

Investigating the Importance of Sociolinguistic Competence in Teaching English to Algerian University Learners: Teachers' Views and Classroom Practices

أهمية الكفاءة اللغوية الاجتماعية في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للمتعلمين
الجامعيين الجزائريين: آراء المعلمين والممارسات الصفية

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic competence refers to learners' ability to perceive and produce appropriate language in various contexts. It is one major component of communicative competence along with strategic, discourse and grammatical. EFL learners need to develop this competence both to ensure successful communication and understand cultural values underlying speech to interpret meaning accurately, especially that inappropriate use of language may lead to prejudice. However, little empirical research on Algerian English language teachers' views on the importance of promoting sociolinguistic competence was conducted. Accordingly, this paper provides a detailed discussion of this concept and gets insights into teachers' perceptions and classroom practices through conducting a survey questionnaire. Findings showed that teachers perceive sociolinguistic competence important in terms of pragmatic-oriented perspective. They also confirmed that dealing with its aspects in EFL contexts is challenging because of lack of access to native speakers, and the tendency to use English for academic rather than socializing purposes.

Keywords: English language teaching; communicative competence; sociolinguistic competence; stylistic variation; socio-cultural norms.

ملخص:

تشير الكفاءة اللغوية الاجتماعية إلى قدرة المتعلمين على إدراك وإنتاج لغة مناسبة في سياقات مختلفة. وهي أحد المكونات الرئيسية للكفاءة التواصلية إلى جانب الإستراتيجية والخطابية والنحوية. يحتاج متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إلى تطوير هذه الكفاءة لضمان التواصل الناجح وفهم القيم الثقافية الكامنة وراء الكلام لتفسير المعنى بدقة، خاصة أن الاستخدام غير المناسب للغة قد يؤدي إلى سوء التفسير والتحيز. ومع ذلك، هناك نقص في الأدبيات حول تدريس الكفاءة اللغوية الاجتماعية، والقليل من البحوث حول آراء معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائريين فيما يتعلق بتدريس هذه الكفاءة. وفقاً لذلك، تقدم هذه الورقة مناقشة مفصلة لهذا المفهوم وتلقي نظرة على تصورات المعلمين والنشاطات الصفية لتعزيزها من خلال إجراء استبيان. أظهرت نتائج أن المعلمين يرون أن الكفاءة اللغوية الاجتماعية مهمة من منظور عملي. وأكدوا أيضاً أن التعامل مع جوانبها في سياقات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يمثل تحدياً بسبب نقص الوصول إلى الناطقين الأصليين، والميل إلى استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية للأغراض الأكاديمية بدلاً من الأغراض الاجتماعية.

كلمات مفتاحية: تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية؛ كفاءة تواصلية؛ كفاءة لغوية اجتماعية؛ اختلاف اسلوبي؛ معايير اجتماعية وثقافية.

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1. Introduction

The notion of communicative competence is mainly established on the idea that learners need not just the grammatical knowledge of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways to be competent speakers. Language teaching methodology, therefore, shifted its focus from a structural perspective to a more functional and communicative one. This latter underlies and emphasizes the importance of developing learners' ability to perceive and produce appropriate language in various social situations. Essentially, language teaching frameworks such the European Framework of Reference, for instance, stressed the fact that besides grammatical competence, learners need other types of competence namely discourse, strategic as well as sociolinguistic competences in order to communicate effectively and appropriately in the target language. Consequently, in a foreign language course that aims to enable learners to reach a level of communicative competence, all its components are of great relevance.

However, there has been a continuous debate about the importance that should be attributed to each component in the different frameworks for classroom application. In addition, little research was conducted to investigate ways in which these competences are integrated and tested in EFL contexts such as the Algerian one.

Hence, this paper aims to address this issue by focusing on the sociolinguistic component, which is essentially related to learners' awareness of the impact of social and cultural factors on the appropriate choices made by language users in different communicative contexts. EFL learners need to develop this particular awareness not only to ensure successful communication with native speakers, but also to understand the cultural values that underlie speech so they can interpret it accurately, especially that inappropriate use of language and violation of cultural norms may well lead to misinterpretation and sometimes to being judged or even offended. The discussion in this article covers elements related to its components, its importance, and ways in which it can be taught in the classroom. Most importantly, a questionnaire survey was conducted to investigate Algerian EFL teachers' views on the relevance of this competence and activities devoted to promote it in their classes at university level.

