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Foreword

It gives us great pleasure to introduce you to the Bejaia University, First International Conference Proceedings – 2015 published in collaboration with Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Languages, University of Bejaia, Algeria. The conference took place at University of Abderrahmane Mira of Bejaia, Algeria on 21-22 April 2015. Presenters were invited to submit their full papers to be considered for publication in the conference proceedings. Based on our review guidelines and the recommendations of our reviewers we accepted for the current publication those papers which appear here. Our sincere apologies go to those whose papers did not get selected this time.

Editorial Board
August 2015
Abstract:
This article explores the gap which exists between the spirit, principles and objectives of the Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching (henceforth, CBLT) and its implementation in the Algerian educational context. The euphoria that prevailed in Algeria around the CBLT and the Educational Reform led, later on, to bitter criticism on its official implementation and its actual application and practices. Some observations are made on how this approach has been implemented since September 2003. These are based on issues related to what has been done for the CBLT at the institutional level and what the reality is at school. Classroom observation and practices and outside school behaviours of both pupils and teachers are indicative of the distancing between institutional decisions and field realism. Some factors related to the socio-educational environment in which this approach was introduced are examined and discussed. The article raises the question on the hiatus between myth, reality and challenges concerning the issue on the CBLT in Algeria.

Key words: Algeria, competencies, education, foreign languages, teacher-training
Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of an ‘abrupt’ shift in the teaching and learning attitudes, methods, materials and behaviours that prevailed prior to 2003 towards the CBLT which was instituted in the Algerian educational system since the school year of 2003-2004. The issues raised here relate to some decision making actions that were taken then by means of ministerial instructions for a shift from the Communicative Approach to the Competency Based Approach to Language Teaching. Needless to mention here that at school, all the other subject matters (Music, Sports, Arithmetic, etc.) are taught under the Competency Based Approach (CBA). This sudden transition did not actually prospect in detail the socio-educational and cultural environment in which this approach was initially carried out. The effect and affect of this change on the teachers’ and the learners’ attitudes and motivations are discussed in the light of the use of the new pedagogies (CBLT) in actual classroom situations. In fact, neither the teachers nor the pupils had been prepared in advance for the move towards the CBLT. They remained, so to speak, unfamiliar or alien to this mode of teaching and learning, not to say, resistant to change. Most of them preferred to stick to their usual teaching/learning behaviours. Instead of proceeding upstream to an evaluation in terms of the teachers’ and the pupils’ entry and exit profiles before injecting the CBLT into the educational system, decision makers limited themselves to top-down instructions as to how this approach had to be carried out. This situation triggered off divergences in the educational arena in Algeria. For example, the logistics put in place for the CBLT in Algeria in September 2003 included new textbooks at primary school for the teaching of English and the teacher’s booklet with guidelines on his new ‘role’ and on how to lead the learner to think and act in order to work out a project in the form of collaborative learning. Some seminars for a better understanding of the CBLT prospects and perspectives were organised in some parts of the country. At the same time, a number of ministerial instructions on the CBLT which spelt out the objectives and the didactic orientations and dimensions of this approach in the Algerian context were sent to the school administration for dispatching among the teachers and staff. Some of these instructions included the targeted socio-educational, cognitive and socio-constructive purposes that were aimed at by implementing the CBLT in Algeria. The message was sometimes vaguely grasped by those teachers who were not acquainted with the new terminology (competency, know-how-to-do, know-how-to-act, know-how-to-be, project pedagogy, collaborative learning, cognitive capacities, socio-constructive behaviours, etc.). Although the new pedagogy stood as a challenge to all actors of education in its broadest sense (decision makers, teachers, learners and even parents) for a more adequate teaching of foreign languages in Algeria, teachers and learners in particular seemed rather anxious of these changes in the programs for which they had neither been properly and adequately informed nor prepared. Moreover, the monitoring in situ of the accomplishment of the CBLT appeared more complex than expected and planned by high level decision makers. Two determining factors for the success or failure of the CBLT project in Algeria remained beyond their control. There still exist centrifuge forces primarily composed of female and young teachers who more or less accepted these changes. On the opposite, we have a strong presence of centipede forces which resist in one way or another to changes in the programs, changes in classroom activities and practices, etc. One possible reason for this is that the decision for the implementation of this approach was made at the institutional level with no consideration of the first users who are the teachers and the learners in the first place. The hectically organised seminars on the CBLT in some schools across the country did not actually come out with indicators for an adequate implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. The objective
was to inform on paper the teachers and inspectors on the relevance of the CBLT in Algeria. More than a decade after its implementation, the euphoria around the CBLT and the excitement of its advocates gave rise to bitter criticism by teachers, learners, the Press and parents in particular. A dilemma is installed nowadays concerning the implementation of new teaching programmes based on the CBLT in Algeria. The prime objective of the CBLT was to shape and prepare the ‘new citizen’ through training on meta-linguistic activities like the ‘know-how-to-do’, ‘know-how-to-act’ and ‘know-how-to-be’ in front of a task or in new situations and contexts. This objective seems to turn nowadays into a source of tensions and even divergences between decision makers, inspectors, teachers, pupils and parents. It reflects in fact the gap which exists between myth and reality in the implementation of this approach in Algeria.

I. **The place of foreign languages in Algeria: an overview**

The 1970’s represent an era where the state economy did not stimulate a particular interest for foreign languages in Algeria. The main concern then was to launch a national language policy for the general use of the Arabic language in all sectors, starting with the primary school level. That was known as the ‘Arabisation Policy’ of the 1970’s. Foreign languages were more confined to university studies with degrees such as a ‘BA in French’, a ‘BA in English’, a ‘BA in Spanish’, a ‘BA in Russian’ and less frequently a ‘BA in German’. These degrees were primarily obtained for the teaching of foreign languages at secondary school level and they were studied at the universities of Algiers, Oran, Constantine and Annaba, the largest cities in Algeria. 60% of the teaching staff was composed of Nationals while 40% were Expatriates. The teaching methods were the Direct and the Indirect Methods. The BA syllabi in Foreign Languages were all set by the MESRS and sent to all the universities in the country.

The 1980’s were symptomatic of a shift towards an openness policy and a market economy turning towards the West (Europe in particular). Some internal political and institutional changes had been brought up together with exchanges at all levels and sectors of the Algerian economy. Algeria started to become an affluent and a consumer society with a significant mobility of the Algerians towards Europe in particular. This was one of the main factors, during this decade that triggered off an increasing demand for foreign languages (French, English and Spanish in particular). At the same time, there was a massive wave (1982-1986) of university teaching staff that was granted Algerian scholarships for further studies particularly in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. The teaching methods were based on objective oriented pedagogy and the communicative approach. The teaching materials and textbooks were prepared by the Direction de l’Enseignement Fondamental (DEF), the Commission Nationale des Programmes (CNP), the Institut National de Recherche en Education (INRE) and by the Comité Pédagogique National, MESRS (CPN).

The 1990’s witnessed a wave of violence and uncertainty in Algeria. The resulting hectic situation and the subsequent trouble in the country caused a sudden fall in the teaching of foreign languages in general and French in particular. The CCF (known today as the French Institute, for French), the British Council (for English), the Cervantes Institute (for Spanish) or the Goethe Institute (for German) as well as other foreign cultural and educational centres based in the main cities and in the Capital Algiers, had to close following the massive departure of expatriates who fled the country for safety reasons. Cultural exchanges dropped drastically with a total absence of foreign and French newspapers, magazines, films, etc. This was coupled with a substantial decrease in bilateral co-operation with the CEIL (Centre d’Enseignement Intensif des Langues). The teaching personnel for foreign languages was drastically reduced as many nationals had to
flee abroad for safety. Those who were sent for post-graduate studies abroad following the ambitious training program of the 1980’s (see above) did not return to Algeria. They represented about 30% of the National University Teaching Staff. The expatriates (teachers and / or students) at university had all left the country. The Algerian university was thus ‘depleted’ of its human resources: teachers and students and more particularly the female teachers and students. Teaching was conducted by patching up with the local staff available on the spot. It was often done by some Magister students and 4th year BA students when the permanent teachers had heavy teaching loads. A specificity of the 1990’s at university was clear repeated absences which characterized the departments of foreign languages. Students - the female students in particular - had to leave the departments of foreign languages and the more so the department of French to register in departments where studies were followed in Arabic as the case was for the departments of Arabic Language and Literature, History, Geography, Islamic Studies, etc. There was also a student rush towards computing and data processing departments for those who had the required qualifications for registration in these departments.

The years 2000 represent a reopening to the outside world. The tarnished and torn image of Algeria of the dark decade was slowly fading away and the country regained progressively its place in the international sphere. The teaching and the use of foreign languages were encouraged at the institutional level. French regained its place of pride in the linguistic landscape of Algeria. An AFP despatch at that time illustrated this revival for the teaching of French in Algeria.

Sous le titre, "le français reprend des couleurs en Algérie", l'article fait état de la reprise de vigueur officielle de la pratique et de l'enseignement du français en Algérie. (Samedi 10 juin, 2000)

Roughly translated as:

Under the title, "French retakes colours in Algeria", the article reports on the vigorous and official revival of the practice and the teaching of French in Algeria. (Saturday June 10th, 2000)

This reopening and revival after a dark decade triggered off the need for foreign languages not only in the economic sector but also in Education and FLT. The general view in this vein was that FLT would give the Algerian pupil the opportunity to better understand the “Other” (i.e., what is foreign, the foreign culture and the foreigner) and to know more on different cultures and civilizations for his own cognitive and socio-constructive development. The implementation of the CBLT was supposed to achieve these socio-educational goals and to meet the learners’ needs in terms of citizenship, vocational and life competencies.

In practice, this political and economic endeavour encouraged the emergence of new projects for university training in foreign languages with an institutional and financial reinforcement of the former CEIL centres across the country. ‘Doctoral Schools’ were established on the basis of academic and scientific exchanges with France in particular to help in the teaching, co-supervising and training of post-graduate students and encourage a North/South scholar exchanges and mobility. This was followed by the establishment of research and cultural poles such as the AUF Campus or the American Corner for access to research facilities like books, journals, magazines and online reference sources in foreign languages. The co-operation also developed with European consortia such as Erasmus-Mundus, PAU, AUF, Averroes, Tempus, etc. Research laboratories were endorsed by the MESRS from 2000 onwards to
stimulate national research and serve the various sectors of the national economy. Partnerships were signed between some of these laboratories and foreign research laboratories; French research laboratories in particular.

The new orientations also included the institution of specialized committees known as the GSD (Groupe de Spécialité par Discipline) to put into practice the orientations concerning the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. The GSD developed school programs based on the CBLT in subject matters such as Arabic, French, English, Arithmetic, Civic Education, Music and Sports etc. The new CBLT textbooks were distributed in September 2003 to schools for use in replacement of the former textbooks. Thus, a new approach on the didactics of foreign languages was introduced in the classroom implying and involving new classroom practices, new teaching materials and behaviours, new tools and a new vision of teaching/learning. The main purpose was to install competencies in the learner and help him develop his own autonomy and critical thinking. He had to produce with his peers projects to present in class. Evaluation and assessment had thus become formative rather than the summative evaluation the learners were used to prior to September 2003. Needless to say that this top-to-bottom action had taken teachers and learners aback!

II. Teaching under the CBLT Algeria

On paper, the prime objective in teaching foreign languages to the Algerian pupil is communicative in essence. He is supposed to be taught how to acquire ‘targeted’ competencies and to stimulate his cognitive development so that he can react in an adequate way to real situations with verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction. The second objective is cultural. The programs and the textbooks that were dispatched for use in the primary and the secondary levels are based on a socio-constructive approach. They aim at making the learner discover other cultures which may be different from his own and develop in him the notion of tolerance and acceptance of the difference together with a critical thinking and a creative mind.

The third objective, according to the programs worked out by the Ministry for National Education and its application in the textbooks, is functional. The training and the acquisition of foreign languages based on the CBLT give access to science, technology and arts. These objectives are clearly expressed through the ministerial instructions and the programs for the development of textbooks based on the CBLT. What should be noticed, however, is a huge breach and obvious contradictions between the objectives as spelt out in the documents and the reality on the ground in its various shades and shapes be it at school and outside the school.

Field observation

Classroom observation and practices as much as outside school behaviour unveil the presence of cracks, breaks and distancing with the objectives of the CBLT in Algeria as expounded in the official documents. Such gaps between the official orientations and real classroom settings and contexts lead inevitably to a profound lack of motivation on the part of the learner who develops an increasing apprehension in front of the changes and new learning practices. Three types of ruptures can be observed. The first one dates back to the late 60’s and early 70’s. It is social and it is manifest in the disproportion and the imbalance between the socialisation process and pre-school behaviour on the one hand and the school environment on the other hand. The child’s first year at school does not prepare him to a smooth transition from his mother tongue to the school tongue (Modern Standard Arabic or Literary Arabic in
general). Some kitten gardens may offer this opportunity but not all the children go to kitten gardens where parents have to pay. These ruptures have already been mentioned on several occasions and suggestions were made for a smooth, consensual and more flexible transition from the family language to the school language. The fact remains that the child’s language acquisition and use is not taken into consideration when he first starts his school life. This can be used as a basis for the development of programs and textbooks so that the child can find references and landmarks with his pre-school life and establish a link between home and the school. A point in case would be that of introducing colour adjectives in class. The vocabulary of the colour terms in dialectal Arabic is quasi similar to that of the language of the school. So, while the child comes to school with very productive structures of the CCVC / CVCC types such as {zrag} to express the blue colour in dialectal Arabic, he is ‘instructed’ to use a CVCCVC, i.e., {azraq} ‘blue’ (masc. sing.) at school. Compared to the school form, the dialectal form undergoes in fact a haplology process where the first CV syllable is dropped and the phonic resonance of some sounds may vary slightly as for [g] and [q] in this case for dialectal Arabic and school Arabic respectively. Classroom observation clearly reveals that the pupil is ‘blackjacked’ by the teacher and the ‘coercive’ pedagogy he has been trained (or instructed) to use in class. However, as soon as the pupil leaves the school context, he switches back to the form and the pronunciation of his local variety or native language. On the cognitive and socio-constructive plane, the pupil develops the feeling that the school tries to erase or obliterate his assets, his lexical repertoire and his identity and landmarks. This abrupt and coercive transition to the language of the school is regarded sometimes as ‘foreign’ to his social and family environment. The same coercive pedagogy is applied in the teaching of foreign languages at primary school, the middle school, the secondary school and even at university. When he enters school, the pupil comes with a linguistic repertoire and a cognitive baggage which can be used to the greatest possible advantage to make him discover the foreign language sounds and words which have already been acquired at home or outside home. The case of French in Algeria as his ‘first foreign language’ is a good example on this.

The second split is typical of traditional Arabic teaching and learning. While school Arabic appears to the pupil as ‘foreign’ to his own home language, he has to learn by heart, memorize and recite what he has learnt in a class or lesson in Arabic (vocabulary, grammar rules, forms of address, ready-made expressions, poems, etc.). The same pedagogical practices are applied to the teaching of French and English. The memorizing of the grammatical rules, in Arabic, French or English, is obligatory for the pupil who must learn by heart and repeat for assessment and evaluation in front of the teacher and the class (summative evaluation). If he passes the tests and exams with a reasonable average, he is then upgraded to the next higher school level. These practices stand in straight contradiction with the objectives of the CBLT in terms of the development of critical thinking, critical appraisal, reformulation, brainstorming and creative in-class and out-of-class activities that the texts on the CBLT in Algeria refer to. Thus, the gap widens between myths and the initial Euphoria and the reality in the classroom situation and settings.

The third rupture is epistemological. The ministerial instructions and recommendations, the accompanying documents, the reference frame, the teacher’s guide, the programs worked out by the GSD and the textbooks introduce a whole set of key concepts and a vision of the teaching/learning based on the CBLT to which the teacher is not acquainted and he/she has not been trained for or prepared beforehand. The teacher who is not any more the only source of
knowledge becomes a facilitator and a collaborator in the preparation of projects to be presented and evaluated in a formative way. The question remains on how can he/she achieve this if no teacher training had been programmed upstream? (e.g., in-service training, getting familiar with the CBLT key concepts and terminology, acting up in classroom observation sessions, etc.).

The general conclusion on this issue is that learning remains defensive together with static knowledge and a summative evaluation that are characterized by the absence of an adequate environment where the acquired knowledge becomes dynamic in order to be reinvested in the performance of a new task at school or outside school. The end result for the learner in this case is the feeling of having achieved something (sometimes using his own breakdown strategies) by carrying out a new task on the basis of what has learnt. Put otherwise, the introduction of the CBLT in Algeria is ‘a bad answer to a real problem’ to translate the words of an article in a national newspaper.\footnote{In 2006, that is three years after the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria, study days were organized by the Ministry of National Education (MEN). These were supervised by the PARE project and the UNESCO (see note 17). Many international experts took part and their results were published by the MEN under the form of conference acts entitled ‘Réforme de l’Éducation et Innovation Pédagogique en Algérie’ (Education Reform and Pedagogical Innovation in Algeria). Those results were much more of a theoretical nature than empirical perspectives and advice for what has to be changed, modified or acted out for better results in the actual teaching under the CBLT in Algeria. To sum up, the institutional approaches and pedagogies carried out by the reform in question did not actually sort out the problems encountered at primary school, at college or at secondary school during the application of the pedagogical innovations of the CBLT in actual classroom situations.}

III. The current situation: myths, reality and challenges

In general terms, the reform of the programs and the PARE project aimed, in the first place, to sustain the educational system in Algeria where education and schooling are compulsory. The main objective (in 2003) was a restructuring of the teaching methods and techniques and support for the implementation of information and communication technologies (ICT’s) in Education. The CTBT was opted for reach this end. The table below shows schematically the general framework for the implementation of the CBLT in Algeria by presenting the actors/decision makers, the arrangements put in place and the aims and objectives of the ministerial documents.
A. The Myths

The prime objective of this general framework with all its human component, funding, materials and documentation, etc. was to ensure the compliance of the teaching programs and learning with the new needs of the Algerian society which has witnessed rapid changes as an affluent society. Some of these changes have also had an impact on the school system. Various accompanying documents have been produced in order to explain to the users of the new textbooks the objectives and expected results in the application of the new CBLT programs. The latter (still in use) focus on the content and progress in class and outside class, the new teaching approach to follow, the management of the class, the preparation of the project (in and outside class) and on formative evaluation. The competencies identified are intended to develop in the child global language strategies and strategies to understand and then act. These were mainly related to the activities of listening, reading and writing. The learner develops then his own breakdown strategies in verbal and non verbal interactions.

B. The reality

What we observe in real classroom situations and in the environment in which this approach has been implemented is a series of shortcomings at all levels. The recommendations and instructions of an outdated type for today’s communication and globalization world are still present in the minds of policy makers and of the majority of practitioners and users (teachers, pupils, students, etc.). Even if the programs developed appeared ambitious and bearers of a promising societal project, the textbooks which were distributed in September 2003 do not reflect the real needs and gestalt of the learner. The pedagogic acts and didactic objectives selected in the teaching programs seem to be so far away from what exists on the ground. Moreover, the textbooks in question date back to their first issue in September 2003. Up to today, none has been updated, revised or reprinted. The ‘mistakes’, ‘shortcomings’ and ‘drawbacks’ of 2003 still remain in the pupils textbooks in 2015.

What we notice in reality and in the daily behaviours of teachers is the 'coercive' tendency in teaching practices. This applies to the pupil who is pushed to remain in a defensive learning position while the teacher stands as the only source of knowledge. The native language of the
The learner (Algerian Arabic, Berber or its varieties) and the French language still remain ‘striped’ in front of the language of the school: the Arabic language. At school in as much as elsewhere, learning under the approach by skills remains deductive and defensive: learn the rule, then store it, then apply it. This form of traditional learning applies to French which is introduced in the Third year and to English in the Fifth year of primary school.

In theory and in the texts on the CBLT in Algeria the learner becomes the centre of the educational device for learning and teaching. He is the actor (offensive learning and individual / collaborative discovery) rather than subject to the acquisition of knowledge, sometimes scattered and lacking motivation). In practice, learning is defensive with memorisation and recitation. The whole process is made up of static knowledge stored for a summative evaluation under the form of continuous assessments and exams. The status of the teacher under the CBLT has not changed in reality and in teaching practices in the classroom. In the texts, the CBLT will create a new landscape and a new educational environment. The teacher is no longer the only source of knowledge in class. He must not monopolize the class and the pedagogical activity. He should not also formulate questions and give the 'correct’ answers (feedback) with no concern on the quality of learning of his pupils. His teaching must mobilize the interest of the learner and his cognitive capacities. In practice, the presence of centripetal forces and centrifugal forces in the teaching staff (see above) gives the feeling of an ambient resistance to change and a tendency in favour of the application of old methods with an authoritarian behaviour of the teacher. We observed a lack of motivation for change and adaptation to new educational approaches (CBLT).

Knowledge is also put in question under the CBLT in Algeria. The texts of application for the CBLT insist on the acquisition and knowledge mobilization for a reinvestment of knowledge at school and outside school. They focus on the cognitive and socio-constructive capacities of the learner for a better understanding of what is foreign as well as on the values of tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding. In practice, knowledge remains confined to the teacher in the first place and the school textbook. It remains unchanged and this is in contradiction with a teaching approach based on the CBLT. The teacher just as the learner who follows his model in class do not seem to grasp how to make that knowledge acquired in class not just for evaluation and assessment but also for life.

The socio-educational environment does not facilitate access for the pupil to ICT’s, the Internet, and other computer assisted learning facilities. The assessment in class is always of the summative type even if the learner must submit projects that he had prepared with the means at his disposal in non-educational circles. It happens that the learners just copy and paste stuff from the Net and present it as a Project to get a ‘good’ mark. In addition, the contents of the textbooks do not actually reflect the learner’s environment. For instance, it may be the case that some passages in the textbook include cultural aspects with very difficult words, sentence constructions and concepts that are alien to the learner’s immediate socio-cultural environment. No explanation is given and sometimes the teacher him/herself is unable to provide an appropriate clarification. The learner is disillusioned, not to say unsatisfied, right from the start by a vocabulary and a choice of words that are totally alien to him. The textbook contents boil down sometimes to the abstraction of the knowledge and experience of the child in his preschool phase and early childhood. Drawing is almost absent in the text illustration with a proliferation of clipart which have no direct connexion with the texts or with the child’s inner
experience of life. The learner thus becomes increasingly uneasy about the understanding of the foreign language that he is presented.

Another equally important factor which stands in direct opposition with the principles and teaching practices of the CBLT appears in the overloaded lessons in overcrowded classrooms. At primary level, pupils are introduced to subjects such as Arabic, French, English, Science and Technology, Arithmetic, Civic and Islamic Education, History, Geography, Music and Physical Education among others. The general picture across the country is that of pupils getting out of school in a melee and heading home with heavy bags on their backs containing copybooks, textbooks, school materials and sometimes dictionaries, etc. It may happen that they also have to carry them from classroom to classroom. There is a characteristic lack of CBLT support facilities such as the access to the Internet in schools. Similarly, there is an absence or non-availability of means of Xeroxing (failures of all kinds: out of order machines, electricity cuts, or simply a lack of paper to print and reproduce the projects to present in class.

C. The challenges

In view of this situation which does not actually render the spirit of an adequate implementation of the CBLT, it is first and foremost a must to come to a consensus among all the participants in the educational system. Teachers, parents, learners and decision makers, school headmasters, etc., should gather and discuss the issue as objectively as possible and suggest possible answers to sort out the problems that hinder a successful implementation of the CBLT in Algeria. All pedagogical and administrative actors should be consulted in order to assess what has worked so far and what not in terms of pedagogy, administration, training, resources, etc. They may also suggest ways and approaches to reconcile the learner with the school, the school textbook and the teacher. In the short term, it is more than urgent to carry out a re-evaluation of the textbooks by experts, cartoonists and drawers, inspectors and practitioners. Objective expertise and rational investigation into this issue are more than necessary today for a revision of the programs in place and a re-adjustment according to the pedagogical principles of the CBLT. This does not mean a total rejection of the presentation and contents of the 2003 textbooks. It is also necessary to give a better place to the learner in the didactic triangle, to revive the institutes for teacher-training and facilitate access to the multimedia and ICT’s at school.

Finally, we truly believe in the reformulation of the educational objectives in a more explicit and adequate way in order to respond to the issues and challenges in place and ensure a more appropriate relevance of education in an ever changing society. The school ensures its function of education, socialization and qualifications only if we install in the learner competencies which enable him to become autonomous in developing his analytical capacities, mobilizing his knowledge acquisitions and synthesising when he faces new problem-solving situations. He has to develop learning strategies which enable him to confront his knowledge to that of others and acquire the capacity to ‘learn how to learn’. The table below summarises the arguments developed above on myths, reality and challenges of the CBLT in Algeria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myths</th>
<th>Reality</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free and obligatory schooling, authenticity of the identity and</td>
<td>Coercive Pedagogy. Errors are not tolerated.</td>
<td>To make the state of the art after a 12 year experience with the CBLT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arabisation of teaching.</td>
<td>Memorisation and Recitation. Denial of the use of the mother tongue in</td>
<td>Open dialogue between teachers, pupils, parents and the decision makers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a foreign language class.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambitious CBLT programs aiming at radical changes in the Algerian</td>
<td>Deductive reasoning and defensive learning.</td>
<td>High level expertise by academics and scholars for the revision of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school: GSD, INRE, MEN.</td>
<td>Traditional learning which is reproduced for French in the 3rd year</td>
<td>programs. Textbooks revision and re-edition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and for English in the 5th year at primary school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks (Sept. 2003) supposed to materialize the programs by</td>
<td>Contents with no incentives for the pupils.</td>
<td>Re-evaluation and re-editing of the textbooks by linguists, didacticians,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching and didactic acts inside and outside school. The new</td>
<td>Lack of motivation. Inadequate instructions with difficult words for</td>
<td>inspectors and experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizen with a critical thinking and a creative mind.</td>
<td>the pupil right from the start. Absence of knowledge, assets and</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experiences of the child. Improper use of images for text illustration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The pupil in at the centre of the teaching / learning process. He</td>
<td>Defensive learning. Memorizing and recitation. Language mechanisms and</td>
<td>To reconcile the pupil with the school, the teacher and the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is an autonomous and authentic actor. Offensive learning.</td>
<td>development of automatisms. Scattered knowledge leading to a lack of</td>
<td>To revalorize the image of learning in the didactic triangle.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>motivation from the learner.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher: facilitator, Co-communicator, guide, tutor, questioner</td>
<td>The teacher: main source of knowledge in class. He monopolizes talking</td>
<td>To re-establish the ITE for teacher training. To return to the act of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for a better locating and handling of the learner’s queries and</td>
<td>in class and the teaching activity. He formulates questions and gives</td>
<td>teaching as a rational and effective act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worries.</td>
<td>the ‘correct answers’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition and mobilization of knowledge. Reinvestment in new</td>
<td>Knowledge is based on the teacher and the textbook. This comes in</td>
<td>To install in the pupil selected competencies to develop his own learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tasks. Better understanding of the ‘Other’. Tolerance and dialogue.</td>
<td>direct opposition with teaching under the CBLT.</td>
<td>and knowledge re-investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial classes with pupils of various nationalities in</td>
<td>Overloaded lessons in overcrowded classrooms. Absence of ICT’s and the</td>
<td>To allow the school as much as possible to play its proper function of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria. Classes not overloaded with pupils. Collaborative and</td>
<td>Internet Proliferation of private schools across the country. Illegal</td>
<td>education, socialization and qualification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperative learning Use of the Internet and ICTs</td>
<td>reinforcement private lessons paid in cash in homes and basements.</td>
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*Figure 2.* arguments developed above on myths, reality and challenges of the CBLT in Algeria.
The euphoria for the CBLT that prevailed in 2003 and the momentum that followed for the change in the educational system in Algeria have led to bitter criticism. The main reason is that this approach which was supposed to bring in a comprehensive framework, as applied throughout the world, and modernize the Algerian school has not been properly and efficiently thought out and implemented on the ground. The means put in place did not meet the requirements and objectives of this integrative approach based on learning by projects and a formative evaluation. The programs were supposed to prepare the ‘citizens of tomorrow’ in his profession and in society through the installation of competencies. These would allow him to self-assess and reinvest the knowledge acquired. In the case of foreign languages, they make him communicate with others and widen his horizons on the world culture, civilisation and technologies. In reality, these programs ended up with heavily concentrated aspects of the foreign language such as grammar, vocabulary, and writing with some cultural aspects that did not lead to understanding and verbal / non-verbal interaction. The language skills and socio-cultural aspects needed to develop a spirit of tolerance and dialog in the Algerian learner have simply been left aside with a few hints that appear in the textbooks without being explicated and clarified. The current curriculum is not based on methodologies that encourage and develop the capacity of the learner to analyze and synthesize before taking a decision in front of a problem situation. This failure in the implementation of the CBLT at school is mainly due to an inadequate and inconsistent preparation of the teacher to a project pedagogy which implies new teaching tools, new statuses, behaviours and attitudes in class for the learners and a formative evaluation which motivates him in acquiring a know-how-to-be, love for learning and love of the school.

At the institutional level, the reform of the educational system through the CBLT was made without transition. It resulted in a sudden shift for the teacher and the learner who were not prepared in a thoughtful and coherent manner. The quick elaboration of programs, textbooks and teaching and learning methods through ministerial instructions and official documents has produced an opposite effect as to the objectives and expected results in the implementation of the CBLT. The school, which was supposed to reflect the social changes in Algeria and meet the challenges of globalization, resulted in a compartmentalization of education programming that led to a notorious didactic and pedagogical confusion which does not respond in any way to the principles and teaching criteria for competencies, skills and qualifications under the CBLT. As it stands today, the Algerian school had failed to respond positively to the challenges of modernity and to fulfil its mission in producing critical and creative minds in today’s global transfer of information, science and technology.

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i. Two diverging tendencies emerged right from the beginning (2003) among teachers, pupils, decision makers, the syndicates and parents alike. These were represented by those who accepted the changes in the educational system and pedagogic methodologies and those who were clearly resistant to change.

ii. See Spotlight on English (Textbooks I and II) for example.

iii. In the ministry documents, the term often used is ‘préparer le citoyen de demain’.


vi. MESRS: Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Search.
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vii. Exception being made here for the petroleum and gas industry which had ties with the US and many other European and non European countries and markets.


ix. CEIL: Centre for Intensive Language Teaching.

x. Though officially, French is still considered as a first foreign language (اللغة الأجنبية الأولى) compared to English which is classified in the syllabi as a second foreign language (اللغة الأجنبية الثانية).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, French is undoubtedly a second language in Algeria.

xi. Cf. the AFP dispatch of Saturday June 10th, 2000 at 10h30.

xii. GSD: Composed of a group of experts by subject matter (e.g., Arabic, French, English, Arithmetic’s, History, Geography, Music, etc.

xiii. The mother tongue is Algerian spoken Arabic in general. It may also be Berber or any of its varieties in Algeria. In which case, the rupture is even more serious compared to the school tongue which is Modern Standard Arabic or a variety of Literary Arabic.

xiv. In fact, some areas of the country use [q] instead of [g] in Algerian Arabic. So the difference in sound production between the home variety and the school variety (or Norm!!!) should not normally be an issue at stake.

xv. Despite radio, TV and satellite dish programs which use a form of Arabic considered as the ‘Norm’ and which may influence the child’s use of Arabic, using the Norm at home or even among children in daily conversation may be a source of laughter as in ‘qol li min fadhlik min ayna ashtari khobz’ (Normative) instead of ‘win neshri l kesra (or al khobz)’ (Dialectal).

xvi. Cf. an article published in El Watan of November 21st, 2011: ‘…une mauvaise réponse à un vrai problème’

xvii. Program of Support to the Reform of the Educational System (PARE), supported by the UNESCO (2004-2006) and funded by Japan with 50,000 US dollars.


xix. Cf. the ordinance of April 16th, 1976 referring to the Algerian identity and its foundations which bears more ideological than didactic dimensions. The latter is always present in the minds. It stands in contradiction with the socio-constructive spirit of the CBLT.

