachers' perspectives reported by the existing research data. This would enable the researchers to draw implications from the findings in order to improve the learning

and teaching of English in the Algerian secondary education. To this purpose, the present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the learners' attitudes towards the English language, English language learning and their English proficiency?
2. Which language aspects and teaching activities do the learners prefer to focus on during their English classes?
3. To what extent are the learners' pedagogical preferences convergent with or divergent from the teachers' practices?

## **2. Review of Relevant Literature**

### **2.1 Learners' Attitudes and Foreign Language Learning**

Attitude is defined as "*A relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or a situation, predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner*", (Smith, 1971, p. 82). It is a construct which has emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions (Doğan and Tuncer, 2020). In this regard, the students' positive or negative attitudes towards language learning can determine their motivation and, wherefore, their success or failure in learning the target language (Thornbury, 2006, p. 20). In classroom learning environments, foreign language learners' attitudes can also determine the kind of interaction that takes place in the classroom. According to Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011, p. 997), it is the learners' positive or negative attitudes towards the language, the teacher and the learning tasks that make life 'easy' or 'difficult' in the classroom.

Recently, a considerable attention has been given to the learner's attitude by researchers in the field language teaching; it is now considered as an inherent part of first, second and foreign language learning (Getie, 2020, p. 04). However,

investigating learners' attitudes to language learning is not as simple as it seems at first sight. According to Garrett (2010), in order to study the learners' attitudes towards their proficiency in a given language, the researcher can examine the learners' attitudes towards the various aspects of proficiency in that language.

## **2.2 The Learners' Pedagogical Preferences in Language Teaching**

Pedagogical preferences, as defined by Wong (2012), refer to "*The learners' preferred choice of teaching and learning activities carried out in the classroom*" (p. 66). In the same line, Schmidt and Watanabe (2001, p. 311) assert that it is meant by the learners' pedagogical preferences those types of classroom structures and teaching activities to which language learners respond positively. Language learners develop preferences for specific instructional activities based on their personal goals, instructional and cultural backgrounds, personality types, and perceived value and difficulty of the activities (Jacques, 2001, p. 186).

Despite the scarcity of research works on the issue, a review of the existing literature shows that the learners' pedagogical preferences have a considerable impact on the quality of language learning and teaching (Wong, 2012). A direct link has been established between the learners' preferences and motivation (Jacques, 2001; Ockert, 2011; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001; Wong, 2012). In addition, considering students' pedagogical preferences when designing and implementing classroom activities results in more active and autonomous language learning (Mehrdad & Ahghar, 2013). Conversely, language teachers experience student resistance when they introduce some instructional activities that do not match the learners' preferences in the classroom (Bada & Okan, 2000). In this respect, language learners' pedagogical preferences is an important area of inquiry that deserves to be pursued more intensively in future ELT research.

### 2.3 Teaching English in the Algerian Secondary Education

Before the implementation of the Algerian secondary education in 2005, the teaching of English aimed mainly at the development of the learners' accurate use of the written form of language at the expense of the oral skills. For instance, the first year English syllabus of that time states that, "*Some emphasis should be put on this skill (reading) as it is the one which will be most widely used in the learners' future careers.*" (Department of Secondary Education, 1993, p. 33). However, the new educational reforms brought about new English syllabuses that maintain a certain balance between fluency and accuracy in all of the four language skills (Imerzoukène, 2019). It is stated in the new first year English syllabus that, "Indeed, the same importance is equally accorded to oral and written communication" (Direction de L'Enseignement Secondaire. Commission Nationale des Programmes, 2005, p. 05).

