

Barriers to Workshop Strategy Implementation in Oral Expression Courses: EFL Teachers' Perspectives

العوائق التي تصعب تطبيق إستراتيجية ورشة العمل في مقياس التعبير الشفوي: وجهات نظر أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract:

The aim of the present study is to investigate the barriers of implementing Workshop Strategy faced by EFL Oral Expression teachers at the level of the Department of English, Guelma, Algeria. It sets forth a discussion about how workshop strategy works and the barriers of its implementation. To carry out the study, a quantitative research method was adopted and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The sample was composed of ten (10) participants who have taught Oral Expression. The results demonstrate that the most commonly workshop strategy obstacles are: workshop strategy is efforts demanding, Oral Expression teachers resist to change, insufficient time for lesson presentation, and the difficulty to assign and evaluate groups. It is then recommended that teachers need to be flexible, aware of their learners' learning styles to easily assign them into groups and evaluate them.

Keywords: Workshop Strategy, obstacles, speaking skill, learner-centered approach.

ملخص البحث

المهدف من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في عوائق تنفيذ إستراتيجية ورشة العمل التي يعاني منها أساتذة مقياس التعبير الشفهي للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على مستوى قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة قالمة/ الجزائر. هذه الدراسة تعرض مناقشة حول كيفية عمل إستراتيجية ورشة العمل والعوائق التي تحول دون تنفيذها، وإجراءاتها، تم اعتماد أسلوب البحث الكمي واستخدام استبيان منظم لجمع البيانات. تكونت العينة من عشرة (10) أساتذة مشاركين قاموا بتدريس مقياس التعبير الشفهي. توضح النتائج أن أكثر صعوبات تطبيق إستراتيجية ورشة العمل شيوعًا هي: - إستراتيجية ورشة العمل تتطلب بذل جهود كبيرة، - أساتذة التعبير الشفهي يرفضون تغيير أساليب التدريس، - الوقت غير الكافي لعرض الدروس، - وصعوبة تعيين المجموعات وتقييمها. ولذلك

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يوصى بضرورة أن يتحلى المعلمون بالمرونة، وأن يكونوا على دراية بأساليب تعلم الطلبة لتقسيمهم بسهولة إلى مجموعات وتقييمهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية ورشة العمل، العقبات، مهارة التحدث، المنهج المتمحور حول المتعلم.



Introduction

Lately, along with the continuous development of teaching and learning strategies, the introduction of workshops as a teaching and learning strategy has resulted in a promising change at the level of high educational frameworks. Therefore, at the level of the EFL teaching-learning process, researchers, academics, and language practitioners have given a huge interest to the implementation of workshops in the new teaching practices. Nevertheless, the implementation of workshop strategy in EFL teaching does face several issues. Basically, EFL teachers in general and oral expression teachers in particular have faced multiple obstacles while trying to integrate workshop activities in their teaching practices. The objective of this article is therefore to investigate and reveal these obstacles and challenges from oral expression teachers' perspective at the University of Guelma.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Definition of Workshops

Basically, the term 'workshop' was defined within a methodological frame as the setting where things are accomplished, made, or repaired (Merriam-Webster's dictionary, 2019). Workshops are a means of arrangement by which individuals meet together to learn, acquire new knowledge, solve a problem, or make innovations for a certain domain issues (Kensing and Blomberg, 1998). Lately, the term 'workshop' is connotated with the term 'participation' (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995). In here, the modern definition of 'workshops' is that they are structures of teaching, learning, developing a need for their users, especially in the educational context. According to McKenzie et al. (2005), they are a means to consult projects as they allow project holders and potential adopters to collaborate and make agreements (p. 2). In other words, workshops refer to goal-oriented arrangements of individuals, in which their participation is for the sake of developing their skills and satisfying their linguistic and communicative needs in different domains, and about various interests especially in education.

1.2. Perspectives on Workshops

Basically, there are three levels of workshop knowledge which are: workshops as a means, workshops as practice, and workshops as a research methodology.