2. Review of the related literature

2.1. The Sociolinguistic perspective and language learning

Sociolinguistics as a field of study is mainly concerned with the study of language in use. One of the major interests in the sociolinguistic perspective to language is to explain how language varies among its speakers according to different factors. Holmes (2001) maintains that "Sociolinguists are interested

in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts" (Methcell & Myles, 2004, p. 224). In fact, it is now a settled issue among sociolinguists that native speakers vary their language use in regular ways, according to some social and cultural factors such as the setting, the interlocutors, the aims, etc.

The point to note here is that although a rich literature about studies dealing with native speakers' stylistic variation in first language acquisitions is available, developing sociolinguistic competence among second language and foreign language learners has received less attention. However, recent studies started to recognize that this aspect of language and its related areas is as crucial in enabling learners to communicate with other people as is grammar (Regan, Martin, & Isabelle, 2009, p. 2). It is clear that social and cultural factors play a role in communication, although probably outweighed in importance by linguistic factors, research into second language variability confirms its complex nature) (Methcell & Myles, 2004, p. 233).

Recently, a set of studies that account for language learners' acquisition of sociolinguistic variation have been carried out. These studies showed that second language learners may become sensitive to sociolinguistic variation in the target language, and may vary their usage patterns over time to accommodate increasingly to the norms of the target community. Much of this work has been conducted with English first language learners in Canada, who are learning French as a second language in an immersion setting (Ritchie, 2011). Other studies have also been carried out in Europe with advanced learners studying French in an academic setting (Regan, 1996) and (Dewaele, 2005)

2.2. The Concept of Sociolinguistic Competence

The connection between sociolinguistics and language learning was shown in various ways, and several definitions of sociolinguistic competence are available in language teaching research. Those definitions hold one broad view of sociolinguistic competence being mainly concerned with the ability to use linguistic forms appropriately for a specific situation, or the competence required to perform specific speech acts in socially appropriate ways, "the capacity to recognize and produce socially appropriate speech in context" as confirmed by (Lyster, 1994, p. 263)

Sociolinguistic competence, therefore, requires adjusting one's grammatical forms to be appropriate to the setting in which communication takes place. Attention is paid to such factors as the age, status, and sex of the participants, as well as the formality/informality of the setting, In brief, sociolinguistic competence has been linked to a speaker's ability to use language for social action with an eye towards the appropriateness of an utterance in context as opposed to the grammaticality of a sentence in isolation.

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2.3. The importance of developing learners' sociolinguistic competence

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is a matter of fact that native speakers of a language use their shared knowledge of their native community and society to convey and judge appropriateness of speech. Native speakers use this knowledge to vary their speech according to the context. However, this also represents a major issue for language teaching and raises many questions such as: to what extent this shared knowledge can be transmitted to FL learners? And how would they perceive it? Will they be able to use it in their production and interpretation of different speech events?

It should be noted that one major source of difficulty for non-native speakers to communicate with native-speakers is the fact that they do not share the same community's memory and knowledge (Kramsch, 1993) In his discussion of FL learners' acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, (Dewaele, 2005) highlights that despite the fact of having spent years learning "the standard norm", instructed FL learners might find themselves at a loss when they suddenly become unable to produce informal speech, or might be stressed when having to use highly formal speech in authentic situations. Learners appear to be monostylistic, stuck somewhere in the middle of the speech style continuum. Furthermore, (Dewaele , 2008) points out that it is unlikely that everybody will agree or disagree on degrees of(in) appropriateness of certain speech acts. Jokes are a typical case where appropriateness can be very hard to judge both by native and non-native speakers alike. What one native speaker may consider a perfectly appropriate (and funny) joke in a given situation may be perceived by another native speaker to be offensive or rude and not funny at all.

Considering the importance of appropriateness of speech to the context of communication, and being aware of difficulties involved when dealing with it in FL setting, teachers are faced with some questions; first to what extent can and should they teach foreign forms of discourse and insist their production by foreign learners (Kramsch, 1993), and the second question is whether or not to teach FL learners words and expressions that are considered inappropriate in polite conversation, and whether or not FL learners should be equipped with the linguistic and pragmatic means to be consciously impolite (Dewaele , 2008).

On the ground of certain experiments in FL situations, the sociolinguist Saville-Troike (1992) stressed awareness raising instructions, she concluded that sociolinguistic rules can be talked about, but it should be left to the learners' own decision to adopt them or not for productive use (Kramsch, 1993).