Nevertheless, after a few years of implementing these reforms, the Ministry of National Education signaled in the ministerial circular N° 321 that the old teaching practices were still prevailing in secondary school EFL classrooms (Ministry of National Education, Sub-Directorate for Educational Documentation, 2013). The ministerial circular stated that the oral communication skills of listening and speaking were not given their due attention by the teachers. Omari (2015, 2017), Boureguig (2019) and Belit & Aliouchouche (2021) investigated the state of speaking instruction in the Algerian secondary education and concluded that the teachers were focusing on grammar, reading and writing on the expense of the oral skills. This uneven attention given to the components of language proficiency stems from the overloaded syllabuses, large class size, lack of teacher training, the current evaluation system and the learners' lack of interest (Omari, 2017;

Boureguig, 2019; Belit & Aliouchouche, 2021).

Unlike the teachers' beliefs and practices, research works about the learners' attitudes and preferences are scarce in the context of the Algerian secondary education. Hence, the present study explores the attitudes and the preferences of Amalou Secondary School's freshman students in reference to the learning of English as a Foreign Language in their classrooms. This inquiry draws on the learners' voices and attempts to contribute to the body of literature on the current state of EFL learning and teaching in Algeria.

### **3. Methodology**

The present study explores the attitudes and pedagogical preferences of the Amalou secondary school first-year pupils in relation to the English language and its instruction. In pursuance of this aim, the researchers opted for a case-study qualitative research design where a five-point Likert-type questionnaire was employed as a data-collection instrument. The efficiency of this type of questionnaires in measuring attitudes has been proven (McLeod, 2019).

The study was conducted at Amalou Secondary School, a state school situated in the town of Amalou that belongs to the province of Bejaia. In what follows, the participants, the research instrument and the procedure of data collection are described.

#### **3.1 Research Participants**

By means of a purposive case selection technique, the first-year pupils at Amalou Secondary School in the school year 2020/2021 were chosen as a population for this study. This choice was dictated by the aim of the inquiry that is to examine the learners' attitudes and preferences with which they initially come to the secondary school. In other words, this choice was made to ensure that the participants' responses would not be affected by the actual secondary school



English instruction. The population includes 116 learners who have completed at least four years of English study at the middle school.

To conduct the present study, the researchers opted for a sample that comprised the entire population. The participants' age ranged from 14 to 19 years old.

### **3.2 Instruments**

For data collection, a five-point Likert-type questionnaire was administered to the participants. Likert-type questionnaires are among the most efficient research instruments that are utilized to investigate beliefs and attitudes directly (McLeod, 2019). The research questionnaire comprises three parts. The first part includes questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants; this part was used to gather information about the socio-demographic profile of the participants. The second part includes 08 five-point Likert-type items, ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. It aims to explore the learners' attitudes towards the English language and their proficiency in it. Finally, the third part of the questionnaire comprises 13 five-point Likert-type items, ranging from 'Not important' to 'Very important'. This last part was designed to examine the learners' pedagogical preferences in relation to their English classes.

In order to make it accessible for the participants, the questionnaire content was translated into the Arabic language. Therefore, the participants were handed a bilingual version of the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Procedure**

The questionnaires were administered to the participants in order to collect data about their EFL learning attitudes and preferences. The researchers read the questionnaire in front of the respondents to see if there were any unclear items. The participants were told that the questionnaire would be used for research

purposes only. After giving the participants the needed time to write their responses, the researchers collected the filled questionnaires.

#### 4. Results

Data about the learners' attitudes and pedagogical preferences were collected through a five-point Likert-type questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the entire population that comprised 116 students. The number of completed questionnaires was equal to 110, with a response rate of more than 94.82%. Thence, this number is higher than 89, the number of responses required to achieve a 05% margin of error at a 95% confidence level.

After collecting the participants' responses, the findings were computed and the SPSS 22.0 software package was used to provide a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire reliability test was performed through Cronbach's Alpha. Table 1 depicts the results of the reliability analysis.

**Table1. Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
.772	21

The reliability estimated for the 21 items of the questionnaire was .772. This index was higher than the minimum required (.70), suggesting that the reliability of the attitude questionnaire was acceptable.

