



CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTING PARTICIPATORY AND ACTIVE PEDAGOGY IN TEFL: PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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Abstract:

The present paper investigates the challenges related to the implementation of the participatory and active pedagogy (PAP) in the teaching and learning of English in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The study focuses on understanding the applicability and obstacles of Participatory and active pedagogy within the Congolese educational system. The results show that teachers applying PAP generally encounter the problem of time, as the process requires two consecutive hours for a teacher to use this method. The big challenge is that this method empowers skilled pupils while the non-skilled go on decreasing their level instead of increasing it, and this would bring those pupils to develop anxiety, trauma, lack of motivation and/or interest in the language to the extent that they tend to use other languages during group work. That is the reason why this method is recommended for a class where pupils already have some command of the language.

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1. Introduction

The word participatory comes from participation, which refers to the action of taking part in activities and projects, the act of sharing in the activities of a group. The process of participation fosters mutual learning. The participatory learning strategy has its theoretical basis in behaviorism as well as in cognitive and social psychology. Collaboration is a useful tool used within participatory culture as a desired educational outcome. The Partnership for Twenty-First Century Skills, for example, defines collaboration as working effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, exercising flexibility and a willingness to make compromises to accomplish a common goal, and assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work while valuing individual contributions (Domínguez, 2012).

PAP can be described by its European origins and long-standing use in primary and secondary education abroad. So, PAP is a new teaching methodology launched in the world of education a long time ago, but it is still fresh in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Though fresh, some Congolese teachers have started trying it in comparison to their routine way of doing things in order to see how more advantageous and applicable it is over other methods. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that since PAP was launched, its promoters have tried to show that it is much more advantageous and sell it as bearing no difficulties regarding its use, except that it is time-consuming.

2. Research Questions

This paper aims to determine the English lessons in which PAP is easily applicable and to look into the different difficulties English teachers encounter and propose some ways to overcome them. The present article is worthy in the field of English language teaching and learning insofar as it helps teachers of English in general to be aware of the method and its benefits, and to provide DRC teachers in particular with some hints to use this method with techniques to overcome possibly encountered or foreseen difficulties.

Therefore, this paper investigates two research questions:

- 1) Is PAP possibly applicable for all the English lessons, for example, vocabulary, grammar, reading for comprehension, etc.?
- 2) What are the difficulties related to the use of PAP, and how should they be overcome?

3. Theoretical Background

Active and participatory teaching is a new approach to learning in some Congolese schools through the socio-constructivist model. Thanks to this model, classes are now

described as more dynamic and participatory, and relationships between teachers and pupils on the one hand, and between pupils on the other, have become more horizontal. This is the 'learning' model. Here, the role of the teacher changes fundamentally from the transmissive style; they encourage research and facilitate the comparison of results. It is therefore no longer a question of lecturing, but of organizing learning scenarios that enable pupils to work and develop their knowledge. They are thus involved in situations that allow them to use their skills and develop them during the course of their education (Mokonzi, 2009, p. 78). In fact, this teaching method enables pupils at all levels, from the first to the sixth year of secondary school, to acquire socio-cognitive, emotional and psychomotor skills and gradually develop an awareness of group work. As a result, pupils' performance is improving compared to previous years.

Professor Grêt, PAP trainer in the region of the Great Lakes in general and particularly in DRC, suggests that there are two procedures embodied in the method under study. Those procedures are respectively Performance of Group I (Type 1) and Performance of Group II (Type 2). They differ in the procedure of their application. Below is the way they are applied regardless of the lesson topic:

A. Procedure of Performance of Group I (Type 1)

- Introduction (review, motivation and topic announcement),
- Presentation of instructions,
- Individual work,
- Instruction/timing,
- Pair work,
- Instruction/precision of timing,
- Teacher going through groups (during group work),
- Instruction/timing,
- Work in a group of 4,
- Instruction/timing,
- Work in a group of 8. Here, pupils chose themselves a moderator and a secretary,
- Presentation,
- Faithfulness of secretaries,
- Display of the teacher's work,
- Permutation of secretaries for the correction of their friends' work,
- Appreciation of works by the teacher,
- Synthesis,
- Practice.

