Exploring Effective Teaching Approaches for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Instructors: Best Practices and Future Directions

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Article Info	Abstract
	The field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is expanding rapidly, with millions of students globally seeking to improve their English language proficiency. To meet the demand for effective EFL instructors, it is essential to possess a diverse range of skills, including knowledge of best practices in language teaching and an understanding of individual learner needs. This paper explores effective teaching approaches for EFL instructors at the university level in France, focusing on key practices and future directions in the field. The paper discusses the significance of effective EFL instruction, outlines the challenges instructors may encounter, and examines approaches such as communicative, task-based, intercultural approach and content-based language teaching. Additionally, the role of technology in EFL instruction is explored as a means of enhancing learning outcomes. Finally, the paper aims to highlight the importance of effective EFL teaching and to propose a roadmap for EFL teachers who wish to improve their teaching practice.

Introduction

As the lingua franca of the modern world, English has become the de facto language of business, science and technology. It is the language of international diplomacy and the most widely used language in academia. As a result, proficiency in English has become increasingly essential for students pursuing higher education and careers in a wide range of fields. In fact, many universities around the world require students to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency in English before being admitted to their programmes, as is the case in some fields of study at universities in France. For these and probably other reasons, which may be personal, there is a growing demand for effective EFL teachers in France as French students, professionals and researchers seek to improve their English language skills, creating a need for competent EFL teachers (Nunés, 2022). To meet this demand, EFL teachers at university level need to have a range of skills. They need to be knowledgeable about best practices in language teaching and have a deep understanding of the needs of individual students.

The term 'effective' here, refers to teaching approaches that have been shown to produce positive learning outcomes for EFL students. These approaches should be able to engage and motivate students and provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and strategies to improve their language proficiency. Effective teaching approaches may involve the use of a variety of teaching methods and techniques, tailored to the needs of the

students and based on sound pedagogical principles and research-based evidence.

According to Joellen Killion and Stephanie Hirsh, teaching effectiveness is an ongoing journey rather than a fixed destination. With each passing year, teachers face new challenges that require them to improve and expand their teaching methods. They are constantly striving to integrate innovative technologies into their classrooms to enhance the learning process, and they are faced with new cohorts of students with different learning needs. In addition, benchmarks for measuring student progress are constantly evolving, and new research on effective teaching techniques is regularly published. Finally, new colleagues join the faculty each year, bringing fresh perspectives and support for teaching practice and student learning (Killion and Hirsh, 2011).

A Brief Overview of EFL Teaching in Universities in France

The French education system has traditionally focused on teaching French as the primary language, but the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in schools has led to a greater emphasis on teaching English in higher education institutions. University-level EFL programmes in France are designed to provide students with the language skills necessary to communicate effectively in English and to prepare them for academic or professional careers that require language skills. These courses are typically offered as part of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in teacher education, language studies and other fields such as science and sport.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is usually a compulsory part of academic curricula and universities expect their students to learn English as part of their degree programme. However, the level of English required may vary from course to course. Language departments or centres, which may exist separately from the main faculties or schools of a university, usually provide EFL courses. These departments employ qualified EFL teachers, some of whom are native speakers. They develop and implement English language curricula.

Courses are often designed to meet the needs of different levels, from beginner to advanced, but in most cases students are expected to have some knowledge of the language as it is taught in some primary schools and almost all secondary schools. They may include different components such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, and may focus on different aspects of learning English such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. However, for students specializing in English as a major, courses may also include the linguistics, history and culture of English-speaking countries. In such cases, the profile of teachers of these courses may be different from that of teachers of EFL as a whole.

In addition to traditional classroom teaching, some universities in France offer online English language courses that can be self-paced or instructor-led. These are often organized through university-specific platforms such as EDOLang, which stands for "Open Environments and Facilities for Language Learning" (my own translation from the French explanation) *Environnement et Dispositifs Ouverts pour l'apprentissage des langues*, used by the University of Lorraine, for example. However, the platforms may differ from one university to another. It is worth noting that some universities in France may exempt students from taking English language courses if they are native speakers or can demonstrate a sufficient level of proficiency in the language. For example, students who

have obtained a language certificate such as TOEFL, TOEIC or IELTS may be exempted from taking English courses.