##### 4.1 Learners' Attitudes towards English and their English Proficiency

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to collect data about the learners' attitudes towards Learning English as a foreign language and their English proficiency. This part of the questionnaire contained 08 items that were coded including: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree. In what follows, the analysis of the eight closed items is described.

**Table 2. Learners' beliefs about EFL learning.**

Item		1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1. It is important to learn English since it is an international language.	(N) %	(0) 00	(3) 02.7	(5) 04.5	(42) 38.2	(60) 54.5
2. When I see that some of my classmates are good speakers of English, I want to be like them.		(4) 03.6	(3) 02.7	(8) 07.3	(27) 20.5	(68) 61.8

Table 2 depicts data about the learners' attitudes towards the importance of learning English as a Foreign Language. In their responses to the first item, 102 of the surveyed learners (42+ 60) learning English was important. This was equal to 92.7% of the participants, while only 02.7% of them disagreed with this item. Likewise, 83.5% of the respondents agreed with item (2) which suggested that the learners had a desire to become good speakers of English. Whereas, only 06.3% of the participants expressed their disagreement with this item. These numbers show that an overwhelming majority of the surveyed learners had positive attitudes towards learning English.

**Table 3. Learners' beliefs about their English proficiency.**

Item		1	2	3	4	5
		SD	D	N	A	SA
3. I often score well in English tests but I am not able to communicate in spoken and written English.	(N)	(7)	(15)	(17)	(52)	(19)
	%	06.4	13.6	15.5	47.3	17.3
4. I often manage to construct correct sentences but I am not able to communicate or participate in conversations in English.		(8)	(14)	(14)	(44)	(30)
		07.3	12.7	12.7	40	27.3

Table 3 presents statistics for items (4) and (5) which investigated the learners' attitudes towards their overall proficiency in the English language. 64.3% of the total number of the participants agreed with item (3) which stated that the learners were unable to communicate in spoken and written English despite their good test scores. On the other hand, 20% of the participants disagreed with this item. In addition, 67.3 % of the participants agreed that they were unable to use English in authentic communication and conversations despite their ability to form correct sentences. On the other side of the spectrum, 19.6% of them disagreed with this statement through their answers to item (4).

Although fewer participants agreed with the items (3) and (4) as compared with the items 1 and 2, the results in Table 3 show that a simple majority of the surveyed learners had negative attitudes towards their English proficiency. In order to elaborate on the issue, the learners were asked about their beliefs about the different aspects of their English proficiency. The results are displayed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Learners' beliefs about the different aspects of their English proficiency**

Item		1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
5. I am satisfied with my ability to read and understand written English.	(N)	(11)	(19)	(19)	(34)	(27)
	%	10	17.3	17.3	30.9	24.5
6. I am satisfied with my ability to communicate and express myself in written English.	(N)	(11)	(32)	(17)	(30)	(20)
	%	10	29.1	15.5	27.3	18.2
7. I am satisfied with my ability to listen and understand spoken English.	(N)	(8)	(23)	(13)	(42)	(24)
	%	07.3	20.9	11.8	38.2	21.8
8. I am satisfied with my ability to communicate and express myself in spoken English.	(N)	(12)	(36)	(19)	(25)	(18)
	%	10.9	32.7	17.3	22.7	16.4

Table 4 presents statistical data about the participants' responses to items (5), (6), (7) and (8) of the questionnaire. With respect to item (5), 55.4 % of the respondents agreed that they were satisfied with their reading ability while 27.3% of them disagreed with this item. Regarding item (6), only 39.5% of the surveyed participants agreed that they were satisfied with their writing ability. Whereas, 39.1% reported their disagreement with this item. Concerning item (7), 60% of the surveyed learners showed their satisfaction with their listening ability. Interestingly, in their responses to item 8, only 39.1% of the participants agreed that they were satisfied with their speaking ability, whereas 43.6% of them disagreed with this item.