About the author

Farouk Bouhadiba; is a professor specialized in Linguistics, sociolinguistics, ELT translation and ICT. He has been teaching at university since 1988. Farouk held many pedagogic, administrative and scientific positions both nationally and internationally. He is an active member in higher education as a member in the ministry’s staff, an expert in many journals and he is the editor-in-chief d two journals. Farouk Bouhadiba is known for his active work as a researcher and an educator. He has more than 30 publications (papers, chapters of books, books and textbooks) as he is the creator of many post-graduate programmes in Algeria. He has been invited as a visiting professor in many universities in France, UK, Spain, Qatar and the USA.

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Towards an Alternative Form of Teaching Pragmatics: Cues to Unfold the Untold.  
TEFL and Cognitive Niche Considerations

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University Mentouri Bros. Constantine, Algeria

Abstract
Although the background of this paper comes from several disciplines as pragmatics, vocabulary and diction, and other related theoretical pedagogic perspectives, my personal alignment is cognitive. What I share with cognition and cognitivists is that what one can do with words is manifold. Besides, with an industriously built schemata (Widdownson.2007), one can through a dynamic process, adapt to any particular contexts, understand and interpret, and ultimately become an inhabitant of a psychological niche (Pinker. 2010). Accordingly, the purport is that cues as particular grammatical constructions, punctuation marks, or any others can aid the foreign language learners in considering the underlying pragmatic force of any text they read. The experiment conducted with 35 FL (Foreign language) students at the University of Constantine has allowed us to shed some light on how to enhance in learners the aptitudes to sharpen their cognitive buoyancy while making the language they are learning their own. Such a trial-and-error empirical test has evenly given us to add another voice in the teaching of English as a foreign language and pragmatics within the general framework of a cognitive niche.  

Key words: cognitive niche, learning, pragmatics, psychology, teaching
Introduction

Studies have been conducted in understanding the issues of vocabulary set-ups and how they are organized. The vocabulary items as verbs, personal pronouns, modals, and others are distributed according to the semantic and pragmatic realities of the language. In a conversation, for example, in adjacency pairs, the utterance produced by different speakers where the ‘utterance of the first part immediately creates an expectation of the utterance of a second part of the same pair’ (Yule, 1996, p.77). Similarly, on the other side of the acoustic exchanges, we try as listeners to understand what the speaker intends to tell us. In other words, a conversation is a cooperative action, inferring meaning in a talk exchange is essential for a successful communication, and a possible description of communication can be seen in the inferences of intentions. In fact, in a language the “encoded meanings are semantic meanings [that]serve a pragmatic purpose.” (Widdowson, 2007, p.8).

The Foreign Language Learner and the Cognitive Niche

In biology a niche (the word was first coined by Tooby and DeVore, 1987) means the role an organism occupies in an ecosystem. In psychology, however, a niche is a loose extension of such a concept, it is a “is a lifestyle of using both thought and social cooperation to manipulate the environment. This involves, for example, using tools(...)and all the stratagems of cooperative hunting: planning, communicating, making traps, and so forth (Pinker, 2010).

In other words, the cognitive language manipulator acts deliberately towards achieving a particular aims he sets himself to attain. A language user, namely the FL learners should have the cognitive guts to manipulate the words of vocabulary, grammar, tenses and prepositions to shape a particular message that is clear enough to be understood –not ambiguous- but remains within the framework of a general standard without which communication is expected to collapse or to shut down (Grice, 1975). To Pinker (2007), language provides a window into human nature, and that “analyzing language can reveal what people are thinking and feeling.” (p, 293), or analyzes the insofar it conveys a message, and helps to negotiate the speaker-audience social relationship.

In fact, if while using language our learners manipulate the environment around them, then they inhabit a cognitive niche, as we will see further down. Furthermore, in manipulating language, speakers manipulate grammar. A grammar is a set of many rules and subsystem, as syntax. The latter is a combination of words into phrases and meaningful sentences into the most known linear order. Such an order allows us to understand, for example, “Yes, Daddy I have” from “Yes Daddy I asked her and she refused. Yet, more important than the clear linear order is constituency (Pinker, 2003) as a sentence can have convey different propositions consisting of ideas embedded inside ideas. A simple demonstration is an incomplete question put by a father in asking his little girl about ice cream.

To see further into such a ‘judicious (?) syntactic and pragmatic confrontations about “the mystery of human nature by examining how we use words”, we conducted an experiment. The aim of the experiment is to try to see how much our learners can dig deep to unfold what has possibly not been told. The other aim of the experiment is to let our FL learners understand how language is constructed and spoken out to achieve social purposes.

Design and Objectives of the Study
This small-scale research was conducted to probe into the learners’ reactions vis-à-vis a text that looks flat and constructed with no true visible manipulation of words, grammar or structure. To this end, we conducted an empirical study with a two-stage classroom activity design. Learner-oriented in essence, classroom activities are primarily set for the aim to maximize students’ performance by using the learner as “a resource (…)to get content from the learner; the teacher remains the language expert” (Frendo, 2009, p.50. Original italics).

The two-stage design allowed us to pursue the following objectives: 1 Testing the participants’ ability to read between the lines without being aided by any directional questions and see their capacity to understand that any text cannot be barely constructed, no matter how much its overall word-combination is simple; 2 testing any behavioral change insofar they can trace, depict and decipher the pragmatic values of the text. These objectives will allow us establish the extent to which our learners learn to brainstorm a text to quickly get the gist of a text presented to them. With a background of an experience that they had over the first and second years of tertiary tuition dealing with writing activities, we test how much the directional link between Stage One and the initial Pragmatics test is expected to be short. Such objectives will evenly allow us understand whether our learners possess the aptitude to shorten even more the link between Stage One to get directly to the main Pragmatics test and make economy of the initial Pragmatics stage. Such an oblique directional line between Stage 01 and the Main Pragmatics test is the most sought for we expect our learners to be cognitive learners and thus can inhabit a cognitive niche.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1.** From tiptoed to hastened performance

**Method**

**Participants**

Third year F.L. learners (N=35) at University of Constantine in Algeria participated in a classroom activity. For more convenience, as gender was not does not represent an empirical variable of interest, the analysis of the results was not gender-biased. Written Expression (Creative writing) at the Department of Lettres and the English Language at the University of Constantine is 3 hours a week. The participants have all had about 600 hours of practice with the English language during their freshman and second year tuition. Likewise, our sample can be poised as representative enough of the Department’s third-year population. All participants share the same cultural and religious background and such an unwanted bias his cleared. To ensure a
pragmatic understanding equality in the working in a collaborative fashion, have progressed in showing some rigor as the exercise started to develop through its different stages.

The Experiment

All participants were native speakers of Arabic sharing a very similar social and cultural background and they are supposed to think with some sort of ‘a pragmatic accent, or ‘aspects of our talk that indicate what we assume is communicated without being said’ (Yule, 1996, p.88).

Instruments

Presenting the text

On the face of it, the text was not lexically challenging, and thus offered unbiased conventions for testing our objectives. Yet, being deliberately Pragmatics loaded, the text was suitable to test third-year brainstorming wits and did not allow any undesirable deviations and misunderstandings. The text is about a dialog that went between a little girl and her parents.

Data collection

The text was presented during an ordinary Written Expression session so that it does not raise any doubts that the learners were undergoing test—which would undermine the test validity. Students and were given enough time to read and re-read to get familiar with every grammatical, structural or lexical construction. The activity was carried out in two stages.

Stage 1: Withholding the questions

At first, the text was administered without the questions. The purpose was precisely to see how students would deal with the text without the aid of questions.

Stage 2: disclosing the questions

For a second activity, questions were disclosed so that students would try to dig deep to dig deeper into to unfold any possible hidden untold meanings. Students were made aware to understand that they should answer beyond the perspective of giving yes/no answers. Students were asked to labor their grey matter to give a full-fledged freedom to their interpretation-as to read between the lines and come up with something rather than feeling ‘reluctant to challenge the text’ (Wallace;1992, p.46).

The expectancy that students to come up with something is fueled by the researcher’s belief that the participants would consider each elements in the text. Elements such as words (diction), grammatical construction or punctuation marks plays the role of rendering the text approachable, and its comprehension easy. Working collaboratively, the participants were expected to have observed the wording of the questions as a key to discovering certain cues to possible unearth pragmatic manipulations of the language.

Results

Our key research objectives were the two main stages. For Stage 1: as a warming up, one question was put: “what is the text trying to tell?” Adjacency pairs and pragmatics bearing, the question was purposefully put in the progressive form to [try to] entice students to understand that there could be many possible answers and not only one.

Preliminary analyses

The data obtained did not significantly inform about the students’ behavioral aptitude in comprehending a Pragmatics cues-loaded text. We, however, confirm normality of the results. A description of the answers are as follows.
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25 students said that the text informs about a little girl who wanted ice cream.
05 students said that the text tells about a severe mother refused to let her little girl have an ice cream whereas the nice father accepted.
05 students that the text communicates about a good relationship between the husband and his wife. He asked his daughter whether she got permission from her mother.

On the first question: Did the little girl say anything that was untrue?
The respondents gave the following answers.
28 said no.
05 said yes.
03 gave no answer

For this question, the students’ answers were surprisingly different. In effect, we expected that the wording of the question would trigger in students some doubt about the little girl’s sincerity. As a first analysis of the answers to the first question, it can be supposed that the 28 respondents who said ‘no’ have considered that in saying, “yes, Daddy I have”, the little girl gave a grammatical answer. In effect, considering his daughter as a small charming sweet girl, the father did not go into asking a full-fledged question as: “Have you asked your mother, and has she accepted? Or ‘has your mother accepted that you have an ice cream?’ The little girl’s pragmatic-loaded answer supports Oxford’s (1990) purport that the ‘concept of strategy has spread outside the bounds of physical warfare into a variety of other(…)conflict(…)situations(…)such as(…)conversations(…)viewed by some as battles of will or wits” (p, 238. Italics ours). The will to get an ice cream has been consolidated by the little girl’s witty grammatical but not innocent answer!

On the second question: Did she intend to lie?
The participants gave these answers.
The answers were as follows: 20 said no.
11 said yes, she intended to lie.
04 said nothing.

For this question, the students’ answers were surprisingly different; too. This second question did not yet prompt any doubt that there was something ‘hidden’ in the little girls’ answer. Thus were the answers.
The unclad evidence is that had the little said the truth and answered in a clearer and more elaborate construction, she would have revealed her mother’s refusal and her father would not have allowed her to have an ice cream. The little girl openly intended to lie.

Again, the same battle of wits continues for the little girl gracefully utilized her will (the desire to have an ice cream) and wits (the intention to lie), changing from bay-face little girl to be as sharp as a tack, cunningly utilizing one part of the answer and withholding the other.

On the third question: If you were this little girl’s parents and found her out, what would you do and why?
The answers are the following.
15 said they would severely punish her by having no ice cream for a month!
10 said they would bit her so that she would not lie again.
07 remained indifferent to what she did.
03 said they would reprimand and advise her not to lie again because it is bad to lie.

Answers to this question seem to come from within and that culture and religion appear to have shaped several of them. In effect, the 15 respondents’ answers suggest that they did not like the father to be laughed at, that the little girl did something wrong which necessitates punishment. The 07 respondents who abstained could have considered that the story of this little foxy girl is fictional. In saying that they reprimand and advise her, the remaining 03 respondents have given a stereotype answer vis-à-vis sweet liars.

However, at this level the last question had deliberately generated an understanding of what truly happened. The wording of the question has left no doubt about the little girl’s vulpine intentions!! The answers were significantly clear that finally, the students understood the untold in the text.

Discussion

Cues and meaning disconnection: the unseen cues

Except from the third question that has allowed for a denouement of the story, students did not rely very much on clues and syntactic construction to discover the pragmatic mysteries of the text. As an operational definition, a cue is a word, a sign, a mark or the like to signal something that might be of interest. In the text presented, many of such cues were almost all unseen by the respondents. The following is an analysis of the content of the text pragmatic of the unseen cues that lead to possible inferable meanings.

Grammatical Cues

Starting from line 2, the text starts to be pragmatically loaded. The sentence is a triple (emotion-free) negation “no, certainly not, not before lunch. Such a cohesive construction reveals the mother’s care of her little daughter’s diet.

On line 5, the little girl gave a correct grammatical answer (she could have answered by a mere ‘yes, Daddy’). Such a bold and clear answer reflects at least two things: boldness: because the little girl has started her lie-game with her father; and clarity because she wanted to avoid any further unwanted question from her father –which would have led to the father’s refusal.

On line 6, the use of the “suppose” allows for different interpretations. First that since her mother accepted, he would not go against the mother’s allowance. Second, it shows that the father has hesitated because he evenly cares about his little girl’s diet, has finally but reluctantly accepted his little girl to have an ice cream before lunch.

Punctuation cues

On line 2, it worth noting that even though there was a triple negation, the author did deliberately not use any exclamation point. This implies that by refusing (three times), the mother was definitely not angry, but was rather caring of her little girl. Consider the answer of the respondents to the third question.

On line 3, although between parentheses, this group of words “goes upstairs to father” does inform about the story is building up. Indeed, the little girl knew that first her father who was upstairs (notion of place) was not listening to what went between her and her mother. She decided to go up and ask him for the ice cream. The untold is that in all likelihood, the little girl was prepared to tell something to her father –knowing that her mother was not being listened, either!

On line 6, the pair of commas separating ‘then’ from the rest of the father’s utterance, suggest that the father understood that his daughter asked her mum who has allowed her to have
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an ice cream. The ‘then’ set off between commas is a conclusion of a deal made by the little girl with her parents.

It is worth stating that students who could understand somewhat that the little girl did lie, did not pay attention at all to any of the aforementioned cues. From an analytical stance, the students have just guessed what happened between the little girl and her parents, and their answers were not the results of a sound cues-bound analysis.

Conclusion

The experiment was conducted to see into how F.L learners view the construction of meaning across words while reading a passage. The results sustain our purport that foreign language learners must be made acquainted with how to read any passage with critical eyes and minds, leaving nothing to chance. Even though the text presented is just an example of English pragmatics and diction, it has allowed to shed some more light on how carefully considering any cues; scrutinizing vocabulary and cautiously examining diction help understand underlying meaning. Just as the detective hunts for cues and clues in his investigation for uncovering the mystery, so should a foreign language learner do to pursue any cues liable to help him manage to unfold the untold. FL students are bound to know how [genuine] texts are constructed and loaded with pragmatic-cues, and that each one of such ‘signs’ is worth considering.

The bottom line is that the experiment has allowed at a first stance to cast some doubt about the efficacy of the existing Written Expression syllabus [and the LMD system] in our tertiary education. More efforts should be deployed if we wish to make of our students cognitive learners and I see them inhabitants of a cognitive niche.

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I hereby confirm that the submitted paper is my original work and it is by no means going under any review by any other journal.

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Towards an Alternative Form of Teaching Pragmatics

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Student-Centered Teaching Practices: Focus on The Project-Based Model to Teaching in the Algerian High-School Contexts

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Abstract
During the last few decades, many teaching philosophies and approaches began to surface and take shape in education. The principles and assumptions underlying these philosophies gained prominence, and started to be adopted and implemented in educational programs and curricula at different learning stages (secondary and tertiary education). The overall aim of these changes is to find better ways (models, approaches) to improve students’ learning. Today, in the Algerian educational context, there is an increase demand for more efficient and beneficial teaching approaches. Call for change to take place in teaching has always been raised. Accordingly, there has been a shift of focus in teaching and a tendency on the part of many researchers and educators to advance more innovative, beneficial and student-centered models and approaches to be adopted and implemented in educational programs. Project-Based Teaching is one of these suggested and advocated teaching models. It addresses important concerns and goals in education, and it is characterized by being student-centered. A radical change in the role of teachers and students in the teaching/learning process takes place. The adoption/implementation of such a teaching model is supported by research and is claimed to help develop the students’ intrinsic interest in the subject matter, emphasize learning not recall, promote group-work and help students become active, self-directed and independent learners. The main aim of the present paper is to give a compendium of the theory that demonstrates the importance of Project-Based Teaching alongside the different types of learning that can be incorporated in project work (experiential-learning and active-learning). The discussion is also based upon a questionnaire which has been administered to high-school teachers of English, Science, History and Technology in Mohamed Larbi Tlilani high-school (Constantine) in order to explore the efficiency of that model in practice.

Keywords: Active learning, experiential-learning, learning improvement, project-based teaching, student-centered teaching.
Introduction

Previously, teachers used to plan courses by taking full responsibility for the content to teach and the way it should be organized into lessons. The emphasis on what teachers often did led to the feeling that students are largely neglected since they were perceived as passive learners. Discontent about the students’ learning results and complaint about the fact that they cannot apply what they learn in addition to their inability to learn on their own led to major changes and reforms in the teaching contexts. There has been a change of emphasis in teaching; the center of focus moved from the teacher to the student, who started to gain more attention in the learning process. The former approach to teaching is referred to as the traditional or the teacher-centered approach to teaching, and the latter is referred to as the learner-centered approach to teaching. Several student-centered models of teaching have been advanced and implemented in the Algerian educational context (Secondary and/or Tertiary), and the project-based model is one of these models.

- Learner-Centered Approaches to Teaching

A good way to improve teaching and learning is to adopt more student-centered approaches to teaching. Special focus is given to the introduction of certain interactive learning tasks and projects in the curriculum. This change in the teaching practices came as a response to the ongoing challenges that teachers face and experience with their students. The intention behind that is to make learning more interesting, relevant, meaningful and more practical in nature (Barraket, 2005, p. 65). Learner-centered teaching is not confined to the use of one single model of teaching. Rather, it emphasizes a variety of models whereby most of them share something in common: the role of the teacher shifts from information provider to learning facilitator. In the learner-centered teaching, focus is placed on what students are learning, how they are learning, how their learning is assessed, and how they can use/apply that learning in real life tasks and contexts. Weimer (2008) provides the following statement to explain what is meant by a student-centered teaching.

Being student-centered implies a focus on student needs. It is an orientation that gives rise to the idea of education as a product, with the student as the customer and the role of the faculty as one of serving and satisfying the customer. Faculty resist the student-as-customer metaphor for some good reasons. When the product is education, the customer cannot always be right, there is no money-back guarantee, and tuition dollars do not “buy” the desired grades. (p. xvi)

Furthermore, in the learner-centered teaching, focus is placed squarely on learning. That is to say, attention is given to what, how, and the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying what has been learnt, and how current learning positions the student for future learning. The student is the main focus of teaching and constitutes an important part of the equation in the learning process. The main aim behind adopting this model is to promote learning in the first place. Weimer (ibid.) points out that the expression “learning-centered” has been suggested to be used instead of “learner-centered”, but she (ibid.) prefers to keep the latter to place focus on the learner. By using the expression “learner-centered”, emphasis is kept fixed on the direct object of our teaching which is the student. Weimer (ibid.) points out that focus in teaching should not be in terms of theoretical knowledge that is transmitted to students; focus in teaching should be practically-oriented. She
states that “We do not want more and better learning at some abstract level; we need it specifically and concretely for the students we face in class” (2008, p. xvi). The adoption of a new teaching approach or model implies that some change has to take place in the teaching practices. According to Blumberg (2009, p. 18), five teaching practices have to be changed to achieve learner-centered teaching. Student-centered models adopt most, if not all, of them and that is what characterizes them from other existing models (traditional).

- **The Function of Content**

  The function of the teaching content in the learner-centered approach gives the student a strong knowledge basis, the ability to apply what has been learnt, and the ability to learn more independently. Students need an understanding of why they need to learn the content, and they need to be actively engaged in their learning of that content.

- **The Role of the Instructor**

  The role of the teacher in the learner-centered approach is to help students to learn. Teachers should not just deliver information as it has been the case in the teacher-centered approach. They should rather create an environment for learning to take place, follow, guide and evaluate the students’ learning as well. The teaching models and approaches that teachers use should also be appropriate for the learning goals and the instructional objectives.

- **The Responsibility for Learning**

  The responsibility for learning in the learner-centered approach shifts from the teacher to the student. The teacher helps students to take responsibility for their own learning by creating situations that motivate them to learn, situations that are interesting to them in their learning. The teacher should also help students to acquire knowledge and skills that they will need in the future. When students assume responsibility for their own learning, they become self-directed learners who are responsible, independent and aware of their own abilities to learn.

- **The Purpose and Processes of Assessment**

  The purpose of assessment in the learner-centered approach shifts from merely assigning grades at the end of each test/exam, which used to be the case in the Algerian secondary education, but which is, may be, still the case in higher education. Assessment of students’ learning in the student-centered approach shifts from giving scores for the final product to providing constructive feedback in order to assist students in improving their learning. Learner-centered approach integrates assessment with feedback as a part of the learning process.

- **The Balance of Power**

  In the learner-centered approach, the balance of power shifts also so that the teacher shares some decisions about the course with the students (ibid.). In classroom discussions, the teacher can notice the things that students are interested in, the things that they like, and the things that get them engaged; and on the basis of that s/he plans some tasks or projects, but which should be related to their learning.

- **Project-Based Model as a Form of Student-centered Teaching**

  One way to increase the connection between students’ interests, the curriculum and the real world is to provide students with more concrete opportunities to learn in a project-based context. Two student-centered teaching models that characterized and still characterize
nowadays teaching programs all around the world are the task-based and the project-based models. These two models shift the emphasis from teachers teaching to students learning and doing. The tasks and the projects students get engaged in reflect the program’s objectives and relate to real world problems, issues, situations and so on (Wiley, 2011, p. 91). Moreover, the tasks and the projects that students get involved in need to match their interests, and these interests are said to be relative to the curriculum. These two models to teaching are claimed to have a beneficial effect on students. They are said to motivate and help them to match their interests to the curriculum (ibid, p. 93).

Project-based instruction is of an exploratory nature. Generally speaking, there are many goals that can be achieved through such kind of instruction. One of these major goals is that projects seek to achieve a comprehensible output. That is to say, the teachers adopting this model give students more opportunities to learn and practice the issues at hand in different subjects. Another important goal is that project-based teaching provides students with the opportunity to “recycle known knowledge and skills” (Haines, 1989, p. 1). It provides them with an opportunity to integrate previously gained knowledge with current knowledge and to use them in performing actual and future tasks and projects in different contexts.

Task-based and project-based teaching are considered as innovative and beneficial models in secondary education or higher education in the Algerian context. These two types of teaching are perceived as being powerful and effective models because they are said to boost collaboration, independence and self-directed learning. Both models are based upon the assumption that learning is an active, integrated and a constructive process that is influenced by social and contextual factors. They are also characterized by the fact that they are student-centered. Teachers in this sense are seen as facilitators in the process of learning rather than information providers. Besides teaching and providing students with a sound and strong knowledge basis in a given subject matter, as teachers, we all aspire to develop the intrinsic interest of students with regard to what they learn and to link what they learn to their real-life (how they will use what they are learning). As such, task-based and project-based teaching came in order to emphasize learning rather than recall of information. They came to promote learners’ collaboration via group-work, independence as well as self-direction and autonomy in learning.

• An Account of Project-Based Teaching

The idea of integrating projects in the teaching/learning process is not a new one in education. The idea of ‘learning by doing’ has been suggested a long time ago by Dewy (1916), who advocated it as a good way for improving learning, retention and application. In the period whereby the constructivist theories of learning gained prominence (Vygotsky, 1978), project-based learning has also started to gain ground in education. The tendency of teachers in the different levels and phases of education moved towards preferring and adopting project-based learning not only in first language contexts, but even in second and foreign language contexts (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Fried-Booth, 2002; Stoller, 2006).

In the discussion of the main premise underlying project-based language teaching, one central notion comes into play. That notion is that of “authenticity.” Unlike any kind of previously existing teaching, authenticity in projects is of key importance. This authenticity can be displayed in different ways in the learning tasks and projects that students get involved in, such as purposeful project topics, purposeful contexts, outside-the-classroom collaborators, project output, project audience within the community, oral presentations, written reports and so
forth. Accordingly, project-based instruction has been defined as “an authentic instructional model or strategy in which students plan, implement, and evaluate projects that have real world applications beyond the classroom” (Railsback, 2002, p. 6). In project-based learning, focus is placed on learning activities that are interdisciplinary, long term and student centered (Challenge 2000 Multimedia Project, 1999). Project-based instructional activities are rooted in the constructivist approach. Constructivism has evolved from previous works of psychologists and educators like Vygotsky and Dewey. The assumption underlying constructivism is that learning is a result of mental construction and that one learns by constructing new ideas based on his/her previous knowledge (Karlin & Vianni, 2001). With projects, focus is, hence, put on the notion of authenticity both with regard to the tasks and the roles of teachers and students who are said to reflect the purposefulness and the authenticity of the target language use (Beckett & Miller, 2006; Beckett & Slater, 2005; Stoller, 2006).

Project learning is a collaborative approach to teaching and learning in which learners are placed in situations where they use authentic language to accomplish particular objectives. As part of the process, learners plan, work on complex tasks, and assess their performance and progress. As project is designed around issues, questions, or needs identified by the learners. (AEEP/REEP, 1997, p. 6)

Despite the fact that there is a general understanding of what project learning is, there is no general consent vis-à-vis the form, the time-span, and the coverage of an educational project, especially in secondary education in the Algerian context. The Buck Institute for Education (BIE) (2003), which represents a research and development organization that focuses on problem- and project-based instruction, confirms that point by pointing out that there is no-one-single definition of project-based learning that can be accepted. They (2003) state that project based learning is:

[A] systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks. (p. 4)

Though not clearly stated, but it can be inferred that project work is a an effort and time-consuming work on the part of both teachers and students. It needs due attention and follow up to achieve the intended goals and objectives of education.

According to BIE (ibid.), an outstanding project must necessarily have the following characteristics:

• Recognize students’ inherent drive to learn;
• Engage the students through the curriculum;
• Lead students to in-depth exploration of authentic and important topics;
• Use tools and skills as part of the learning process;
• Generate multiple output that requires research, problem-solving, feedback and reflection;
• Incorporate performance-based assessment, and
• Involve collaboration.

In the same line of thought, according to Stoller (1997), project work has some characteristics that can be summarized as follows:
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- It focuses on content learning through language learning
- It is student-centered
- Teachers play the role of language guiders and facilitators
- It is cooperative, not competitive: students work individually or in groups to complete a project
- It leads to the authentic integration of skills
- The culmination will be a final product
- It is motivating, stimulating and challenging
- Students can build confidence, self-esteem as well as autonomy.

Given the fact that they both share the same acronyms, much confusion is usually made between project-based learning (PBL) and problem-based learning (PBL). There lies a difference, however, between the two and this difference lies in how much autonomy is allowed or given to students. In project-based learning, students are given greater autonomy.

Central to the thread of discussion is also the confusion that is usually made between task-based language teaching (TBLT) and project-based language teaching (PBLT). Similar to project-based language teaching, task-based language teaching is also said to promote learning and acquisition; it is fostered through cognitively challenging and meaningful use of language. Language learning tasks are goal-oriented and focus is placed on meaning with clearly defined learning outcomes. Compared to projects, which take longer time to be achieved outside the classroom, tasks are mini-activities that are accomplished inside classroom. Bygate et al. (2011, p. 11) state that, “a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective.” Long (1985, p. 89) points out that the notion of “task” exists within the educational world alongside a more mundane concept of task as “the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between.” Teachers may, hence, confuse between what constitutes a task or a project in language teaching. One thing that should be always be born in mind, however, is the fact that a task in the TBLT is pedagogically focused, contextualized, and has a clear focus (Ellis, 2003).

Project based learning is based upon the idea that language learning reflects an approach which connects content and target language to students’ lives (Dooly & Masats, 2010). Additionally, Stoller (2006) points out that project-based language learning allows students to set and evaluate their own language learning goals and content learning goals besides other related skills and learning strategies. Doing this will not only be beneficial for learning, but it will also ensures language learners’ motivation and confidence in the process of learning. Moreover, it will make assessment more transparent and integrated in the overall learning process (AAEP/REEP, 1997).

It is a real challenge for teachers to keep their students involved, engaged and motivated in their classrooms. Despite the fact that there is no general consent on a “one-size-fits-all” approach, it is usually claimed that there are certain teaching practices which encourage learning and engagement more than others. The idea these practices are centrally based on is that teaching should move away from rote learning and memorization; it should provoke learning that is more challenging to involve students in more complex, but meaningful, work. Teaching should have an interdisciplinary rather than a departmentalized focus; it should encourage cooperative learning (Lumsden, 1994).
In the Algerian educational context, some teachers used to incorporate projects in their classrooms and in their lesson plans even before the introduction and the implementation of project-based model in the curriculum. Occasionally, they used to require from their learners to prepare a mini-research about an educational issue relative to the subject at hand. With the introduction of the educational reforms in 2004, project-based instruction received much attention and projects gained more importance in the process of learning. Project-based teaching is different from other types of teaching in the sense that it is a holistic instructional strategy rather than an add-on. This approach to teaching is beneficial and more meaningful. In today’s teaching, teachers group students together with different learning styles, learning abilities and levels together. “Project based instruction builds on students’ individual strengths, and allows them to explore their interests in the framework of a defined curriculum.” (Railsback, 2002, p. 3).

• **Elements of Authentic Projects**

  Projects are said to be authentic when they have in common the following defining features:
  • Student-centered, student-directed
  • A definite beginning, middle, and end
  • Content meaningful to students; directly observable in their environment
  • Real world problems
  • First hand investigation
  • Sensitivity to local culture and culturally appropriate
  • Specific goals related to curriculum and school
  • A tangible product that can be shared with the intended audience
  • Connections among academic, life, and work skills
  • Opportunity for feedback and assessment from expert sources
  • Opportunity for reflective thinking and student self-assessment
  • Authentic assessment (portfolios, journals, etc.) (ibid, p. 7)

• **Benefits of Project Based Instruction**

  Using project-based instruction in teaching is claimed to have many benefits for students. The approach motivates learners to learn by giving them more chances to choose topics that they find interesting and relevant to them in their lives (Katz & Chard, 1989). According to Brewster & Fager (2000), twenty years of research indicate that engagement and motivation lead to high achievement. Since students come to classroom with a wide range of abilities and learning styles, teachers are always seeking to find better ways to respond to the needs of these learners. One way to do this is to use project-based instruction because it provides learners with a good deal of learning opportunities inside and outside classrooms.

  In the 1960’s and the early 1970’s, active learning has been greatly emphasized. Active engagement in projects has also been emphasized as a type of learning by doing. Some of the other most important benefits of project-based instruction can be summarized in the following points:
  • Preparing students for work place
  • Increasing motivation
  • Connecting learning at school with reality
  • Providing collaborative opportunities to construct knowledge
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- Increasing social and communication skills
- Increasing problem-solving skills
- Enabling students to make and see connections between disciplines
- Providing opportunities to contribute to their school or community
- Increasing self-esteem
- Allowing students to use their individual learning strengths and diverse approaches to learning
  - Providing a practical, real-world way to learn to use technology (ibid, p. 10).