1.2.1. Workshops as a Means

This level of knowledge for workshops is based on the claim that workshops are a means to solve domain-specific issues as authentic materials. Basically, there are two types of literature that stand for this claim. The first type (like cookbooks) focuses on the heuristics, frameworks, guidelines, and instructions for how to design, orchestrate, conduct, and facilitate workshops (Müllert and Jungk 1987; Bobo et al., 2001; Chambers, 2002; Misha and Koehler, 2006). The second type is about the results achieved concerning participants' new competencies, practices, knowledge, or ideas as a result their participation in different authentic workshops (Durance and Godet, 2010; Axmacher, 2013).

1.2.2. Workshops as Practice

These workshops investigate the interconnectedness between workshops and their form (e.g. Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Phaal et al., 2007; Mor et al., 2012; Wiek, et al., 2014) and the participants' domain-specific achieved results (e.g. Putnam and Borko, 2000; Koehler et al., 2007; Jaipal and Figg, 2010). In all, workshops as a practice are the workshops which are designed for development as they focus mostly on what participants achieve as a final goal.

1.2.3. Workshops as Research Methodology

Mostly, workshops are used as a research methodology to focus on the study of cases which are related to the domain of research (Darsø, 2001). In this respect, workshops can serve two different aims; they authentically help participants to fulfil their expectations by achieving an outcome which serves their needs, as they are also used to fulfil a pure research purpose like producing authentic data about the research problem (Wakkary, 2007; Jaipal and Figg, 2010; Baran, et al., 2014).

1.3. Workshops in EFL Teaching

In EFL settings, workshops are viewed as a teaching structure that helps learners to be active agents who are aware of their needs and goals. Within workshops, learners are expected to be self-responsible and to take charge of their own learning, and this is done by their engagement in the different communicative activities that are meant to develop their language understanding and authentic language use in real life situations (Jaipal and Figg, 2010). According to Darso (2001), implementing workshops in the educational settings (like language classrooms) is seen as a modern teaching strategy and a useful approach because they touch the needs of the learners and

they are goal-directed, real-timeness, have thrownness, motivate interaction, and have clear prospects (p. 203).

1.4. Aims of Workshop Strategy

According to Maheshwari (2012), as any other teaching strategies, the recent workshop strategy is established in order to meet specific pedagogical aims. This strategy searches in depth about the correct ways by which learning arrangements and teaching techniques are implemented. It takes into specific consideration the concept of “context” to adopt teaching and especially the learning process with the authentic situations. He quoted that:

“Workshop participants will use generically described teaching method for (supposed) application to a specific learning/teaching situation...the workshop’s goal is to work out a practitioner-oriented set of elements that make up the context of teaching methods as well as the barriers and uncertainties that arise when using generic teaching methods”.

In other words, the workshop strategy aims at the identification of pedagogical issues, the investigation of the problems, and the application of the appropriate solutions.

1.5. Development of Speaking Through Workshops

According to Jenks (2011), workshop strategy is highly recommended for oral expression classes as it enables speakers to evaluate their speech and language by their classmates and teachers continuously. In speaking-oriented classroom workshops, the teacher may ask his students to perform a certain communicative task in pairs or in groups like role-plays or brainstorming discussions about a chosen topic, and then the teacher along with the integration of the students take make analysis of errors and make constructive comments on each other’s oral productions (Connors & Glenn, 2003; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2008).

Furthermore, the use of workshop strategy to teach the speaking skill aims at training students to share their knowledge and experiences through collaborative work; in other words, workshop language teaching is a means by which teachers arrange their students in groups to benefit from each other’s propositions, thinking, analysis, and student-to-student evaluation (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2008). Consequently, oral expression workshops encourage students to achieve a goal of collective learning in "peer-response" groups where members of the same group provide oral and written responses to each other’s performances (Connors & Glenn, 2003).

1.6. Barriers to Workshop Strategy Implementation in EFL Teaching

Although teaching through workshops has been regarded as an up-to date teaching strategy (Darso, 2001), its implementation is characterized by a number of obstacles. Beebe and Masterson (2003) listed four main barriers for incorporating workshops in EFL teaching, and these barriers are listed as follows:

1. Pressure will be exerted in workshops especially in groups. This pressure arises when a member of the group find difficulty to comply with the prevailing view. Often learners might not like to experience confrontation for problems and within discussions; therefore, they may try to prevent it if possible, through agreement. By immediately agreeing to a majority opinion, students can agree on the wrong solution purely to avoid disagreement.