Importance EFL Teaching in Universities in France

There are several reasons for the inclusion of English in the French university curriculum. One of the most important is the recognition that English is an essential tool for academic and professional growth in today's world. Daniel Brooker, an authority on the subject, has highlighted the importance of English as the primary language for international communication. According to him, English is often cited as part of the '21st century skill set' and a 'must have' for participation in the global knowledge economy (Brooker, 2018).

A good command of English can bring many benefits to students. Firstly, it allows them to communicate and collaborate effectively with people from different parts of Europe and other parts of the world, giving them access to a wide range of academic and professional resources that would otherwise be unavailable to them if they only spoke French. In addition, fluency in English can broaden a student's career prospects, enabling them to work in different countries and explore different job opportunities. In France, universities that offer English as a foreign language courses go beyond simply providing students with language skills. Such courses also offer students the opportunity to participate in international and exchange programmes such as the Erasmus programme, which can be invaluable for students looking to gain a competitive edge in the job market.

Employers highly value fluency in English, which can significantly enhance a student's employability. Therefore, students who invest time and effort in learning English can increase their chances of success in their chosen career paths. EFL is also important for researchers who wish to publish their work in international academic journals where English is the primary language of publication, as it gives them the opportunity to share their work with a global audience.

From another perspective, learning English offers students the opportunity to explore different cultures and perspectives. As noted by Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981), language and culture are closely intertwined and one cannot be truly understood without an appreciation of the other. Deborah Peck points out that without the study of culture, the teaching of a foreign language is incomplete and inaccurate. According to the author, without a deeper understanding of the people who speak the language and the country in which it is spoken, students may find it pointless to study the language. Therefore, the study of English not only equips students with language skills, but also provides them with a broader cultural understanding, making them more well-rounded individuals (Peck 1998).

Challenges for EFL Students

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can be challenging for students due to both linguistic and cultural aspects of the language (Byram 1997). Linguistic challenges can arise from differences in grammar, vocabulary pronunciation and idiomatic expressions between French and English. For example, French and English have

different phonetic systems, making it difficult for French students to pronounce certain sounds and words correctly. The English "th" sound is one such example, as it does not exist in French. Another sound that, in my case, most of my students struggled with was the silent "r" in a word like iron.

Although French and English share common roots, there are also false friends and differences in vocabulary that can lead to confusion and mistakes. For example, the English word "actual" means "real" or "current", whereas the French word "actuel" means "actual". French and English also have different grammar rules, including word order, verb tenses and sentence structure. For example, the adjective usually comes after the noun in French, but before in English. For example, in French, one would say *une voiture rouge,* while in English, the correct phrasing would be "a red car".

English also has many idiomatic expressions that may not make sense to French students without prior exposure and context. For example, "it's raining cats and dogs" means it's raining heavily in English, but the French equivalent would be "il pleut des cordes" (literally, "it's raining ropes"). English also has many regional accents and dialects, which can make it difficult for French students to understand spoken English. Some English speakers also tend to speak quickly and may use slang and colloquialisms not found in textbooks or formal language classes, which is also common for native speakers of other languages.

In terms of cultural aspects, French and English speakers have different communication styles. French communication is often formal and indirect, while English communication can be more direct and informal. In addition to differences in communication style, there are also differences in cultural norms and values. French culture places a high value on privacy and personal space, while English-speaking cultures tend to be more outgoing and open.

French and English speakers may also have different senses of humor. French humor is often sophisticated and subtle, while English humor can be more direct and sometimes irreverent (Scroope, 2017). Social customs also differ between France and English-speaking countries. For example, in France it is customary to greet someone with a kiss on each cheek, while in English-speaking countries a handshake is more common.