- Project-Based Teaching and Experiential Learning

  Learning by experience is considered as one of the most fundamental means of learning. In simple words, experiential learning indicates the ability to think and to reflect individually or collectively on experience in programmed and/or incidental learning. To use Beard & Wilson’s (2002) words,

  Experiential learning is, in essence, the underpinning process to all forms of learning since it represents the transformation of most new and significant experiences and incorporates them within a broader conceptual framework. (p.16)

  Stein et al. (2004) also emphasizes the importance of experiential learning by stating that, a uniquely valuable source for learning—especially in the realm of human behaviour on the individual and group level—lies in the experience of everyday life and the conceptualization and reflection on it. It implies that academic or book learning—on its own—cannot be a substitution for learning from experience and may only play a supplementary role by recording or otherwise elaborating on some of the learning phenomena derived from experience. (p. 20)

  In a similar vein, Silberman (2007) states that experiential learning refers to, (a) the involvement of learners in concrete activities that enable them to experience what they are learning about and (b) the opportunity to reflect on those activities. Experiential learning can be based on both real work/life experiences (e.g. working on a current project) and structured experiences that stimulate or approximate real work/life. (p. 8)

  All in all, as it has been pointed out earlier in this paper, a good way to teach something is to act it out. Accordingly, projects that are included in Algerian secondary education are a form of acting what has been learnt out, they are a form of applying and doing. Descriptions and theoretical explanation of some concepts are useful, but they are not always greatly understood by students, especially if they are later on asked to apply what they have covered in the course in real life situations. To use Silberman’s (2007, p. 8) words again, “acquiring skills require more than monkey see, monkey do”. Experiential activities are important in order to succeed in building a level of awareness and to be able to apply what has been learnt in other different, but related, contexts. There are many forms of experiential learning such as: on-the-job assignments,
field experience, action learning projects, and so forth. Other different teaching models are available at the disposal of teachers to teach the different subjects in a more practical way including: problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and so forth. It is our belief that if the teaching practices and the curriculum are to be oriented toward student-centered teaching in a sound way with all conditions being present, this may lead to better learning, understanding, and positive performance on the part of students (Barraket, 2005, p. 64).

**Project-Based Teaching and Active Learning**

Students can learn better by doing as an active involvement in the process of learning which may lead to success. Teaching the knowledge and skills in the English subject, for instance, using real life situations will be useful in providing students with good learning experience. Learning by doing is a good way to understand, retain knowledge and apply it later on in different contexts as well.

Unsuccessful teaching and learning of English in the Algerian secondary education is claimed to have been so, as it has been pointed out earlier in this paper, because teaching has been characterized by being teacher-centered. Focus has been on delivering information at the expense of placing much focus on the student as an active agent in the process of learning, the process of learning and the communicative needs they want to achieve. Given these facts, teachers’ teaching orientations have been directed towards adopting more student-centered approaches to teaching any subject, and this is the case with the adoption and the implementation of projects in secondary school education in Algeria. Decision to adopt the student-centered approach to teaching aims to increase interaction among students through group discussions, collective and individual research projects related to their real life situations. Within this scope, Khumalo & Ndaba (2005) state that,

> The use of practical real life examples that are relevant to the local situation where students have some expertise and experience is recommended. In research application rather than sheer exposition by lecturers and absorption is what makes effective learning. (p. 248)

Such kind of learning that involves students in direct and real-life tasks and projects to achieve some communicative goals allows students to start asking important questions, think, and reflect in a process of exploration, analysis, discovery and understanding, which is at the heart of many student-centered teaching models and project-based model in the first place. In this case, students will develop an ability to appreciate the process of reasoning and understanding. Hence, through getting them down to work in a given task or project, for instance, teachers provide the students with an excellent opportunity to gauge their grasp of theoretical knowledge (ibid.).

According to Wolters et al. (2000), active learning is:

> a form of learning in which the learner uses opportunities to decide about aspects of the learning process... it refers to the extent to which the learner is challenged to use his or her mental abilities while learning. This active learning on the one hand has to do with decisions about learning and on the other hand making an active use of thinking. (p. 21)
One of the major points that should be given due concern in classes where teaching is characterized by being student-centered and adopting project-based model to teaching (Active learning, Experiential Learning), is the fact that after each unit of teaching, the teacher should make a follow up when assigning some practical tasks/projects to be accomplished over a period of time outside classroom. This will serve as a demonstration of students’ understanding of the points covered in the whole unit. Moreover, the spotlight should always be placed on the student as a central agent in learning; he should be always seen an active participant in the learning process.

**Purpose of the Paper**

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss the important role and the value of project work in strengthening knowledge acquisition and skills' development of Algerian high school students in the subjects of Science, History, Technology and English in the Algerian high school context. Its aim is to discuss project teaching as an innovative model in the student-centered approach which has beneficial effects on students' learning. This teaching model is supported by research and has received welcome among a good deal of researchers and teachers as a useful model to be integrated and implemented in the curriculum to improve learning (achievement). On the basis of that, this paper represents an investigation of whether or not projects do really bring beneficial improvement in the learning of high school students and in boosting their understanding, and hence their achievement.

**Methodology**

The present research paper involves a discussion of the project-based model to teaching and its implementation in curriculum. Discussion of project work is twofolds. First, the project model is theoretically discussed in light of research which supports its adoption and application in teaching programs as an efficient model alongside some of its related types of learning, namely, experiential learning and active learning. Second, the importance and usefulness of project work is practically discussed in light of a questionnaire which has been administered to teachers at Tilani Mohamed Larbi high school-Bousouf (Constantine-Algeria). The teachers involved in the questionnaire are 20 high school teachers who teach different subjects: Science, History, Technology and English. The main aim behind the administration of this questionnaire is to get more informed about the importance of project work in the teaching/learning process and to explore its efficiency in teaching on the basis of teachers' personal experience in using it over many years now since its implementation in the Algerian high school curriculum.

**The Analysis of the Questionnaire**

As it has been mentioned earlier in this paper, there has been an educational reform in the Algerian system of education which started to be implemented since 2004 onward. The curriculum in secondary education is characterized by the adoption of competency-based approach to teaching. Since the world is increasingly witnessing huge development and advance in the different fields of life (technology, science, economy, politics, and so on), it has become an urgent need for people to learn the English language as the main dominant language used for communication today. The intention behind such an educational reform has been to boost the Algerian young learners’ level in English. The intention is to form competent and proficient learners and to prepare them for future jobs, future studies, and even for the country’s own benefit. Accordingly, some competency-based teaching models have been adopted and
implemented in the curriculum of first, second and third year secondary education students in Algeria using the project-based model.

This study is based upon a questionnaire which has been administered to high school teachers in the Lycee Tiliani Mohamed Larbi-Bousouf (Constantine-Algeria). Its main purpose is to investigate the use of projects in teaching different subject matters, namely, English, science, technology, and history in the Algerian context. The questionnaire consists of twenty two questions and it has been administered to 20 teachers (5 teachers from each subject mentioned above). The aim of the questionnaire is to see, from teachers’ own point and teaching practices, whether or not the projects do really bring any beneficial improvement in the learning of students and in boosting their understanding, hence their achievement (scores).

• Teachers Experience in Teaching and Teaching Subjects

The informants in the present research paper are 20 high school teachers who teach English, Science, Technology, and History. Five teachers from each subject have been administered the questionnaire. The purpose behind that is to get more informed about the importance and the usefulness of the project-based model in the different subjects taught in the Algerian high schools. Most of the teachers (12/20) have a good deal of experience in teaching (20 years), which means that they have a good knowledge about the two educational systems and the curriculum that used to be in high school before and after the educational reforms which took place in 2004. The remaining teachers (8/20) have an average experience of 8 years in teaching, which means that they had started teaching just after the educational reforms took place.

• Satisfaction with the Educational Reform and the Program

When asked about their satisfaction with the educational reforms that took place in the Algerian educational system, all the informants (20/20) said that they are satisfied. The new curriculum has brought innovation in the teaching and the learning process of all subjects. The teachers are given more freedom in adding new things in their teaching, something which has not been the case before. Teachers used to follow the textbook and were deprived of adding things that might be helpful to their students, to help them learn and to engage them in the learning process.

The main focus of the program is no longer on the mere rote memorization of content. Today’s program includes a variety of interesting lessons (more communicative), topics and interesting activities that help meet the needs of different learners who have different learning needs and different learning style. The teachers (14/20) said that the program now takes the students into consideration and aims to engage them in the process of learning as active participants.

• The Inclusion of Projects in Learning and Their Importance

All teachers (20/20) of different subjects said that they assign projects to their students because projects form an essential part in the curriculum and they receive the same importance as the one of tests and exams. The purpose behind giving projects to students to work on is to reinforce learning, and to help students apply the knowledge gained inside the classroom by applying it on their own in other different, but related, situations (20/20).
The projects that are assigned to students are not the ones of their own choice. They are suggested by the teachers but they are still related to the program of the curriculum. Students’ freedom exhibits itself in the way they gather information, treat the topic, find solutions to problems, and apply the different skills to achieve certain goal. The textbook is divided into units; in turn, the units are divided into sequences. Each unit takes approximately two months and a half, maximum three months, to be covered. In each unit, student can be given a project to work on, with an average of one project per unit. According to all the teachers (20/20), that project is said to serve the content or the points which have been taught in that unit.

- **Students’ Tendency Toward Project Work**

Project work is an adventure that students like to take. They feel that they are free to apply what they have learnt in their own way. Teachers (20/20) said that students do not find projects difficult to achieve especially that they are related to their curriculum. They also do not find much problems in the presence of clear instructions, guidance, help and follow-up from the teacher. It is a structured work that has a beginning, a middle and an end. In the process of doing the project, students usually ask questions and seek help from the teacher who is there to guide and facilitate learning for them. What is more important is that students feel motivated to work on their project and enjoy doing that very much (20/20).

- **The Assessment of Project**

There is a general consent among teachers (20/20) that projects are difficult to achieve and include in the curriculum. Given the facts that students work in a collaborative way (group-work), the result will always be that out of 5 students, for instance, 2 work seriously on the project while the others get the piece of pie ready-made for them to eat. This drawback has been raised in research about project work and has always been emphasized. Unlike previous teaching practices which used to exist before the educational reforms, today, the project work that students are asked to do is taken into consideration in the process of assessing students’ learning and their improvement. The final mark is divided on four main parts: the Test, the Project-Work, Oral Expression, and the Exam. Project work is given importance just like the importance given to an exam. But unlike the exam that is taken under certain conditions (individual work, time limitation, etc.), project work does not share those conditions. Consequently, teachers find it difficult to manage and evaluate. Since it is done by groups of students, the teacher can never make sure that all the students have been searching, collecting information, analyzing it, then applying what has been learnt in a given task. One drawback in the implementation of project work in secondary education is the fact that teachers are faced with many pressure to finish the program, while projects take a good deal of time and great deal of attention on the part of the teacher who will be responsible for assigning them, guiding, following, and then evaluating the final product. At the end of project work, students are not assessed on their performance (oral performance, presentation), most of the time, they get assessed only on a written product especially in the case of the English, French, Arabic, history subjects.

As it has been pointed out all over this paper, project based teaching is student-centered which necessitates that assessment should be authentic. Projects are a type of authentic assessment but if conducted in a wrong manner, the result will not be reliable. For projects to be authentically assessed, they should be evaluated on the basis of oral performance (performance-
based assessment) which seems to be missing in the actual teachers’ (20/20) teaching practices in secondary education. When asked to explain the absence of performance assessment of the projects, the teachers (20/20) said that they ran short of time. Furthermore, they argue that the feedback that is given to students on their projects is allocated just a one session class discussion of the topics, with students participating and expressing themselves about what they have been working about.

**Conclusion**

The present paper is an attempt to explore the importance and the efficiency of project-based teaching in the Algerian secondary education. It serves as a first step to get more informed about the current teaching and assessment practices that take place in high school. Given the observed low level that many Algerian secondary students have in foreign languages, and in English in particular, this investigation can shed light on some of the points that might be reasons for impeding learning and achieving good mastery of foreign languages. We can say that despite the fact that project-based teaching and project work might be beneficial in many ways, conditions should first be made appropriate for learning to take place and for improvement to be achieved. If projects are to be taken into account, authentic assessment should be used. Assessment should focus not only on written products, whereby many times it is a copy and paste process, but rather oral presentation or oral performance should also be given space in the assessment (performance assessment). Doing this would reflect a deeper view of what communicative-based teaching seeks to achieve: developing the students’ ability to find information (reading), analyzing it (reasoning), writing about it (writing), then presenting it (oral presentation).

**About the Authors**

**Doctor Nacera Boudersa** is a researcher in Applied language studies and language teaching. She has been teaching the English language to FL learners at secondary school and EFL students at Constantine University (Algeria).

**Professor Hacene Hamada** is lecturer and research supervisor in applied linguistics and language teaching, discourse analysis, course design and teacher training at Constantine University and Teacher Training School of Constantine. Professor Hamada has been supervising postgraduate courses and research projects at the Universities of Bejaia, Setif, Biskra and Annaba (Algeria).

**References**


Appendix

Dear teacher/colleague,

This questionnaire is addressed to high school teachers at Tlilani Mohamed Larbi High School-Bousouf (Constantine-Algeria). It is a part of a research investigation about the importance of project work and the implementation of the project-based model in secondary education school curricula. Would you please put (x) where applicable and/or supply the required information when necessary.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Section One: Teachers' Experience and Subjects Taught
1. Would you please choose the number of years of experience in teaching the subject:
   5 years   10 years   15 years   20 years   Other
2. What subjects do you teach in secondary school?
   Science   Technology   History   English

Section 02: Teachers' Opinion Concerning Educational Reforms and Project Work Importance
3. What is your opinion with regard to the reforms in secondary school education?

4. Do you think that the integration of projects in secondary school curriculum/program has brought any new to teaching/learning?
   Yes   No

Explain, please!
5. Do projects form an important part in the curriculum?
   Yes  No
   Explain, please!

6. Do you assign project work to your students?
   Yes  No
   If yes, how many project per unit?
      None  One  Two  Other
   At what phase of unit do you assign projects?
      Beginning of the unit  Middle  End
   For what purposes do you assign projects to students?
      Reinforce learning  Apply knowledge  In-depth topic exploration
      Authentic topic exploration  Test learning
   On what basis do you assign project topics?
      Students' choice  Teacher's choice  Program/Curriculum  Other

Section 03: Students' Attitude and Tendency Towards Project Work and Teacher's Role

10. How do students find projects?
    Engaging  Interesting  Motivating  Boring  Stimulating  Challenging  Other

11. Do students find projects difficult?
    Yes  No
    If students find/don't find projects difficult, why do you think they do so?
       Clear instructions  guidance  help  follow up  Other

12. What skills do projects develop most in your students?
    Researching  Problem-solving  Feedback and reflection  Other

13. What is your role in project conducting?
    Guide/facilitator  Information giver  Evaluator/Feedback provider  Other

14. Do you check students' progress in conducting projects?
    Yes  No
    If yes, how often?
       Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

15. Do students work individually or collectively to complete projects?
    Individually (competitive)  Collectively (Group collaboration/cooperative)

16. Do you set specific goals before assigning projects to students?
    Yes  No
    If yes, on what basis do you set them? Specify, please!

Section 04: Project Work Applicability and Assessment

17. Do you think that working on projects help students learn better and enhance their achievement?
    Yes  No
18. Are projects difficult to achieve/include in the curriculum?
Yes                        No
If yes/no, explain, please!
Time constraint              Program overload           Difficult to manage/evaluate
lack of authentic assessment of performance           other

19. Do you take projects into consideration in the assessment process?
Yes                        No

20. Does the mark of projects receive a good deal of importance in assessment?
Yes                        No

18. Are projects difficult to achieve/include in the curriculum?
Yes                        No
If yes/no, explain, please!
Time constraint              Program overload           Difficult to manage/evaluate
lack of authentic assessment of performance           other

19. Do you take projects into consideration in the assessment process?
Yes                        No

20. Does the mark of projects receive a good deal of importance in assessment?
Yes                        No

21. Choose from the list below the main benefits of project work in the learning process. Put (x) where necessary:
- Motivates students/Increase motivation
- Gives more learning opportunities
- Promotes achievement
- Active engagement
- Connect learning at school with reality
- Provide collaborative opportunities to construct knowledge
- Develop/Increase problem-solving skills
- Develop/Increase social and communication skills
- Increase self-esteem
- Allow students to use their individual learning strengths
- Develop research skills of learners
- Provide Students with practical and real-life way to learn

22. Are you satisfied with the implementation of project work in the curriculum?
Yes                        No
If no, explain why please!

THANK YOU
Suggesting a Support Centre for Dissertation Writing in EFL at Bejaia University

Dr. Nadia Idri
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Algeria

Abstract
In the Algerian higher education context, Master students in foreign languages are required to write a dissertation to get their final degree. However, through observation, the author noticed the students’ difficulty to get engaged in their research from the initial step of choosing a topic to the final research outcome of writing the dissertation according to an academic style. During the supervision process, teachers waste a lot of time on the problem of language adjustment and correction instead of monitoring the learners’ research skills, critical thinking abilities and mastery of concepts related to the field of interest. This exploratory study comes to classify the problems both learners and teachers face when working jointly on the final product of the Master. The study took place in the Department of English, Bejaia University. The present research is the result of seven years collaborative work with students preparing their Master dissertations. The author used observation and analysis of students’ works, and focus groups to collect data from students. In addition, online journals with ten university EFL teachers were used. Results confirmed the existence of writing problems students face when preparing their research papers. The final product of the ethnographic research is the suggestion of a Writing Support Centre.

Keywords: Dissertation Writing, ELT, EAP, Academic Writing, Tutoring, Language Support Centre.
Suggesting a Support Centre for Dissertation Writing

Idri

Introduction

Writing- as a productive performance, synthetic-based ability- remains challenging for English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. Difficulties may result from both the cognitive aspect like lack of an appropriate composing process and the affective aspect such as writing apprehension and negative experiences from instruction and evaluation (Sy-ying Lee, 2005).

The present paper put focus on academic writing as an existing problem in master students at Bejaia University. It is part of an ethnographic research that started since seven years as part of supervising master students working on their dissertations. According to the participant observation, students seem unable to develop their ideas using the appropriate academic style easily. Although they choose topics of interest, they display difficulties in constructing their thoughts correctly.

In a paper presented in the EAP Conference (Idri, 2015), the author focused on the problems Algerian EFL masters face when writing their dissertations. Difficulties students face were classified according to: accuracy, academic style, cultural clues and language interference. A number of recommendations such as teaching EAP, tutoring learners were suggested as parts of the curriculum at its early stages. This present paper comes as a follow up of the paper and suggests a project to diminish such writing deficiencies learners face at an advanced level.

The paper raises four main questions:

1. How well is the Master students’ academic writing performance?
2. Do master students possess the required skill to write academically?
3. How can teachers and learners collaborate to make dissertation writing fun?
4. How feasible is it to create Language Support Centres for EAP in Algerian Universities?

Academic Writing: the Challenge

Writing is a vital skill that learners need to develop. Hence, understanding the nature of writing and the processes it involves helps students develop their writing proficiency. Writing is also an important predictor for academic success, this is why many attempts were made in the area of teaching writing to explore and develop the effective strategies that should be followed in order to achieve practical writing instruction.

Focusing on academic writing implies EAP learning and teaching in higher education. That is why; the center comes to: focus on challenges students meet, find out the differing styles of student writing, assess writing proficiency, and address these in class (EAP conference, 2015). Models of analysis of academic and scientific discourse already exist such as register, discourse and genre. Hence, needs analysis can help design syllabi specific to ESP/EAP and taught in the centers. Writing centers is not a novice idea in the world; many internationally accredited universities have already established such centers. However, though writing centers have developed an array of programmess and strategies for providing writing support (Lawrence & Zawacki, 2015), Bejaia University still does not provide such services.

Tutoring and Accompaniment as a Pedagogic Activity

Tutoring is essentially a mission of pedagogical support and consists not only of accompanying the student in aspects of reception, information, orientation but also helping him realize his personal works and construct his formation course. This will facilitate the matter for the learner in his learning enterprise. Tutoring is, then, an innovative pedagogical task introduced in education. Its philosophy is based on handling individual learning through tasks students will
Suggesting a Support Centre for Dissertation Writing

Idri

make. The instructor here is far from being the leader, the manager, but a guide, a coach, an evaluator, a supervisor, a facilitator. In this concern, Pothier (2003, p. 94-97) attributes three major roles to the tutor. He [the tutor] is the mediator (at the level of the placement of didactics), a facilitator (at the level of the specific knowledge which leads to learning) and an evaluator of progress. Therefore, when the evaluator is the tutor, difficulties learners face can be managed. Moreover, Demazière (2003) relates tutoring to a number of forms of guidance which co-exist in a given device. For him, each system where tutoring is integrated, a number of constituting points is crucial. These concerns are:

- The importance of the students taking of responsibility and initiative to reach the level of self-formation. Here, there will be less self-negative evaluation and center scan help develop this quality in the learners.
- Individualizing the course and giving more time to individual work using the available materials and resources. In the project we present, learners will choose what to learn in writing and get individualized support.
- Usual supervision and coaching under the form of interviews. We also add focus groups, support groups and counseling in the center.

These are a few points related to the term tutoring as explained by a number of researchers elsewhere. In Algeria, the notion of tutoring is still novel and remains unclear for many people although it makes one of the core elements of the LMD system introduced since 2004. At this level, conferences of universities held since January 2008 reported:

every student should take profit from a reception device, accompaniment and support which promotes his success and helps him assure a coherence in his pedagogical course as well as his orientation (National Conference of Universities: LMD Vocabulary, March, 2004: 37)

The tutor, hence, becomes an important actor in this educational system and in the learning process as a whole. Moreover, the tutor can also be a guide, a companion, but never a problem-solver; his skill should and must be acquired by the student himself as the Socratic Method dictates. That is to say, he should develop the students’ problem-solving capabilities, their communicative skills with the diverse partners of formation. In other words, the tutor is not to be an expert in the content, but rather a companion of the student in collecting appropriate data in a maximum of autonomy. Again, it is vital to find out equilibrium between the student’s supervision and the necessity to develop his sense of initiative, his autonomy and his ability to face novel, complex situations. These principles are unfortunately not present in teaching practices. Hence, creating writing support centres would complete the LMD mission in Higher education.
Suggesting a Support Centre for Dissertation Writing

Figure 01. The LMD System and Tutoring

The main objective of tutoring is to reduce failure in university by providing learners with the needed support to make them able to:

- Integrate with the university milieu;
- Have their personal works supervised;
- Have a good knowledge and insertion of the professional world.

The Writing support centers can help learners with difficulties in writing get engaged in learning, integrated in the university context, have positive attitudes towards assessment and evaluation (promote self-assessment and peer-reviewing).

Methodology

The research work aims at identifying the challenges behind academic writing performance in English and suggests a writing center as a space of collaboration and tutoring. Such centres would, then, support learners and link between academic writing performance and writing dissertations at the master level.

The paper is part of a long ethnographic research that started in 2008/2009 when the first master students in Algeria started their theses. With the adoption of the LMD\(^1\) system in Algeria in 2004/2005, the reform aimed at adjusting the educational system to international standards. Our ethnographic study was based on our supervision of master works and on the analysis of their texts. In addition, an online journal with ten instructors from diverse universities was used. Its aim is to collect data about the difficulties both learners and teachers have when preparing their master theses. The final technique was three focus groups we held in 2014 and 2015 with Master I and Master II Applied linguistics and ELT option. This seven years ethnographic research is qualitatively driven. The used techniques are:

- Analysis of the students’ performance (Teacher-correction of the learners’ products).
- Participant observation (Learners’ experiences, their enquiries, their fears through permanent contact with them either in the classroom as an instructor or outside the classroom in tutoring sessions).
- Three focus groups in the research methodology sessions.

\(^{1}\) LMD : Licence/Master/doctorat
Online journals with ELT instructors who supervise master students. Ten ELT instructors from different universities in Algeria (5 females and 2 males, having between 1 and 32 years of experience took part in the study (Idri, 2015; online EAP Conference).

Results

During the supervision period of students’ works, we could notice that a number of students struggle with language accuracy. Examples of such language deficiencies can be presented:

**Student 1:** “The present work is conducted in nearly six months and the problem tackled in this research needs an experiment so as to prove our hypodissertation”

This student for instance has mis-spelt the word “tackled” and mis-used the word “prove”. The first is a spelling problem and the second is a methodological and lexical inaccuracy.

**Student 02:** “so the problem that can be introduced here is, if the negative feedback that the teacher may give to his learners can limit their relationship which is in main the interaction between them.”

One can notice problems in bold red summed up in: capitalization, punctuation, language transfer, subordination, redundancy and style.

This student has serious problem in writing. All of his reports are inaccurate. Here are two examples:

**Student 03:**

**Q8:** Does teaching academic writing to 3rd year students leads them to write better essays?

**Q9:** What are the specific techniques should be based by the teacher during teaching academic writing in classroom?

Many other examples

**Student 04:** statement of the problem and research questions

*My* research questions are the following:

- Is negative transfer a cause of errors in the writings of EFL students?
- What types of errors? common in the writings of EFL students, in other words which of these errors are due to the influence of the students' first language?

**Student 05:** This lead us to ask some questions are: Why EFL students at university of Bejaia find difficulties for producing a logical meaningful writing especially in exams? And how can use vocabulary development as a mean for providing a good thinking process, in order to develop accuracy and fluency in their writing skill (2015).

These were some examples of the learners’ errors. At a master level, a learner is supposed to have acquired the necessary skill to write accurately. This kind of observations and common errors made the job of the teacher complicated. Focus shifted from guiding the learner on methodological bases to correcting language errors.

After the analysis of the learners’ works all along the seven years and the teachers’ responses, the following difficulties are drawn:

**Classification of Writing Difficulties**

According to the observation of Master students writings and the ELT teachers’ responses, the following difficulties have been enumerated:
• The use of non-effective transitions (problem of coherence).

• Quotations from the literature are not clearly referred to, copy-paste mechanisms are often used by the learners.

• Grammar deficiencies in English and mistakes in surface features: inappropriate use of tenses, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Errors in subordination and paragraph organization. This makes the essay’s paragraphs do not adhere to the main idea of the research topic.

• The wording of the statement is most of the time neither clear nor precise. In addition, some information are not relevant to the dissertation statement (this causes a problem of unity).

• Lack of genre knowledge related to dissertation writing: text structures, language functions, coding conventions, etc. This leads to a limited mastery of the academic language and style

• Content and discourse problems: Coherence, clarity, redundancy, repetition, long sentences.

• Problems of interference from French, Arabic and Berber to English are all found in the learners’ writings (Bejaia is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural region),

**Methodological Problems**

• One teacher wrote: “Well, the first difficulty I notice is the methodology, the students for sure have learnt by heart the different steps of research, I always ask them about it and they answer, but I think that they did not understand how to put it into practice. So, when it comes to application, big questions arise as: how to start, how to make review of literature, how to quote a critic , whether/when to quote or paraphrase” (Idri, 2015)

• The rhetorical sections making up those moves are mixed up and inconsistent. Take the example of the abstract, many students do not know what to be put in it.

• Research methodology problems such as formulating hypotheses, narrowing down a research problem, choosing an appropriate research design and/ research tools, discussing the research results, explaining their implications in their research context, etc.

• formulating hypotheses, narrowing down a research problem, choosing an appropriate research design and/ research tools, discussing the research results, explaining their implications in their research context, etc. proved to be common problems as revealed by the teachers.

In terms of the classification of academic writing problems, the following figure summarizes them in relation to accuracy, academic style, cultural clues and language interference:
As concerns the focus groups adopted from last year until now, three focus group were adopted as a new way to teach research methodology. The master entitled: Applied linguistics and ELT was designed by Dr. Nadia Idri and accepted in 2014. The Department of English started the first group with 12 students. This year, 22 students are taking part in the courses. In the following table, a numbers of observations are summarized as a result of the focus group method:

**Table 01. Focus Group results (Master 1 and Master 2 levels, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015)**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. First year of this new master. The pioneers were not accustomed to project-based instruction. 2. Students faced the problem of writing many projects in a short period of time with oral presentations. They expressed their inability to manage. Focus groups helped them manage this problem. 3. Choice of the topic for the methodology assignment was</td>
<td>1. First year of this new master. The pioneers were not accustomed to project-based instruction. 2. Students faced the problem of writing many projects in a short period of time with oral presentations. They expressed their inability to manage. Focus groups helped them manage this problem. 3. Choice of the topic for the methodology assignment was</td>
<td>1. Choice of the topic was required from October, 2014. Students started choosing ideas, but not topics by May, 2015. Students discussed the difficulty of finding up a research topic during the focus group session. 2. Students find PBI challenging but beneficial. This can help them develop their academic thinking. 3. Students could not respect the deadline. They negotiated</td>
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**Figure 02. Students’ common problems (accuracy, academic style, cultural clues and language interference (Idri, 2015).**
made during the focus group sessions. This facilitated the task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions and Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching academic writing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• The solution is to design a new writing curriculum based on these objectives, and to focus on writing skills’</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teach academic conventions related to dissertation writing (hedging, in-text citations &amp; APA/MLA referencing systems. Since students possess a poor knowledge about academic English, a support team at university should be created to tutor learners and make them aware of the characteristics of academic English and explain the “How” and the “Why” to write academically.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assessing foreign language writing in an academic context should not only focus on content assessment, but the emphasis should be only on evaluating sentence level features such as grammar, punctuation and spelling and on the structure and organization of the students’ essays. Teachers should also think of varying assessment techniques to well accompany the learner on an ongoing basis: (authentic assessment, peer-assessment, self-assessment and portfolio assessment).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy and coherence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a need to put more focus on teaching text structures, grammar and language functions, writing process right from the first two years of graduation. This is available in the schedule of the subject “Writing a Research Paper” at the Master 1 level, but needs more emphasis, especially practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural clues and language interference</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teach academic culture, make learners aware about language interferences,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Motivate and push learners to read intensively to expose them to academic writing, develop their thinking in English and help them avoid language transfer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Motivate and push learners to read extensively chosen texts of British and American cultures and on academic writing. This is more likely to help learners discover the cultural clues and avoid language interference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching EAP (to reduce problems in academic writing)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• EAP is also necessary for students of other departments. For English Master students, topics meant to be covered superficially in EAP are dealt with extensively in methodology units (study skills, research methodology, bibliographic research, writing a dissertation, etc.) and writing subjects (academic writing.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implications: Language Support Centre for EAP (LSC-EAP)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LSC-EAP’s Role and Description.</strong> These support centers will be based on teams and group of advanced learners (Master students and post-graduate students) as well as ELT professionals, who will be engaged in meeting learners with difficulties, accompany them and tutor them in order to cope with their problems.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
LSC-EAP’s main goal is to develop academic writing in English and offer innovative ideas to help learners follow the international standards in academic writing. It also aims at fostering tutoring and accompaniment and bridging the gap between learners and teachers.