2. The classroom discussion (within communicative tasks) can be dominated by a single speaker (a single group member). This results in participants' loss of satisfaction from the group, and they may feel too isolated in the decision-making process. This group domination would develop negative attitudes for the students towards teamwork and workshops in general.

3. Due to the uncertainty of some teachers about their students' real level, they may assign incoherent groups in workshops. Therefore, some students may take the chance to rely heavily on the active members to fulfil the whole task without any contribution (Freeman & Greenacre, 2011). Hence, workshops sometimes cover the laziness and passivity of some students, and this is because the students work as one unit and generally receive equal grading. As a result, group members should be aware of the goals and objectives of the assigned task and should assign part of it to each member.

4. Learning through workshops and in groups requires more time than learning and working individually. When learners interact collaboratively, it needs longer time to complete the assigned tasks. however, the time that they spend on taking and evaluating issues usually results in better responses.

2. Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present research study is to identify and uncover the common workshop strategy implementation obstacles and challenges faced by EFL oral expression teachers, and to attempt to find out suggestions and recommendations that can help them overcome hindrances in their workshop-based teaching practices.

3. Research Questions

The current study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers that impede EFL oral expression teachers from implementing workshops in their teaching practices?
2. What suggestions can be proposed to overcome these barriers?

4. Research Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives and to answer the research questions, a quantitative research design has been adopted throughout research. To collect the research data, a questionnaire has been chosen as a data gathering tool. The use of questionnaires as research tools is highly frequent because it elicits information about participants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions (Mackey & Grass, 2005, p.92). In this study, the questionnaire aims to collect data about teachers' perceptions for the obstacles that prevent them from implementing workshop teaching strategy in oral expression classes. This questionnaire is developed in seventeen (17) questions which are in turn divided into three main sections. The first section encompasses four (04) questions about the teachers' background information. The second section contains six (06) questions, and it deals with the teachers' perspectives about teaching speaking in EFL classrooms. The third section, which is the last, is devoted to the teachers' current barriers to the implementation of workshop strategy in oral expression sessions, and it is developed in seven (07) main questions.

5. Findings and Discussions

The following section is devoted to the presentation of the results of the study and the analysis and the interpretation of its main findings.

Table 1: *Teachers' Background Information*

Questions items	Answers
Q1 Age	- Ranging from 33 to 59 years old
Q2 Teachers' highest qualification	- 2 professors, 4 Doctors, 4 MA
Q3 Teaching experience	- Ranging from 8 to 19 years
Q4 Teaching experience of oral expression module	- Ranging from 2 to 11 years

As it is shown in the table above (Table 1), the results about

teachers' background information indicate that the participants' age ranges between 33 to 59 years old. Concerning the participants' highest academic qualification, the results show that they have different academic degrees; two respondents have a professor degree, four respondents have a doctorate degree, and the rest four respondents admit that they have an MA degree. The admitted academic degrees imply that the research participants hold adequate academic degrees that fulfil their academic positions. Moreover, the results show that the respondents are experienced in teaching as their academic career ranges between eight to nineteen years in general, and between two to eleven years as teachers of oral expression module in particular. As a total, these results exhibit the rich experience of the participants in the teaching process as a whole.

Table 2: *Teachers' Familiarity and Implementation of 'Workshop Strategy'*

Research participants have been asked about their familiarity with the

Question items	a. Yes	b. No
Q5 Are you familiar with the term 'workshop' strategy?	100%	00%
Q6 Do you implement it in your oral expression courses?	80 %	20%

concept 'workshop strategy' and whether they implement

to teach Oral Expression module. As a response, all the teachers admit that they are familiar with the concept 'workshop' strategy'. In regard to its implementation, the wide majority (8 teachers) declare that they use it as an oral expression teaching strategy, while only 2 teachers declare that they do not use it at all. Results for both questions (Q5 and Q6) demonstrate that all teachers are acknowledged with the recent teaching strategies of speaking and the majority of them agree on identical way of teaching the same module; however, they still have different preferences about which strategy to use in order to reach their teaching goals and to serve their learners' needs.