Table 4 shows a significant difference between the learners' attitudes towards the different components of their English language proficiency. While a simple majority of the participants reported their satisfaction with their listening and reading abilities, the surveyed learners showed negative attitudes towards their speaking and writing abilities. Intriguingly, the number of students who expressed their dissatisfaction with their speaking ability exceeded the number of those who reported their satisfaction with this aspect of language proficiency.

#### 4.2 Learners' Preferences

The third part of the questionnaire examined the learners' pedagogical preferences as far as their English classes are concerned. It contained 13 closed items that were coded ranging from: 1= Not important, 2= Slightly important, 3= Fairly important, 4= Important and 5= Very Important. The findings are presented in this section.

**Table 5. Exam-oriented versus communicative activities.**

Item		1	2	3	4	5
		NI	SI	FI	I	VI
9. Activities that focus on preparing the learners for tests and exams only.	(N) %	(3) 02.7	(15) 13.6	(23) 20.9	(38) 34.5	(31) 28.2
10. Activities that focus on preparing the learners to use English to communicate in real-life situations.		(4) 03.6	(5) 04.5	(14) 12.7	(39) 35.5	(47) 42.7

Table 5 provides data about the learners' responses to items (9) and (10) of the questionnaire. In item 9, the participants were asked to rate the importance of examination-oriented activities. The findings suggest that these activities were rated as important or very important by 62% of the participants. Whereas, 37.2% of the respondents attributed little or no importance to examination-oriented

activities. In item 10, the learners were requested to rate the importance of communicative activities. These activities were rated as important or very important by 78.2% of the respondents while they were attributed little or no importance by 20.8% of the surveyed learners.

A significant difference was observed between the degrees of importance attributed to each of communicative learning-oriented activities and examination-oriented activities. More importance was ascribed to the former than the latter.

**Table 6. Activities addressing different aspects of proficiency.**

Item		1	2	3	4	5
		NI	SI	FI	I	VI
11. Activities that focus on grammar and the correct use of English.	(N) %	(2) 01.8	(8) 07.3	(14) 12.7	(39) 35.5	(47) 42.7
12. Activities that focus on vocabulary, introducing new English words and phrases.		(7) 06.4	(8) 07.3	(3) 02.7	(39) 35.5	(55) 50
13. Activities that focus on the pronunciation of English words and phrases.		(5) 04.5	(9) 08.2	(9) 08.2	(29) 26.4	(58) 52.7
14. Activities that focus on reading, aiming to improve my ability to read and understand written English.		(5) 04.5	(4) 03.6	(7) 06.4	(30) 27.3	(64) 58.2
15. Activities that focus on writing, aiming to improve my ability to communicate and express myself in		(3) 02.7	(8) 07.3	(6) 05.5	(35) 31.8	(58) 52.7

16. Activities that focus on listening, aiming to improve my ability to listen and understand spoken English.	(5)	(7)	(10)	(33)	(54)
	04.5	06.4	09.1	30	49.1
17. Activities that focus on speaking, aiming to improve my ability to communicate and express myself in	(8)	(3)	(10)	(28)	(61)
	07.3	02.7	09.1	25.5	55.5

Items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 investigated the learners' preferences for the different aspects of language proficiency. The findings in Table 6 show that 78.2% of the participants rated grammar activities as being important or very important. In addition, both pronunciation and listening activities were considered important or very important by 79.1% of the respondents. Moreover, 83.6% of the surveyed learners rated vocabulary activities as being important or very important. Additionally, reading activities were rated important or very important by 85.5% of the participants while 84.5% of them attributed this rate of importance to writing activities. Finally, 81% of the surveyed learners rated speaking activities as important or very important.

Table 6 shows that the different kinds activities focusing on all the aspects and skills of English received high percentages of preference. No significant differences were reflected through the learners' preferences of these different classroom activities. However, the participants were slightly inclined to reading, writing, vocabulary and speaking activities compared with grammar, pronunciation and listening activities.