**Project Objectives**

- Help learners with linguistic and writing difficulties diagnose their problems, share them with other students, develop appropriate writing strategies through focus groups (These proved efficient tools during the ethnographic research).
- Train learners develop their critical-thinking, autonomy, logic and do-it-myself spirit.
- Promote tutoring and accompaniment through counseling and support teams as a follow up of the tutoring within the LMD system.
- Focus on language skills, research skills, communication skills and English use in specific contexts and use of specific genre in writing.
- Strengthen the notion of team work, cooperation and introduce learners to peer-reviewing.
- Strengthen the link between learners and teachers through writing scaffolding tasks and common projects they can share within the center.
- Foster out-of-class language learning and use.
- Adopt Project Activities
- Design a program of workshop series to help define learners’ difficulties, needed content for trainings, create support teams, etc. This will help train learners on an ongoing basis to write a successful piece writing.
- Create a team of tutors and counselors that can work in the center and online.
- Organize competitions on a regular basis based on academic achievement, successful writing.
- Set a website to network with the ELT community engaged in research.
- Create a magazine for learners and publish students’ writings on a regular basis.
- Teaching EAP (to reduce problems in academic writing). EAP is also necessary for students of other departments. For English Master students, topics meant to be covered superficially in EAP are dealt with extensively in methodology units (study skills, research methodology, bibliographic research, writing a dissertation, etc.) and writing subjects (academic writing.)

**Conclusion**

This attempt revealed many of the difficulties EFL learners face at Master levels when trying to write academically. The paper is two-fold; finding out learners’ writing difficulties and classifying them on the one hand; and suggest the creation of a writing support centre on the other.

To conclude, suggestions need to be made and a word about the centre needs to be addressed.

Students are encouraged to identify the challenges behind writing in a second or a foreign language and to reflect on the diverse effects which are attained based on different linguistic decisions. Both learners and teachers should, then, collaborate together to successfully learn and teach writing. This will lead learners to make the right decision about making the adequate linguistic structures, the right stylistic choices, the right cross-cultural variations to convey the
meant writing communicative purpose. In addition, the EFL community is required to develop critical thinking in the learner and enhance autonomy.

Such centers, if created and facilitated by stakeholders, can host learners and teachers to solve many of the problems learners meet not only at the level of writing but also at the level of interaction, motivation, learning strategies, critical thinking, learner autonomy and many other positive outcomes related to both content and context.

Finally, such support centers become a need to cope with writing problems learners face when required to fulfill a salient writing task as a dissertation.

To end, a question is asked and wad under debate during the conference to follow up the current paper:

*How can such support centres be funded and adopted? Is it possible to address stake-holders to facilitate such projects?*

**About the Author**

Nadia Idri has been teaching at Bejaia University for twelve years. Specialized in educational psychology, ELT and Applied Linguistics, she is interested in conducting research on affective factors, applied linguistics, learner autonomy, basic and higher education, technology education and LMD Reform. Nadia masters four languages and translates in three of them (English-French-Arabic). She has published in many national and international journals; she has been a member of various scientific committees and chairing sessions in national and international conferences and chaired many of them in her university and now at international levels. She has a reviewing and editing experience with many journals. Actually, she is the chair of the scientific committee in her Department and a chair of the master she created: Applied Linguistics and ELT. Nadia is also a founding member in BEST student association to develop autonomy, creativity and sense of initiative in her students. She is the founder of the Creative Writing Days event in Bejaia University in partnership with BEST. Nadia is an active member of the Algerian English Language Teacher Training (AELTT) team; a winner of the Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Project Proposal funded by the US embassy in 2015-2016. Nadia is also in charge of development and training in Abp El Djazzeir Private School. Nadia’s main focus is to promote ELT and make change in the way English is taught and conceived through strengthening the learner’s role and place in the class and outside it as a citizen.

**References**


**Appendixes**

**Appendix A. Online Journals designed for ELT Instructors**

In order to contribute in this research, your teaching experience is quite salient for us to enumerate the problems Algerian masters encounter when writing academically. The following questions are addressed to university teachers who taught academic writing or supervised masters when writing theirs theses.

**Q1. Profile information**
Job Title, affiliation, years of experience teaching at university, years of experience teaching/supervising EFL masters

**Q2. How do you assess your EFL masters’ academic writing?**

**Q3. Do EFL masters possess the required skill to write academically?**

**Q4. To what extent do Algerian EFL masters face problems when writing up their research papers?**

**Q5. Would you enumerate the difficulties Algerian EFL masters encounter when writing their research works?**

**Q6. Suggestions concerning:**
- Learners’ academic style
- Accuracy and coherence
- Cultural clues and language interference
- Teaching EAP (to reduce problems in academic writing)

Thank you for your attention
Appendix B Writing for Academic Purposes Suggested Support Courses

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction and overview of academic writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. English for Academic Purposes</td>
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<td>3. Academic Literacy and academic integrity</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Critical thinking and argumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accuracy in academic writing: grammar and vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Critical Reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Subjectivity and Voice in Academic writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Writing genres and discourse communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Needs analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Assessment and feedback in EAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Final product: participation in academic events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The program will be based on continuing sessions all along the academic year for learners with difficulties. Each session will involve a mixture of tutor input, group discussion and small-group practical activities. Students will be expected to read selected parts of the core texts or selected articles before each session and post reflective comments on a class blog.
Investigating the Effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization in Reducing Anxiety among Jordanian EFL Learners

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Abstract
This study aimed at examining the effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization (S. D.) as used in group counseling to reduce the level of anxiety for Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language. The procedures include three specific steps namely: Relaxation training, anxiety hierarchy construction and the systematic desensitization procedure that ties the two together. The study sample consisted of 28 male and female students at Ajloun National University. The participants were all at the undergraduate level and have received the highest anxiety scores on the foreign language anxiety scale. The students were randomly divided into two groups; an experimental group and a controlled group. Each group consisted of 14 male and female students. Members of the experimental group received training on systematic desensitization, while no remedial training was given to the participants in the controlled group. Results of the study revealed that the use of systematic desensitization was more effective in reducing the anxiety level for learners of English compared to the absence of using the remedial program for members of the controlled group. Statistical analysis showed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the controlled group (α= 0.05). The use of systematic desensitization was gender specific since statistical analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between males and females (α= 0.05) in favor of female informants.

Keywords: Relaxation training, English language, anxiety hierarchy construction, systematic desensitization, Jordanian university students.
**Introduction**

Language is a very crucial component of any culture. It is the most important means of communication and understanding among people. Members of any society attempt to prove themselves primarily through their language at the level of intercultural dialogue and exchange of knowledge among different societies. The process of first language acquisition takes place under natural circumstances as an indivisible part of the development of an individual and his/her social and psychological maturity (Aly & Walker, 2007).

Learning a second or foreign language is different from acquiring the native language since it is acquired under normal and completely natural circumstances as mentioned above. The age factor in which a foreign language is learned is one of the most important factors in the process of foreign language learning (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). This is due to the flexibility of the brain before the age of puberty which enables the child to acquire language more effectively and easily. It becomes more difficult for the learner to acquire language after the age of puberty especially the phonetic system of language (Singleton & Lengyel, 1995).

Motivation is one of the most important factors in foreign language learning which stands behind the goal of learning a target language coupled with intelligence, readiness, hard work as well as the strategies used in second or foreign language learning (Al-Damegh, 2011). This is in addition to other emotive factors such as anxiety, which is considered as one of the most effective factors in foreign language learning and causes an obstacle that prohibits the learner from becoming fully competent.

**Study Problem**

Foreign language anxiety may be considered as one of the most common psychological disorders among foreign language learners at the university level in particular. A considerable number of university students complain from the symptoms of foreign language anxiety which could become severe and serve as an obstacle on the way of learners when learning or acquiring a foreign language.

Former theoretical studies in this field point to the fact that there is a lack of studies in Arabic or any other language that attempted to examine the effectiveness of group counseling and systematic desensitization in dealing with the issue of foreign language anxiety. This is exactly what justifies the authors to carry out this study. This is done as an attempt to investigate the effectiveness of systematic desensitization for remedial purposes to university students who attempt to learn English as a foreign language.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of systematic desensitization in treating the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety for male and female undergraduate university students at Ajloun National University in Jordan. The study attempted to investigate the following hypothesis: "There are statistically significant differences (α= 0.05) in the treatment of foreign language anxiety which are due to the impact of the group or gender or the interaction between them".

**Significance**

This study may be considered important and significant due to the following reasons:
• It is concerned with discovering the individuals who suffer from foreign language anxiety and attempts to help them in restoring self-esteem and confidence and enables them to get rid of the problems and obstacles that hinder their learning process.

• It provides psychological counselors with a treatment program (systematic desensitization), which can be utilized to help learners who seek counseling due to foreign language anxiety.

• It contributes to the encouragement of researchers and educators in designing additional counseling programs that are preventable, developmental and remedial in nature and which are suitable and effective in reducing the level of anxiety for learners of English as a foreign language. This undoubtedly contributes to fostering and achieving a higher level of performance.

• It is hoped that this study will serve as a new beginning and a steppingstone for further educational and scientific research that specifically deal with the very issue of foreign language anxiety in general and anxiety associated with learning English as a foreign language in particular.

Definitions

Foreign language anxiety: A number of physiological, behavioral and knowledge related responses that accompany an individual's feelings as a result of his or her own negative expectations and of failure in terms of negative performance related to foreign language learning. This concept of anxiety is measured in this study by a foreign language anxiety scale adopted by the authors for this particular purpose.

Systematic Desensitization: Also known as (graduated exposure therapy) is a type of behavior therapy used in the field of psychology to help effectively overcome phobias and other anxiety disorders.

The foreign language anxiety scale: A scale which measures the level of anxiety of learners in a situation where they attempt to learn English as a foreign language.

Methodology

For purposes of this study, 28 male and female undergraduate students were chosen from those university students enrolled at Ajloun National University during the Fall semester of the academic year 2014-2015. Participants in the study based on their foreign language anxiety scores. Students with the highest anxiety scores were selected and asked to take part in the study. Participants were randomly divided into two groups: An experimental group and a controlled group. Systematic desensitization was administered to students participating in the experimental group leaving participants in the controlled group without any treatment programs. Each group consisted of 14 participants.

For purposes of this study, the authors used the foreign language anxiety scale (Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M. & Cope, 1986). The scale consisted of 33 items. It was translated into Arabic, the students' native language, then distributed to participants who were asked to respond in a 5-level gradual grading system (0= strongly disagree - 5= strongly agree). The lowest score on the scale was; therefore, 0, while the highest score was 165.

The foreign language anxiety scale may be described as a scale which measures the level of anxiety of learners in a situation where they attempt to learn English as a foreign language. The scale consists of 33 items (please see appendix).
The researchers translated the original language anxiety scale from English into Arabic. The scale was then evaluated by a number of specialists in the areas of educational psychology, psychological counseling and English language. They were all requested to offer their opinions regarding language style, clarity of meaning and any other modifications they might feel necessary based on their experience and knowledge. The items on the scale were modified according to the comments and suggestions of the reviewers.

The researchers applied systematic desensitization as a remedial program on the experimental group which consisted of 14 students. Participants in the group received a total of 10 treatment sessions over a period of five weeks. Students received two sessions a week that lasted for approximately 50 minutes each.

The application of systematic desensitization aimed at assisting students who suffer from foreign language anxiety by getting rid of negative destructive thoughts which cause them anxiety and make them feel discouraged when attempting to learn English as a foreign language. The systematic desensitization program consisted of the following sessions:

- First session: Getting to know each other. This session was concerned with fostering the relationship between the counselor and members of the group. The purpose of the treatment program was explained and an explanation of systematic desensitization was given to participants. Possible activities were discussed and a homework assignment was given to students.
- Second session: Foreign language anxiety. In this session, the previous homework assignment was reviewed; foreign language anxiety was explained including its definition, causes and consequences through lecturing, discussing and interaction. The session was concluded with a homework assignment.
- The third session: Explaining systematic desensitization. In this session, the previous homework assignment was reviewed. The theoretical concepts of systematic desensitization were discussed. Irrational thoughts that cause foreign language anxiety were discussed through dialogue and interaction. The session was concluded with giving a homework assignment.
- The fourth session: The importance of relaxation in facing language anxiety. In this session, the previous homework assignment was reviewed. The method of relaxation was discussed along with its importance in facing English language anxiety learning. This was primarily conducted through discussion and dialogue along with exercises related to relaxation. The session was also concluded with giving a homework assignment.
- The fifth session: Relaxation training. In the beginning of this session, the previous homework assignment was reviewed. It consisted mainly of using the practical method of relaxation training through explain what relaxation means and how it may be achieved along with applying it to members of the group. This session was also concluded with a homework assignment.
- The sixth session: Muscle relaxation skill. The session consisted of reviewing the previous homework and explained the meaning of muscle relaxation along with an explanation of how students can learn this skill and apply it to their lives on a daily basis. This was conducted also through discussion and dialogue and concluded with a homework assignment.
- The seventh session: Anxiety hierarchy construction. This session started with reviewing the previous homework. It discussed the method of anxiety hierarchy construction.
through discussion, dialogue and self suggestion. The session was also concluded with another homework assignment.

- The eighth session: Applying systematic desensitization. This session began with reviewing the previous homework. Students were encouraged to apply systematic desensitization through the process of muscle relaxation. At the end a homework was given as usual.

- The ninth session: Final application of systematic desensitization. The session began with reviewing the previous assignment. Participants in the experimental group were asked to apply everything they learned in previous sessions in order to maximize the benefits of systematic desensitization. It was also concluded with another homework assignment.

- The final session: Evaluating the program and thanking participants for their participation and discipline. In this session, participants were thanked for their efforts and participation after the program was evaluated. Students were urged to stay in touch with the counselor and asked not to hesitate in asking for any future counseling if it is ever needed.

Limitations
This study is limited to a sample of 28 male and female students currently enrolled at Ajloun National University at various undergraduate programs. The study was conducted during the Fall semester of the academic year 2014-2015. The study dealt with anxiety related to learning English as a foreign language leaving out any other foreign languages.

Literature Review
A number of previous studies point to the significant, but negative role that anxiety plays in the process of learning a foreign language (Supon, 2004). Spielberger (1983) defines anxiety as an emotional state that triggers the natural nervous system at a given moment characterized by fear, stress and nervousness. It is also defined as a state of exhaustion at the knowledge level as well as the emotional, behavioral and physiological levels (Scholing & Emmelkamp, 1993). Moreover, anxiety may be defined as a state of annoyance and discomfort accompanied with physiological responses such as accelerated heart beats and irregular breathing. Other behavioral responses include weakness in performance and the deliberate avoidance of being in certain situations (Barlow, 1988).

Anxiety differs according to its types which include anxiety about the future, marital anxiety, death anxiety, social anxiety, test anxiety and foreign language learning anxiety among other kinds of anxiety which different people in society face at relatively different levels of seriousness including university students who have to face anxiety as a result of psychological and academic pressure related to the different life circumstances that they have to face which includes the process of foreign language learning.

The process of foreign language learning in general and learning English in particular is considered the gateway to different cultures, sciences and technologies. Thus, studying the obstacles that hinder the learning of English is extremely important and represents one of the most important ways of learning and acquiring the language. Therefore, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is one of the factors that affect the level of competence for students in the process of foreign language learning especially the English language.
The English language has a special status and importance in the life of university students. This is true since it is extremely important for university students to pass university placement tests especially at the graduate level since passing an English proficiency test with a certain score is now a prerequisite for graduate admission for Jordanian students at all levels of graduate studies and applies to all majors. This makes it crucial for Jordanian college students to be proficient in English in order to pass such exams. However, there are so many challenges that go along with learning English as a foreign language at Jordanian universities. Anxiety may be considered as one of the most salient challenges that students have to face when learning English since it makes them feel unqualified to pass English placement tests. This feeling is negatively reflected on the level of achievement and empowerment.

In a study conducted on Chinese students learning English as a foreign language, the results of the study showed that anxiety was one of the most important factors affecting language learning (Xu & Li, 2010). In another study conducted on American students learning Arabic as a foreign language, the study results revealed that anxiety was negatively associated with achievement and the ability to learn a foreign language (Campbell, 1995). Foreign language anxiety was given a lot of attention by scholars and linguistic researchers since it is a determining factor in the learning process (Hu, 2003).

Foreign language anxiety may be defined as an emotional state accompanied by physiological and behavioral aspects that become apparent on the case of the individual learning languages other than his or her native language. Anxiety is also defined as a state of instability on the knowledge and cognitive aspects which negatively affects students' performance when attempting to learn a foreign language (Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M. & Cope, 1986).

There are several factors that contribute to foreign language anxiety: Aly & Walker (2007), for example claims that the methods and approaches of foreign language teaching, the lack of time set aside to language learners and the unavailability of native language speakers constitute the most important reasons behind foreign language anxiety (Tanveer, 2007).

There are also other factors associated with foreign language anxiety which include: Age, gender and personal traits of learners (Campbell, 1995 & Dewaele, 2002). Chazan & Jackson (1971) claims that factors which cause foreign language anxiety may be classified into two major categories namely: Factors directly related to the teaching process and factors directly related to the learners. Factors related to the teaching process are represented by activities that accompany the learning process, methods of teaching and the interaction between learners themselves. As for factors related to the learners themselves, they include variables associated with such language learners, age, educational level, gender and personal traits (Baron, 1993).

There is a negative impact associated with foreign language anxiety and the factors that cause it. These negative factors cause the learners to lose their sense of self effectiveness which is extremely important to possess a strong will and motivation. This kind of motivation enables the learners to reach a high level of performance. Some of the consequences associated with foreign language anxiety, as stated by (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994), are directly related to academic, knowledge and social consequences. Academically, foreign language anxiety affects the sense of accomplishment, performance and the ability to pronounce English words correctly, or even using the grammatical rules of language properly. Knowledge wise, information processing is influenced by the expected speed with which language is learned or acquired. Socially, foreign language learners who suffer from a high level of anxiety may face ridicule by other individuals with whom they deal on a regular basis.
In order to deal effectively with the phenomenon of foreign language anxiety that affects the learners when attempting to learn English, this study executes a group counseling program which relies on the application of systematic desensitization. This treatment program was used on a number of students who constitute the sample of the study from Ajloun National University in Jordan. The application of the treatment program lasted for ten sessions. Group counseling here may be defined as a series of meetings between counselors and students systematically. Such groups are usually small and those students usually suffer from similar obstacles and desire to reach solutions for their problems.

The benefits of group counseling are most apparent in saving effort, cost and giving each participant the chance to participate others in the same group sharing their feelings and emotions. A group is usually considered as a source of positive modeling. Members of the same group usually support one another and if one member succeeds in a certain skill, the remaining members reinforce this success and appreciate it highly. The group in this case becomes a source of support. Another benefit of group counseling is that it is considered as a good opportunity for feedback from other members which gives the members the chance to see things as they are.

Systematic desensitization is a form of counter conditioning, a type of Pavlovian therapy developed by South African psychiatrist, Joseph Wolpe. In the 1950s, Wolpe discovered that the cats of Wits University could overcome their fears through gradual and systematic exposure (Dubord, 2011). The process of systematic desensitization occurs in three steps. The first step of systematic desensitization is the identification of an anxiety inducing stimulus hierarchy. The second step is the learning of relaxation or coping techniques. Once the individual has been taught these skills, he or she must use them in the third step to react towards and overcome situations in the established hierarchy of fears. The goal of this process is for the individual to learn how to cope with, and overcome the fear in each step of the hierarchy.

There are three main steps that Wolpe identified to successfully desensitize an individual.

1. Establish anxiety stimulus hierarchy. The individual must first identify the items that are causing anxiety. Each item that causes anxiety is given a subjective ranking on the severity of induced anxiety. If the individual is experiencing great anxiety to many different triggers, each item is dealt with separately. For each trigger or stimulus, a list is created to rank the events from least anxiety provoking to the greatest anxiety provoking.

2. Learn coping mechanism or incompatible response. Relaxation training, such as meditation, is one type of coping strategy. Wolpe taught his patients relaxation responses because it is not possible to be both relaxed and anxious at the same time. In this method, patients practice tensing and relaxing different parts of the body until the patient reaches a state of serenity (Wolpe, 1958). This is necessary because it provides the patient with a means of controlling his fear, rather than letting it increase to intolerable levels. Usually only a few sessions are needed for a patient to learn the appropriate coping mechanisms. Additional coping strategies include anti-anxiety medicine and breathing exercises. Another means of relaxation is cognitive reappraisal of imagined outcomes. The therapist might encourage subjects to examine what they imagine happening when exposed to the anxiety-inducing stimulus and allowing for the client to replace the imagined catastrophic situation with imagined positive outcomes.

3. Connect the stimulus to the incompatible response or coping method through counter conditioning. In this step the client completely relaxes and is then is presented with the lowest item that was placed on their hierarchy of severity of anxiety. When the client has
reached a state of serenity again after being presented with the first stimulus, the second stimulus that should present a higher level of anxiety is presented. Again, the individual practices the coping strategies learned. This activity is completed until all items of the hierarchy of severity of anxiety is completed without inducing anxiety in the client. If at any time during the exercise the coping mechanisms fail or the client fails to complete the coping mechanism due to severe anxiety, the exercise is stopped. Once the individual is calm, the last stimulus that was presented without inducing anxiety is presented again and the exercise is continued (Mischel, 2008 et al).

Between 25 to 40 percent of students experience test anxiety (Cassady, 2010). Children can suffer from low self-esteem and stress induced symptoms as a result of test anxiety (Deffenbacher & Hazaleus, 1985). The principles of systematic desensitization can be used by children to help reduce their test anxiety. Children can practice the muscle relaxation techniques by tensing and relaxing different muscle groups. With older children and college students, an explanation of desensitization can help to increase the effectiveness of the process. After these students learn the relaxation techniques, they can create an anxiety inducing hierarchy. For test anxiety these items could include not understanding directions, finishing on time or marking the answers properly. Teachers, school counselors or school psychologists could instruct children on the methods of systematic desensitization (Austin & Partridge, 1995).

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is noticed that studies that dealt with the concept of foreign language anxiety are for the most part limited to surveying this topic in a shallow manner or in association with other issues. This kind of language anxiety was not dealt with through the use of treatment and counseling programs.

One thing that distinguishes this study from other previous studies is that it seeks to investigate the level of effectiveness for systematic desensitization in treating foreign language anxiety for undergraduate university students in Jordan. It may be claimed that this study is the first of its kind which deals with counseling programs and how they may be used in learning English as a foreign language.

Results and Conclusions

The study hypothesis was tested using the following statistical procedures:

- The means and standard deviations were calculated for the scores of sampled individuals on the foreign language anxiety scale.
- Dual differentiation analysis was used to investigate if there were any statistically significant differences in the level of foreign language anxiety which are due to group, gender or interaction between the two.

The researchers first calculated the means and standard deviations in light of the variables of group and gender as shown in table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.710</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-0.376</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that there are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha= 0.05$) which can be due to the impact of the group ($t= -0.376$), statistical significance= (0.710). This reflects the fact that the groups are equal.

The following figure represents the means of the experimental and controlled groups on the foreign language anxiety scale pre-test.

Figure 1. The means of the experimental and controlled groups on the foreign language anxiety scale pre-test.

Dual differentiation analysis was used to show the statistically significant differences between these means as illustrated in table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-2.662</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in table 2 show that there were statistically significant differences ($\alpha= 0.05$) which can be due to the impact of the group ($t= -2.662$), statistical significance= (0.013) in favor of the experimental group.

The following figure represents the means of the experimental and controlled groups on the foreign language anxiety scale post-test.
To investigate the reliability of the study hypothesis, means and standard deviations were calculated for the scores of both controlled and experimental groups on the scale of foreign language anxiety in the post test according to gender.

Table 3. **Means and standard deviations for foreign language anxiety post test according to gender.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.422</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Post-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that there are statistically significant differences ($\alpha = 0.05$) which can be due to the impact of gender ($t = 3.422$), statistical significance $= (0.005)$ in favor of the experimental group.

The following figure represents the means of males and females on the foreign language anxiety scale post-test.

Figure 3. **The means of males and females on the foreign language anxiety scale post-test.**
Based on data analysis as illustrated in the three tables, results of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and controlled groups. The results showed that systematic desensitization was more influential in reducing foreign language anxiety for Jordanian university students with a significantly high level of influence regarding the study sample. This finding supports the hypothesis related to the impact of the group. This result may be interpreted in light of the level of effectiveness in using systematic desensitization in reducing foreign language anxiety for Jordanian university students as shown in the study sample. Therefore, it may be claimed that foreign language anxiety in general and English language anxiety in particular can be treated effectively using this particular method. Furthermore, results of the study show that systematic desensitization is extremely influential in group therapy as a means to reduce foreign language anxiety since it affects students' knowledge and thinking behavior trends. This in turn shows that foreign language anxiety is not at all justified or realistically substantiated.

The use of systematic desensitization works in two parallel directions namely knowledge based and behavior based. The anxious person's knowledge influences his or her information and thoughts. Systematic desensitization attempts to get rid of such negative feelings and unrealistic thoughts. The behavioral side attempts to work in the same direction to put the anxious person in realistic situations which help him or her realize how to get rid of the feelings of fear regarding different situations.

In an attempt to compare and contrast using or not using systematic desensitization as a treatment program, the foreign language learner's feelings of anxiety will no doubt increase if systematic desensitization is not used especially in the beginning stages. It may be safely concluded that using systematic desensitization as a group therapy program to reduce anxiety will be a very effective tool in helping foreign language learners overcome their fear of learning a foreign language. Systematic desensitization contributes to extinguishing the fear and anxiety associated with foreign language learning in general and English learning in particular as clearly shown in this study. It does so through effectively reducing sensitivity towards learning English as a foreign language and reducing the fear and anxiety associated with the process of language learning. These findings reaffirm the findings reached by Alghonaim (2014), who conducted a study that involved 52 English major students at Qassim University, Saudi Arabia in an attempt to determine their attitudes towards communicative and non-communicative activities and their relationship to foreign language anxiety. Findings of his study suggested that oral activities which require students to speak before their peers were seen as a source of most anxiety felt by English language learners. On the other hand, group-oriented activities were found to increase the possibility of producing less anxiety.

In relation to the same hypothesis in light of gender and interaction between group and gender, there were statistically significant differences found in the study which may be specifically due to the impact of gender or the interaction between gender and group. This finding may be interpreted in the sense that male and female students participating in the study have received different training which results in students possessing varying concepts and skills and with relatively different levels of proficiency. Program instructions and treatment and whatever activities it included were directed specifically towards participants in the experimental group regardless of gender. This is in addition to the fact that participants from both genders were exposed to the same circumstances and that they belong to the same cultural and educational environment and that they study at the same university. Female participants seem to benefit more from systematic desensitization since they tend to spend more time at home.
compared to their male counterparts in addition to their feminist nature which makes them more receptive to such programs.

This may also be interpreted in light of foreign language anxiety that students suffer from regardless of gender. The level of effectiveness for this program is related to the kind of instruction and conditions put forth to insure the success of the treatment program. This success is greatly impacted by the learner's approval, co-operation, acceptance, discipline and motivation. This is not gender specific by any means but rather applies to all learners regardless of gender and it has to be applied to all participants to ensure the success of the treatment program.

Finally, it may be safely stated that gender is a factor in achieving the level of effectiveness or success for systematic desensitization which is used in group therapy although success and effectiveness of such a program depends primarily on following certain instruction and conditions, which is substantiated by a large number of previous studies regarding the appropriate environment for treatment.

**Recommendations**

Based on the results and conclusions discussed above, the following recommendations may be reached:

- Systematic desensitization should be used in group counseling to reduce the level of anxiety for students learning English as a foreign language based on the positive results of this method as shown by the results of this study.
- Further research dealing with foreign language anxiety should be conducted since studies in this area are relatively scarce. Furthermore, the level of seriousness for the spread of foreign language anxiety should be investigated in order to find better ways to treat it.
- Professional training courses should be held for educational and psychological counselors in order to foster their knowledge and abilities in using special methods and treatment programs to reduce and overcome foreign language anxiety.

**About the Authors**

**Mohammad H. Abood** is an Assistant Professor of psychological and educational counseling, currently teaching at Ajloun National University in Jordan. He received his Ph.D. degree in psychological and educational counseling from Yarmouk University in 2013. Prior to that, he obtained his Master's degree in psychological and educational counseling from Yarmouk University in 2006 preceded by a Bachelor's degree in psychological and educational counseling also from Yarmouk University in 2002. His major area of concentration is the relationship between group counseling and test anxiety.

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References


Appendix: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

[1] I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[2] I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[3] I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[4] It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[5] It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[6] During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[7] I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[8] I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[9] I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[10] I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
[12] In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[13] It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[14] I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[15] I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[16] Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[17] I often feel like not going to my language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[18] I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[19] I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[20] I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[21] The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[22] I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[23] I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[24] I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[25] Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[26] I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[27] I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[28] When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[29] I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[30] I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[31] I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[32] I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

[33] I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree Nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
Integrating the Content-based Instruction into the American Civilization Class

Abdelhak Elaggoune
University of 8 May 1945 – Guelma
Algeria

Abstract
Despite the fact that content-based instruction (CBI) is a curricular model that allows foreign language learners to simultaneously improve content of the subject matter and language skills, many Algerian foreign language teachers usually focus on the course content and neglect the linguistic aspect. This paper reports on an experiment conducted with first year EFL students where content-based instruction was implemented to foster the integration of content and language in order to provide a vehicle for foreign language learning. In the American civilization course taught in the department of English at Guelma University, a theme-based CBI instruction method was used as a means of providing first year EFL students with the opportunity to reinforce their language skills through themes in American history accompanied by a set of tasks conceived to promote their target language skills. Such an activity-based approach enabled students both to assimilate the content of the American civilization course and also to improve their foreign language proficiency.

Keywords: American civilisation; Content-Based Instruction (CBI); critical thinking; integrating language and content; study skills
Introduction

The department of English of the University of 8 May 1945 at Guelma in Algeria offers a license degree (Bachelor of Arts Degree) in the teaching of English as a foreign language. The latter includes the American Civilisation course that extends from the first to the third year for students majoring in English as a Foreign Language. The overall objective of this course is to make students more cognisant of the history, culture, and government of the American nation. Besides, throughout this course the students are expected to develop English language, and learn and practise, study skills and critical thinking skills through engagement in the course content.

Study skills help students situate and organise information. Study skills make it possible for students to learn more effectively and efficiently (Murphy, 2001, p. 7). They include the following skills: building vocabulary, summarising, understanding charts, reading graphs, using the library, writing an outline, taking notes, writing reports, and taking tests. Adjacent to study skills is critical thinking. It has also been proved that critical thinking skills are indispensable, and advantageous (Klooster, 2001, pp. 36-37). These skills include: interpretation, analysis, translating and synthesising, problem solving, forming hypotheses, and evaluation. So, critical thinking skills help students look below the surface of American history. They make the study of history more interesting, for if students can look critically at the events of ancient times, they will be able to make sense of today’s world.

Statement of the Problem

Students of English as a foreign language have frequently complained that they did not really have the opportunity to make any progress in the acquisition of the English language or the skills in the American civilisation course because most of the class time is spent passively listening to the teacher presenting information-heavy lectures. Because of the size of the classes that amount to 36 students on average, lectures became more predominant. In such an environment, civilisation teachers do not usually have the time to provide classroom activities that would actively engage students in the learning process. Therefore, American civilisation teachers found themselves becoming the main dispensers of learning rather than facilitators of learning.