Table 3: *Teachers' Roles in Workshops*

Question items	a.	b.	a+b.
Q7 What is your role in Oral Expression workshops?	30%	50%	20%

As (Table 3) represents, teachers

have been asked to precise their roles during oral expression workshops. Three teachers (30%) denote that they act as the source of knowledge during the oral expression workshops; that means that they are implementing a teacher-centered approach. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority (50%) affirm that they act as a guide or a facilitator, which indicates that they teach oral expression module following a learner-centered approach. Surprisingly, two teachers (mainly who are holding MA degree) affirm that they perform two contradictory roles in their oral expression workshops; as a source of knowledge and as facilitators of knowledge as well. This contradiction in roles performance signifies that these teachers are probably facing a difficulty to implement workshop strategy purely as a learner-centered approach i.e. teachers' lack of experience.

Table 4: *Teachers' Objective to Use Workshops*

Question items	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.
Q8 You use workshops in oral expression courses in order to:	10%	10%	10%	10%	60%

Table 4 mirrors the teachers'

responses about the reasons behind implementation of workshops. Statistically speaking, equal selection of choices a, b, c, and d have been reported. In other words, the first teacher believes that workshops serve the objective of developing learners' grammatical knowledge, the second teacher affirms that workshops enrich the learners' vocabulary, the third teacher denotes that they increase the learners' creativity, and the fourth teacher claims that they help to strengthen the learners' interpersonal relationships. In fact, this minority of selection and equality in the same time shows that each teacher believe in a single major objective to be fulfilled through workshops. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of teachers (60%) affirm that they use workshops because they serve all of the previously mentioned oral expression course objectives. This high percentage of option (e) signifies that oral expression teachers believe that teaching this has several major objectives and that using workshops as a teaching strategy is the correct way for their fulfilment all at once.

Table 5: *Learners' Attitudes Towards Oral Expression Workshops*

As the learner is the most important element in the teaching process, teachers have been asked about their EFL

Question items	a. Positive	b. Negative	c. Neutral
Q9 How do you evaluate your learners' attitudes towards oral expression workshops?	80%	20%	00%

learners' attitudes towards oral expression workshops. The obtained responses represented in (Table 5) indicate that the highest percentage of teachers (80%) believe that their students have positive attitudes to study oral expression module through workshops, while only two teachers (20%) think that their students do not like to be taught through workshops. Notably, none of them have opted for "neutral" option. In this regard, it can be assumed that our sample teachers are aware about their students' learning preferences and styles, and how they are acting towards workshops in their teaching process.

Table 6: *Teachers' Perspective about Workshop Strategy Implementation*

Though all the teachers are qualified and competent, they all agree that

Question items	a. Easy	b. Demanding	c. difficult
Q10 How do you find implementing workshop strategy to teach speaking?	00%	30%	70%

implementing workshop strategy to teach speaking is not an easy task as none

of them (00%) have opted for option (a) as it is shown in (Table 6). Seven teachers (70%) represent the biggest section who believe that workshop strategy implementation is a difficult task. Simultaneously, three teachers (30%) admit that it is demanding to apply workshop strategy. This signifies the fact that the target teachers find that using workshops in their oral expressions courses is a task that demands valuable prerequisites and that it is not easily applied in classrooms to teach EFL learners the speaking skill.

Table 7: *Workshop Strategy Implementation Barriers*

Barriers to Workshop Strategy Implementation	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Q11. Insufficient time for the whole lesson presentation	90%	10%	00%
Q12. It's hard to assign groups	60%	20%	20%
Q13. Most teachers have resistance to change their usual/ traditional teaching methods	90%	00%	10%
Q14. It's hard to give adequate evaluation and feedback	60%	40%	00%
Q15. It's hard to make students collaborate	70%	30%	00%
Q16. It's hard to keep the students attentive	40%	40%	20%
Q17. It's exhausting; it needs continuous preparation	100%	00%	00%

The
obtained
results that
are

demonstrated in (Table 7) reflect the distribution of the barriers that face Oral expression teachers when implementing Workshop Strategy in oral expression courses. The results rank at the first place the teachers' belief that using workshop strategy is exhausting and it needs continuous preparation (100%). Seemingly, all participants do agree upon it as being a major obstacle. The second highest percentage of agreement (90%) is given equally for both the teachers' resistance to change their usual/ traditional teaching methods, and their belief that they do not have enough time for the whole lesson presentation. Thereafter, a couple of barriers which are: hardships to assign groups and hardships to give adequate evaluation and feedback are placed as barriers that six teachers (60%) admit to face them. Basically, the above-mentioned Workshop Strategy obstacles have been opted for by more than half of the participants. Nevertheless, the less frequently confronted barrier from the point of view of the participants, and which has been chosen by less than half of the surveyed participants (40%) is the hindrance of keeping the students attentive. To this end, it can be understood that teachers of oral expression do face a variety of barriers in workshops implementation, and that these barriers are the result of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In other words, these

barriers are both school-level barriers and teachers' individual-level barriers; some of them are out of the teachers' control while others are teacher-concerned.