Stereotypes and prejudices can also be a cultural challenge for French students learning English. Some English speakers may have stereotypes that the French are rude or arrogant, which can lead to communication difficulties and misunderstandings (Achieng, 2021). According to Chara Scroope, this stereotype could be explained by the fact that the French tend to be very direct, and the reason for this is that the French language is very precise; it is therefore difficult not to be direct when using it (*ibid.*). It is for these reasons that there is an emphasis on the need for EFL teachers to be well trained in the effective use of teaching practices that are appropriate to the needs of their students.

Methodology

In order to better understand the teaching practices of EFL teachers in different departments of universities in

France, I conducted a qualitative study in which EFL teachers, including those who teach linguistics and phonetics, were invited to respond to an online questionnaire with open-ended questions (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

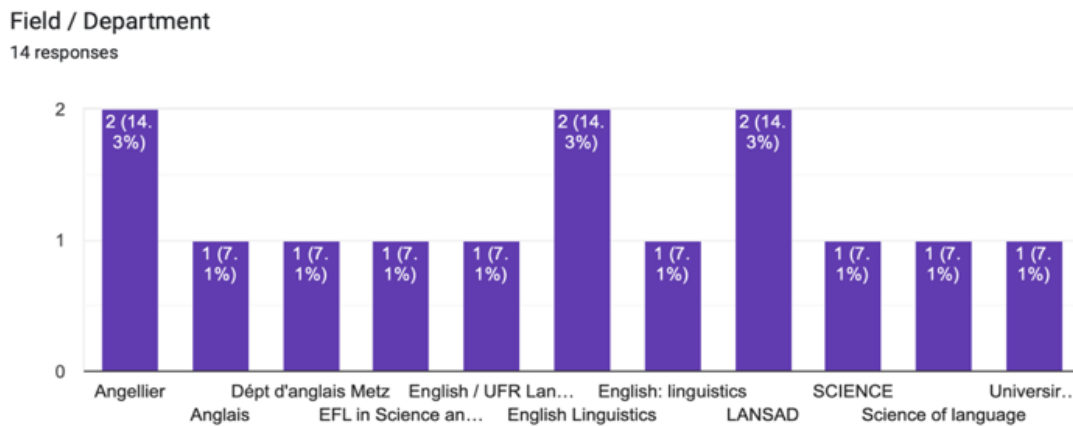**Field / Department**
14 responses

Figure 1. Image showing the Different Fields and Departments of the Participants

The sample size in this study was relatively small, with only 14 participants from four different universities in France. However, the use of a small sample can be justified in several ways. Firstly, the participants were carefully selected to ensure that the sample was representative of EFL teachers in different departments of the universities. As can be seen from the figure above, the selected participants represent different profiles, which allowed for a range of perspectives on EFL teaching practices in different contexts.

Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study means that sample size is less important than the richness of the data collected. Qualitative research is often concerned with exploring in depth the experiences and perspectives of a small number of participants, rather than generalizing findings to a larger population (Gobo, 2004). In this study, open-ended questions were used to allow participants to provide detailed and nuanced responses, resulting in rich data on the teaching practices of EFL teachers in different departments of universities in France.

How long have you been teaching EFL at the university level in France?
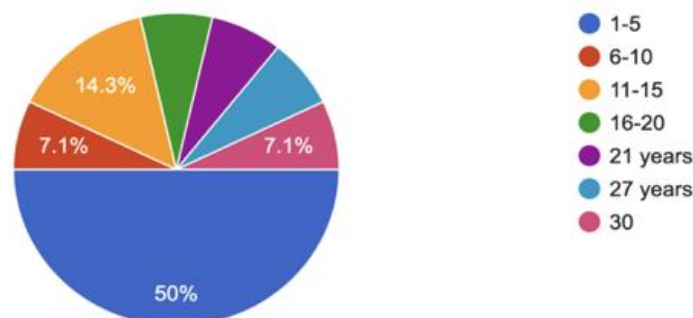14 responses

Figure 2. Illustration of Participants' Years of Experience as EFL Teachers

Results

The presentation of the results follows the order of the questions in the questionnaire. The focus will be on the teaching methods teachers use, the challenges they face, their use of technology and their recommendations for effective teaching methods. Any additional ideas that were not explained will be addressed later in the discussion.