B. Procedure of Performance of Group II (Type 2)

- 1) Introduction: a few commentaries to attract learners' attention,
- 2) Instruction: study the content of the work that you will be given, and explain it to one another until everybody gets the essence.
- 3) Constitution of groups:

- Distribution of notes to the group containing their materials to study,
- Precision of the tiling by the teacher,
- The teacher surrounds the groups during work and intervenes if necessary,
- Preparation of spaces for oral presentation,
- 4) Oral presentation
 - Group members present their work: all the group members pass in front of the class to present without any reference,
 - Any member of the group must talk under the moderator's permission,
 - The teacher distributes this group's notes to the rest of the class and asks them to glance at them to ask questions,
 - The teacher gets involved in the work by making a partial synthesis; this must be done after any exposé,
- 5) Global synthesis: the teacher summarizes all the work that the different groups presented,
- 6) Practice: the teacher asks questions covering all the topics presented by all the groups, and pupils answer individually either orally or on paper.

As can be seen from the prior procedures of participatory and active pedagogy, one can deduce that PAP is a teaching methodology that puts the accent on the learner-centered approach. It requires learners to work in groups in the course of the lesson, and the teacher can intervene only after a given group finishes their oral presentation.

PAP yields a lot of advantages, as Paccolat advocates combining theory and practice. In his book entitled *Didactique générale* (General Didactics), he states that "*the great advantage of active teaching methods is that they initially place learners in the position of primary pedagogical transmitters for a relatively short period of time, because when used correctly, they place several learners in the position of primary transmitters during group discussions. At that point, the teacher is delighted that some pupils are taking his place, since the position of main transmitter is a privileged one, particularly in terms of learning more*" (Paccolat, 2002, p. 29).

Active teaching requires the use of active methods and techniques based primarily on four didactic principles:

- 1) activity, active learning allows students to link knowledge, attitudes or skills to their needs, participation, anticipation and cooperation;
- 2) participatory learning, students carry out most of the activities. They analyze, study ideas, solve problems and apply what they learn;
- 3) anticipatory learning, which enables students to act for present and future purposes. Students must find that school activities enable them to solve current problems and those that will arise in the future; and finally,
- 4) cooperative learning based on a group approach: learning together in a complementary and mutual way. Students learn with common goals, receive mutual rewards, use shared resources, and benefit from complementary roles (Gret, 2007, p. 22).

Though promoting learners' autonomy, Participatory and active pedagogy implies some difficulty for teachers to apply it. James & Pedder (2006) quoted by Willis

(2010), state: “the majority of teachers in AfL research reported great difficulty in promoting learner autonomy”. Also, working in a group is very essential for learners, entailing, according to (Grêt, 2007, p. 30), the following disadvantages for students:

- 1) intolerance,
- 2) competition,
- 3) tension,
- 4) formation of clans,
- 5) timing of coordination,
- 6) loss of much energy to convince the colleague,
- 7) duty to form compromises,
- 8) difficulty in orienting the energy into positive power,
- 9) in case of bigger groups, there is hard information and transmission,
- 10) condition to work with people with whom one shares fewer or no relationships,
- 11) thinking that one could do better quickly than the group.

In relation to the requirements of PAP, the practice is contrasting in DRC since teachers are still reported to stand in front of pupils and transmit knowledge. That way of thinking will never promote the mastery of English because. On the contrary, teachers should be resorting to approaches that put pupils in a position to participate in the construction of their knowledge. That is why David (1988, p. 97) argues that real life and psycho linguistically motivated pedagogic tasks seem to be both pedagogically and psycho-linguistically sound and also appear to have a general support of the learners themselves.