**Table 7. Accuracy versus fluency speaking activities.**

Item		1	2	3	4	5
		NI	SI	FI	I	VI
18. Speaking activities that focus on producing correct English.	(N)	(8)	(4)	(19)	(39)	(40)
	%	07.3	03.6	17.3	35.5	36.4
19. Speaking activities that focus on communicating spontaneously and smoothly through spoken English.	(N)	(5)	(6)	(12)	(39)	(48)
	%	04.5	05.5	10.9	35.5	43.6

As depicted in Table 7, 71.9% of the surveyed learners considered the speaking activities that focus on accuracy as important or very important while 28.2% of them attributed little or no importance to these activities. On the other hand, 79.1% of the participants rated the speaking activities that focus on oral fluency as being important or very important while these activities were attributed little of no importance by 20.9% of the participants.

These findings show that both accuracy and fluency speaking activities received high percentages of preference. However, fluency activities received a significantly higher percentage of preference than accuracy activities.

**Table 8. Teacher–learner versus learner–learner interaction in speaking activities.**

Item		1	2	3	4	5
		NI	SI	FI	I	VI
20. Speaking activities that are based on participation and interaction with my teacher.	(N)	(6)	(14)	(22)	(42)	(26)
	%	05.5	12.7	20	38.2	23.6

21. Speaking activities that are based on interaction with my classmates, through pair or group work.	(4)	(9)	(11)	(28)	(58)
	03.6	08.2	10	25.5	52.7

The findings presented in Table 8 reveal that 61.8% of the participants viewed the speaking activities that involve their interaction with the teacher as important or very important. Whereas, 78.2% of them rated the speaking activities that are based on peer interaction as important or very important.

In this respect, it can be said that the respondents accorded much importance to the two types of interaction. However, the activities that are based on learner-learner interaction received a significantly higher percentage of preference than the activities that involve teacher-learner interaction.

## 5. Discussion

The present study attempted to examine the attitudes of the first-year learners in Amalou secondary school towards English as well as to explore their pedagogical preferences. The results show that the learners are aware about the importance of learning English as a Foreign Language; however, they have negative attitudes towards their proficiency in the English language. The findings also indicate that, while the learners are relatively satisfied with their reading and listening abilities, they have negative attitudes towards their writing and speaking abilities. As far as the learners' pedagogical preferences are concerned, the findings revealed the participants' positive responses towards the different aspects of language proficiency and the various types of instructional activities. In other words, the learners reported their desire for a classroom instruction that combines written and oral language skills, examination-oriented and communicative activities, accuracy and fluency speaking activities as well as learner-teacher and

teacher-learner interaction patterns. Additionally, the participants showed their preference for communicative over examination-oriented tasks, fluency over accuracy activities and learner-learner over teacher-learner classroom interaction.

The results presented in Table 2 show that the learners have positive attitudes towards the English language and that they are aware about its importance in the today's world. However, the findings in Table 3 suggest that the learners have negative attitudes towards their proficiency in the English language. These findings are accordant with the teachers' attitudes in Bellour's (2017) study, suggesting that the English proficiency level of the Algerian secondary school learners was below the acceptable standard. Besides, Table 4 shows that the learners have positive attitudes to their listening and reading abilities while they have negative attitudes towards their writing and speaking abilities. Hence, this reflects the learners' inability to produce language, especially in its oral form. These results support the existing research data, namely the ones reported by Omari (2015, 2017) and Boureguig (2019).

With respect to the learners' pedagogical preferences, the results in Table 5 suggest that, despite the importance that the learners give to exam-oriented instruction, they tend to prioritize communicative over examination-oriented activities. These findings are incongruous with the teachers' practices as reported by Omari (2015, 2017) and Belit & Aliouchouche (2021). The teachers felt compelled to prepare their learners for standardized exams, neglecting the teaching content that is not covered by the exams. In addition, Table 6 shows the learners' preference for a classroom instruction that balances between the different aspects of the English language. Once more, the learners' preferences for the different aspects of the English language are significantly divergent from the