6. Conclusion

With reference to the statistical findings of the present article, it is concluded that an interesting number of EFL Oral expression teachers are familiar with Workshop Strategy concept, they are aware of how to implement it as a teaching strategy, what are their students' perspectives towards it, and what are course objectives that it does fulfil. Nevertheless, EFL Oral Expression teachers still consider Workshop Strategy-based teaching as a challenging due to the hindrances and barriers that they face throughout its classroom implementation. The barriers that are deemed to be major and the most challenging for the research sample are: workshop strategy is exhausting and it needs continuous preparation, the teachers' resistance to change their usual/ traditional teaching methods, and the unavailability of enough time for the whole lesson presentation, and hardships to assign groups and to give adequate evaluation and feedback for the learners. Consequently, the current context requires practical initiatives to make pedagogical reforms and to set further educational implications.

7. Recommendations

For the sake of overcoming the previously mentioned barriers and in order to realize an effective Workshop Strategy implementation for EFL teaching in general and for the oral expression courses in particular, a number of implications have been proposed to be practically executed. Such implications can be summarized in the following manner:

1. Attempting to offer sufficient information sources that decreases the burden of continuous preparation for teachers, especially at the level of libraries.
2. Acknowledging the teachers about the need for flexibility and accommodation of their teaching methods with the up-to date needs of their students i.e. not to impose the teacher-centered approach and to allow students to take active roles in the classroom.
3. Dedicating larger sessions for Oral Expression module to allow teachers to exercise the course activities with their students sufficiently.
4. Teachers should be more aware of their students' academic levels, learning styles, and competences to manage assigning them in a well-designed group.
5. Teachers should be more attentive about their students individual and group classroom performances to facilitate the evaluation task.

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Appendix : Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We are preparing a research on **Barriers to Workshop Strategy**

Implementation in Oral Expression Courses: EFL Teachers' Perspectives

We would be grateful if you could answer these questions to help us in our research.

Please, use a cross (×) to indicate your chosen option, and specify your answer when needed.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Section One: General Information

Q1. Your age: Years old.

Q2. Your highest qualification:

- a. License
- b. Magister
- c. Doctorate
- d. Professor

Q3. For how long have you been teaching English at the University?
..... Years.

Q4. For how long have you been teaching Oral Expression Module?
..... Years.

Section Two: Familiarity and implementation of 'Workshop Strategy'

Q5. Are you familiar with the term 'Workshop Strategy'?

- Yes
- No

Q6. Do you implement it in your oral expression courses?

- Yes
- No

Q7. You use workshops in oral expression courses in order to:

- a. Develop the learners' Grammatical knowledge

- b. Enrich the learners' Vocabulary
- c. Increase the learners' creativity
- d. Strengthen the learners' interpersonal relationships
- e. All together

Q8. What is your role during the oral expression workshops?

- a. Source of Knowledge
- b. A guide
- c. Both (a+b)

Q9. How do you evaluate your learners' attitudes towards oral expression workshops?

- a. Positive
- b. Negative
- c. Neutral

Q10. How do you find implementing workshop strategy to teach speaking?

- a. Easy
- b. Demanding
- c. Difficult

Section Three : Implementation Barriers

Please indicate to what extent do you agree with each of the following statements:

Barriers to Workshop Strategy Implementation	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Q11. Insufficient time for the whole lesson presentation			
Q12. It's hard to assign groups			
Q13. Most teachers have resistance to change their usual/ traditional teaching methods			
Q14. It's hard to give adequate evaluation and feedback			
Q15. It's hard to make students collaborate			
Q16. It's hard to keep the students attentive			
Q17. It's exhausting; it needs continuous preparation			

Thank you for your collaboration