4. Methodology

To document the applicability of PAP, research was conducted on a small population of English teachers in Bukavu. The group included only schools whose teachers had received training in this method. So, the study included teachers from the protestant school sector who were the main beneficiaries of the training. Given such a limiting criterion, the number of respondents in the survey was eight (n=8). In addition to the questionnaire, an interview was also held with pupils taught by those teachers in order to obtain their views regarding PAP. The analysis of data was done using “Sphinx” software. The choice of this software was motivated by its capacity to deal with both qualitative and quantitative data.

5. Findings and Discussion

Below are the tables highlighting the realities about Participatory and active pedagogy. As said earlier, the investigation concerned eight teachers of English in some schools in Bukavu. Among these teachers, some are Graduate and others are Undergraduate. The table below presents that.

Table 1: Years of Experience and Qualification

Years of Experience/Qualification	Graduate (Bac+5)	Undergraduate	Total
Non answer	1	0	1
Below 2 years	0	1	1
From 2 to 4 years	0	1	1
From 4 to 6 years	0	0	0
From 6 to 8 years	0	1	1
From 8 to 10 years	1	0	1
From 10 to 12 years	0	0	0
12 years and up	3	0	3
Total	5	3	8

The above table shows that there is one Bachelor holder (five years of college/University) who did not state his experience, one whose experience varies between 8 and 10 years and three who have been teaching English for 12 years or more. That makes the total of five graduates who were concerned with this study. There were also three undergraduates (three years of college/University), among whom one had not yet reached 2 years of experience, one whose experience is between 2 and 4 years, and one who had taught English for a period between 6 and 8 years. However, some of them were trained for PAP.

Table 2: Qualifications and Training in PAP

Qualification/Training in PAP	Yes	No	Total
Graduate	5	0	5
Undergraduate	1	2	3
Total	6	2	8

The data in the above table may be read as stating that all five graduates confirmed to have just been trained in PAP, whereas among the three undergraduates, only one has already been trained, and two have not yet. These two having answered the questionnaire may be explained by the fact that trained teachers always organize debriefing sessions for their colleagues, and the latter start trying the methodology even though they are not yet trained. The high number of Graduates proves that the training organization also takes into account the qualification of the teachers to train.

Table 3: PAP Use Period and Training in PAP

PAP Use Period/Training in PAP	Yes	No	Total
Less than a year	1	1	2
1 year	2	1	3
2 years	0	0	0
3 years	1	0	1
4 years	1	0	1
5 years	0	0	0
6 years	1	0	1
Total	6	2	8

Data in this table show, for example, that six out eight teachers are already trained in PAP. And among those six teachers, only one has been using it for six years now. Thus, they were varied in terms of their experience and training with PAP.

Table 4: Courses in which PAP Has Been Used

Courses for PAP Use		
All courses, except grammar	1	25,0%
Grammar, Reading for comprehension, Vocabulary, Reading for intonation	1	25,0%
In most lessons that are required to be taught in the class.	1	25,0%
Reading for comprehension, Composition	1	25,0%
Total	4	100,0%

The above table reveals the areas wherein some teachers have been using PAP. As can be seen, only four out of eight teachers answered this question, and four others did not. Then the four who answered represent 100% of the answers to that question. As can be read from the table, the sample of teachers uses PAP in a variety of lessons.

Table 5: Applicability of PAP to any English lesson

Applicability To Any Lesson	Nb. cit.	Freq.
Vocabulary	6	75,0%
Grammar	5	62,5%
Reading for comprehension	7	87,5%
Reading for intonation	5	62,5%
Composition	5	62,5%
Dialogue	4	50,0%
Total	8	

As can be read from the above table, 87,5% of teachers use PAP for the lesson of reading for comprehension. This is understandable given that this category of lessons accepts both the procedures suggested by the PAP trainer. It means that, whether pupils start working together from the beginning of the lesson up to its end or whether they start working individually and later form groups, answers will be provided to questions related to the text. Also, this lesson does not require/or imply any speaking skills. This situation may be opposed to the one for a lesson of Dialogue for which only four teachers apply PAP. The rationale behind that is the requirement of this lesson to resort to the speaking skill, which may be difficult, if not impossible, in fresh English classes, i.e., third and fourth forms, because, as said in the introduction, for PAP the teachers give only instructions through which pupils construct their knowledge. The data show agreement among these teachers for the validity of PAP use in almost all types of lessons.