What motivated you to become an EFL instructor?

The reason for this question is that in France today, the teaching profession seems to be losing its attractiveness, especially for young people, which also explains the shortage of EFL teachers (Knight, 2019). It was therefore necessary to understand teachers' motivations for wanting to teach EFL. Below are the responses (reasons: 14 responses) received, with similar responses grouped together.

- Love for teaching, always wanted to teach (6 responses)
- Love for the language (3 responses)
- The opportunity to share my culture and language with others (2 native speakers)
- Opportunities for work (2 responses)
- Need to gain work experience (1 response)

In general, the responses suggest that there are a variety of reasons for becoming an EFL teacher. The most common reason given was a love of teaching, with many respondents stating that they had always wanted to be a teacher. This highlights the importance of a passion for teaching in this profession. Other respondents mentioned their love of English as a motivating factor, indicating that they were attracted to EFL teaching because it allowed them to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for the language with others.

Similarly, some native speakers cited the opportunity to share their culture and language with students as a reason for becoming an EFL teacher. A smaller number of respondents cited practical considerations, such as the job opportunities that EFL teaching offers or the need to gain work experience. While these reasons may not be as personally fulfilling as a love of teaching or the language, they still demonstrate the practical value of EFL teaching as a career.

Have you tried any communicative, task-based, content-based or intercultural language teaching approaches in your classes?

This question aimed to identify the teaching methods used by teachers and their effectiveness in facilitating their students' learning. Respondents could choose from a range of approaches including task-based, communicative, intercultural, content-based, all or none of the above (see Figure 3).

From the responses provided, it appears that task-based teaching is the most commonly used approach among the teachers surveyed, with 5 out of 14 respondents mentioning it. Task-based teaching focuses on giving students real-life tasks that they would encounter outside the classroom and encouraging them to use the language to

complete the tasks. It is an approach that allows students to develop their language skills in a more practical context, which helps them to retain the language better. Below are the responses of two teachers:

"*Many task-based activities. Students do not often like working in groups with students they do not know, or participating in front of others*".

"*Task-based thanks to the use of a common platform (Arche). The possibility for the students to manage their own time is a source of great motivation*".
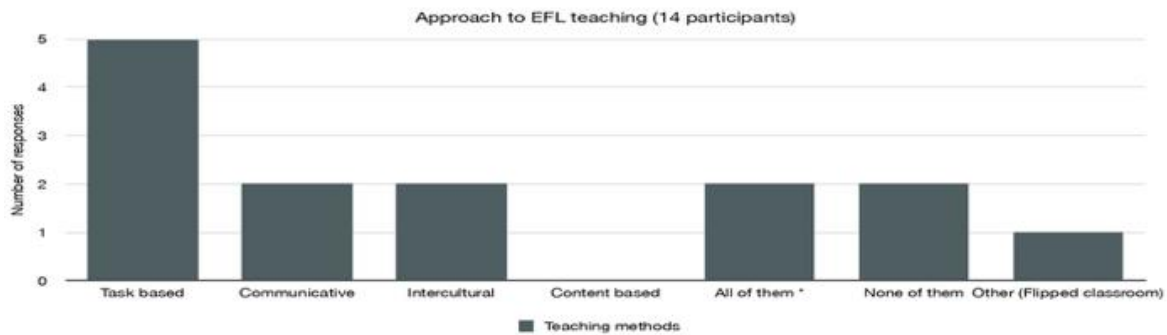
Approach to EFL teaching (14 participants)

	Teaching methods
Task based	5
Communicative	2
Intercultural	2
Content based	0
All of them *	2
None of them	2
Other (Flipped classroom)	1

Figure 3. Image showing Approaches used to teach EFL in Universities in France

The communicative approach, which emphasises communication and interaction as the primary aim of language learning, was mentioned by 2 respondents. This approach encourages students to engage in conversation and to use the language they are learning in meaningful ways. One of the teachers said of this method that:

"*I have mainly used communicative and lexical approaches in the classroom. I feel that classroom activities guided by the communicative approach help learners to improve their skills while engaging in meaningful communication. Studying authentic documents highlighted for lexical chunks proved to be helpful in acquiring vocabulary knowledge and gaining fluency. However, while the use of the L1 is discouraged in the communicative approach, recent research has pointed to many positive effects of allowing occasional use of the L1 in class*".