teachers' classroom practices. While the learners call for a relatively balanced English instruction, the teachers' practices are characterized by a considerable emphasis on grammar, reading and writing (Ministry of National Education, Sub-Directorate for Educational Documentation, 2013; Omari, 2017). With reference to speaking instruction, Table 7 illustrates that the surveyed learners have positive responses to both accuracy and fluency speaking activities. However, the participants expressed their desire to prioritize fluency activities over accuracy activities in the EFL classroom. These preferences are inconsistent with the teachers' practices, which are said to focus on grammatical accuracy at the expense of speech fluency (Belit & Aliouchouche 2021). Finally, the results in Table 8 suggest that the learners respond positively to the activities that are based on learner-learner interaction and the ones that are based teacher-learner interaction. However, they tend to prefer the former over the latter. These findings are, indeed, divergent from the teachers' practices as described in the existing literature. The teachers' classroom practices are based on participation and teacher-learner interaction patterns like 'Initiation-Response-Feedback' (Omari, 2015). In classes that are based on this interaction pattern, the learners are supposed to say what the teacher wants to hear rather than produce authentic and communicative speech (Campuzano, 2018).

Like all case-study research works, the present study is limited by the fact that it provides little basis for the generalization of its results to the wider population which includes the Algerian secondary school EFL learners. This is due to the sample size, which is far from representing the larger population. Thence, replicating this study with a representative sample would provide more generalizable data about the research topic.

## 6. Conclusions and Implications

The present study investigated the attitudes and the pedagogical practices of the first-year learners at Amalou secondary school in relation to learning English as a Foreign Language. The findings of this study suggest that the learners have negative attitudes towards their English proficiency despite their positive attitudes towards the importance of the English language. Particularly, the participants reported their dissatisfaction with their speaking and writing abilities in the English language. Besides, this inquiry showed that the learners advocate a relatively balanced instructional model, which combines different types of classroom activities and interaction patterns. In addition, the learners are found to have a proclivity for a classroom instruction that lays a heavier emphasis on authentic communication, oral fluency activities and learner-learner interaction patterns. Finally, the findings of this study indicate that the learners' pedagogical preferences are significantly divergent from the teachers' practices. Therefore, besides the mismatch between the teachers' practices and the objectives of the English curriculum, there is a gap between the learners' pedagogical preferences and the teachers' classroom practices.

Based upon the conclusions, it is highly recommended that the classroom learning activities and teaching strategies should be tailored according to the learners' needs and pedagogical preferences in order to maximize the efficiency of language instruction. In addition, the content of the existing English syllabuses ought to be optimized and adapted to the learners' preferences and needs so as to promote their engagement in the classroom. Finally, the actual English textbooks

should be revised to fit the learners' pedagogical preferences by supplying more relevant learning materials and activities.

## 7. List of References

Bada, E., & Okan, Z (2000), Students' Language Learning Preferences, *TESL-EJ, USA*, 4(3).

Belit, B., & Aliouchouche, F (2021), Speaking Instruction in the Algerian Secondary Schools: EFL Teachers' Attitudes and Classroom Practices, *El Mohtaref Journal of Sports Science, Social and Human Science, Algeria*, 8(1), 339-354.

Bellour, L (2017), The Competency Based Approach and its Discontents in the Algerian Secondary Schools, *Journal of Social Science Development, Algeria*, 10(02).

Bloemert, J., Paran, A., & Jansen, E (2020), Connecting students and researchers: the secondary school student's voice in foreign language education research, *Cambridge Journal of Education, UK*, 1-21.

Boureguig, A (2019), Oral-Competency: A Drawback of CBLT in Algeria, *Al Nass Journal, Algeria*, 5(09), 6-16.

Campuzano, J. M (2018), Initiation-Response-Feedback in Content Language Integrated Learning. *Universidad y Sociedad, Cuba*, 10(4), 142-146.

Department of Secondary Education (1993), *Syllabuses for English: 1st, 2nd and 3rd Years*, Department of Syllabus Design, Algeria.