Table 6: Years of Experience and the Applicability of PAP to Any Lesson

Years of Experience/ Applicability to Any Lesson	Vocabulary	Grammar	Reading for comprehension	Reading for intonation	Composition	Dialogue	Total
No answer	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Under 2 years	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
From 2 to 4 years	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
From 4 to 6 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
From 6 to 8 years	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
From 8 to 10 years	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
From 10 to 12 years	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 years and plus	3	3	3	3	2	2	16
Total	6	5	7	5	5	4	32

The objective of confronting the experience of teachers and the lessons in which they apply PAP was to see if the experience impacts the use of the said method. That issue has been confirmed as one can read the results in the above table, where 16 out of the 32 citation numbers with an experience of 12 years and beyond apply PAP in any suggested lesson compared to the rest of the results highlighted in the table. That means that the more one is trained in PAP and the more experienced, the more he/she use it.

Table 7: Applicability of PAP to any Lesson and Training in PAP

Applicability to Any Lesson/Training in PAP	Yes	No	Total
Vocabulary	4	2	6
Grammar	3	2	5
Reading for comprehension	6	1	7
Reading for intonation	4	1	5
Composition	4	1	5
Dialogue	3	1	4
Total	24	8	32

Mingling these two modalities was intended to check the impact of the training and the non-training in PAP on its applicability in any English lesson. And, as it can be read from the above table, there is great impact. This is proved, for example, for the applicability of PAP in the lesson of vocabulary, where, out of six respondents, four have just taken the training in the method. Comparing the two columns (yes and no), everybody sees that the 'yes' column, standing for 'trained teachers', embodies a greater number for each type of English lesson than the 'no' column, which stands for 'untrained' teachers. That proves that the training in PAP has a big influence on its use in this or that lesson.

Table 8: Any Other Area

Dictation	2	100,0%
Total	2	100,0%

Here, the point was to know if there are any other lessons in which teachers use PAPs. The table shows that two teachers said that they also use that method when teaching Dictation. This shows how language teachers are still entrenched in “old” methodologies.

Table 9: Difficulties Related to the Application of the PAP

Challenges Connected to PAP Use		
In inappropriate places (most schools do not have places for pupils to work in groups calmly), most pupils discuss in French, the language they know better; some pupils talk less, lack of appropriate materials (audio-visual).	1	12,5%
Consumes so much time.	1	12,5%
Not many difficulties, but I may say that it takes much time, and for pupils who are weak, the teacher has difficulties assessing their knowledge.	1	12,5%
Some pupils hardly understand this lesson since it is taught in a foreign language. When we form groups and give instructions, they do not provide us with good answers simply because the language is not mastered by the pupils.	1	12,5%
The difficulty is that some learners are too frightened or too afraid to speak, regardless of the mistakes/errors they are likely to make.	1	12,5%
The main difficulty is the lack of time. The scheduled hours are not appropriate for this PAP. Sometimes, the end of the period appears when the lesson is not ended. The lack of some means (objects) which can let the lesson talk.	1	12,5%
When applying PAP in the classroom, here are some difficulties that I always see: some learners always talk while others work silently.	1	12,5%
When applying PAP, some pupils are not active; they leave the task to those who react in English. And when the floor is given to every group member, these do not speak.	1	12,5%
Total	8	100,0%

Table 9.B: Types of Difficulties

Teacher-related	Student-related	Process-related
Time	Time	Time
Teacher's quality	Anxiety	Material
Teacher communication	Fear of error	
Materials	Student conversation engagement	
Visual aids	Group dynamics	
	Use of L1	