The intercultural approach, which focuses on developing students' cultural awareness and sensitivity, was also mentioned by 2 respondents. This approach can be particularly effective in helping learners to understand and communicate with people from different cultures. One of the responses was as follows:

" *French students are particularly comfortable analysing and dissecting things on a more discursive or cultural level, if they are given the space to do so. I have had good success in doing things like analysing videos not just for their content, but for what they represent in a broader cultural sense*".

Interestingly, none of the respondents mentioned content-based teaching, which emphasises the use of subject-

specific content to teach language. This approach can be particularly useful for learners who need to use the language in a specific academic context, such as a science or history course, or in a professional context.

One of the teachers mentioned the use of the flipped classroom, and I quote:

> *"I use flipped classrooms for intermediate and advanced learners, working in pairs, which is even more effective when done on Zoom, with students assigned to breakout rooms, starting a class with a warm-up that gets learners interested and motivated ".*

One of the two teachers who answered "all" gave the following explanation:

> *"More or less. Task-based: I ask my students to prepare for a parliamentary debate; the class is divided into two groups who work together on their statements throughout the term, and the debate takes place at the end of the term. Content-based: in Year 3, we ask our students to carry out academic research and summarize it. Intercultural language teaching is more difficult, but you can use it to explain how phonetics and grammar work. You can also use it to teach inference. All these activities allow students to know what is expected of them and to have a precise goal. It also allows them to work at their own pace and according to their areas of interest".*

From the answers given above, one question that could be asked is whether there is a 'one size fits all' approach to effective EFL teaching. Other questions asked and the answers given are presented below.

Based on your experience of teaching EFL at University, what do you find works best for you and your students?

The following are the responses (method/approach: 10 Responses out of 14) provided by some of the teachers in response to this question.

- Blended learning (proved most effective during the COVID Pandemic) (4 responses)
- Scaffolding (1 response)
- A flipped classroom (1 response)
- Student- centered learning (2 responses)
- Differentiated pedagogy (1 response)
- Formative assessment (1 response)

What role do you believe technology plays in enhancing EFL learning outcomes?

When asked about the role of technology in improving EFL learning outcomes, teachers unanimously agreed that it was essential and gave a variety of responses. A common theme was the use of new technologies to change the way teachers work with students. For example, platforms such as Ed Puzzle and Schoology allow teachers to create interactive learning experiences that engage students in new ways.

Another example of the use of technology in EFL classrooms that was mentioned was the use of collaborative

spaces such as the Miro interactive whiteboard. This tool allows students to work together on language learning activities and exercises in a virtual space, enabling them to practice and develop their language skills in a collaborative environment. In addition, one teacher noted that technology has opened up new ways for students to access a wide range of content such as films, documentaries, books, online courses and exercises. This unlimited access to authentic language materials has helped students to develop their language skills beyond the classroom, allowing them to immerse themselves in the language and culture.

Most teachers also reported using technology to create quizzes and exercises in learning management systems such as Moodle and Arche. This allows them to interact with students in real time, provide immediate feedback and monitor progress. For these teachers, this use of technology has made it easier for them to track student performance and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Finally, one teacher mentioned the use of authentic content, such as videos on Youtube and TikTok, in the EFL classroom to expose students to real-world language and culture. For the teacher, this approach helps students to develop their listening and comprehension skills and also gives them the opportunity to practice their speaking skills by imitating and responding to the content they are watching.

What are the most significant challenges you encounter while teaching EFL and how do you deal with them?

When asked about the biggest challenges they faced in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), teachers cited several obstacles. One major difficulty was motivating students and helping them to understand grammar, as many struggled with it, which hindered their ability to communicate effectively in English. As a result, teachers had to find creative ways to engage students and make grammar more accessible.