2.4. Components of sociolinguistic competence

As far as language teaching methodology is concerned, although the importance of sociolinguistic competence is undeniable, references that give a good description of its elements and which guide the instructors in the teaching and evaluation of this competence are difficult to find. For example, in (Canale, 1983) sociolinguistic competence was used in a broad sense to address the appropriateness issue; it includes both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form.

A more detailed description of what sociolinguistic competence entails can be found in the framework of communicative language ability proposed by Bachman (1990). Following (Bachman, 2010, p. 95.97), sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge that enables language users to create or interpret language that is appropriate to a particular language use. This includes:

- Sensitivity to differences in dialect or variety.
- Sensitivity to differences in register
- Sensitivity to naturalness.
- Ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 118) represents one of the valuable documents published by the Council of Europe. This document is a key reference for language teaching especially that it provides a comprehensive vision of the competences necessary for communication. More importantly, this document gives a detailed description of the elements entailed in the sociolinguistic competence. These are presented as follows:

1. Linguistic Markers of Social Relations. They are divergent in different languages and cultures, examples in English may include:

- Use and choice of greetings: on arrival, e.g., *Hello! Good morning!* introductions, e.g. *How do you do?* leave-taking, e.g., *Good-bye . . . See you later.*
- Use and choice of address forms: e.g., *Sir, Madam, Miss, Dr, Professor* (+ surname), first name only, no address form, *dear, darling;* (popular) *mate, love*

2. Politeness Conventions. They vary from one culture to another and are a frequent source of inter-cultural misunderstanding, especially when polite expressions are literally interpreted. This includes: · Expressing regret, apologising for face-threatening behaviour; - appropriate use of ‘please’, ‘thank you’, etc.; · Using hedges, etc. (e.g., ‘I think’, tag questions, etc.)

3. Expressions of Folk Wisdom. These fixed formulae make a significant contribution to popular culture. Knowledge of this accumulated folk wisdom expressed in language assumed to be known to all, is a significant component of sociocultural competence. Examples include:

- Proverbs, e.g., *a stitch in time saves nine*· Idioms, e.g., *piece of cake*
- Familiar quotations, e.g., *If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman*· Expressions of belief, such as –weather saws,

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e.g., *Fine before seven, rain by eleven* · TV catch phrases, work-place cards and posters.

4. Register Differences. The term 'register' is used to refer to systematic differences between varieties of language used in different contexts. It is mainly concerned with differences in level of formality:

- Formal, e.g., *May we now come to order, please.*
- Neutral, e.g., *Shall we begin?*
- Informal, e.g. *Right. What about making a start?*
- Intimate, e.g., *Ready dear?*

In early learning, a relatively neutral register is appropriate. Acquaintance with more formal or more familiar registers is likely to come over a period of time, at first as a receptive competence since their inappropriate use may well lead to misinterpretation and ridicule.

5. Dialect and Accent. Sociolinguistic competence also includes the ability to recognise the linguistic markers of, for example: · Social class · Regional provenance · and National origin.

2.5. Classroom Activities and techniques for teaching sociolinguistic competence

Research in foreign language teaching has shown that teaching speech acts promotes pragmatic/sociolinguistic competence and helps learners to develop communicative competence. In a study conducted by (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990) with EFL advanced learners about apologizing, the findings were promising and significant development was noticed.

By reviewing the related literature, various techniques and activities have been suggested to develop effective speech act instructions to EFL learners. (Judd, 1999, p. 154) has grouped techniques for developing sociolinguistic awareness into three broad categories:

2.5.1. Cognitive –awareness Raising Activities. They are designed to make learners consciously aware of differences between the native and the target language speech act as most of these differences go unnoticed by learners unless they are directly addressed. Generally, the teacher presents the target speech act and provides students with detailed information about the participants, their status, the situations, and speech events. For example, simply to state that one way of apologizing is by saying 'I'm sorry' or 'excuse me' does not capture the intricacy of when to apologize, to whom, to what extent. Another cognitive technique is to have students acting as amateur investigators who gather their own examples of speech acts.

2.5.2. Receptive Skill Development. In this technique students are exposed to the target speech act in order to make them recognize it within natural language, and to change their view that there is only one way for a speech act

to appear and this form works for all situations. Such technique begins by presenting the target speech act within natural discourse, and having students recognize it within the discourse in terms of its linguistic features and to comment on the sociolinguistic environment. Example,

Professor A: I think we should continue our study to see if additional factors can be identified.