Reading the above challenges highlighted by teachers, one can see that PAP is a good method for a language that pupils know very well. Using PAP in English classes will not help pupils master the English language since many of them will use the language they know better (French, Swahili), and others will simply keep quiet and not speak. Knowing that we happen to know a language by speaking it, how will then a pupil who does not speak English know it? For such an issue, Elliott and Reynolds (2014) say:

“Group work and experiential learning methods have been sharply criticized for being based on overly simplified learning theories and for taking insufficient account of the complex social, political and emotional processes which are generated when they are used. Much of what is significant to the students may not be expressed at the time.”

The problem of time as well may also prevent teachers from achieve the foreseen materials, and that would later on impact negatively the pupils’ results at the state exam, as teachers would not have covered all the materials requested by the national curriculum.

To sum up with these difficulties and thinking of pupils’ attitude towards PAP, Griffiths et al (2005) propose the phenomenon of ‘learning shock’ as a way of understanding students’ responses of frustration, confusion and anxiety when faced with unfamiliar pedagogical approaches. Also, Elliott and Reynolds (2014, p. 311) report: *“this pedagogy is unfamiliar to most of the students, is welcomed by some, and irksome to others.”*

Table 10: Strategies to overcome the encountered difficulties

Mitigating Strategies		
I always ask learners to keep quiet and follow me. If they didn't understand, they must work together for a better understanding, and they have to exchange themselves under my supervision.	1	12,5%
I always avoid talking rubbish, I manage very well the small time. I have to teach each lesson by dealing with the essential one. I always look for my own means through the procedures and strategies.	1	12,5%
in order to overcome these difficulties, I help the pupils by taking some opportunities of give a short explanation of the materials.	1	12,5%
Assisting pupils, managing to translate their Swahili language or French to English because most of the time they discuss in Swahili or in French, correcting structural mistakes, managing time because they take more time discussing.	1	12,5%
Taking only the care of time, do not do things which do not concern the lesson.	1	12,5%
To overcome the problem of time, I take two hours for a lesson if necessary. For the assessment, I always consider individual work.	1	12,5%
We manage to form groups of clever pupils and insert some weak ones so as to get more explanation by their mates who seem to be more intelligent than them.	1	12,5%
We try to involve even the shy students in interacting with the others.	1	12,5%
Total	8	100,0%

Table 10.B: Types of strategies

Teacher-related	Student-related	Process-related
Time management	Interaction	
Clear instructions		
Time flexibility		
Motivate		
Grouping		
Individualization		

Regarding the remedies as suggested above by the teachers, it is worth mentioning here that whatever teachers may do, they will not eradicate at one hundred per cent the fact, for example, of a pupil not willing to work with others. We must know that when a pupil manifests such an attitude, there is a reason for that. That is what Ledwith and Seymour's (2001) research proved: *"regardless of culture, students consistently thought that their individual assessments better reflected their ability than their group work did"*. It has also to be said that this method is recommended for a class where pupils already know the language.

Table 11: Teachers' views about PAP

Teachers' Perspectives about of PAP		
The teacher, despite of supervising groups, has time for the rest.	1	11,1%
PAP is a good method, though it is not used in every English lesson. It doesn't exclude the other methods from being used.	1	11,1%
PAP seems to be better than other teaching methods, according to me, because in the group, every pupil is free to give their ideas and therefore the acquisition is easy.	1	11,1%
If all schools could apply PAP, it could help because when teaching in this method, it is good.	1	11,1%
It is a good method because it is active, but it needs to be applied with appropriate materials and an environment.	1	11,1%
Pupils have to debate (talk) in the classroom. PAP is a good method which helps pupils to understand the materials rapidly. It helps learners to better understand the materials.	1	11,1%
The PAP being a method which is applied in groups better than the CLT since it brings pupils to teach themselves	1	11,1%
The learning a language or EFL requires communication. Also, forward/promote group work.	1	11,1%
This is the best method, which gives good results because it allows pupils to express themselves, work in groups, and provides good feedback between the teacher and his/her pupils. Really, with it, pupils feel at ease and they become strong in English.	1	11,1%
Total	9	100,0%