Another challenge was keeping students' attention, as many came to class tired or distracted. To keep them interested and motivated, some teachers used interactive and engaging tools such as games and videos from popular applications such as Tik Tok or websites such as Youtube, which can provide authentic learning resources. Another difficulty was getting students interested in phonetics and linguistics, which many found boring. However, emphasizing the practical applications of these topics helped students to understand how they could communicate better in English.

Most teachers mentioned that they had to deal with different levels of English among the students, which made it difficult to create lesson plans that would suit everyone. To overcome this, some teachers included a range of activities that catered for different levels. For example, more advanced students can be given longer and more complex reading passages and writing tasks, while less advanced students can be given shorter and simpler versions. Teachers can also group students with similar levels of English for certain activities or discussions, allowing them to work at a comfortable pace without feeling left behind or frustrated.

One teacher mentioned the use of visual aids and realia to facilitate language learning where there is a difference in level. Pictures or videos can be used to explain new vocabulary or concepts, and objects representing different

cultural traditions can be brought in for students to learn from. Vocabulary games such as Hangman, Charades and Pictionary can also be adapted for different levels of English by choosing vocabulary words that match the students' abilities.

Finally, project-based learning was mentioned as another strategy that can be used to accommodate students with different levels of English proficiency. Teachers can set students research projects on topics of their choice, or they can work together to create presentations on different aspects of culture or society. This approach allows students to take ownership of their learning and work at a level appropriate to their abilities.

One teacher also mentioned encountering colleagues who didn't prioritize English as a subject, which was frustrating. They tried to emphasize the importance of English as a global language and its relevance to future careers. The COVID-19 pandemic was another major challenge, as the shift to online teaching forced teachers to adapt to new methods and tools. In addition, many students were reluctant to speak in English during class discussions due to a lack of confidence or fear of making mistakes.

Four teachers stated that students may not have the opportunity to practice English outside the classroom, which can hinder their language development. To address this, teachers tried to create a supportive environment where students felt comfortable expressing themselves in English and receiving constructive feedback. Finally, one teacher mentioned the fear of technology development where the use of DeepL and ChatGPT threatened to replace teachers' jobs. The teacher saw this as an existing problem in her classroom where the quality of work has changed according to the feedback she receives from her students.

In your opinion, what are the most critical factors for effective EFL instruction?

When asked about the critical factors for effective EFL teaching, the teachers gave several insightful responses. One important factor mentioned was the need for a well-designed curriculum and appropriate teaching materials that cover all four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The curriculum should also be tailored to the needs and interests of the students, as in some departments there is no prescribed programme for English, leading to inconsistencies between teachers who create their own materials.

Another critical factor highlighted by most teachers was the English language skills of the teachers. Effective communication and modelling of correct pronunciation and grammar requires a high level of speaking and writing skills, as well as an understanding of the nuances of the language. While some teachers commonly translate from English into French, they noted that this approach does not necessarily help students to improve their language skills.

Student motivation was identified by the majority of teachers as an important critical factor for effective EFL teaching. Teaching at university level can be impersonal, making it difficult for students to find motivation in the somewhat cold lessons and content they receive. Students tend not to prepare adequately in advance and, according to one teacher's observation, behave like tourists in some courses.

The need for pedagogical training for new EFL teachers and graduate students who are given the responsibility of teaching was also mentioned as a critical factor. Such training should equip teachers with the skills to create a positive and effective learning environment, manage classroom dynamics and use teaching techniques appropriate to the needs and abilities of the students. Two teachers emphasised the importance of promoting the use of technology in the EFL classroom, such as interactive whiteboards, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) software and online resources, to enhance learning and provide additional opportunities for students.

Fair and comprehensive assessment systems were also considered critical by some teachers. These systems are essential for monitoring students' progress and identifying areas of weakness that need to be addressed. Assessment should be aligned with the learning objectives of the curriculum and provide students with clear feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. Finally, two teachers stressed the importance of understanding their students' cultural backgrounds. One teacher mentioned that EFL teachers need to adapt their teaching methods and materials to meet the diverse needs and interests of the class, especially when teaching English to French students, including foreign students from non-Anglophone countries.