Because of the prevalence of the teacher-cantered approach, and due to the instructional limitations with larger-sized classes, students in the American civilization class never have the opportunity to participate in the learning process. They seem content to just sit, passively absorbing the information. When questions are asked, few students are willing to respond and it is often the same ones. Exams also indicate that performance was below average for a considerable number of students.

Following these shortcomings realised from personal observation and students’ frequent comments, a decision was made to explore another alternative approach to teaching the civilization course in a way that would increase student participation, engagement, and involvement in the learning process and more effective learning/digestion of the course material. It is meant to be a method based on active learning which requires students to share more than the teachers the responsibility for instruction/learning, because almost all theories of how people learn emphasize the importance of active participation in the learning process rather than passive observation (Olgun, Ö., 2009, 113-125). Active learning improves retention of course content, and listening to the teacher or classmates expose different opinions improves students interpreting and analyzing skills.

This paper, therefore, presents the results of an experiment conducted with a group of first year students of English at the University of Guelma in Algeria. The purpose of this experiment...
is to find out if content-based instruction (CBI), also known in Europe as content language integrated learning (CLIL), is an effective approach in achieving the American civilization course objectives.

**Theoretical Framework**

CBI is an acronym for Content-Based Instruction. It is a paradigm to teaching a second/foreign language in which instruction is mainly based on a content which usually refers to a specific subject matter that people study or teach using a language. It is an approach where the language is taught within the context of a specific academic subject (Stoller, 2004, p. 261). In a CBI course, students gain knowledge and understanding of the curricular subject while at the same time learn and use the target language. A number of definitions of CBI have been given by several authors. For instance, Richards and Rodgers (2001) see Content-Based Instruction as “the teaching of language through exposure to content that is interesting and relevant to learners” (204). Similarly, Brinton (2003) views Content-Based Instruction as “the teaching of language through exposure to content that is interesting and relevant to learners” (204). In this regard, Genesee (1994) argues that content does not have to be strictly academic but it can include any authentic topic, theme or non-language issue that is of interest to the learners (p.3).

More precisely, Snow (2001) says that Content “is the use of subject matter for second/foreign language teaching purposes. Subject matter may consist of topics or themes based on the interest or need in an adult EFL setting, or it may be very specific, such as the subjects that students are currently studying in their elementary school classes” (303). To Brinton, “Content-based instruction is the integration of particular content with language teaching aims…the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills” (Brinton et al., 2003, p.2). Taken together, these definitions suggest that CBI is an approach in which learners acquire the target language through content.

**Benefits of CBI**

Numerous foreign language educators (Snow, 1998; Stoller, 2004) have advocated the benefits of content-based instruction revealing that such instruction promotes academic development while also fostering language proficiency. They have all stressed the advantages and benefits of incorporating language and content instruction for second/foreign language students. They have also stated that content-based instruction has great advantages because classroom activities offer a framework for language learning. In other words, students can successfully get both language and subject matter knowledge by obtaining content input through activities in the target language.

Chamot and O’Malley (1994) assume that there are at least four reasons for integrating content into the English as a Second/Foreign Language class. First, content enables students to acquire significant knowledge in different courses. Second, content-based instruction provides students with the ability to master the language function and skills needed to understand, discuss, read, and write about the concepts acquired. Stated differently, CBI promotes an integrated skills approach to language teaching. For instance, students might read, take notes, summarise, or reply orally to what they have read or listened to. Third, the majority of students become greatly motivated when they learn content instead of learning language only. This means that students constantly explore interesting content and engage in language-dependent activities which can lead to inherent motivation. Fourth, content enables teachers to teach students different learning
strategies (26). In other words, students grasp the different learning strategies used by instructors when teaching content through activities such as brainstorming, recalling, listening, or note taking.

Over the past several decades, many approaches to content-based instruction have been developed. According to Stoller and Grabe (1997), the approaches differ in “representing diverse contexts for instruction, different perspectives on the integration of content and language, and differing assumptions about content, language, and learning strategies” (5). Regardless of their differences, Straight (1994) regards that these approaches to CBI equally perceive language as a means for learning content, and content as a context for learning language. One of these approaches is that of ‘university-level foreign language CBI’. This approach involves foreign language instruction that is organised around cultural, geographic, historical, political, and literary themes.

Models of CBI in Higher Education

Depending on the learners’ requirements, interests and context, content-based instruction offers numerous models that can be applied in second/foreign language classes. According to Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003), the most common and dominant ones that are frequently used in foreign language education at the university level are: theme-based courses (TB), and adjunct/linked courses (AL) (p.19). These and other models of CBI vary from one another in terms of being content or language driven.

In the theme-based language instruction, the course outline is set around topics, with a content orientation whose main intention is students’ second/foreign language competence. In the theme-based course, the teacher acts both as a language and content instructor. In this model, topics may be introduced through both videos or/and handouts. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the materials used to deal with the topics have to provide a great deal of useful input and to integrate all skills.

In the adjunct/linked language instruction model, students take two separate but coordinated courses which share a common content base; and which are taught by two separate teachers. One relies on content, and its main objective is to make students assimilate the subject matter. The other is based on the acquisition of language skills of the target language, and its chief aim is to enable students improve their language skills (Richards and Rodgers 2001). In the adjunct courses, learners are expected to master content and simultaneously develop language skills.

However, the essential aim of the sheltered content instruction model is to make students understand the content material with only minor language learning. In this mode, the teacher is in charge of both content and language, but students are assessed only on the content knowledge. With regard to instructional design, the above three models vary in the extent to which content and language are integrated. Stoller and Grab (1997) view that “practically all instruction is theme-based” (7). They also perceive that sheltered and adjunct instruction are “not alternatives to theme-based instruction but rather…two methods for carrying out theme-based instruction”. Accordingly, they see the two terms, “content-based instruction and theme-based instruction as interchangeable” (op cit).

Notwithstanding the model, in order to effectively put into practice a content-based instruction course, the following fundamental attributes must be included. First, content must be the organising principle of the course because second/foreign languages are well acquired when the focal point is on mastery of content more than on mastery of language in isolation (Nunan, 1999, p. 209), 2). Second, the content-based method must also use authentic language and texts.
The latter, according to Stryker and Leaver (1997), may include videotapes, audio recordings, handouts, visual aids, and web resources (p. 8). Third, it is important to select authentic learning activities; these are tasks related to real events, people, or places that enable students to become more active in their learning, and require them to interact with others and engage in critical or deeper-level thinking. Content and language tasks must also be appropriate to the professional needs and personal interests of students. Maly contends that “students-generated themes and activities create an atmosphere in which the students take responsibility for their own learning and the teacher becomes more of a manager of student learning” (Maly, 1993, p. 41 in Stryker and Leaver, 1997, p. 11).

**Background of the Study**

The general objective of the present study is to determine if the use of the theme-based CBI model in the American civilisation course improves the students’ English language. Specifically, the study examined whether students, through engagement in the course content, will demonstrate the ability to improve their: 1) study skills like (building vocabulary, understanding charts, reading graphs, using the library, taking notes, writing an outline, writing reports, and taking tests; and 2) thinking skills such as (interpretation, analysis, translating and synthesising, problem solving, forming hypotheses, and evaluation. This teaching experiment was conducted to critically assess the impact of CBI so that needed changes could be made as a consequence in the American civilisation course. Since the experiment is a fresh one, its results could also provide helpful information to other faculty within the department of English who want to use this instructional method in their classes.

**Participants, Methodology and Data**

The participants subject to the present study were two first year groups of 32 graduate students each pursuing a B.A (licence) degree in English as a foreign language. The students were all native speakers of Arabic. They attended the American civilisation course once a week on Mondays from 8.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. Some of the themes covered in the American civilisation course during the first year are: Focus on US Geography, the First Americans, the Thirteen English Colonies, the American Revolution, and Creating the American Republic.

In the first group, the teaching method is chiefly built on a teacher-centered method, where students spend most of the time passively listening to the teacher presenting information-heavy lectures. In that environment and with such traditional method prevalent in most Algerian universities, the American civilisation teacher does not usually have the time to provide classroom tasks that would promote students’ language skills. Consequently, students have less opportunity to participate or engage in activities which would enable them to make a steady progress in the acquisition of the English language or language skills in the American civilisation course. In these lecture-style classes, the teacher is often considered a “bank of knowledge” from which students get information rather than contribute (Howard, et al., 1996, 8-24). In such classes, students often will disengage from the learning process and may only appear to be paying attention (Karp and Yoels, 1976, 421-39).

With the second group, a different curricular approach is adopted, one which integrates content with study and critical thinking skills. In this approach, the civilisation teacher acts as a guide and as a facilitator of learning. Being an expert in content and language, his main role is to enable students promote their study skills, and develop concepts of critical thinking and inquiry. In this approach, some web components are incorporated in order to offer students the
Integrating the Content-based Instruction into the American Elaggoune

convenience and flexibility of online research without losing face-to-face instruction and student interaction in the classroom.

This is so because blended courses which combine online with traditional delivery of instruction can be better suited to classroom participation than just online methods or lectures (Baer, J., & Baer, S.K., 2005, 83-101). Therefore, prior to each American civilisation class, students were given handouts dealing with a major theme or chapter of the American history, with the instruction to carry out online research and complete activities to ensure that everyone shares a common knowledge base. Then during class time, the content can be enriched with application and problem solving activities to allow students think critically and discuss their views about the content.

Each chapter covers a particular time period and deals with a major development in American history. The chapter is divided into two or more sections. Each section opens with key terms, which are either vocabulary words or important terms in American history; and which are all defined in the text. Each section includes the main idea, a brief preview, and several objectives under the form of questions which students must keep in mind as they go through the text. At the end of each section, students will be asked to review the key terms and names of important people and places. There are questions covering the section objectives, and a critical thinking question that asks students to reflect on what they have learned. At the end of each chapter, students are asked to sum up the chapter. This is always followed by a variety of tasks, including other critical thinking (comprehension) questions, and written assignments.

In order to achieve these objectives, a qualitative design was adopted. Data collection was done over a two-semester period of time. The methods used to collect information were proposed by Tedick and Camarata (2007) who identify many forms of assessment that can test language and content, and who point out that the most important to CBI are: a) Culminating presentations and/or written essays at the end of the course, b) Project-based learning where language and content are constantly used to analyse, synthesise, plan, and research information. The teacher’s observations and evaluations of the tasks carried out in class, and scores obtained in final exams also provided information about the students’ progress in learning. This is so because CBI is performance based.

Study Procedure

The following sections describe the strategies used to design and implement the CBI model and the results of the action research study conducted. The paper concludes by summarising the challenges encountered, the lessons learned and the future directions for the CBI course within the restrictions of a limited-resource environment.

The action research study focused on four areas of the students’ experiences during the experimental study: 1) Did the CBI approach improve the students’ study skills and critical thinking skills? 2) Did the CBI approach increase the students’ active involvement in the course and engagement in the course content? 3), Did the CBI approach increase the students’ participation? and 4) Did the CBI approach increase the students’ interest and motivation in the content and overall satisfaction with the course?

To answer and measure these questions four types of data were collected. The same exams were given to the two study groups of the American civilisation course in order to compare the CBI group results with the non-CBI group. The exams consisted of defining key items, short answer questions, and essay form questions to test language and content and measure understanding and application of the skills covered in the course. Project-based assignments
where language and content were constantly used to analyse, synthesise, plan, and research data; were also given to both the CBI group and the non-CBI group after each theme was completed to measure students’ perceptions of how the approach affected their levels of progress in the content assimilation and skills development. Informal observations, analyses, and interpretations of students’ behaviour during class sessions, and information about students’ viewing the approach were used to determine the level of the two groups’ learning, participation, interest, and satisfaction.

**Study Results**

In what follows, the most significant findings obtained from examining the obtained data are presented.

**Question 1:** Did the CBI approach improve the students’ study skills and critical thinking skills?

Students’ performance in written exams revealed that the CBI group had a slightly higher average score (24 out of 32) than the non-CBI group (16 out of 32). These results were promising and showed that students could learn the content better with the CBI approach. The respondents’ achievements in written assignments also showed that students in the CBI group have really improved their study skills and critical thinking skills in a relevant, challenging, and meaningful manner. Conversely, the written assignments of students in the non-CBI group reflected an obvious lack of mastery of both skills and content.

**Question 2:** Did the CBI approach increase the students’ active involvement in the course and engagement in the course content?

In the CBI group, more than 90% (29 out of 32) of students agreed that the CBI approach contributed to their learning, and they said they felt more engaged in the course subject matter. They thought that this approach promoted interaction between the teacher and them, that it enhanced reciprocity and cooperation among students, promoted active learning, provided prompt feedback, and increased time on tasks. More than 60% (20 out of 32) students in the non-CBI group reported that they disliked the lecture format and mentioned that they had little opportunities to ask or answer questions; that they received little instructor feedback, and perceived the course content to be too loaded for independent learning. This resulted in an obvious absence of engagement in the course content.

**Question 3:** Did the CBI approach increase student participation?

More than 80% (26 out of 32) of the students confessed that their participation in class increased as a result of the theme-based CBI format. During informal observations of in-class students’ participation, the students’ response rate to questions tended to be higher in the CBI group, and the lowest in the non-CBI group. In all likelihood, this is so because students in the CBI group believe that this instruction model increased their confidence and willingness to participate.

**Question 4:** Did the CBI approach increase student interest and motivation in the content and overall satisfaction with the course?

The CBI approach helped to promote interest in the course material, with about 90% of the students who perceived an increased interest in the content; against 75% who indicated that the tasks helped them to go more in-depth on the topics. The latter also admitted that the approach promoted their prior knowledge in English, lessened their anxiety, raised their self-confidence and motivation towards language learning.

However, one weakness of the approach mentioned by the students was the large-size class which does not allow all students to take part in the activities. On the whole, the results of the
action research study were positive. Students using the CBI format learned the content, and many indicated that their engagement, preparation, participation, and interest increased. The major challenge faced in this experimental study was finding the time for course development, and correction of frequent assignments.

Many valuable lessons were learned with the CBI approach. It is more manageable, feedback more quickly obtained and necessary modifications more easily made. In CBI, there is a move away from teacher as instructor to teacher as facilitator, with an emphasis on cooperative learning and learner-centeredness. A benefit for the learner is that they can gain new knowledge about subject content while at the same time coming into contact with, learning about and using and improving the foreign language. These benefits can help other educators who are starting to use CBI learning or considering the use of this technique in their teaching.

Conclusion

One major reason for the adoption of the CBI approach is to increase the students’ engagement and involvement in the learning process, i.e. to improve their learning. It goes without saying that mastery of a thorough knowledge of a foreign language in the twenty-first century might help students simultaneously develop some core skills and competencies, e.g. critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration, information and ICT literacies, self-initiative, social interaction, productivity and leadership.

This experimental study showed that, if designed correctly, content-based instruction can serve as an effective learning strategy that promotes student participation, engagement, and interactivity. The analysis of collected data revealed that students developed both study and critical thinking skills in a relevant, challenging, and meaningful manner because the approach implemented is based on the integration of language and content. Students also reported satisfaction with CBI instruction, and viewed it to have generally been very positive with convenience and that controlling the pace of learning was considered to be the major benefits of the CBI approach.

One may venture to assume that content-based instruction can effectively suit language teaching when integrated in the American civilisation class. In addition to the assimilation of content, well conceived tasks or class activities could enable students to build vocabulary, understand charts, read graphs, use the library, write an outline, write reports, take notes and take tests.

Through class activities and written essays, presentations, or projects, students can also develop critical thinking skills, such as interpretation (cause and effect relationships, making and supporting generalisations, inferring and drawing conclusions, and detecting bias), analysis (showing that they understand what they read), translating (presenting information in a form that is different from the way they receive it), problem solving (making choices or taking decisions), forming hypotheses (collect and piece together the bits of information in order to answer a puzzling question), or evaluation (making a judgement about an event).

About the Author

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Integrating the Content-based Instruction into the American

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References


Algerian EFL Course, the Digital Competence, and Critical Thinking Skills

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Abstract

This paper examined the uses of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in Algerian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course from the perspective of critical thinking. It sought to address issue of the unethical practice of ‘copy and paste’ which plagues most of the learners’ research projects by exploring the ICT skills fostered in the Middle and High school textbooks of English and discussing their pertinence to the implementation of the intellectual competency. For this, the following question was asked: How do Algerian EFL textbooks spell, develop, and/or foster the digital competence? In other words, how are the Internet resources tapped and employed by the Algerian EFL educationists to foster research skills and strengthen cognitive processes leading to critical thinking and autonomy? The exploration of the textbooks has shown that the digital competence in the Algerian EFL course is limited to technical skills, especially as most of the tasks involving the use of the Internet are there to serve solely linguistic and (inter)cultural purposes. Propositions are made, therefore, so as to develop the digital competency in tandem with the intellectual skills.

Key words: Algerian EFL Course, critical thinking, digital competence, Internet skills.
Introduction

The purpose of this paper is three-fold:

One, to report on the uses of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as part of a broader digital competence in the Algerian EFL course through an exploration of Middle and High school textbooks;

Two, to discuss our findings in the light of the need for the implementation of the intellectual competence (critical thinking skills) within the discipline of English as a second foreign language;

Three, to explore areas of innovation and suggest some measures for embedding Internet skills leading to collaborative learning, learning by doing, and critical thinking.

The pertinence of our investigation into the place of the digital competence in the Algerian EFL course is asserted by the controversy among the country’s professionals, researchers and teachers alike, over the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet by young learners in their education. Thus, while for some enthusiasts the use of the Internet in learning is an important means for the youth to keep abreast of the twenty-first century’s digital culture, for the majority of educators the young learners’ sloppy Internet practices pose intellectual as well as ethical concerns. The latter relate to what can be termed the ‘copy and paste syndrome’, which seems to have reached pandemic proportions threatening the whole edifice of learning, which should be based on intellectual criteria and comply with high ethical standards.

The increasing dissemination of the digital culture among the youth compared to the reluctance (resistance?) of their elders to take up the digital challenge might suggest that the problem is a generational one, i.e. a kind of a ‘generation gap’ separating the Internet literate youth from their book literate elders. In our opinion, however, this view is too easy to account for the complexity of the problem, especially as the following important two questions must be considered: do the Algerian EFL curricula and textbooks help install intellectual skills vis-à-vis the use of ICT in terms of critical judgments and evaluation of e-sources? Furthermore, do they sensitize the learners to the ethics of the acquisition of scientific knowledge and its reproduction?

For all these reasons and considerations, it is our intention in this paper to go over the Algerian EFL textbooks having as a main concern the necessity, to borrow the words of the Québec Education Program (2004), “to foster the students’ respect for ethical standards in the use of ICT and ensure that the educational advantages of ICT are reflected in the intellectual, methodological, social and personal development of every student.” (p. 46) For this, we will first review the various meanings and skills associated with the concept of critical thinking in the field of progressive education, and then provide an encompassing definition which embraces the large scope of the digital competence.

Review of the Literature

Critical thinking, also called intellectual skills or intellectual competence, is the hardcore of the constructivist philosophy of education and the competency-based curriculum, such as the one implemented in the Algerian school, and many other Arab countries. A review of the concept associates it with the major philosophers of education in the world, such as John Dewey, Charles Sanders Peirce, Jerome Bruner, Jean Piaget, Lev Semionovitch Vygotski and many others. The link between all these philosophers is their concerns and interests in the ways learners activate intellectual/cognitive processes to learn in real-life contexts, and transfer their knowledge to the wider external world.
Basically, the intellectual competence relates to the learner’s ability to face situations of problems by formulating hypotheses, testing them and drawing conclusions from their experiments and/or experiences. This procedure can be expanded in a number of ways and is at the heart of the scientific method. For example, Dewey calls it “reflective enquiry”, and Bruner, “critical learning”.

What unites all the constructivist perspectives on critical thinking is the concern to put the learner at the centre of the classroom and in an authentic, task-based and problem solving situation of learning, in order to: 1- engage issues pertaining to the real life and negotiate meanings; 2- activate mental/cognitive and metacognitive processes (inferences, comparison and contrast, etc), preferably in a collaborative way; 3- discover connections, make decisions, and construct knowledge(s), identity etc.; 4- integrate different types of knowledge, transfer them to the wider life outside school, and develop the learner’s autonomy.

The process of transfer is considered as a fundamental feature of the construction of critical thinking skills. Allieu (quoted in Boisvert, 1999, p. 38) proposes three indicators of transfer:

1- Knowledge should be considered as an intermediate performance objective in the process of learning.
2- Reflection on the thinking process (skills, critical thinking) to construct learners’ autonomy.
3- Learning should focus on “wholes/broad areas of learning” not discrete points which do not show the real picture of knowledge.

One broad area of learning which pertains strongly to our ‘information age’ is communication, whose latest fast development in the modern world has transformed it into a ‘global village’. In the field of education, communication has increasingly come to mean during the last years e-learning via the tools of Information and Communications Technologies, in general, and the Internet, in particular. Though e-learning still remains an “evolving concept” which escapes easy definition, the use of ICT in education has already proved to be an efficient means for training, teaching and learning.

The potential of ICT to improve the school performances and learners’ habits is tributary to the development of digital competence in teachers and learners alike. Digital competence is defined by the 2008 report of the EU commission on “the use of ICT to support innovation and lifelong learning for all” as being

the confident and critical use of information society technology for work, leisure, learning and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT and the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present, and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.” (p. 5)

The relevance of e-learning, in general, and ICT, in particular, to the implementation of the critical thinking skills within the constructivist philosophy and a competency-based curriculum is asserted by many studies in the discipline. For example, the authors of the last quoted report states that “a review of studies carried out for the Commission confirms broad positive benefits of ICT for learning modes such as cognitive processing, independent learning, critical thinking and teamwork and that ICT enhances a student-centred learning approach.” (p.
8) This statement prompts us to project the definitions of critical thinking skills and the digital competence on the Algerian EFL textbooks and see what results they yield.

**E-learning and Algerian EFL Course: A Description of EFL Textbooks**

Within the 2003 educational reform in Algeria, digital culture is introduced in the national EFL course as part of a constructivist curriculum and competency-based textbooks. The latter are articulated around big areas of learning (environment, media etc.) presented in a number of files/units. The files, on their turn, are devised through several and various tasks culminating at the end of each file into a project work. The project work is there to implement, consolidate and capitalize all what was previously learned in the file/unit. It entails a series of task involving collaborative learning, learning by doing, and the mobilization of a set of linguistic, communicative, (inter-) cultural and methodological competencies.

To enable learners perform and present the projects scheduled at the end of every file in the EFL textbooks, the textbook designers encourage them to use the Internet and develop ICT-related skills. For this, they have designed a number of files and preparatory tasks which deal with digital literacy and aim at fostering adequate ICT skills. These files are only two in number and are distributed in two textbooks, *Spotlight on English Book Three* and *At the Crossroads Book One*, designed respectively for the Middle and Secondary schools.

“Communications” is the title of the only unit in *Spotlight on English (book 3)* which seems to address the use of ICT. Its objective is to foster communication-related competencies, considered as an essential methodological foundation for learning. The content of the second task of project one, “Writing a Contribution to a Class Wall Sheet”, relates to e-messaging. It asks learners to write an email, an SMS, an MMS, or search for logos and emoticons. In another task of the same file, learners are introduced to the “Yahoo! Messenger” and are required to find other messaging services (Caramail, MSN …). Next to that, they are asked to write a user’s guide for the messaging service of their choice. Finally, each student is invited to enter and sign his/her ID.

At the level of secondary education, *At the Crossroads (book1)* shows a similar orientation, since its first file “Signs of the time,” which focuses on lifestyles, is devoted to Internet skills. In this file, stress is made on the following operative objectives:
- different uses of the Internet;
- labeling the components of the computer;
- following instructions for accessing e-mail;
- distinguishing icons and functions;
- reading e-mail addresses;
- reading and understanding e-mails.

All in all, what the exploration of the two textbooks reveals is that the designers limited their scope to manipulation processing and basic Internet tasks leading solely to the acquisition of specific linguistic and technical competencies, regardless of the intellectual competency, a competency too much fundamental to be overlooked.

Unfortunately, as our discussion will show, the targeted technical and linguistic skills are far from meeting the increasing digital needs of our time, the least of which requires a research skill leading to keen methodological and trans-curricular competencies, such as critical thinking skills. This critique might be objected and it may be counter-argued that one cannot assess the e-competence fostered many years ago (when the reform was launched in 2005) with today’s developments in digital literacy, because this field is a fast-evolving one. Nonetheless, in our
view, time lag cannot explain all the limitations and anachronisms in the Algerian EFL textbooks in terms of the quality of use of ICT, especially when one has to account for such a case-sensitive competence like critical thinking.

Discussion

To begin our discussion, let us remind that the multiple uses of ICT as a learning tool need always to be adapted to the type of the curriculum and the learning model implemented in the classroom and textbooks. This said, we can observe that, being in nature methodological and trans-curricular competencies based on a learner-centered teaching methodology, ICT are suitable tools for the implementation of a constructivist curriculum and competency-approach to learning. In its 2008 report on the progress of the use of ICT, the EU Commission Staff tells us that, when appropriately embedded, e-learning “can facilitate learning-by-doing, inquiry learning, problem solving strategies, creativity, complex decision-taking” (p. 14) and other processes and competencies at the heart of the constructivist philosophy of learning.

However, if ICT in general fit well within the competency-based approach and task-based teaching methodology in the Algerian curriculum, the learning contents in the English textbooks is far from meeting the requirements in terms of intellectual skills. For, if accessing information definitely enhances learner’s performance and research and is, therefore, the key skill associated with the Internet use, it does not mean, nor does imply, learning.

The first limitation we want to point out in our discussion of the place of digital competence in the Algerian EFL textbooks relates to the teaching of various Internet uses; a teaching procedure which, unfortunately, remains descriptive in essence. Actually, listing different uses of the Internet, asking for opinion about the Internet, or teaching skills for the use of emails, as it is the case in SE1 textbook, is a procedure that does not travel far when placed within the perspectives of both the philosophy of constructivism and contemporary digital culture. Indeed, today, it is commonly acknowledged by practitioners that a constructivist classroom practice revolves around the learning by doing process, on the one hand, and individual processing with an appeal to the individual experience, on the other hand. Surprisingly, however, these two forms of practice are completely overlooked when it comes to embedding the digital competence, since the learners have to wait until the secondary school level in order to be introduced to the basic lesson on labeling the different parts of the computer! This could have been understandable if this basic type of activity responded to the needs of first year Middle School learners who start to learn English for the first time; in the case of secondary school learners, however, it is no less than a sheer pedagogical blunder!

The limitation in the technical competence fostered in the use of ICT extends also to the intellectual competency, the ability to activate cognitive processes in formulating hypotheses, discussing arguments, and drawing conclusions. This competency is at the heart of learners’ attitude to media and learning, because working with the ICT is working with trial and error. To learn through the digital tools, generally, and the Internet, specifically, learners have not only to learn how to tap, collect, store and display information, as done by most of our learners, but also how to analyze, categorize, classify, interpret and integrate digital data in their work. This concern about the tight conjunction between learners’ Internet practices and high order cognitive and/or metacognitive skills is emphasized by the Québec Education Program (2004), which underscores the ability of the learners to process information resources, because they are not “of equal value”, and calls on schools to “ensure that students learn how to locate what they are
looking for and that they develop cognitive flexibility required to process and use a broad variety of information effectively.” (p. 36)

Lawless & Brown (1997) refine further the kind of skills sought after the acquisition of the digital competence, by distinguishing two types of users according to the types of interaction with the Internet: the “apathetic users” and the “knowledge seekers”. For this, they have put forward five operations related to learners’ interactions in technology use. These are:

- Browsing: involving the least interactivity as learners have no specific searching goals and tend to take a random path through the e-resources;
- Searching: more interactive involvement with a defined goal (interaction should be inserted within a designed program for uses of ICT);
- Connecting: creating personal links between pieces of information in the system;
- Collecting: identifying and extracting a diversity of materials to reassemble them into another artifact;
- Generating: contributing to the instructional database.

As can be observed from the operations listed above, learners are requested to search for the information, identify it according to their needs, assemble it, link it to their personal views and vision of life, and then create new digital models on the basis of the knowledge they have acquired. In other words, within the process of learning, learners’ acquisition of the digital competence is subordinated to the development of the intellectual skills leading to the construction of their autonomy.

Proficiency in Internet use is, thus, required from learners whose aim is to become autonomous in their lifelong learning and living. ICT provide access to a multitude of information resources and authors. As such, they represent a big potential for research, information processing and exchange. For that reason, there is indeed a need for learners not only to manipulate and use appropriate media, but also to acquire a digital competency which combines technical with intellectual skills. In this specific context, ICT skills can be expanded on to mean complex and interconnected cognitive and metacognitive operations, thought of in terms of

the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing the real from the virtual while recognizing the links. Individuals should have skills to use tools to produce, present and understand complex information and the ability to access, search and use Internet-based services. Individuals should also be able to support critical thinking, creativity, and innovation. (European Communities, 2007, p. 7)

In other words, digital/Internet skills imply much more than accessing and tapping specific learning contents in the fields of sciences, culture, entertainment, sports, etc. All in all, therefore, the implementation of the digital competency has to involve specific learning situations where the learners develop efficient strategies to:

- One, carry out efficient and pertinent Web searches by using suitable search engines (such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.) and relevant key words and by targeting appropriate websites;
- Two, perform technical as well as intellectual tasks which range from sourcing, identifying, tapping, to classifying, comparing, selecting, storing, and organizing information in various formats;
- Three, interpret data and transform it into various other forms, using ICT supports, such as PowerPoint slides, Excel spreadsheets, Photoshop etc. and not just Word processor;
  - Integrate the gathered knowledge from one discipline to another and transfer it from school to outside school;
  - Four, respect copyright and work within Internet license.

Perspectives and Proposals

As mentioned above, textbook designers did not neglect to integrate some Internet specific activities in the EFL textbooks for the purpose of equipping learners with some basic digital knowledge and abilities. What should be noted, however, is that their interest in digital culture is limited to the technical strategy for the use of the Internet. No advice or any explicit information is provided in the textbooks on the evaluation of online information, nor on the use of other media or software. Therefore, the fostering of more digital skills in tandem with high order cognitive and metacognitive skills in the EFL course is required.

Furthermore, the rapid growth during the last years of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) prompts action by educationists, decision makers and stakeholders alike. And one of the urgent needs is to address the digital divide which separates young learners, on the one hand, from their teachers and school managers, on the other. It is indeed sad to notice that in the Algerian school, the latter (teachers and school managers) lag well behind their students in terms of confidence in, and the quality of, use of ICT. To remedy this problem, decision makers have to support urgently teachers with appropriate training programs and professional development guidelines in the workplace.

Taking up the challenge posed by the digital divide will make it possible for upgrading the digital competence of our schools and, thus, bring positive, innovative and, why not, revolutionary changes to the education sector. This change is expected to occur at least at two levels:

- One, pedagogy: embedding ICT in our schools has the potential to suggest, nurture, and foster novel and effective teaching and learning methods. Researchers in education are therefore invited to engage seriously this field at the levels of both theory and praxis;
- Two, organization: the integration of ICT as tools for learning and teaching will prompt an evolution in the organization and management of our schools towards more modern and more democratic institutions providing quality services.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the Algerian EFL textbooks has demonstrated that there exists disconnection between the goal set forth for the construction of the digital competency and the procedure implemented to reach that goal, a disconnection that has led to the development of unethical learning habits, such as the practice of ‘copy and paste’. To remedy this problem, we suggest broadening the understanding of the digital competence to include research skills demanding a critical use of information for learning, communication, and interacting. Accordingly, learners should be guided in their attempts to cope with the protean and ever-evolving field of ICT and their increasing demands for more acute and more astute use of intellectual skills. It is only under such condition that learners will acquire high level of e-maturity and demonstrate performance in the quality of their learning in and outside school.
Thanks to the contribution of ICT, learning will no more be regarded within its traditional didactic scope of knowledge transmission; instead, with the new perspective introduced by the new learning modes such as cognitive processing, independent learning, critical thinking, and collaborative learning via teamwork, the learning process will be more in line with the requirements of the contemporary globalized world.