Table 11.B: Types of View

Teacher
Time for rest
Not exclusive
Better than others
Needs appropriate materials and environment
How people talk
Student control of own learning
Communicative/group work
Benefits both teachers and pupils

Confronting what teachers have expressed in the above table, let us mention the idea of Chen, Fang and Kerrane quoted by Elliott and Reynolds (p. 312) on group work organization. They state:

“A fundamental aspect of group work is group membership and the degree of discretion which students have over choosing whom they work with. These choices over membership and selection are one of the ways in which the distribution of power and control within the program is reflected. As tutors, our dilemma is that on the one hand, we wish to encourage students to take responsibility for such decisions, but on the other hand, to exert control in the interests of students working with as many of their colleagues as possible throughout the year. Some students experience a similar dilemma as to whether to choose to work with friends they already feel comfortable with, or to expand their experience by working with people they do not know well”.

Table 12: Any other comments about PAP

Further Teachers' Comments on PAP		
PAP is a way of learning easily, and it helps even teachers to communicate with pupils, and even pupils themselves.	1	14,3%
PAP is good, but it cannot be applied to all the lessons of the English course. For example, the vocabulary lesson and grammar. But it helps the teacher and the pupils.	1	14,3%
I encourage the application of this method, for it is active with the pupils and makes the teacher save more energy. For its inconvenience, more research is still to be sought out.	1	14,3%
In English, PAP should be removed because it is based on active pupils only.	1	14,3%
It is a good method. I like and enjoy it.	1	14,3%
It's no use saying that PAP has been used for ages with John Dewey and his followers.	1	14,3%
Total	7	100,0%

Reading the commentaries in the above table, one sees that teachers are still reserved about the applicability of PAP to any English lesson. The pity is that even the teachers who talk of PAP here express trivial reasons like the teacher saves more energy, which has nothing to do with pupils' growth in English.

6. Conclusion

Reading the results of this research, one may see that PAP does not help much pupils grow in English in the present condition of DRC foreign language learning/teaching. The great reason is that, once involved in group work from the beginning up to the end of the lesson, pupils use local languages on one hand and French on the other hand, rather than English, which they use only when the teacher gets to their group to check how their work is going. Teachers, on their own behalf, encounter the difficulty in handling that issue. In fact, the fact of pupils working in groups is not synonymous with them practicing/using the English language. As said above, they may be working in groups and, unfortunately, using other languages than English. That goes in accordance with the World Bank's result stating that in DRC the number of children at school has increased, though the question of what those pupils are learning once at school still can be asked.

Another difficulty, as it can be read from tables 4, 5, and 6, is that each teacher uses PAP regarding the course of his choice. That proves the big challenge the use of PAP brings in the teaching of English, given that there is no curricular uniformity as to which

courses to apply the PAP. This supports the argument of Krogull and Scheunpflug stating that the implementation of PAP is successful in some classes than in others. Reading this statement from Suzane and Prof Annette and taking also into account the results, one may say that PAP better fits for the lessons of Reading for comprehension, Dictation and sometimes Composition since they are lessons requiring writing skills that pupils develop quickly than in lessons like vocabulary, grammar, dialogue, reading for intonation requiring spoken skills, which most pupils do not do easily, if not never develop.

Given that many teachers use PAP because they are compelled to by school authorities (curriculum design and implementation requirements), and sometimes when there is an inspector visit to their classes, actually, many use the methods they used to use (results from the interview conducted with the teachers). This article recommends revisiting the concept of PAP and reshaping it to the realities of English teaching-learning frameworks of DRC, where English is taught as a foreign language by low-qualified teachers, working in less resourced conditions. The authors leave room open for qualitative research for in-depth exploration of PAP.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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