What recommendations do you have for EFL instructors who wish to improve their teaching practice?

A number of recommendations were made in response to this question. Firstly, four teachers who happen to teach phonetics and linguistic courses suggested attending conferences and events as a means of exchanging ideas about teaching practice. This allows teachers to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field and to share their own experiences and insights with others.

Another key recommendation is to assess the level of students and place them in appropriate level groups. This helps to ensure that students are not overwhelmed by material that is too difficult for them or bored by material that is too easy. It is also important to talk to colleagues and share teaching practice. Every teacher has different ideas about teaching, and communication and exchange between teachers can lead to new ideas and fresh practices.

Teachers should also be open to different teaching practices and not be too set in their ways. It is also important to take a moment after each lesson to reflect on what went well and what could be improved to help students learn more effectively. EFL teachers should also be aware that reading and writing are not the only important aspects of language learning. If students do not practice speaking and listening, they will never be confident. Teachers should therefore ensure that their lessons include activities that focus on these skills.

By combining and encouraging formal, non-formal and informal activities, EFL teachers at universities in France can create a well-rounded learning experience that meets the needs of their students and helps them to become confident and proficient in English. Finally, teachers should try to speak in English with their students as much as possible, even if it is difficult for them to understand at first. This helps students to feel more comfortable with the language and gives them the opportunity to practice their listening and speaking skills.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain an insight into the practices used by EFL teachers at universities in France and what they consider to be effective. I also sought to understand the challenges they face and what they consider to be critical factors in EFL teaching. When designing the questionnaire, the teachers' level of experience was taken into account as a variable. Although this factor was not directly related to the primary objective of the study, it revealed some important aspects.

When the responses were analysed, it was found that most of the newly qualified teachers did not give any feedback on the methods used, critical factors or recommendations. These teachers cited a lack of knowledge as the reason for not responding, highlighting the importance of considering the training that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers receive. This finding suggests that there may be a gap in the training of new EFL teachers, which could affect their ability to effectively implement teaching methods and identify critical factors that impact on student learning. It also highlights the importance of providing ongoing professional development and support for EFL teachers at all levels of experience to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in their roles.

Motivating students was identified as a major challenge for teachers, as many EFL students often lack the motivation and concentration needed to engage effectively in their learning. To address this issue, some teachers suggested using creative approaches to motivate their students. This can include making lessons interactive and engaging, providing positive feedback and setting achievable goals. However, for students who feel emotionally disconnected from both the language and the culture that their studies represent, these strategies may not be enough to inspire them. Teachers may therefore need to explore alternative ways of motivating their students. With this in mind, what can teachers do at a personal level to inspire and engage their students?

Some teachers have commented on the lack of a commonly prescribed programme in some departments, particularly in the area of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While some teachers see this as a constraint because of the potential inconsistencies it can create, others see it as an opportunity for flexibility that can enable them to maximise their potential. This raises an important issue: Does the absence of a prescribed EFL programme in a language department have an impact on students' learning outcomes?

It can be argued that a prescribed programme in EFL can provide a structured and consistent approach to language teaching, which can facilitate better learning outcomes for students. A prescribed programme can ensure that all students receive the same level of exposure to the language and can also provide a framework for measuring progress. This can be particularly important in a language department where students may come from different backgrounds and have different levels of language proficiency.

On the other hand, the absence of a prescribed programme can give teachers more flexibility in designing lessons and adapting to the needs of their students. It may also allow teachers to personalise their teaching methods and respond to the specific needs and abilities of each student. This approach can be particularly effective in promoting

student engagement and motivation, which can lead to better learning outcomes.

All the teachers agreed that technology is essential for EFL teaching. However, one teacher expressed concern about the possibility of technology, particularly DeepL writer and Chat GPT, threatening the EFL teaching profession. Should EFL teachers be concerned? My hypothesis is that while AI translation tools like DeepL can help students translate texts or write correctly, they may not replace human teachers in all aspects. How can they guide students and manage student behaviour or classrooms? Are they able to give the personalised feedback that a teacher can?