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References
The Teacher’s Role and the Students ‘Autonomy under the LMD and the Integration of ICT

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Abstract
The role of the teacher has changed to suit more the freedom given to the students ‘autonomy under the LMD (Licence, Master Doctorate) system. Thus, the teacher has to accept now his/her role as a mediator, a facilitator of knowledge and learning processes. The teacher, therefore, is no more the only, exclusive omnipotent holder of knowledge. S/he is called to master not only the subject s/he teaches but also the methodological competencies that allow him/her to clearly define the objectives of the learning process as well as the referential of the competence on which the control of the learning process is based. In this respect, the present study focuses on what teachers have to do in their classrooms when teaching under a learner-centered approach or orientation. This paper attempts to work on the modern relationship between the teacher and the learner in the classroom under observational experiences using ICT (Information and Communications Technology) as a motivating tool.

Key words: Learner-centered, Autonomy, Teachers, Role and ICT
1. Introduction

An obvious relationship appears in terms of autonomy and competencies between the modern teacher and the learner in the classroom. This qualified relationship has started since 2004 when Algerian universities adopted a new system brought to higher education to help develop procedures, methods and techniques used by the traditional teachers, under the classical (or previous) system, in most disciplines and particularly in teaching Foreign Languages. The LMD has also the aim of achieving the learners’ autonomy and innovation that is to be noticed when reflecting on the succession of new educational reforms adopted by the Algerian makers. Within a contextual framework of the new procedures, methods and techniques, the modern teacher has to be able to transmit the knowledge to a process of evaluation which is rather more complete. The evaluation of students relies now on a set of procedures meant to measure the results of the latter in terms of the grasped knowledge, the deduced comprehension and the acquired competence. The issue raised in this work clarifies to what extent do the teachers’ knowledge affect the learning process to improve the students’ autonomy under the LMD and the integration of ICT. To engage in this issue, we need first to shed light on the former method that was adopted by teachers in the classroom to see the difference between the traditional teacher/method and the modern teacher/method or student-centred orientation.

Reference to the importance of the use of ICT in the classroom is also discussed.

2. The Former Method

The traditional method is teacher-centred, i.e., the teacher is the provider of knowledge thinking that s/he is the only source of knowledge. S/he was the centre of the teaching-learning practices (teacher-centred approach). In other words, in the traditional classroom, the teacher is the only actor who can direct with authority his or her classes; s/he imposes himself/herself on the learners’ FL acquisition by making them reliant and dependent without making much effort to develop their skills in the classroom. They learn passively, focusing upon the teachers’ instructions and their performance (presentation).

Dupin-Bryant (2004, p. 42) delineates teacher-centred teaching style as “a style of instruction that is formally controlled, and autocratic in which the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn”. We understand from this quotation that there is a kind of authority which is the relationship between teachers and students. In addition, what helps and makes the teachers gain authority is the lack of methodology and practice. To put it differently, the teacher must not be present all the time to find himself/herself authoritarian without paying attention to the pedagogical process s/he is following in teaching in the classroom. The teacher must not be authoritarian to use any methods and techniques to rise the learners’ awareness. He must be present to guide, explain and select the various tasks because there are many; he must be present to enable the students knowing what skills they must be good at in order to achieve their goals in learning English. In this context, the next section is devoted to make clear what is the learner-centred.

3. The Learner-Centered View

According to what we have understood from the previous section, the modern method is now called learner–centred, and not teacher-centred. It is the teachers’ ability to cope with the changes brought to higher education that helps obviously the learners to express independently their individually and opinions and to demonstrate their skills to act in English using a variety
of skills acquired from the new learning strategies. Thus, the next section is devoted to give an idea about the characteristics of the teacher’s and the learner’ roles in the classroom today.

4. The Teacher’s and the Learner’ Roles in the Classroom Today

Because the process of learning and teaching has changed in the last two decades, the teacher’s role and the learner’s role in the classroom have changed too. These changes appear in the following table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s role</th>
<th>Learner’s role</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- be helpful - be observer</td>
<td>- be active in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be controller</td>
<td>- be independent and autonomous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be less authoritarian</td>
<td>- be learner-centered in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be passive in the classroom</td>
<td>- be innovative and interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be contributor to the learner’s knowledge</td>
<td>- be curious and ready for problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be facilitator supporting learners as they acquire and develop skills</td>
<td>- be the doer while doing tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- be challenger</td>
<td>- be challenger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned above about the importance of the ICTs use in the classroom under the LMD, the next discusses the use of the ICTs in the classroom.

5. ICT Use in the Classroom

The promotion of the use of ICT in the Algerian Universities started in 2004. Such use has become very needed with the introduction of the LMD system. Thus, it is required that equipment with data-logging must be available in the classrooms so as to contribute to enhance the learning and teaching of English as a Foreign Language. The use of ICT in the classroom helps teachers to facilitate their role as well as it can participate in making lessons more objective, attractive and efficient. On the basis of the data we have collected from the majority of EFL teachers through questionnaire, we may deduce that using ICT impels and motivates both teachers and learners to reach success in their autonomy and willing under the LMD. It becomes quite useful and beneficial to individuals everywhere because it helps them engage in various social, cultural and scientific activities and then it prepares them for the professional life. Furthermore, it provides all kinds of opportunities to make learners as well as teachers familiar with research or how to seeking information to look for their places, and here we are pointing at their love of curiosity and creativity.

The use of the ICT in the classroom helps facilitate as much as it makes the teachers’ lesson easy, clear and attractive by using the data show, and it saves time and chases away that burden on teachers such as: using the chalk, the blackboard, drawing pictures and so on. It also makes them updated with other foreign schools and universities or in other words, it makes them connected to professionalism and it serves to make them good and efficient in the world of technology such as: being good at the use of the computer and surfing on the net.
6. The Method
The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling, a method considered appropriate within the realm of qualitative research. According to Fraenkel, J. R. & Wallen, N. E. (2010) who engage in some form of qualitative research are likely to select a purposive sample, that is, they select a sample they feel will yield the best understanding of what they are studying”. Our informants were given a series of questionnaires, and then given time to respond to our questions freely.

7. The Context
The research study took place in Mostaganem. This location, Mostaganem city, was selected because Mostaganem University is among the pioneering universities to adopt LMD as well as the integration of the ICT use in the classroom. Thus it may provide us with a sample of students and teachers whose characteristics are appropriate for the research study.

8. The Participants
In fact, the one suitable sampling method we used in our investigations was the probability sampling because we had to select groups of students and teachers from different levels randomly at English studies departments, and a maximum of thirty participants was decided for Mostaganem to generate the findings on larger communities – the LMD students’ community and the teachers’ community. Thus, for this study, our participants were as follows:
- Thirty Mostaganem University English LMD students from L1, L2, L3, M1 and M2,
- 12 EFL teachers at Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem
The age range of the informants was between 18 and 22; 70% of these students are acquainted with ICT. The informants, males and females, were chosen purposefully from different levels according to the conditions mentioned before.

9. Data Analysis
Being modern is to rely on the new techniques and tools which represent modern technology. Among the characteristics of the modern teacher to develop teaching is that to be more crafted in dealing with computers, how to use data shows and how to substitute books and dictionaries with research engines and websites like Google and Yahoo for the preparation of their lectures and lessons. For instance, data shows have become part and parcel of the technological progress intended by the Algerian high educational authorities. Because most, if not all, amphitheatres in our university, faculties and departments are now equipped with data shows in classrooms, amphitheatres and auditoriums, a pressure was exercised upon most university teachers –directly and indirectly –but this pressure had a double influence on most teachers: some have found it more relaxing and time consuming to use electronic boards and data shows instead of spending a longer time writing explanations, lessons and exercises, while others find it a waste of time bringing a laptop to the amphitheatre or the classroom, install the data show, and wait for slow students to write what is on the slide show. At abdelhamid Ibnbadis University, English department, the responses and attitudes of teachers towards using Power Point slides and slide shows in the classrooms and amphitheatres were a bit divergent. To test and investigate their responses, some permanent teachers in our department were asked whether they used data shows or not, how often and what they use them for. In the following bar graph, we display the different answers of our colleagues among whom only 12 teachers said they used the data show in their tutorials and lectures frequently when available.
Figure 1. The Use of the Data Show (Power Point slides) in the Classroom

Displaying the graph, we clearly notice three differently coloured increasing lines which represent the rate of use of data-shows by teachers with three various levels: L1, L3 and Master. The elimination of L2 was done on purpose because we based our estimation on L1 as a first introductory year, on L3 as the final year of Licence and Master as a different level. What we may deduce from the displayed results on the graph is that the number of teachers who use the data show to present their lectures and tutorials has risen from 2010 to 2013 for the three levels. We can explain this increase by a growing awareness of the didactic benefits of using the data show which contribute to shortening the time and the effort of lectures.

However, we also notice that the percentage of teachers using the data show with Master students is much more important than that of other levels, and that with L1 students less teachers use data shows. This can be due to the number of students enrolled for the Master’s Degree that is less important than that of L3 students, and L1 students. In fact, comparing fifty Master students with two hundred L3 students (per section) and more than two hundred fifty L1 students (per section) leads us to conclude that the larger the number of students, the less enthusiastic and encouraging for teachers to use data shows is.

Moreover, we can also suggest that L1 students are neither well-prepared nor ready to read on the slide show, and this might be less noticeable in L3 and Master students. The other factor that we may infer from our interpretation of the graph and our experience in teaching with and without the data show is the type of teaching unit at stake. On the one hand, there are some teaching units which may be better taught with the data show as the case may be for Methodology, Discourse Analysis, Grammar and Oral Expression. On the other hand, some other teaching units like Linguistics, Literature and Human Sciences need more explanation and interaction between the teacher and his or her students than only data displayed on the slide show.
10. Results and Discussion

The results show that the integration of the ICT in the classroom is more helpful in terms of specialization-focused-teaching. It helps teachers reach the required level of high quality teaching that could be achieved through the integration of new technologies as teaching materials. Faced with a new generation of learners who are constantly using new high-tech facilities, teachers find it compulsory to use ICT to narrow the gap that may set the two partners apart in the modern partnership-based classroom.

According to most teachers, the implementation of a new system purpose must give more importance to the students’ capacities and learning abilities, and thus more focus is on the teacher vs. the learner partnership rapport which depends on the teachers’ ability to comprehend their students’ needs and the competencies of the students; in addition to the availability of the materials, the space factor, the time factor and above all the psychological and physical factors; this is mostly related to what extent the teachers and their students are physically and psychologically ready to interact and communicate using ICT in the classroom.

11. Conclusion

On the basis of the data we have collected from the majority of EFL teachers through a questionnaire, we deduce that using ICT impels and motivates teachers and learners to be successfully autonomous, their love of curiosity, creativity under LMD in terms of getting a wide range of instructions and language forms to be in contact with society. So, the modern relationship between the teacher and the students in the classroom as being observed when using ICT as a motivating tool contributes to enhancing the teaching and learning process on the one hand and making modern teaching learners-centred on the other hand. In other words, modernity in teaching helps both teachers and students to engage in various social, cultural and scientific activities and then it prepares them for a professional life. Moreover, it provides all kinds of opportunities to make learners as well as teachers efficient in society.

About the Author

Dr. Hanane Sarnou conducts research on Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics. Her research interests focus on English language teaching methodology, curriculum design, and the use of ICT in learning language. She has contributed to some international conferences in Algeria, Turkey, Tunis and France.

References

Issues on the Enhancement and Evaluation of Oral Communication in the Foreign Language Class

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Abstract

The mission of most university English departments is to make students attain the most advanced levels of proficiency in the target language. Considering the fact that the skill of oral communication has become a passport to social and professional success during these last decades, it needs to become a central component in our curriculum. Empirical research as well as teacher experience in the Algerian university reveal that many students (and teachers, for that matter) have a limited oral communication competence. The present paper raises the following questions: What is involved in oral communication? What are the most frequently encountered difficulties in respect to teaching/learning how to communicate? What are teachers' wrong assumptions about this task? And what aspects of communication ought to be privileged in evaluating this competence: correct language, naturalness, fluency, pronunciation and intonation, or cultural appropriacy? The present paper addresses the above issues and attempts to set pedagogical principles that are likely to make of the EFL class an environment where genuine and targeted exchanges are possible. The questions raised in the present paper may open the space for fruitful discussions among language professionals whose primary concern remains the continuous progression of the student both as a language learner and as a citizen of this global world where efficient communication is highly desirable.

Key words: Cultural awareness, evaluation, fluency, oral communication
Introduction

Our students are learning the target language in a world of continual movement and change. In such a demanding environment, efficient skills in communication have become a passport to success. Foreign language teaching has conventionally been, and still is, based on the reference to the four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Most language schools and university language departments teach and evaluate second and/or foreign languages in terms of these so-called passive and active skills. This paper deals with the teaching of speaking in the foreign language classroom as a separate skill, knowing that the latter is part of a more general and integrated language ability. In teaching speaking, which is also referred to in the related literature as ‘conversation’, the ‘oral skill', ‘oral communication’ or the ‘spoken language’; the aim is generally to make learners use the target language for communication purposes.

Oral communication

Communicating with others, be it face to face or through the numerous media channels available today, entails the presence of several characteristics:

Message transmission

Much of what we communicate in our daily exchanges is not actually always said, it is transmitted. Language is not based on the oral-aural channel only; it also significantly relies on the visual medium. Interlocutors say things to each other with words, but they also say a great deal with their body language eye contact, facial expressions, etc.

Spontaneity

The language we use for our daily exchanges is generally spontaneous, natural, i.e., not prepared or planned beforehand. This in itself makes it quite different from the written language which may be subject to repeated revision and reorganization. The time constraint in natural conversations together with the concern of the speaker (who is less focused on the form) make him produce a language characterized by such features as frequent repetitions, false starts, hesitations, short sentences, frequent use of linking words such as “and”, etc.

Variation

Language use changes from one culture to another because of varied the socio-cultural rules, and it also changes within the same culture because of differences in social contexts. Although speakers are generally unaware that they adopt their talk, they do not use the same language whether they are addressing a colleague, a friend, a child, husband or wife, etc.

Conversational routines

Most of the language we use daily consists of conventional utterances. Such language is usually referred to as “formulaic speech”, “gambits”, ”automatised language” (Nash 1978) or “conversational routines” (Coulmas, 1981). These are sentences, clauses or words we use without much thinking, planning or structuring. They usually emerge naturally as build-up wholes and are produced spontaneously in related social contexts. Examples: nice to meet you; you’re welcome; don’t worry! I’ll give you a call; really? I’m glad to hear that; sorry, I’m late; yes, please.
In teaching oral language use to foreign language learners, attention ought to be given to such conversational routines, as they constitute part of the socio-cultural knowledge of the TL in the sense that they carry common and salient culture specific features. Conversational routines also help learners with limited communicative capacities put their meaning across and, in this sense, they stand as communication strategy that enables learners to make up for their communicative deficiencies and thus achieve a higher level of oral communication as well as fluency.

**Culture and speaking**

Culture generally refers to shared patterns of behavior amongst a group of people (Fichtner & Chapman, 2001). These patterns are based on common valued principles, beliefs, and assumptions which will determine the dynamic of the group (Byram, M. et al., 1992). The culture of a community is also manifested in their music, literature, painting, etc. Culture is an indissociable ingredient of language. Thus, any act of communication necessarily holds a cultural dimension. When people interact, they do so following the social norms of their community, as any failure will undoubtedly cause misunderstanding or even breaking up.

**Extralinguistic or Non-verbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication has long been neglected by FL professionals. Sanchez, S.Y. (1999) writes, Families and communities hand down language and culture to their young. Young children learn to understand those around them and to express their own fears, needs, and desires in the distinctive vocabulary of the home language that includes not only words, but also rhythms, gestures, patterns of speech and silence.

Kinetic features such as gestures, facial expressions and body movement that accompany language may have different interactional significances in different languages and culture (Hurley, S.D., 1992). Therefore, the student who is learning to communicate in the FL needs to how to use and interpret these symbols.

**Some difficulties around teaching oral communication**

The teaching and, for that matter, evaluation of speaking is still one of the most problematic issues in foreign language methodology. “…If communication practice is one of the most important components of the language learning/teaching process, it is also one of the most problematical”. (Ur, P., 1985:2). A major difficulty inherent to the ‘teaching’ of speaking is the belief that it is easy to teach. Also, it may be assumed that if a teacher has a good command of the target language, he can ‘teach’ others how to speak it.

Moreover, many teachers do not know what to include or what to give priority to in their oral classes: should they focus on language correctness (in terms of grammar)? Should they rather teach how to use language appropriately (in terms of socio-cultural rules of use)? What place should they give to fluency? Intonation? Pronunciation? Naturalness? Accent?

Once (and if ever) they have classified all these components of oral language according to priority, teachers remain with the no less troublesome decisions to take: what activities and tasks are best to adopt in their classes? How frequently should they propose them? Should THEY propose them or should learners themselves choose what they want to do and how to do it? In other words, many teachers do not know the extent to which the oral class belongs to the learners.
**FL teachers’ frequent wrong assumptions**

Students’ lack of cultural awareness and their frequent inappropriate communication reactions and exchanges are most often due to their limited exposure to the target culture. Very little reference is made to the culture of the language they are learning as well as the people who use it. This may be due to the following reasons:

1. Some teachers do not give enough importance to the culture of the target language, and stress instead the linguistic aspect. In their study of FL teachers’ affiliation to more than one culture, Fitcher, F. and Chapman, K. (2011) state “…FL teachers remain rooted in their own national identities while they have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge of the target culture”.

2. Some teachers believe that since their students are learning the TL in a typically foreign language situation, they have very little chance to engage in Native Speakers/Non Native Speakers type of interaction and that consequently they do not need to communicate as native speakers do.

3. Many teachers have themselves a limited awareness and familiarity with the culture of the language they are teaching.

4. Many teachers have never come into contact with a native speaker of English and so never experienced a NS/NNS interaction and many have never travelled to a country where the target language is widely used, and so by no means got into contact with its culture and way of life of its inhabitants.

**The FL class communicative potential**

If we consider that ‘an act of communication through speaking is commonly performed in face- to-face interaction and occurs as part of a dialogue or other verbal exchange (Widdowson, 1984:58), our objective should be to provide foreign language learners with classes where such opportunities of natural and spontaneous language interchange are made possible.

The assumption underlying this work is that the extent to which students attain acceptable levels of “intercultural competence” (Byram & Kramsh, 2008) is highly determined by what goes on in their classroom. This does not mean that there is a systematic, direct relationship between all that teachers do and make learners do in the classroom and the type or level of competence these learners achieve. Language development is to a large extent, an individual accomplishment (“Leaner Autonomy”, Little, D. 2013), but typically this internal process takes place in the public context of the classroom, the individual is one of a group, a member of the class, and the activities which are to set the process in train are determined by the teacher. In any language classroom there seems to be a specific pattern of teaching/learning: some tasks, types of interaction, activities, and attitudes appear to be more common and customary than others. These are believed to affect the outcome of a classroom experience.

The FL class does have a potential for developing students' oral skills. Yet, in order to allow this to happen; teachers ought to fulfill this set of conditions which are labeled here as ‘the four Cs’:

1. **Classroom atmosphere:** The affective state of learners is of paramount importance to the extent that it determines the amount and nature of the language they may develop. “Successful classroom communication and learning is contingent upon social relationships that are established between teachers and students” (Richards, R.J., 1998). Not only this, the class emotional climate highly influences learners’ involvement in communication. The teacher is a decidedly influential partner here: his/her personality, attitude, relationship with learners, motivation, empathy, etc…all contribute to create either a safe inviting or a threatening and hostile communication environment.

2. **Communication:** When learners feel comfortable and relaxed they are most likely to venture communicate. Recent methodology, namely Communicative Language Teaching (CLT),
Competency Based Language Teaching (CBLT), and Task- Based Teaching (TBT), has placed communication at the centre of FL practice.

3- **Content oriented**: One of the teachers task is to inform the learners about the culture of the language they are learning, as well as make them aware of any likeness or disparity between the former and their native culture. A wide range of material ranging from literary novels and short stories, to plays, music, proverbs, advertisement, etc. may be exploited for this purpose.

4- **Culture based tasks**: Being in a positive affective class with well tuned cultural material, learners are ready to engage in activities (large or small group debates, drama) and challenge communication tasks allowing them to practise the TL with its cultural dimension. Target culture typical social situations and settings may be created in order to make students aware of what TL speakers say and how they say it in such cases.

**Evaluating oral communication**

The inability to comprehend what is being said, and the problem of artificiality are further difficulty that most teachers of ‘speaking’ face when they come to evaluation learners. Most teachers know what and how to correct a written work (content, coherence, paragraph organisation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.), but many simply feel at loss when it comes to decide whether a given learner CAN SPEAK a given language. Firth, D.S. &Macintosh, H.G. write:

> Many of the criteria used in oral assessment of English or, of course other native languages, can also be applied to foreign languages, but accent and pronunciation become much more significant, as well as the ability to comprehend what is being said. The problem of artificiality becomes more pressing since the difficulties of sustaining conversation in a foreign language are greater (1987).

Teachers often do not know what aspects of an oral exchange should be taken into account and to what extent. The procedures they should use to evaluate them remain difficult. decisions to take. Being confronted to such a difficult situation most ‘teachers simply teach and evaluate such a skill intuitively.

Teachers ‘interpret’ a teaching situation in the light of their beliefs about the learning and teaching of what they consider a second language to consist of; the result of this interpretation is what the teacher plans for and attempts to create in the classroom. (Woods D.1996: 69)

Evaluating students’ oral spontaneous performance is considered by many teachers as being quite complex. In fact, what is often reported is the lack of objective and reliable criteria as well as tools for valid assessment. Thus, if the FL class is to reflect inter-cultural communication what aspects of this skill should be evaluated? What should teachers look at and/or listen to when the difficult task of evaluation is required? Teachers often find it difficult to test their learners’ oral production capacities as there are no reliable objective tests so far. Thus, some use the reading of texts and dialogues as a written support to oral testing while others make individual interviews or do their assessment through an oral project. There is no doubt, however, that such techniques give teachers little ‘information’ on how well learners can use the TL in real communication situations.

Furthermore, what makes evaluating students’ oral production a thornier issue is the time factor: short time constraints of producing oral discourse (by the speaker), and consequently listening to it (by the teacher-evaluator) leaves the latter with almost no scope for revising initial impressions, or having access to second opportunities for listening.
Assessment of oral communication with its various facets (cultural awareness, appropriate and correct language use, naturalness, fluency, etc.) may be done individually or by assessing pairs or even small groups of learners at the same time. A first step towards designing adequate assessment of communication may be to identify the ‘ingredients’ or features of this skill and set them in an analytical scheme. Issues related to the process of assessing interaction include concepts such as rating scores, assigning evaluation tasks, rating checklists, validity and reliability.

**Assessment techniques**

When learners are given tasks to perform, the output will be evaluated in terms of ‘accuracy’ and ‘fluency’ (Brumfit, 1984). Accuracy refers to correctness or well-formedness in which case the teacher will consider the frequency and importance of the linguistic mistake produced by the learner. Fluency means using words with ease (Richards, J., C. 2005). Teachers should account for all features of spoken discourse. They should test and judge verbal and non-verbal performance in read communicate situation. The scoring scale below is designed to assess various features of oral communication:

**Table 1. Chart for assessing a student’s oral communication skills**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of oral communication</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mastery of pronunciation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Pronunciation</td>
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<td>2. Stress and intonation</td>
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<td><strong>Mastery of the linguistic form</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ability to use grammatically correct sentences</td>
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<td>2. Ability to use appropriate vocabulary</td>
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<td><strong>Communicative ability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ability to participate in discussion</td>
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<td>2. Ability to convey factual information</td>
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<td>3. Ability to construct long turns</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies of communication</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ability to use without undue hesitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ability to paraphrase</td>
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<td>3. Ability to negotiate meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Ability to use non verbal signals (mime and gestures)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Ability to appropriate conversation fillers</td>
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</table>
Issues on the Enhancement and Evaluation of Oral Communication

Benaissi & Guerroudj

Key: 5. Outstanding; 4. Above average; 3. Average; 2. Below average; 1. Unsatisfactory

When scoring students’ performances, the teacher should concentrate on what individual students are doing with the TL and how they are using it to achieve their communicative goal. Clearly, minor errors which do not seem to impede communication will not be considered. Not all mistakes need to be corrected: the main aim of [communication] is to receive and convey meaningful messages, and correction should be focussed on mistakes that interfere with this aim, not on inaccuracies of usage (Ur, 1997, 224)

Students’ oral communication abilities may be evaluated through various communication tasks and activities.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper is not to put the blame on teachers; it is rather to highlight the problems and difficulties encountered in the teaching and evaluation of speaking. It is hoped such an awareness may lead both language professionals (such as Syllabus designers, textbook writers or specialists in didactics), and teachers to think about better attitudes, and stimulating techniques in order not to ‘teach’ learners how to speak, but mainly to create a supportive and efficient oral class in which through communicating, learners can gradually develop communication abilities in the target language.

Future research may contribute to answer the question that could be asked at this level: should teachers help foreign language learners use a fluent inter-communication with its local characteristics and specificities or should they rather lead them towards a near-native skill of communication? knowing that such students are learning their TL in a typical foreign language environment in which they are more likely to be engaged in NNS/NNS than in NS/NNS interaction. Finally, it stands to reason that if we want to get genuine learner/learner and learner/teacher interaction in FL classes, it becomes necessary to revise the present practices and reexamine the ‘parameters’ that we generally tend to favor in our practice. Awareness that the target language is not only a linguistic entity, but also a cultural manifestation is necessary in order to enable our students to fully function as members of a large intercultural community.

About the Authors

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References


Integrating Strategy Training to Enhance Foreign Language Learning.

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Abstract
The implementation of the competency based approach to the teaching of EFL in the middle and secondary schools has inspired new methods and techniques at the level of syllabus design and textbook writing; and more specifically at the level of the teaching/learning process with great concern on developing learners’ different competencies and skills so as to achieve the ultimate educational objective, which is learners’ autonomy. Following the same objective of reforming the educational system, the Ministry of Higher Education has also introduced a new system labeled the LMD system which, as far as the teaching/learning process is concerned, resembles the one the students have been accustomed to in the middle and secondary schools, in the sense that they both have the ultimate objective of enhancing competitiveness and autonomy in learning. Consequently, this new orientation in our educational system towards learner-centered methods where the learner is central in the teaching/learning process requires a radical change in the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practice. This can be done in the form of an explicit instruction of cognitive and metacognitive skills which would help the learner become an efficient self-directed learner who would carry on his learning even after he has left school and university.

Keywords: Cognitive/metacognitive strategies, explicit training, learner autonomy, self directed learning.
**Introduction**

For the last decade, reforms in EFL learning and teaching have been launched by the Algerian Ministry of education, followed by the same ones in the university. These reforms aim at developing learners’ competencies and skills so as to achieve the ultimate educational goal which is learner autonomy. Consequently this new approach requires new methods and techniques which need to be implemented at the level of syllabus design and textbook elaboration. It also requires a radical change in the beliefs, attitudes and teaching practice from the part of the teachers who have to change their role as the only source of knowledge, and learners have to be more active in the learning process. This shift, in emphasis, aims at promoting learner autonomy; so the learners should be equipped with the necessary tools (strategies) that make them have control of their learning. The aim of this communication is to consider the importance of language learning strategies in foreign language learning and the possibility of teaching explicitly these strategies.

**Definition of language learning strategies**

The word strategy comes from the ancient Greek word *strategia* which means steps or actions generally taken for the purpose of winning a war. The term strategy is defined as a plan, a step, a conscious movement or action toward achievement of a goal (Oxford 1990). In the educational context the meaning of strategies has been transformed into learning strategies, and in the domain of second and foreign language learning, it has been classified as language learning strategies.

Many definitions of the term language learning strategies have been proposed by many researchers:

- O’Malley and Chamot (1990) defined learning strategies as “The special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of information”.
- Richard and Platt (1992) argued that learning strategies are "internal behavior and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to help them understand, learn, or remember new information”
- According to Stern (1992) “the concept of learning strategies is dependent on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals and learning strategies can be regarded as broadly conceived intentional directions and learning techniques”
- Rebecca Oxford (1999) defined language learning strategies as “specific actions, behaviours, steps or techniques that learners (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative skills”.
- It seems from these definitions that language learning strategies are techniques used( often consciously) by learners in order to facilitate their language learning; they are tactics which learners can employ to comprehend, learn, retain new information; these techniques are also used to store, retrieve and use the new language. Finally they are also methods that help learners evaluate their language progress during the learning process and be self-directly involved in the development of their communicative abilities.

To complete the definitions stated above by researchers, Rebecca Oxford (1999) added the following list of 12 key features of language learning strategies:

- Contribute to the main goal: communicative competence
- Allow learners to become more self-directed
Expand the role of the teacher
- Are problem-oriented
- Are specific actions taken by the learner.
- Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
- Support learning both directly and indirectly.
- Are not always observable
- Are often conscious
- Can be taught
- Are flexible
- Are influenced by a variety of factors

**Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies**

Language Learning Strategies have been classified by many scholars in different groups, classes, and categories. The most common categories of language learning strategies are:

- Cognitive
- Metacognitive
- Social/affective

**O’Malley’s Classification of language learning Strategies**

O’Malley et al (1985) classify language learning strategies into three categories: a) cognitive strategies; b) metacognitive strategies and c) socioaffective strategies.

a) Cognitive strategies

c) Socioaffective Strategies

d) Socioaffective strategies are related to social mediating activity and transacting with others.

The main socioaffective strategies are cooperating with others and asking for clarification.

**Rubin’s Classification of Language Learning Strategies**

Rubin classifies language learning strategies into two groups and makes the distinction between strategies that directly affect learning and those which contribute indirectly to learning. She suggests that there are three major types of strategies: learning strategies, metacognitive strategies, and communication strategies. She believes that there are two types of strategies which contribute directly to the development of the language system that the learner constructs. They include both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. That is, they are thought processes used directly in learning to enable learners to deal with the new information presented in tasks and materials by working on it in different ways. For Rubin, metacognitive learning strategies are used by learners to supervise, regulate and self direct language learning. They are strategies
that involve planning for learning, thinking about learning and how to make it effective, self monitoring during learning and self evaluation of learning after the language activity is finished. Finally, communication strategies are those used by learners, when they face some difficulties in conveying the message, because of the lack of adequate knowledge of the language. Communication strategies are less directly related to language learning because they focus on the process of participating in a conversation and negotiating meaning. These strategies have been in their turn categorized into: avoidance or reduction strategies; compensatory or achievement strategies and time gaining strategies.