Professor B: you may be right, but I think we'd better recheck the statistics first.

Students may be asked to identify who disagrees, with whom, where the conversation is occurring, and what the participant relationship is. Students can also be exposed to alternative pieces of discourse and be asked to identify factors affecting differences in the choice of language behaviour. After comparing the two pieces of disagreement, factors accounting for the differences in style will be highlighted.

2.5.3. Controlled Productive Skills. After being exposed to different speech acts, and being able to recognize and understand them, students should activate their knowledge to produce speech acts. This can be achieved through activities such as the following:

a. **Discourse completion tasks:** in this exercise, the teacher provides a natural communicative situation, and the students are asked to fill in the appropriate speech act. For example,

Situation: your friend invites you to her house for the first time.

Friend: why don't you come in?

You: thanks/ (after looking around)house you have.

(Possible answers: what a great/ wonderful/ beautiful)

b. **Role play activities:** they are one useful way to help students learn about speech acts. In such activities, the teacher provides the situation including the appropriate sociolinguistic information, and then asks students to act out the situation. A variation of the role play is constructive role plays. Here, series of role plays can be presented, with differing sociolinguistic features, and acted out to show how the factors can affect the choice of the speech act. For example, in case of apologies, first the students are asked apologize to a stranger whom they have accidentally bumped into on the street, then to a friend after coming late for an appointment, and finally, to a professor with whom the students had an appointment to discuss a term paper topic. These contrasting situations help illustrate how different situations affect the form of speech act.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Method

The choice of the appropriate research methodology is determined by the researcher's objectives and the kind of data he is interested in. Hence, the use

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of the descriptive method in this study is justified regarding the fact that the researcher is interested in exploring teachers' perceptions and current classroom practices; first through investigating teachers' views about the importance attributed to different aspects of sociolinguistic competence, and second by getting insight into the types and frequency of activities/techniques involved in presenting such knowledge to their students.

3. 2. Research Instrument

In order to achieve the above stated objectives, the main instrument used in this research is a questionnaire; this latter is designed assuming that it is necessary to explore teachers' perspective since their views and speech have a significant role in the process of language learning, and much of the students' knowledge, and competence in the target language depend on what they receive in the classroom. Accordingly, reviewing the relevant literature to the topic provided a basis for the researcher to construct the items of the questionnaire. This latter was administered to all teachers at the department of English at Khenchela University during the academic year 2020/2021, their total number was 28 teachers. The questionnaire is composed of three main sections:

-Section one: aimed to investigate teachers' background information (their gender, educational background, teaching experience, and finally, whether they dealt with any kind of sociolinguistic/pragmatic study during their education).

-Section two: aimed to find out teachers' views on the importance of teaching sociolinguistic competence. This section included nine statements; for each statement, the respondents were asked to choose from a four-point Likert scale: 4: strongly agree 3: agree 2: disagree 1: strongly disagree

-Section three: aimed to look at the type of knowledge and frequency of classroom activities devoted for developing students' sociolinguistic competence. This section comprised eight items, and teachers were asked to rate the frequency of each activity by choosing: never, rarely, sometimes, or always.

4. Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics for the results of the teachers' questionnaire are presented in tables that show both statistical frequency and weighed percentage for each statement in the questionnaire.

4.1. Teachers' Background information

This first section provides a general picture of the department's teachers profile in terms of their gender, educational background, years of teaching, their experience to study or travel abroad, and whether they have benefited from a sociolinguistic course during their graduation.

- Table 1 shows that among the 28 participants, there were 11 (39,29%) male and 17 (60,71%) female teachers. Their teaching experience varied from less

than five years (10,71%) to more than 15 years (17,86%); however, it can be noticed that the percentage of teachers with 5 to 15 years of experience (71,43%) represent the majority. Thus, it can be said that a good proportion of teachers have a considerable experience.

- Concerning teachers' qualifications, about 25% hold a Ph.D. degree and the majority of teachers (75%) have a magister degree. About 70% of them had overseas traveling experience; while 60,71% had been to a foreign country, unfortunately, only 10% of teachers had visited an English-speaking country. These statistics reflect teachers' lack of direct experience and contact with native speakers of English.

-All the participants indicated that they had received pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge during their university studies. It is worth noting that teachers' background information is investigated to introduce the context of the study, but it is not going to be used as a factor analysis, yet some of the statistics may be used to illustrate as well as support data analysis and interpretation.