Direction de l'Enseignement Secondaire. Commission Nationale des Programmes (2005, January). *Programme d'Anglais Deuxième Langue Etrangère (Première année secondaire)*. <https://www.education.gov.dz/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89.pdf> (Consulted on 02/07/2021).

Direction de l'Enseignement Secondaire. Commission Nationale des Programmes. (2006, January). *Programme d'Anglais Deuxième Langue Etrangère (Deuxième année secondaire) ?*

<https://www.education.gov.dz/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/Anglais-2AS-1.pdf> (Consulted on 02/07/2021).

Direction de L'Enseignement Secondaire. Commission Nationale des Programmes. (2007). Programme d'Anglais Deuxième Langue Etrangère (Troisième année secondaire), <https://www.education.gov.dz/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/English-3AS.pdf> (Consulted on 02/07/2021).

Doğan, Y., & Tuncer, M (2020), The Role of Attitudes in Foreign Language Learning. In Y, Doğan (Ed), *Academic Studies in Foreign Language Education* (pp. 83-99), Livre de Lyon, France.

Garret, P (2010), *Attitudes to Language*, Cambridge University Press, UK.

Getie, A. S (2020), Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language. *Cogent Education*, UK, 7(1).

Imerzoukène, S (2019), A Comparative Study of the Algerian and Tunisian Last Year Secondary Education Syllabuses of the English Language. *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society, Algeria*, 2(2), 86-94.

Jacques, S. R (2001), Preferences for Instructional Activities and Motivation: A Comparison of Student and Teacher Perspectives, In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 185-211), University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, Hawaii.

McLeod, S. A (2019, August 03), Likert Scale. *Simply Psychology*, [www.simplypsychology.org/likertscale.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/likertscale.html) (Consulted on 19/03/2022).

Mehrdad, A. G., & Ahghar, M. R (2013), EFL Students' Language Learning Preferences at Islamic Azad University- Hamedan Branch. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Netherlands, 93, 102–106.

Ministry of National Education, Sub-Directorate for Educational Documentation (2013), Al-Nashra Al-Rasmia Lil-Tarbiya Al-Watania: Al-Doukhoul Al-Madrassi 2013/2014 [Official Bulletin of National Education: Back to School 2013/2014], <http://www.education.gov.dz/wpcontent/uploads/2015/02/beo111.pdf> (Consulted on 24/04/2020).

Ockert, D (2011), A Multivariate Analysis of Japanese University Student Motivation and Pedagogical Activity Preferences, *The Language Teacher Online*, Japan, 35/2.

Omari F. Z (2015), An Evaluation of the Teaching of the Speaking Skill in EFL Classroom within the Framework of the CBA: The Case of 3rd Year Pupils in 3 Secondary Schools in Tlemcen, University of Tlemcen, Tlemcen, Algeria.

Omari, F. Z (2017), Challenges of Teaching the Speaking Skill within the Framework of the CBA in the Algerian Context. *BEST: IJHAMS*, India, 05(09), 25-31.

Oroujlou, N., & Vahedi, M (2011), Motivation, Attitude and Language Learning. *Procedia- Social and Behavioural Sciences*, Netherlands, 29, 994-1000.

Schmidt, R., & Watanabe, Y (2001), Motivation, Strategy Use and Pedagogical Preferences in Foreign Language Learning. In Z. Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 311-357), University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, Hawaii.

Smith, A. N (1971), The Importance of Attitude in Foreign Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, UK, 55(2), 82.

Spratt, M (1999), How Good Are We at Knowing What Learners Like?. *System*, 27, 141-155.

Thornbury, S (2006), *An A-Z of ELT*, Macmillan Education, UK.

Wong, M. S-L (2012), Language Anxiety, Motivation to Learn and Pedagogical Preferences: The Case of Malaysian Pre-Service Teachers of English, *ELTED*, UK, 15, 65-73.