**Oxford Classification of Language Learning Strategies**

Rebecca Oxford (1990) sees the aim of language learning strategies as to develop learners’ communicative competence. She also provides the most comprehensive taxonomy of these strategies. She divides language learning strategies into two main classes: direct and indirect, which are further divided into six groups and nineteen sets (see figure 1). For Oxford, cognitive strategies are the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning, memory strategies are those used for storage and retrieval of information, and compensation strategies help learners to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language and continue the communication.

Metacognitive strategies are those which enable learners to control, to supervise, to regulate and evaluate their own learning. Affective strategies help and develop learners’ ability in controlling his feelings, motivation and attitudes in language learning. Social strategies facilitate and lead to interaction with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct strategies</th>
<th>Indirect strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1-Memory strategies</strong></td>
<td>a) Centering your learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Creating mental linkage</td>
<td>b) Arranging and planning your learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Applying images and sounds</td>
<td>c) Evaluating your learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Reviewing well</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Employing actions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2-Cognitive strategies</strong></td>
<td>a) Lowering your anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Practicing</td>
<td>b) Encouraging yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Receiving and sending messages</td>
<td>c) Taking your emotional temperature</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Analyzing and reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Creating structure for input and output</td>
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</table>
To sum up, language learning strategies maybe defined as specific actions, behaviours, plans, tactics, methods or techniques that are used by learners to facilitate the second or foreign language. These strategies contribute to the development of the learners’ cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective skills. So foreign language learners should be taught not only the language but also the learning strategies they need.

**Strategy Training**

The teaching of language learning strategies or strategy training of foreign language learners is drawn from a learner-centered approach to teaching. This takes into consideration that the learner is central in the learning process. In order to prepare the learner to be capable of self direction and self monitoring of his own learning, he needs to be trained and provided with appropriate learning strategies to take on responsibility for self direction and own learning, this approach is called learner training.

Learner training is defined as:

_A set of strategies, procedures or activities designed to raise learners’ awareness of what is involved in the process of learning a foreign language, which encourage learners to become more involved, active and responsible for their own learning, and which helps them to develop and strengthen their strategies for language learning._ (Hedge, 2000:85)

Learner training is then a set of strategies that helps the development of learners’ study skills and the development of learner autonomy. It is a preparation of the learners at both levels: Psychological and methodological levels. Psychological preparation is concerned with understanding the learning process, and being aware of the teacher and the learner’s roles and responsibility, and confidence building. Methodological preparation is concerned with the acquisition of study skills, strategies for learning and techniques of self evaluation. It is a preparation that helps learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. It prepares learners to become effective and autonomous learners.

Learner training is an approach that attempts to make learners autonomous and able to learn by themselves inside and outside the classroom. It also aims at making learners aware of learning strategies and supply them with systematic practice reinforcement and self-monitoring of their strategies use during language learning activities. Dickinson (1993) confirmed the close link between learner training and autonomy. She believes that learner training is “learning how to learn, in that it aims to provide learners with the ability to take more responsibility for their own learning”.

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**Figure 1. Oxford’s Language Learning Strategies Classification**

a) Guessing intelligently
b) Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

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**3- Compensation strategies**

a) Asking questions
b) Cooperating with others
c) Empathizing with others

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**3- Social strategies**

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It seems clear that the aim of learning how to learn strategy is to create independent and self-reliant learners who are capable of taking responsibility of their own learning through the appropriate use of many different learning strategies. However, learners’ ability to take in charge their own learning can be possible only if they are taught and trained to identify and use appropriate strategies while learning.

The crucial task of the teachers wishing to promote learner autonomy is to prepare their learners psychologically and methodologically to help them take responsibility for their learning. The teacher’s task is to raise his learners’ awareness of the effectiveness of language learning strategy use. Their task is to help their learners understand the language learning process, why the language strategies are, how to use them for accomplishing various language learning tasks, how to monitor their performance, and how to assess the outcome of their learning. Learners need to learn how to be successful language learners and be aware of the specific language learning strategies that can help them improve their vocabulary use, grammar knowledge, and foreign language skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Hence, teachers need to teach their learners the language learning strategies and train them how to use them. But the question is how can these strategies be taught? What is the best way to teach them?

**Teaching Language Learning Strategies**

According to language learning strategies and learner training researchers (Oxford, 1990) the ultimate goal of strategy training is to make learners able to take control of the language learning process, and prepare them to be strategic and lifelong learners. Then learner training must be an integral part of any foreign language syllabus, and strategy instruction should be integrated into regular class because in learner centered approach to teaching, the primary focus is not on language teaching and content but rather on developing learners’ abilities, skills and competencies when learning content.

**Direct and Explicit Strategy Training**

Recent approach in strategy training encourages more the direct and explicit teaching of language learning strategies rather than the indirect, implicit training” Strategy training should not be abstract and theoretical but should be highly practical and useful for students” (Oxford, 1990:201). This approach is based on the belief that learning is facilitated and more meaningful if the teaching of language strategies is more explicit and direct in the sense that it helps learners develop their learning strategies repertoire and motivate them to be more active when learning a foreign language.

In direct strategy instruction, learners are told about the value, the purpose and rationale of strategy use. They are taught how, when and why to use language learning strategies. They are informed how to evaluate their strategy use, how to transfer these strategies to new situations and how to monitor their own learning. That is, enabling them to be aware of the importance of language learning strategies in learning in general and language learning in particular. Thus, learning strategy training is found to be more effective if it is explicit, direct and informed. In this explicit teaching, the teacher raises learners’ awareness of the purpose for strategy use, identifies the specific strategy being used, and provides opportunities for practice and self evaluation. So the teacher’s role in informed teaching is to help the students think about their strategies so that they can develop conscious control of their learning and language use, (Wenden 1987 in O’Malley and Chamot, 1990:154) argues that “
Students who are not aware of the strategies they are using do not develop independent learning strategies and have little opportunity of becoming autonomous learners”.

**Strategy Instruction Steps**
A language Learning strategies lesson involves different steps: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and expansion.

**a) Preparation phase:**
- Activate learners’ background knowledge.
- Raise learners’ awareness, discover and discuss strategies students are already using for a specific learning task.
- Tell the learners about the importance of language learning strategies.
- Explain to the learners that you will be showing them specific techniques that they can use on their own to improve their English.
- Inform them that many of these techniques have been suggested by successful language learners.

**b) Presentation phase:**
Present new strategies explicitly:
- Name and describe the strategy
- Model the strategy
- Explain when and why the strategy can be used
- Integrate the strategy with other language skills. That is, teach the strategy in relation with a typical class activity, such as listening comprehension, reading, pronunciation vocabulary development, grammar communicative activities, or writing.
- Combine cognitive strategies with metacognitive ones for a maximum effect. For instance, have students engaged in planning for what they will learn and in evaluating what they have or have not learned.

**c) Practice phase:**
- Provide extensive practice with authentic tasks (provide guidance, opportunities to practice the strategy(ies) with various tasks)
- Teach students a variety of learning strategies for each type of activity so that they choose strategies that match their learning styles.
- Encourage independent practice of the strategy(ies).
- Give feedback.

**d) Evaluation phase:**
- Develop learners’ ability to evaluate strategy(ies)
- Help learners to reflect on the strategy(ies) effectiveness.

**e) Expansion phase:**
- Develop learners’ skills to transfer strategy use to new tasks.
- Remind learners about using learning strategies when introducing new materials and making assignment or after an exercise assignment.
Integrating Strategy Training to Enhance Foreign Language

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- Encourage learners to develop and share learning strategies. Provide opportunities for them to discuss their own applications of the strategy(ies) with their peers.
- Be patient and remind learners to be patient. It takes time to learn to use new learning strategies effectively.

Conclusion

Language learning Strategies are specific actions, plans, methods that facilitate the learning of a second or a foreign language. They participate in the development of learners cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective skills. They need to be taught explicitly and integrated in a foreign language learning syllabus to give learners the opportunity to learn, and be aware of their learning strategy use. With frequent use these learning strategies may become behaviour that would make learners successful ones who would not only learn the foreign language but also be self directed, critical thinker, problem solver and effective lifelong learners.

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Developing First year EFL Students’ Learning Skills through Adopting Task-Based Learning in the Study Skills Session

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Abstract
The LMD (Licence- Master- Doctorat) system brought certain innovations in the field of teaching/learning English as a foreign language at the University of Badji Mokhtar- Annaba-Algeria. The very significant innovation in the department of English was the insertion of the Study Skills session. First year study skills’ syllabus aims at developing students’ awareness of themselves as learners and at promoting their learning skills. The first semester deals with the following learning skills: learning styles, memorization, attention and concentration, note taking, time management, self discipline, anxiety management and exam management. However, the question to be asked is: How to develop these skills in learning English as a foreign language for first year students at the University of Badji Mokhtar during the first semester? It is easy to provide theory but how to effectively develop learners’ learning skills? Adopting task based learning (TBL) could be the clue to expand and refine learners’ skills. Therefore, along the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, sixty first year students were involved, consciously, in developing their learning skills of English through tasks inside and outside the classroom. Two questionnaires were administered to investigate learners’ skills before and after the implementation of Willis’ TBL framework. The results showed that the majority of learners have effectively developed their learning skills, and TBL assured that the study skills session is no more about the theory of how to be successful, but the practice of being successful.

Key words: Constructivism, learner autonomy, learning Skills, ‘Study skills’, Task based learning
1. Introduction

‘Learning’ is the process of constructing knowledge from one’s experiences, while ‘teaching’ should provide opportunities for learners to construct their learning by themselves. Language teaching has been subject to changes because of the dissatisfaction with the existing methods. From 1980s language teaching theories and methodology have attributed a new role to the learner as an active participant and responsible agent in the process of learning. Task-based language (TBLT) teaching is an approach that focuses on developing learners’ communication skills in the target language through tasks. The interest is not on language form, rather it is on meaning. TBLT ensures learners’ active engagement in their learning and constant exposure to the target language. Willis proposed a framework that consists of three stages. In order to effectively develop first year students of English learning skills, task based approach has been implemented in the study skills session along the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Language Learning

The analysis of learning becomes a central theme of educational psychology as the concept of learning went far beyond learning directly from a teacher. According to Stern (2001), learning is a general concept that refers to the modifications and adjustments of organisms to the environment; it results from experience or practice under the influence of different factors in the environment including teaching. He adds, “It refers also to learning to learn and learning to think; the modification of attitudes; the acquisition of interests, social values, or social roles; and even changes in personality” (Stern, 2001, p. 304). Besides, Stevick (1980) explains that the process of learning includes two steps. The first step is the conscious act of the will that results in some mental action. The second step refers to the process of assimilating the results of that action through the formation of new images or reshaping old ones. Furthermore, Wordsworth (1978, p. 30) defines learning as the acquisition of a skill or specific information based on current intellectual structures or development.

To learn a second/foreign language efficiently, Willis (2001) proposes four conditions; three are essential and one is desirable. Exposure, use, and motivation are basic enough to apply to all learners regardless of their individual styles (Willis, 2001, p. 11). Instruction, the fourth condition, is not essential but is highly desirable. Exposure is a conscious process that might involve listening, reading, or both. However, the learners are likely to use strategies to adjust the input to suit their level of comprehension. Skehen (2000) clarifies that the effective learning approach generates exposure to considerable quantities of input in addition to the different opportunities of interaction. Language use -output- considers both the speaking and the writing skill in the target language. Learners who are encouraged to communicate are likely to acquire a language faster and more efficiently.

Motivation is needed to process the exposure learners’ receive and to use the target language as often as possible. As a result, the learner benefits from both the exposure and the use. Ducker (2012) further explains that motivation is provided by the need to realize the objectives of the task and to report back on it and that success in doing this can intensify longer term motivation. Instruction is generally accepted as focus on language form; it “can both speed up the rate of language development and raise the ultimate level of the learners’ attainment” (Willis, 2001, p. 15). She argues that instruction does not change the learners’ developmental sequence. In addition, Shulman (1996; cited in McClure, 2001) proposes four principles that
characterize the conditions for effective learning: activity, reflection or metacognition, collaboration and the formation of supportive community.

2.2. Constructivism

Constructivism is an approach in cognitive psychology which claims that effective learning occurs when the learner processes actively the information on a personal basis, rather than passively incorporating information unchanged from its original form (Carlson, 2003, p. 3). Constructivist learning is founded on the premise that, by reflecting on their experiences, learners construct their own meaning (Cornu & Peters, 2005, p. 50). Carlson (2003) and Woolfolk (2004) draw attention to two waves in constructivism: Piaget’s psychological/individual constructivism; ‘the first wave constructivism’ or ‘solo constructivism’, and Vygotsky’s social constructivism; ‘the second wave constructivism’.

In the first wave, Piaget explains that basing on sensory experience—visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic—the child “constructs what the world is to him” (cited in Wordsworth, 1978, p. 36). He sees cognitive development as essentially a process of maturation, within which genetics and experience interact. The developing mind is viewed as constantly seeking ‘equilibration’, that is, a balance between what is known and what is currently being experienced. The second wave, social constructivism, considers the social nature of language itself; “it highlights the importance of social processes on cognitive activity” (Carlson, 2003, p. 1). The concepts of ‘mediation’ and “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD) are central to this psychology. Task based language learning offers learners opportunities to construct their knowledge both on the individual level and the social one.

2.3. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Developing Self-Directed Learners (2004) affirms that “a student cannot become autonomous without being engaged in a curriculum that allows it to happen”. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the idea of ‘task’ as a unit for developing language curricula. The rationale behind task-based approach derives from knowledge about the learning process. Hence, language teaching literature provides a multiplicity of definitions of the term task, but there was a broad agreement that “a task is any activity that learners engage in to further the process of learning a language” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 170). Subsequently, with the increasing interest in task as the basic unit of syllabus design, it has taken a particular meaning. For Willis (2001), “task is a goal oriented communicative activity with specific outcome, where the emphasis is on exchanging meanings not producing specific language forms” (p. 36). It aims to create a real purpose for language use and to provide a natural context for language study. Nunan (2004) further clarifies,

a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end (p. 4).

He also emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in task based teaching, “intellectual growth occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks” (2004,
He argues for an integration of action and reflection. Ellis (2003, p. 9–10), then, draws the following criteria of a task:

- A task is a work plan.
- A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
- A task involves real world process of language use.
- A task can involve any of the four language skills.
- A task engages cognitive processes.
- A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

In addition Willis & Willis (2012) provide a set of questions for determining a learning task as follows:

A task has a number of defining characteristics, among them: does it engage the learners’ interest; is there a primary focus on meaning; is success measured in terms of non-linguistic outcome rather than accurate use of language forms; and does it relate to real world activities? The more confidently we can answer yes to each of these questions the more task-like the activity (p. 4).

### 2.4. Willis’ TBL Framework

To make tasks part of the teaching procedures, Willis (2001) describes a three stage model: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus (Figure 1). The pre-task stage permits introduction of the topic and the task. The teacher explores the topic with the class, highlights useful words and phrases, and helps students to understand task instructions. The task cycle includes: the task, planning and report. Thus, students do the task in pairs or small groups and the teacher monitors from a distance; then, they engage in planning post-task. Students prepare to report to the whole class, orally or in writing, how they did the task, what they decided or discovered. In reporting the task some groups present their reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results.

**Figure 1. Components of TBL Framework (Willis (2001, p. 38))**

Finally, the language focus stage includes a variety of activities dealing with language analysis and language practice. These may be of a consciousness-raising nature where further input is provided; there may be some degree of explicit focus on a particular aspect of the language system.

For Skehan (2000), Willis’ approach is much more systematic and consistent with contemporary views on the learning process since it seeks to develop learners’ capacities and knowledge. In fact, the three stages of task design oblige the learners to use their own language
resources instead of practicing prepared items of language, and develop a natural context of language learning where all four skills are integrated. It is worth noting that task based language teaching does emphasize fluency, though accuracy is not ignored.

In addition, Willis (2001) provides a classification of the different types of tasks. Listing involves brainstorming and fact-finding. Ordering and storing involve sequencing, ranking, categorizing, and classifying. Comparing involves similarities and/or differences. Problem solving involves learners’ intellectual and reasoning powers. Sharing personal experiences engages learners in exchanging experiences. Creative tasks, often called projects, involves a combination of task types.

### 2.5. TBLT Advantages

Nunan (2001) affirms that task-based syllabuses represent a particular realization of communicative language teaching, and that task provides the basis for an entire language curriculum, particularly in the contexts of foreign language situations. Tasks should be authentic, learner-centered, intentional, interactive, and lead to success (Izadpanah, 2010, p. 47). Moreover, Skehan (2000) explains that task based teaching approaches give learners the power to participate in decisions making and in how they interact with each other, even with the teacher. As a result, teachers and learners display different roles, “teachers have to learn how to relinquish power, as well as how to provide useful information devise to learners from their new role” (Skehan, 2000, p. 262). Tasks are constructed to help learners monitor, reflect on, and evaluate their own ways of learning. Ellis (2003, p. 32) admits that task is designed with metacognitive focus for learner training purposes. Cameron (1997) sees tasks as sources of learning, teaching and training.

Furthermore, task based syllabus engages learners in pair/group work, in which every student is individually accountable for part of the outcome that cannot be completed unless the members work together (Johnson and Johnson, 1999). In her turn, Willis (2001) explains that doing a task in pairs or groups has a number of advantages as developing self-confidence, spontaneous interaction, noticing others, negotiating, a purposeful and a cooperative use of language (p. 35). Besides, teacher participation as an equal in the group activity makes the students feel that they get both a new member, and a more constant feedback. Ellis(2003) adds, thus, learnt skills provide a basis for the performance of new skills. When these skills in turn become autonomous and stable, a new zone can be created to make possible the acquisition of still further skills. The implication for effective task-based learning is that tasks must be structured in such a way that they pose an appropriate challenge by requiring learners to perform functions and use language that enable them to dynamically construct ZPDs [Zones of Proximal Development](p. 179).

Vincent (1984) asserts that task-based learning secures learners’ need for autonomy; “with a room left for him to grow into” (p.3). Ellis (2003) adds that TBLT approaches have tackled different issues in the center of interest in language pedagogy as the role of meaning based activity, the need for learner-centered curricula, the importance of affective factors, the contribution of learner training, and the need for some focus on form.

### 3. Research Questions and Hypothesis

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1-How to develop learners’ skills in learning English as a foreign language during the first semester 2014-2015?
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2- How to assure that students do effectively practice the new learned skills in the study skills session?

We hypothesized that if first year students were involved in task based language learning in ‘the study skills’ session, then they would effectively develop and practice the new learned skills.

4. The Study

4.1. Setting and participants

This study took place in the department of English, Faculty of Letters, Social and Human Sciences, University of Badji Mokhtar- Annaba- Algeria. In the module of study skills, sixty first year students were involved in the experiment; two classes of 30 students. The participants aged from 19 to 23. At this level, learners’ are expected to attain certain level of proficiency in using English since the majority had at least seven years of English study.

4.2. Instruments

Two questionnaires were administered to the students under investigation, one before the implementation of TBLT in the study skills session and the other one by the end of the first semester. The first questionnaire aimed at investigating learners’ strengths and weaknesses in learning English as a foreign language. The second questionnaire investigated learners’ developed skills in the first semester 2014-2015. In addition, it aims at involving learners in reflection on their previous learning habits in comparison with the new ones.

4.3. First year Study skills’ Objectives

First year ‘study skills’ is a module concerned with developing learners’ awareness of how they learn and how they can be better through developing their learning competencies. This session is of one hour and a half, twice a week. The first semester considers the following lessons: learning styles, attention and concentration, memorization, time management, self-discipline, anxiety management, and exam management. The objectives of this module during the first semester are as follows:

1. Developing learners’ awareness of their learning styles and discovering their dominant learning style through checking list and deciding how they will develop the other learning styles.
2. Raising learners’ awareness of the importance of attention and concentration in their learning and promoting these skills in all the modules through the use of the tally sheet paper along a month of study.
3. Enhancing and promoting learners’ memorization strategies especially the mnemonic devices through certain memorization activities.
4. Explaining five note taking methods: Cornell, charting, planning, mapping and sentence. Learners will be trained on using these note taking methods in the study skills lessons and in the other modules’ lessons.
5. Involving learners in time management along a month through the use of time management sheet.
6. Clarifying the term self discipline and involving learners in reflection on their learning habits so that to be more disciplined in their study.
7. Developing learners’ awareness of the definition and the symptoms of anxiety, and the best ways to deal with them. Students will provide situations where they were so anxious and they did not know how to react.

8. Enhancing learners’ exam management by following certain steps before the exam, the day of the exam, in the exam, and after the exam. Learners will compare their learning habits and behavior before the lesson and how they will behave after this lesson.

4.4. Questionnaire One Analysis

The first questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015. It aimed at discovering learners’ strengths and weaknesses in learning English as a foreign language. The results showed that the majority (80%) had problems in using the English language especially grammar, writing, and speaking. They showed that reading is not part of their learning habits and if they read, they did so just while revising their lessons for quizzes and exams. 70% of the learners were shy, and this makes a great responsibility on the teacher to make them participate, interact and communicate in English.

The great majority of the learners (80%) affirmed that they had problems of attention and concentration while listening to their teachers’ explanation. All the students, except one, were unaware of how well to take notes; they just did it without following any method. Concerning time management, all the students faced problems in organizing their time. A student assured, “I do a planning for my time but I do not respect it”. For the others time management was a matter of knowing what to do; that is, the to-do list and “I keep it in my mind”, “I never do a time management sheet”. All the students affirmed that writing their to-do lists with timing for a whole day represented an obligation for them, and they did not want to be obliged to do something. For self-discipline, 80% were struggling to be so. Concerning anxiety, 75% of the learners showed a great awareness of how they manage their anxiety; however, 90% were unaware of how to manage best themselves during the exam period.

4.5. TBL Implementation procedures

Along the first semester in the study skills session, the teacher involved learners in TBLT. She considered the following criteria in designing tasks:

1. The activity engages learners’ interest.
2. The primary focus is on meaning.
3. Task completion is a priority.
4. The activity relates to real world activity.
5. Success is judged in terms of outcome.
6. Task completion should breed more self-awareness, self-discipline, sense of responsibility, and sense of achievement.

Before being engaged in task-based learning, learners were informed of the new roles they had to play in the study skills session. They would no more just listen to teacher’s explanation; they became active members in the classroom by interacting with the teacher, with each other, and with the learning texts. This phase represented the psychological preparation for TBLT. The teacher implemented Willis’ task based framework as follows:

Pre task:
This stage gave the learners the opportunity to engage in producing meanings which would be useful for the next stage; “it helps learners focus on the topic and engage their own knowledge
and opinions on the subject” (Willis & Willis, 2012, p. 21). In this stage, the teacher introduced the title of the lesson and involved the students in brainstorming ideas related to the lesson’s title. At this level, the teacher activated learners’ previous schemata related the lesson; then, learners exchanged ideas through answering certain questions.

The new terms and vocabulary were explained at this level. For example: what is a learning style? What is attention? What is the difference between attention and concentration? While listening to your teachers, do you apply a specific note taking method? Do you organize your time effectively? Explain. What does time management mean? Are you self disciplined? According to you, what does self discipline mean? What is anxiety? And what does anxiety management mean? What is exam management? Do you manage yourself before the exam? During the exam? After the exam? This stage included certain sub-tasks as brainstorming individually, sharing ideas in pairs / groups, then discussing their ideas with the whole classroom.

Moreover, the teacher involved learners in critical thinking in order to find the lessons’ objectives. Learners had to recognize first the objectives by themselves, and if they did not attain the main ones, the teacher guided them by certain questions or examples. The teacher tried always to find a link primarily between lessons’ objectives and the study skills session; secondarily between the study skills session and the other modules; and finally between the new learned skills and the needed life skills. Once the learners became actively involved in finding answers, the teacher guaranteed their intrinsic motivation along the session.

**Task Cycle**

Learners read the lesson’s handout in pairs or groups of four to five students. The task cycle would involve learners in reading (silent then aloud), pair/group discussion, and whole class interaction. Learners read in order to answer teacher’s questions or to answer each other’s questions on the text. The task cycle would end with sharing certain personal experiences with that specific skill the lesson focused on. The teacher explained her expectation of active engagement from all the students and provided certain instructions.

**A) Task**

Learners began by carrying out a communication based on reading lessons’ handouts. Depending on the lesson, learners were involved in the following tasks: listing, ordering, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, project and creative tasks. While working in pairs or groups, every student was accountable. Learners would understand main ideas, identify opinions and points of view, then evaluate their previous learning habits. In group work, learners would handle different roles: reader, writer/secretary, spokesperson/reporter and leader chairperson. The teacher became the mediator and the facilitator: moving around the groups making sure that all the students were taking part in the task, and whenever needed provided clarifications to the students; the teacher guided them but did not provide any answer or correction.

**B) Planning**

After doing the task, students prepared to report on the outcome. The outcome could be oral or written and sometimes both.
c). Report

Some or all of the pairs or groups reported briefly to the whole class how they proceeded in the task till they completed it. The others listened in order to compare findings. At this level, the teacher might rephrase but not correct the language because the focus was on the task.

Language Focus

A). Analysis

Considering learners' report, the teacher focused on certain errors for correction with the help of the students.

B). Practice

Teacher conducted practice of the new terms and phrases occurring in the lesson and students’ reports. In every lesson, learners were asked to highlight the key words and phrases.

All the lessons ended with out of class work. Certain lessons ended with a project work and others with a homework. The point was that students should do the task individually by next week during the TD session (Travaux dirigés ; i.e: the practical session) by focusing on the new discussed learning skill. The teacher believed that the study skills session is not about lessons to be presented rather it is about skills to be developed with every lesson. The teacher provided instructions and even guidance, but it was up to the students to think about how to present the final outcome of the project work. For example:

1. Using the tally sheet to develop learners’ level of attention in all the modules, first every week and then assessing a month of using the tally sheet.
2. Using mnemonic devices in order to remember a lesson that they choose from the other modules (linguistics, Anglo-Saxon literature, phonetics,…etc).
3. Using time management chart that included dates and tasks in addition to a report explaining how efficiently they organized their time and how effectively they followed their time management sheet.

The homework can be as follows:

1. Considering the different learning styles, what is your dominant learning style? And how will you develop the other styles?
2. Choose two lessons, one in study skills and the other in another module and do note-taking following two different note-taking methods.
3. Why learners should be self-disciplined? And how do you count to be more self-disciplined? How to avoid procrastination?
4. Compare your behavior in the previous years of study before, during, and after the exam periods and how they should be?

Through out of classroom tasks, learners would consider their personal learning experiences at a higher level of critical thinking because they had to decide how to do it, and how to report it. This level represented a real face to face to one’s truth as a learner. Some students, and even the teacher, became surprised of how brilliantly certain students expressed their ideas and feelings. Other students were very original and creative in presenting their tasks.

Learners’ reports were more a reflection on their tasks and the needed learning skills. While reporting to the whole class, the other students listened with interest to how the task had been accomplished by the student. The teacher asked students, “According to you, why I asked you to read aloud the report of your project work?”. By thinking about the answer, students would find the objective by themselves. In addition, learners should decide for the best presented
project work, considering the final format and its creativity, how the ideas and feelings were expressed, and how deep and critical they were.

4.6. Encountered Problems

At the beginning of implementing the TBLT in the study skills session, learners had not shown any motivation. On the contrary, tasks were real burdens for them especially the project work. They complained, “We work in study skills more than in any other module”, “Too much work to be done”, “We work too much in the classroom and at home”. Learners clarified that they were not used to such tasks inside and outside the classroom. Another problem was learners’ reliance on each other for doing the tasks in the classroom, and this made appeal to teacher’s firm control of pair and group work. The teacher clarified how it should be done and that all students are accountable for the final outcome of the task. Concerning the project work, some forgot to do it and the others said they did not know how to do it.

4.7. Questionnaire two Analysis

By the end of the first semester, another questionnaire was designed so that students would assess their new learned skills after the implementation of TBLT. 80% of the students found that the new teaching method enhanced their speaking, writing, and reading skills. Reading became part of their learning habits as they were obliged to do so in every session and even at home. 73% of the students developed their self confidence. For 75% the problems of attention and concentration were solved through the use of the tally sheet. All the students became aware of the different note taking methods, and 60% used some of them while taking notes in the other modules. 75% learned how to manage better their time especially after the use of the time management sheet. 70% developed self discipline as they became more responsible on their learning. 77% became aware of how to manage their anxiety before, during, and after the exam period. Here are some of their comments on the module and the teaching method:

- “At the beginning of the year I disliked this module, but now I appreciate it because it developed my skills from the better to the best”, “Note taking and time management are my favorite lessons”.
- “I liked this module because it is interesting and new. It helped me in all the modules”. “I learned how to be attentive, manage my time, memorize and take notes”.
- “Now, I am more organized. I learned many things which will help me in my daily life. I liked most the lesson of memorization because it helped me a lot to revise my lessons.”
- “I like this module because it was very helpful to me to change my bad learning habits”.
- “I learned to control myself before I control my work”. “I liked most the lessons of memorization and attention/concentration because I need them in my study and in my life too”.
- “Interesting method of teaching which does not let you distracted at all because you were working always in the classroom or at home”.
- “It helped me to master not only the study skills module but also the other modules”.
- “I liked this module because we learn something practical and we can use it in our daily life, something positive and makes you feel better about yourself”, “I liked all the lessons especially that of learning styles because it affected my way of studying”.
- “I learned how to be more successful. I learned many skills that helped me so much”, I liked the lesson of attention because it is the basis of success: the first step in the classroom, and time management at home. This is very important for my whole studies.”
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- “When I enter the session, I feel like am with a doctor, I tell what I find not comfortable and I find the solution”.
- “This module makes us organized not just in the classroom but even at home”. “The teaching method is very good”.
- “The module is amazing and the teaching method is great”.
- “I know how to manage my time, I know what is my objective and I stick to it”, “This module helped me in other modules how to memorize, take notes and plan my study”.

4.8. Findings

After a month of adopting TBLT in the study skills session, certain changes occurred. The classroom tasks went smoothly and learners developed an inner need to accomplish something by the end of every session. By the end of the first semester, learners became very aware of the importance of developing their study skills for the best of their own learning in specific and as future responsible citizens in general. In fact, study skills session became more a community of knowledge seekers and skill developers. They discovered how successful they can be, just by being aware of certain information and effectively applying them. Also, they became very creative in how they presented their project work, some were very impressive. In pair/group work, learners discovered that whatever their level they should participate. Learners discovered that only hard work can bring success, both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, applying TBL approach in the study skills session with first year students guaranteed the active construction of their knowledge by themselves. It also guided them towards better learning skills as the majority of their learning problems were solved as shown in Table 1. In comparing learners’ skills at the beginning of the year with their new learned skills by the end the semester, important increase in percentages were revealed as follows:

Table 1. TBL Positive Effect on Learners’ Learning Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The learning skills</th>
<th>Beginning of the 1st semester</th>
<th>The end of the 1st semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language skills (Writing, reading, speaking)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence</td>
<td>30% (70% shy)</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention &amp; concentration</td>
<td>20% (80% are not)</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Note taking methods</td>
<td>1.66%</td>
<td>100% (60% use them in the other modules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-management</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety-management</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam Anxiety-management</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion

Effective language teaching refers to all the activities that involve learners in constructing their knowledge by themselves. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) secures this end by considering learner’s cognitive and affective aspects. Adopting TBLT with first year students of English represented an innovation in the study skills session. It set the ground for developing autonomous, creative and successful learners. In fact, TBLT guaranteed the development and the practise of the following skills: language skills, attention and concentration, self-confidence,
Developing First year EFL Students’ Learning Skills

Ghaouar

time management, exam management, and self-discipline. Involving learners in tasks inside and outside the classroom had engaged their deep thinking of the needed learning skills they should promote as university learners. TBLT was not easily accepted by the learners, but gradually, learners embraced it with joy and responsibility. Then, learners need to be aware of how they can be successful, but more importantly, they need to be trained on how to be successful. Success is a skill that needs training.