That's not to say that such technology can't be a valuable resource for students to ask questions, seek clarification and explore ideas. But what about the emotional intelligence and empathy of a human teacher? Can that be replicated? Teachers play a key role in helping students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that technology alone may not be able to provide.

Perhaps it is better to see technology as a means to complement and enhance teaching skills, rather than a rival, and explore how it can be integrated into the classroom. Teachers can provide more personalised instruction, engage students in new ways and facilitate learning experiences that would not be possible without technology. Finally, we look at effective ways or effective teaching approaches or EFL best practices.

From the results presented from the questionnaire, the task-based approach seems to be the most used approach in EFL teaching. One reason for this could be that the task-based approach is in line with the communicative approach, which is widely used in EFL teaching in France. The communicative approach emphasises the importance of communication and interaction in language learning, which the task-based approach promotes through the use of meaningful tasks.

In addition, the task-based approach allows for a more student-centred approach to teaching, where students are given the opportunity to take control of their own learning and work collaboratively to complete tasks. This can be particularly appealing to EFL teachers who value learner autonomy and want to create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment (Sanchez 2004). Furthermore, the task-based approach also gives learners the opportunity to practice language use in real-life situations, which can motivate learners more than traditional grammar-focused lessons *(ibid)*. This can be particularly important for university level EFL learners who may be more interested in using English for academic or professional purposes.

However, this does not mean that other approaches are not equally effective. Content-based teaching can be effective in integrating language learning with other subjects, helping students to develop both content knowledge and language skills (Snow, 2001). Communicative language teaching emphasises the importance of meaningful communication and interaction and can be effective in developing students' fluency and accuracy (Quinghong, 2009). Finally, intercultural language teaching emphasises understanding and respecting different cultural perspectives and can be effective in developing students' intercultural competence (Barrett et al., 2014).

Conclusions

The primary aim of this study was to explore the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching practices of EFL teachers in French universities, to identify the most effective approaches they use and the challenges they face. The study also aimed to provide recommendations for EFL teachers to consider when seeking to improve their pedagogical approaches. Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that there is no one universally applicable method that can be considered superior to others. Instead, each teacher adapts their teaching style to meet the individual needs of their students. While they may face different challenges, most teachers strive to address them by engaging in discussions with their colleagues or by conducting research with the aim of improving their students' success. Ultimately, the most effective teaching approach depends on the unique context of the classroom and the specific goals and needs of the students. It is therefore essential that teachers remain flexible and adaptable in their teaching strategies, using a variety of methods and techniques that are appropriate to their students' learning objectives.

Future Directions

Exploring effective teaching approaches for EFL teachers requires looking at several possible future directions. Technology integration is one such area that can be explored to improve learning outcomes, engagement and collaboration. Researchers can investigate how tools mentioned by some teachers in the study, such as virtual and augmented reality and AI chat GPT, translation/writing tools such as Deepl and others, can be used to make learning more engaging and effective in EFL classrooms.

The COVID pandemic led to the adoption of blended learning, which combines traditional classroom learning with online learning. Researchers can explore how EFL teachers can use blended learning to improve student learning outcomes and engagement. Research can focus on the most effective approaches to blended classroom instruction, such as flipped classroom models, hybrid courses, and synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Effective EFL teaching requires a high level of English language proficiency as well as knowledge of best practices in pedagogy and language acquisition. Therefore, future research can also explore how teacher training and professional development can better prepare EFL teachers for their teaching practices. This could include investigating the most effective training methods, identifying areas where teachers need the most support, and developing training programmes that meet the needs of diverse EFL teacher populations.

Finally, effective EFL teaching requires an understanding of the cultural backgrounds and experiences of language learners. Future research can explore how EFL teachers can adopt culturally and/or intercultural responsive teaching practices to improve learning outcomes and build stronger relationships with students. This could include identifying best practices for integrating students' cultural experiences into the curriculum, developing teaching strategies that recognise and value diversity, and fostering both intercultural and culturally responsive learning environments. These areas of research could help to improve learning outcomes, engagement and motivation in EFL classrooms.

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