Table (1): Teachers' background information

Variables		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	11	39.29%
	female	17	60.71%
Work experience	Less than 5 years	03	10.71%
	From 5-15 years	20	71.43%
	More than 15 years	05	17.86%
Highest degree (Rank)	PhD : MCA - MCB	07	25%
	Magister	21	75%
Travel / study abroad experience	Foreign country	17	60.71%
	English speaking country	03	10.71%
	Never been to a foreign country	08	28.58%
Sociolinguistic/Pragmatic study experience	Yes	28	100%
	No	00	0%

4.2. Teachers' perceptions of sociolinguistic competence and English Language teaching/learning

This section is meant to discuss the results obtained from investigating teachers' views regarding the following issues:

-Teachers' perceptions of language teaching objectives (Teaching linguistic knowledge versus teaching English communicatively and sociolinguistic knowledge): As shown in table (2), the data obtained indicated that although a

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considerable majority of teachers (71,43%) perceived English language teaching more in terms of linguistic competence, they still agree with statement approving that teaching English to enable students to communicate effectively and appropriately in different social contexts is as important as linguistic knowledge (i.e., pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary) as revealed by 60, 72% of teachers.

-Teachers' perceptions of the importance of sociolinguistic competence in language Teaching: (statements: 4,5,6, and 7), this included their views about the importance attributed to extending students' knowledge and use of various registers, varieties and accents of English, in addition to raising students' awareness about the impact of culture and social factors on the choice of certain linguistic forms. Findings show that teachers do not attribute the same importance to all aspects of sociolinguistic competence; for example, almost 54% of teachers agreed that English can be taught successfully by focussing only on the formal register or variety that is suitable for mastering English in all situations, and 46,42% of them see that it is not important to students of English to understand various varieties and accents of English to ensure effective and appropriate communication.

-Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers perceive the importance of sociolinguistic competence not in terms of stylistic variation but rather more in terms of a pragmatic oriented perspective; almost 76% of teacher agree that it is important to relate language teaching to being able to communicate effectively in different situations, and to use the language for practical purposes.

-Teachers' perceptions of the difficulties involved when dealing with this component: Finally, concerning the difficulties encountered while dealing with the sociolinguistic component, it seems that more than 76% of teachers find that one of the major challenges encountered lay in the lack of exposure to the target language and culture in natural settings. This result confirmed the view that EFL contexts represent challenging situation; where both learners and teachers do not have easy access to native speakers in their real-life and the target language tends to be used for academic rather than socializing and communicating purposes.

Table (2): Teachers' perceptions of sociolinguistic competence and English Language teaching/learning

Statement	Level of agreement							
	SA		A		D		SD	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Teaching English means teaching grammar,	07	25%	13	46.43%	8	28.57%	00	0%

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vocabulary, and pronunciation. Therefore, it is important to focus on developing learners' linguistic competence								
2. Knowledge of how to use English appropriately in different social contexts is as important as linguistic knowledge (i.e., pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary).	03	10.72%	14	50%	09	32.14%	02	7.14%
3. It is important to design activities that help students learn different ways of performing speech acts in different situations such as greeting, requesting, apologizing, etc	10	35.72%	10	35.72%	04	14.28%	04	14.28%
4. English can be taught successfully by focussing only on the formal register or variety that is suitable for mastering English in all situations.	09	39.29%	04	14.28%	11	32.15%	04	14.28%
5. The RP (received pronunciation) accent is the only accent that should be taught in the classroom	05	17.86%	13	46.42%	05	17.86%	05	17.86%
6. Students of English need to understand different accents and dialects of English apart	05	17.86%	10	35.72%	07	25%	06	21.42%

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from native English (e.g., American, British).								
7. Raising students' awareness of getting information on culture and appropriate language use is more useful than teaching grammatical correctness	04	14.28%	10	35.72%	07	25%	07	25%
8. Both teachers and learners have lack of direct experience in the culture of the target language and contexts	10	35.72%	10	35.72%	04	14.28%	04	14.28%
9. Learners have cross-cultural and cross-linguistic difficulties; hence, it is hard to introduce such knowledge to them	08	28.57%	10	35.72%	07	25%	03	10.72%

4.3. Teachers' application of their sociolinguistic competence understanding to their classroom practices

This section presents the obtained data from investigating teachers' classroom practices as far teaching sociolinguistic competence is concerned. Aspects investigated included: Frequency of different classroom activities and material devoted for developing students' sociolinguistic competence:

- Statements presenting activities oriented towards developing learners' sociolinguistic competence included: choice and use of forms of greetings, leave-taking, and forms of address in different social contexts, information related to politeness conventions/impoliteness in English and in different cultures, different ways of performing speech acts, extending students' knowledge and use of idiomatic expressions, in addition to including various registers, accents and varieties of English.
- As shown in table (3), teachers do not attribute the same importance to all aspects of sociolinguistic competence:

- Including activities related to introducing various registers, varieties and accents of English received the lowest percentage in terms of frequency; 21.43% and 42.85% of teachers chose “never” or “rarely” dealing with these activities in their classes. this may limit the students’ opportunities to learn about English varieties and registers in the classroom, hence being exposed to only one standard variety.
- In addition, providing information about politeness conventions either in English or in other cultures is not given much importance in terms of classroom activities, this is indicated by almost (60%) of teachers who chose either never or rarely include such information in their classes.
- On the other hand, it seems quite clear from results of the survey that activities related to developing students’ knowledge of expression of folk wisdom and use of different forms of greetings, leave-taking, and forms of address in different social contexts received the highest frequency; this is revealed by (78%) and (64%) of teachers respectively who chose either always or sometimes include these activities. This means that teachers regard teaching idioms and linguistic markers for social relations as the essential aspects of learners’ sociolinguistic competence.
- In terms of techniques and material used in the realization of sociolinguistic competence teaching objectives, it clear that teachers rely on authentic materials such as using videos and audios in their teaching. This is was expected since in an EFL context, it is almost the only way for both teachers and learners to get exposed to real language use.

Table (3): Teachers’ application of their sociolinguistic competence understanding to their classroom practices

Type of task/ Technique	Frequency							
	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Always	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.Comparing and contrasting choice of different forms of greetings, leave-taking, and forms of address in different social contexts.	05	17.86%	05	17.86%	12	42.86%	06	21.42%
2.Introducing and explaining	08	28.57%	09	32.15%	11	39.28%	00	0%

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information related to politeness conventions/impoliteness in English and in different cultures								
3. Giving explanation of expressions of folk wisdom in English including: Proverbs, Idioms, Familiar quotations, Expressions of belief, TV catch phrases, and posters	00	0%	06	21.43%	14	50%	08	28.57%
4. Communication activities focussing on appropriacy of speech, formality, informality of register according to different social situations.	06	21.43%	12	42.85%	10	35.72%	00	0%
5. Giving explicit instruction on the role of different social factors on the choice of language forms	06	21.42%	12	42.85%	10	35.73%	00	0%
6. Implementing activities to raise students' awareness about different accents of English (e.g., American English VS British English).	08	28.58%	12	42.86%	06	21.42%	02	7.14%

7. Giving explicit instructions on cultural knowledge and appropriate language use.	02	7.14%	06	21.42%	12	42.86%	08	28.58%
8. Using authentic materials to illustrate real language use (e.g., newspapers, magazines, videos, radio and TV programs).	02	7.15%	06	21.42%	13	46.41%	07	25%

5- Conclusion

This research paper intended to consider the contributions brought by the field of sociolinguistics to English language teaching methodology. It aimed to demonstrate the importance of promoting learners' sociolinguistic competence as an integral part of classroom instruction that aims at developing communicative competence in the foreign language. As discussed in the literature review, although sociolinguistic competence is an essential component of communicative competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996,2010) and (Canale, 1983), there still exists a lack of literature about incorporating this component in English language teaching methodologies. Furthermore, little empirical research on teachers' perceptions and classroom practices at university level in Algeria can be found. Hence, after being informed by key issues in the literature, a questionnaire was conducted with EFL teachers at Khenchela University during the academic year 2020-2021. Major findings revealed that teachers' understanding of sociolinguistic knowledge and its teaching varied; although all of them recognised the importance of teaching sociolinguistic knowledge in enhancing EFL students' communicative competence, the ways teachers dealt with it is influenced by their own perceptions; teachers perceive the importance of sociolinguistic competence not in terms of stylistic variation but rather more in terms of pragmatic oriented perspective. Results also showed that teaching idioms and linguistic markers for social relations are the essential aspects of sociolinguistic competence that are likely to be stressed by teachers in their classes. Finally, teachers confirmed encountering difficulties in teaching sociolinguistic components, particularly because of the lack of direct experience in the culture of English-speaking countries.

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