About the Author
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List of References
A Morphosyntactic Study of EFL Students’ Written Compositions: A Corpus Based Analysis

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Abstract
The present paper attempts to explore the written compositions of EFL students at the level of morphosyntax. The purpose of the study is to identify, classify, and supply a plausible interpretation for the different morphosyntactic errors made by the learners. For this reason, a corpus of 120 English written compositions was collected from second year LMD students enrolled in the English department of Bejaia University, Algeria. After analyzing the corpus at the sentence boundary, the findings revealed the following morphosyntactic errors: (1) word order, (2) subject-verb agreement, (3) verb structure, (4) noun/adjective/adverb structure, (5) word/morpheme addition, (6) word/morpheme omission, (7) short forms/abbreviations, and (8) conversational informal words. It concludes with some pedagogical implications to overcome the aforementioned problem and for a better writing performance.

Key words: ELF, Writing, Morphosyntax, Errors Analysis, Algeria
Introduction

Learning a foreign or a second language is always subject to erroneous structures and outputs. Thus, writing in a second language is one of the challenging tasks that may face the learners. According to Harmer (2004: 3), the spoken language is naturally acquired by contact and exposure, while the written one is intentionally learned. Therefore, academic writing involves conscious attempt and practice in writing, building, developing, and analyzing ideas (Myles, 2002:1). Moreover, Pearson (1976 – as cited in Welsh Assembly Government 2010:24) asserts that writing covers three main cues which are: semantic cues (i.e., knowledge about topics, cultures, and ideas), syntactic cues (i.e., knowledge about grammar and the organization of texts), and graphophonic cues (i.e., knowledge about words and how they are pronounced). Hence, second language writing assessment witnessed considerable developments in the last twenty years. Many scholars focus on the types of writing errors and how these errors may recognize developmental patterns in the acquisition of particular grammatical features (Ellis, 1997:15). Therefore, the present paper attempts to investigate the morphosyntactic errors made by Algerian EFL students in their written compositions.

Statement of the Problem

As a lecturer of Stylistics at the English department of Bejaia University, Algeria, and for an exam subject, I gave my second year students an excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe’s The Fall of the House of Usher to analyze in a well-structured essay with academic and intelligible English. Surprisingly, during the exam correction process, I noticed that my students made a lot of errors at the level of morphosyntax when writing their essays. From this fact, I saw that a morphosyntactic analysis of my students’ writings is highly needed in order to diagnose their writing skill. Hence, their exam answer sheets constitute the corpus of the present study.

Questions of the Study

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions

- What are the different morphosyntactic errors that occur in Bejaia EFL Students’ writings?
- What are the reasonable explanations for these errors?
- What are the plausible solutions to overcome those errors?

Null Hypothesis

The present researcher hypothesizes that second year EFL Students do not master satisfactorily English morphosyntax that is why they make errors in their writings.

Theoretical Background

In last decades, there has been an increasing interest in the study and analysis of errors made by second language learners. Error analysis is under consideration and investigation by many linguists, language teachers, and researchers worldwide (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1583). In general, there are two main approaches to the study of errors i.e., contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA). CA is ‘the comparison of the learners’ mother tongue and the target language. Based on the similarities and differences between two languages, predictions were
made’ (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1583). Conversely, EA is ‘a procedure used by both researchers and teachers which involves collecting samples of the learner language, identifying the errors in the sample, describing these errors, classifying them according to their nature and causes, and evaluating their seriousness’ (Corder 1967 – as cited in Heydari & Bagheri, 2012:1584).

As far as learning theories are concerned, there are two main theories related to language learning errors. They are the Behaviorist Learning Theory and the Mentalist Learning Theory. According to Ellis (1997:31), the Behaviorist Theory is the prevailing theory of the fifties and the sixties. It claims that language learning involves habit formation. That is, a habit is stimulus-response connection. Later on, the Mentalist Theory came as an alternative to the Behaviorism. It claims that human language is innate. Furthermore, it asserts that input is used only to activate the process of the language acquisition device. Besides, they can generate infinite numbers of constructions. Thus, during this process, errors may occur but they are considered as natural and part of the learning process (Ellis, 1997: 32-33).

According to Richards (1971: 174-181), intralingual errors are of four types, namely, (1) overgeneralization, (2) ignorance of rule restrictions, (3) incomplete application of rules, and (4) false concepts hypothesized. The first concerns examples where the learner generates unusual structures on the basis of his preceding knowledge of other structures from the target language. The second deals with the faulty structures because of ignorance of restrictions. That is, the use of rules out of their contexts. The third takes place when the learners fail to build and develop a complete structure in the target language. And the fourth concerns the missing comprehension of differences in the target language. Hence, the learners tend to substitute erroneously some structures for others.

**Literature Review**

Error analysis has been an area of interest for many researchers and scholars from different countries. Although many studies seem to share the overall aims of the study but still they are conducted in different contexts and conditions. The present researcher selected some reviewed studies to put the reader in the field of error analysis and to show in the last paragraph the contribution of his present study.

Hourani (2008) investigates the common grammatical errors made by Emirati male students in their English essays. The study is conducted in five Emirati schools with the participation of 105 students and 20 teachers. The findings of the study indicate that the most common grammatical errors are at the level of passivization, verb tense and form, word order, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, articles, plural forms, and auxiliaries. Moreover, these errors are intralingual. At last, the study presents some recommendations such as school textbooks should cover more free and controlled writing activities in order to improve the learners’ writing performance.

Kirkgöz (2010) examines the written errors of Turkish adult learners of English. The purpose of the study is to identify and classify the errors according to two categories: interlingual and intralingual errors. The corpus of the study consists of 120 essays written by 86 Turkish learners studying in Çukurova University, Turkey. The results of the study show that most of the students’ errors are interlingual and they are instances of the first language interference.
Moreover, the study suggests that students’ errors should be perceived positively because they are steps towards the target language learning.

Wee et al. (2010) examine the written verb-form errors in the EAP writings of 39 second year Malaysian students enrolled in a public university, in Malaysia. The study seeks to find out the frequency and types of verb-form errors. The findings point out that the most frequent errors types are omission, addition, misformation, and ordering. Moreover, there is a high frequency of errors related to the omission of the third person singular marker ‘s’. Besides, the learners have difficulties in using the auxiliary ‘to be’. At the end, the researchers emphasize on the importance of grammar in learning a foreign language.

Nayernia (2011) studies the writing errors of Iranian EFL students in order to recognize the different intralingual errors and whether L1 plays a role in learning L2. For the purpose of the study, the researcher asks his students to write some paragraphs on a topic of their choice. After that, 30 incorrect sentences are selected for analysis. The findings of the study reveal that most of the errors are intralingual and only few (16.7%) interlingual errors that are present in the students’ writings. At last, the study highlights the importance of error analysis in the better understanding of the language system.

Al-Shormani (2012) investigates the sources of syntactic errors made by Yemeni learners’ in their English written compositions. The sample of the study consists of 50 third year students of English at Ibb University, Yemen. The researcher adopts James’ (1998) error taxonomies in which he classifies the syntactic errors into 4 categories, namely, L1 transfer, L2 influence, L1&L2, and unrecognized. The findings of the study reveal that Yemeni students face real problems in English syntax. Moreover, it is highly recommended to teach syntactic categories inductively in order to extract rules rather than memorizing them. At length, the study suggests a solution for the syntactic errors by adopting the ‘discovery’ technique initiated by Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) which consist of: (i) presentation, (ii) focused practice, (iii) communicative practice, incorporating information gap, choice and feedback, and (iv) supplying teacher feedback.

Basri et al. (2013) explore the syntactic errors occurring in the descriptive paragraphs of Indonesian students of English. The purpose of the study is to identify the types and manners of English syntactic errors in the students’ writings. The findings of the study indicate that 16 types of syntactic errors occur in the descriptive paragraphs such as auxiliaries, word form, and world class. As far as the manners of errors are concerned, the result reveal 18 errors such as misuse of verb form, omission of auxiliaries, and misuse of word order. It concludes that the English phrases are the main problem that faces the Indonesian learners because of the syntactic differences that exist between English and Indonesian.

Al-Khasawneh (2014) explores the writings of Jordanian undergraduate students. He aims at analyzing a corpus of 26 English paragraphs written by 26 students from different majors studying at Ajloun National University, Jordan. After data collection, all the errors made by the students are identified and categorized. The results of the study reveal that most of the students made errors at the level of spelling, subject-verb agreement, word order, and the English articles
misuse. The study concludes with some implications such as Jordanian EFL students should practice English writing regularly in order to improve their writing skill.

Rostami and Boroomand (2015) explore the sources of errors made by 100 Iranian EFL learners in their written compositions. The purpose of the study is to identify, describe, and classify the errors according to their sources. Considering gender as a variable of the study, 50 male students and 50 female students are randomly selected and their written compositions constitute the corpus of the study. The findings show that the majority of errors are due to unsatisfactory mastery of the target language while few errors are due to L1 transfer. Besides, female learners tend to make more errors than males do but the classification of errors in the two groups is the same.

Hence, the present study agrees with the abovementioned studies in that it deals with EFL students’ written compositions. Moreover, it explores the errors made the learners and attempts to identify, classify, and explain those errors. However, the present study is different from the previous ones in the following: it is limited to morphosyntactic errors made by Algerian EFL students in their writings. Hence, spelling, punctuation are not considered in the present study. Besides, it treats the outputs of a different sample. That is, 120 Algerian Kabyle students enrolled in the English department of Bejaia University. Furthermore, the linguistic situation of Algeria, where this study is conducted, witnesses a considerable presence of the French language. To end with, the present study is purely descriptive and qualitative.

Methods

The method adopted in the present research paper is a descriptive and qualitative one. Hence, the present researcher analyzed the corpus of the present study consisting of 120 answer sheets of the second term exam of Stylistics (during the academic year 2013-2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify, classify, and supply a plausible interpretation for the different morphosyntactic errors that occurred in the EFL learners’ written compositions. Moreover, it aims to suggest credible implications for the abovementioned problem.

Population & Sample of the Study

The population of the present study consists of all second year students enrolled in the English department of Bejaia University during the academic year 2013-2014. The sample of the present study consists of 120 second year students enrolled in the English department of Bejaia University during the academic year 2013-2014. They studied English as a foreign language at least for 08 years (i.e. 6 years before University + 2 years at the University). Hence, they are expected to have a good command of English morphosyntax and to be good at writing.

Significance of the Study

Although much research has been conducted on the error analysis in EFL students’ written compositions, still this topic needs further investigation with different population and different context. Thus, to the best knowledge of the present researcher, the problem of the present study was not discussed before in Bejaia University. That is, no teacher or student discussed morphosyntactic errors in examinations. Moreover, no one used the exam answer
sheets as a corpus for study. Hence, from this originality, the present study derives its significance.

**Results & Discussion**

The analysis of the corpus of the present study reveals that second year EFL students face a lot of troubles in their compositions. It shows that their writings contain a lot of morphosyntactic errors of different types. Hence, the following table summarizes the different types of errors found in the learners’ productions:

*Table 1: A Summary of the Morphosyntactic Errors Found in the Students’ Essays*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Word Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Subject - Verb Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Verb Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Word/Morpheme Addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Word/Morpheme Omission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Short Forms/Abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Conversational Informal Words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 summarizes the eight morphosyntactic errors found in the learners written compositions. It reveals obviously that they face a real problem in academic writing. These errors are related to word order, subject-verb agreement, verb structure, noun/adjective/adverb structure, word/morpheme addition, word/morpheme omission, short forms/abbreviations, and conversational informal words. Hence, a detailed description of the errors is provided throughout the following tables (2-9).

*Table 2: A Sample of Word Order Errors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word Order</td>
<td>1. … and always he felt that he will soon died.</td>
<td>1. … and he <strong>always feels</strong> that he <strong>will die soon</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. He used the pronoun personal.</td>
<td>2. He used the <strong>personal pronoun</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. He introduced expressions very clear.</td>
<td>3. He introduced <strong>very clear expressions</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. There is an existence morale ...</td>
<td>4. There is a <strong>moral existence</strong> ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 shows that the participants face a problem with word order. That is, they do not know the rules of English syntax. Moreover, it is noticeable that within the same sentence, we may find several errors from different types. In the first example, the students used a wrong syntactic order and a faulty verb structure. It is shown in ‘… and always he felt that he will soon died’ instead of ‘… and he always feels that he will die soon’ where adverbs of frequency go before the main verb. Besides, expressing the future using will + infinitive form of the verb not with the past form of the verb. In the second example, the participants used ‘… the pronoun personal’ instead of ‘… the personal pronoun’ where the adjective should appear before the noun it qualifies. A plausible interpretation for this error is the French interference. That is, in French, the adjective may occur after its noun (as it may occur before it). Similarly, in the third and fourth example, the students use the wrong syntactic order of the adjectives and the nouns they qualify. That is to say, they wrote ‘… expressions very clear’ instead of ‘… very clear expressions’ and ‘… existence morale’ instead of ‘… moral existence’. In addition, we notice another instance of French interference at the level of the morphology of the word ‘moral’ where the students wrote it with final ‘e’ as in French ‘morale’. Hence, all the aforementioned errors could be ascribed to incomplete application of rules and French interference.

The next difficulty that the second year students have in writing is at the level of subject–verb agreement. It is clearly revealed in the following table:

**Table 3: A Sample of Subject - Verb Agreement Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject-Verb Agreement</td>
<td>1. He describe the engine… where the miners plays …</td>
<td>1. He describes the engine… where the miners play …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The author describe the environment …</td>
<td>2. The author describes the environment …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The second paragraph show us …</td>
<td>3. The second paragraph shows us …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. All that events was very harsh</td>
<td>4. All those events were very harsh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the errors made by the students at the level of subject - verb agreement. It shows perceptibly that the participants do not assimilate the rules in which a verb must agree with its subject in person and number. That is, if the subject is singular, the verb must be in singular form and the same thing is true for the plural form. Thus, it is clear in all the examples presented in table 3 that the students did not write the third person singular marker, namely, ‘s’ like in ‘he describe the engine’, ‘the author describe’, ‘the second paragraph show’ instead of ‘he describes the engine’, ‘the author describes’, and ‘the second paragraph shows’. In the same way, in the fourth instance, instead of writing ‘all those events were very harsh’ they erroneously wrote ‘all that events was very harsh’. Hence, these errors are assigned to incomplete application of rules.
Another morphosyntactic problem is reflected in the participants’ compositions which is the verb structure. It is shown in the following table:

Table 4: A Sample of Verb Structure Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb Structure</td>
<td>1. They didn’t found anything …</td>
<td>1. They did not find anything …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. … and how she’s lived …</td>
<td>2. … and how she is living …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. He had suffer …</td>
<td>3. He had suffered …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. … that tragedy will happened …</td>
<td>4. … that tragedy will happen …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Two words that signify …</td>
<td>5. Two words that signify …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 represents the errors made by second year EFL students in their written compositions related to the verb structure; either at the level of tenses or verb morphology. The first example shows that the learners made errors related to the structure of the verb after the auxiliary ‘to do’. That is, they wrote ‘they didn’t found anything’ rather than ‘they did not find anything’. They wrote the verb in past simple instead of writing it in its infinitive form. Moreover, the second example shows clearly that the students failed in using the present continuous. To be precise, they used ‘how she’s lived’ instead of ‘how she is living’. Similarly, in the third example, the learners failed in expressing the past perfect. That is, they wrote ‘he had suffer’ instead of ‘he had suffered’. Quite the opposite, in the fourth example, the students used the past participle form in place of the infinitive form. That is to say, they wrote ‘that tragedy will happened’ instead of ‘that tragedy will happen’. As far as interlanguage interference is concerned, in the fifth instance, the participants tend to write the verb ‘signify’ in the French form. That is, they wrote ‘two words that signifie’ rather than ‘two words that signify’. The aforementioned examples reveal that the students lack the mastery of the use of English tenses. So, these errors could be attributed to incomplete rules application and interlanguage interference.

Additionally, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs seem to be troublesome for second year EFL students. It is clearly shown in the next table:

Table 5, A Sample of Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noun/Adjective/Adverb Structure</td>
<td>1. His long sufferance with …</td>
<td>1. His long suffering with …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. His mental sick …</td>
<td>2. His mental sickness …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. From line eight to</td>
<td>3. From line eight to fifteen…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 shows that the participants face a problem with English nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. That is, they tend to mix between them. Besides, they even generate wrong constructions such as in ‘fiveteen’ where the students merged the word ‘teen’ with ‘five’ in order to get fifteen. This could be attributed to overgeneralization of rules and constructions. Furthermore, the participants seem to confuse between the adjectives and the adverbs. For instance, they considered ‘clear’ as an adverb like in ‘he could be seen clear’ instead of ‘he could be seen clearly.’ In contrast, they considered the adverb ‘full’ as an adjective like in ‘the fully foregrounding elements’ as opposed to ‘the full foregrounding elements’. This could be interpreted as a false concepts hypothesized, where the learners wrongly assume that some linguistic components behave in the same way and they do not make distinctions between them (Richards, 1974: 178-181).

Another trouble found in the students’ writings is related to word or morpheme addition. It is visibly explained in the coming table:

**Table . A Sample of Word/Morpheme Addition Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word/Morpheme Addition</td>
<td>1. The second paragraphe …</td>
<td>1. The second paragraph …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. There is an existence morale…</td>
<td>2. There is a moral existence …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. From the first ligne…</td>
<td>3. From the first line…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. … where the both share the same feature …</td>
<td>4. … where both share the same feature …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. In this passage, the writter uses…</td>
<td>5. In this passage, the writer uses…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that the participants made errors where they some extra odd morphemes such as ‘e’ in ‘paragraphe’ and ‘morale’; and ‘g’, ‘t’ in ‘ligne’ and ‘writter’, respectively. For the addition of ‘e’, the plausible interpretation is interlanguage interference where the students unconsciously wrote the following words in French: ‘paragraphe’, ‘morale’, and ‘ligne’ instead of ‘paragraph’, ‘moral’, and ‘line’. Besides, whole words are inappropriately inserted such as in
the following example: ‘where the both share the same feature’ rather than ‘where both share the same feature’. This error could be attributed to incomplete application of rules.

In contrast, table 7 demonstrates that second year EFL students tend to omit some morphemes in words during their writing process. It is noticeably shown in the below table:

**Table 7. A Sample of Word/Morpheme Omission Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word/Morpheme Omission</td>
<td>1. Usher continued his life <strong>alone</strong> …</td>
<td>1. Usher continued his life <strong>alone</strong> …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Usher <strong>which</strong> is the actor …</td>
<td>2. Usher <strong>who</strong> is the actor …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. … these two <strong>line</strong> …</td>
<td>3. … these two <strong>lines</strong> …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The narrator used some <strong>explanation</strong> …</td>
<td>4. The narrator used some <strong>explanations</strong> …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 reflects the omission errors found in the learners’ written compositions. In the first and second examples respectively, they omitted the final letter ‘e’ for the word ‘alone’ and the ‘h’ for the word ‘which’. It is worth mentioning that the use of ‘which’ in this sentence is irrelevant. Thus, the adequate word would be ‘who’. Moreover, the learners have a tendency to omit the plural marker. For instance, in the following selected sentences: ‘these two line’ and ‘the narrator used some explanation’ instead of ‘these two lines’ and ‘the narrator used some explanations’. Hence, these errors could be considered as incomplete application of rules.

Another inadequacy that occurs in the students’ written compositions is related to the use of short form and abbreviations instead of writing the full form of the words. It is visibly shown in the next table:

**Table 8. A Sample of Short Forms/Abbreviations Errors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Forms/Abbreviations</td>
<td>1. A <strong>women</strong> isn’t happy …</td>
<td>1. A <strong>woman</strong> is <strong>not</strong> happy …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. … and how <strong>she’s</strong> lived</td>
<td>2. … and how <strong>she</strong> <strong>is living</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. … because <strong>he’s</strong> always sick</td>
<td>3. … because <strong>he</strong> is <strong>always</strong> sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. … the same words in the <strong>2 line</strong> …</td>
<td>4. … the same words in the <strong>second line</strong> …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. … he used gothic <strong>lge</strong> …</td>
<td>5. … he used gothic <strong>language</strong> …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 shows that the students tend to use short forms and abbreviations in their academic writing. For instance, they use the short form of the verb ‘to be’ in the following examples: ‘and how she’s lived’ and ‘because he’s always sick’ instead of ‘and how she is living’ and ‘because he is always sick’. Besides, it noteworthy to recall that one sentence may encompass different errors from different types. Hence, the present researcher tries to focus only on the instances that fit the type being discussed. Furthermore, the participants tend to use some abbreviations such as in ‘he used gothic lge’ instead of ‘he used gothic language’. A plausible explanation could be attributed to a kind of habit formation during their in-class notes taking.

Unexpectedly, the learners have a tendency to insert even conversational and informal words in their academic writing. This is what we shall discuss in the following table:

Table 9. A Sample of Conversational / Informal Words Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Classification</th>
<th>Error Identification</th>
<th>Error Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversational / Informal</td>
<td>1. … always home.</td>
<td>1. … always at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>2. … cause he is …</td>
<td>2. … because he is …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. … gonna see how …</td>
<td>3. … we are going to see how …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 depicts the conversational and informal words found in the second year EFL students in their written productions. For example, they wrote respectively ‘always home’, ‘cause he is’, and ‘gonna see how’ instead of ‘always at home’, ‘because he is’, and ‘we are going to see how’. A possible interpretation could be that of ignorance of rule restrictions, where the learners do not make a distinction in language use. Furthermore, they seem to ignore the conventions of academic writing.

**Conclusion & Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of the present study show that second year EFL students at Bejaia University make a lot of morphosyntactic errors in their written compositions. Hence, the identified errors are classified according to the following types: word order, subject-verb agreement, verb structure, noun/adj/adv structure, word/morpheme addition, word/morpheme omission, short forms/abbreviations, and conversational informal words. Besides, most of the aforesaid errors are ascribed either to incomplete application of rules, overgeneralization of rules, false concepts hypothesized, or to interlanguage interference, mainly, with French. In a word, all the above mentioned errors indicate that second year EFL Students do not master English morphosyntax. Thus, this confirms the hypothesis of the present study. Furthermore, the findings of the present study join the Mentalist Learning Theory. As Ellis (1997) states:

Learners frequently do not produce output that simply reproduces the input. Furthermore, the systematic nature of their errors demonstrates that they are actively involved in constructing their own ‘rules’, rules that sometimes bear little resemblance to the patterns of language modeled in the input (p.32).
Based on the findings of the present study, it is noteworthy to give some pedagogical implications for both teachers and students:

During courses, teachers of morphosyntax should emphasize on the morphosyntactic rules by adopting the pertinent procedure such as the PPP, which stands for Presentation, Practice, and Production (Harmer, 2001:80-82). Besides, morphosyntax teachers should work in collaboration with teachers of writing. That is, their syllabuses should complement each other in theory and practice. Moreover, they have to encourage their students to read English texts from different genres in order to acquire vocabulary and get familiar with English structure and system. Accordingly, students are invited to practice free writing and peer – review and assessment. Besides, they have to be aware of the writing conventions and different genres restrictions in specific types of writing (Harmer, 2004: 41).

**Limitations of the Study & Suggestions for Further Research**

The present study is limited to morphosyntactic errors; hence, spelling and punctuation errors fall outside the scope of the study. Besides, the sample of the study is limited to EFL students enrolled in the English department. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other departments. Moreover, the results of the present study concern Bejaia University EFL Students; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other Algerian universities.

Based on the review of literature and the findings of the present study, the present researcher proposes the following suggestions for further research:

Further research can be conducted on spelling and punctuation in the EFL students’ writings. Besides, future research may investigate solely the interlanguage errors that may occur in the EFL students’ written compositions. As a final point, further research can explore gender differences in the students’ writing performance.

**About the Author**

**Sofiane Mammeri** is an assistant professor of Linguistics at the English department of Bejaia University, Algeria. His research interests include: Sociolinguistics, Theoretical Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Translation. He taught several undergraduate & graduate courses in the same department. He has been supervising M.A. theses in Applied Linguistics since 2012.

**References**


A Morphosyntactic Study of EFL Students’ Written Compositions


Appendices

Appendix 1: The Second Term Exam of Stylistics

University of Bejaia 2nd Year Classes
Faculty of Languages Student’s Full Name:
Department of English Group Number:

The Second Term Exam of Stylistics

Based on the studied stylistic approach, write a well-organized essay with academic and intelligible English on the actor Roderick Usher.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall perish,” said he, “I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved—in
I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the physique of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the morale of his existence.

Appendix 2: Selected Samples of the Students’ Essays (with Errors)

Sample 1
This text is a passage from the source the fall of the house of usher. It is based on the description of the actor ‘Rodrick Usher’.

The first paragraph shows us that Rodrick Usher was depressed, he was ill. He suffer when he said ‘thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost’ he can’t except that he was lost. he dread the events of the future. he always think about the bad things. When he said that ‘I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and raison together’. Here usher was depressed and always he fell that he will soon died. In this paragraph the author used adjectives to describe usher such as: intolerable – anomalous – aboundon – slave – absolute effect – phantasm. . ., and he had also used foregrounding when he said: ‘said he’ the correct is ‘he said’.

The second paragraph shows us that Rodrick Usher was superstitious; since many years he had never ventured forth in regard. he want to re-stated, he had suffer and forced and this it mentioned when he said that: ‘… by dint of long suffereance’. In this paragraph the author used also adjectives such as: superstitious. The author aachievs his aim for describing Roderick Usher through foregrounding and adjectives.

Sample 2
This passage is an excerpt from the text of the Fall of the House of Usher, in which the narrator tell us about the suffrence of Usher when there meeting was after a long time this passage is numbered and we shall folowthe stylistic approach in order to analyse the actor Roderick Usher. For Roderick Usher in which his friend found him abounden slave in which say a terrible word as ‘I shall perish’ and a lot of expressions that he dreed the even of futur in their result. Usher was alone in his house and he is ill that signifie the state of Usher in which operate an intolerable agitation of soul and Usher just wait the moment that he abandon the life. He knew that he will died as he said ‘ I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together’. Usher suffered a lot in his house and his friend said about his
mental condition. The narrator used some explanation for this mental condition that he was enchain by certain supertitious impressions he used a word certain not totally, and Usher for many years had never ventured forth influence in terms too shadowy. The writer used ‘too’ to tell us that there is a lot of shadowy and Usher is alone in his familly which is a poor family and he lives in a long suffrance and for the narrator he used the pronon personal I to share us this story to be more attached and to understand it more. The narrator which is the friend of Usher and who told us about the fall of the house of usher narrator used a suitable words to describe the state of Usher and he introduced expressions very clear when he describe or narrate the sufferance of Usher.
Assessing Professional Quality in EFL Pre-service Training Programme at the Department of English at Tlemcen University

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Abstract
Although many claims about the necessity to restructure teacher education, not least pre-service training at universities, are aroused here and there, few attempts are made to update teacher education programmes that are responsive to the needs and expectations of future teachers of English as a foreign language. This work aimed to examine the adequacy of the pre-service training programme in use at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. It attempted to unveil the students’ needs to attain professional quality in teaching English. The findings of a multi-method study conducted at the Department of English with a sample of 108 students revealed that inadequate preparations of students in terms of the English language itself, first- and second-language acquisition processes, assessment procedures, educational psychology and lack of teaching practice are among the major problems that should be revised to render the current pre-service teacher training programme able to prepare a kind of professionally qualified EFL teachers.

Keywords: EFL Teaching, Needs Analysis, Pre-service Training, Professional Competence, Student-teachers
Introduction

English has become a de facto global language. It is economically a workforce; socially and politically, a key to international integration. Competence in English is going more progressively vital for many societies sustained economic and commercial success. As such, the profession of English language teaching (hereafter ELT) became a sensitive issue in many countries, including Algeria. In such countries under rapid social, economic and political transformation, ELT is also to face the reform challenges that call for fulfilling the needs of the whole society, not least enhancing pupils’ learning. The very first step to achieve the latter aim is to improve the professional quality of teachers: competent teachers who know the language, and know how to teach it.

However, in Algeria in which English is the second foreign language (FL2) after French, the society is still complaining about the pupils’ low proficiency in English. It represents a frequent dilemma that pupils and their parents face before each exam, namely the official exams such as the BEM (final exam in middle-school) and the Baccalaureate exam. Among the common complains about the reasons behind this critical situation is the lack of professional competence among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

This problematic situation pushed the researchers to investigate the issue of EFL teaching professional competence among our teachers, with the avowed aim to find solutions at the end of the study. The researchers preferred to deal with this problem in universities where EFL students (future teachers) receive their primary pre-service (hereafter PS) training. The goal out of investigating the PS preparation of the students in the Department of English at the University of Tlemcen is to cover the pitfalls of the current PS training programme, and therefore to define students’ needs to be qualified for the EFL teaching profession. In this way, this research is aimed to help improve the quality of teachers having their diplomas from this Department.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The importance of this research lies in the fact that PS training in universities is the first preparation for the future EFL teachers to be used to the world of their future profession. Systematically, PS preparation will be the primary source of intuition for novice EFL teachers before taking any professional action, and the premise upon which they will shape their professional identity at the beginning of their career. Taking the Department of English at Tlemcen University as a research site for our case study, this research is driven by the following research questions:

a) Do EFL university students receive adequate training to be qualified future EFL teachers?

b) What are the EFL students’ needs, in terms of both theory and practice, in their PS training?

Bearing in mind the importance of both ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ as must conditions in the training and development of EFL teachers, the researchers suggest the following hypotheses:

a) The current PS training programme does not assure totally adequate training for future EFL teachers.

b) There is a sharp need to adopt a bi-directional PS training programme that would emphasize both theory and practice focusing on EFL methodology, EFL teaching skills, techniques of assessment, educational psychology and L1 and L2 acquisition theories.

Literature Review
Before tackling directly the case study, let us first review some momentous aspects related to PS training, sketched below.

**The Needs for Pre-service Training**

The importance of PS training of EFL students lies in the fact that it prepares them for the needs of schools and society in general. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL for short) moves fast and the challenges of the ELT profession are changing quickly in terms of time and place (Korthagen et al., 2006). Needless to recall that EFL PS training is the premise on which teachers would tackle these issues and challenges; it is the first ‘workshop’ to shape the teachers’ professional identity and the source of intuition for any future professional action. Otherwise, as Britten (1988) makes clear that there are strong perceptions that novice teachers would teach as they have been taught, and likewise the EFL profession may become just a routine passing far from what is expected by society. In a similar vein, Loughran and Russel (1997) explain the importance of PS training programmes as follows:

Pre-service teacher education programs are the first place of contact between beginning teachers and their prospective profession. If they are to value the pedagogical knowledge that is continually being developed, refined and articulated within their profession, if they are to understand the complex nature of teaching and learning, and if they are to be ‘teachers’ not ‘tellers’, ‘trainers’ or ‘programmers’, then this first contact through pre-service programs is crucial. (p.68-69)

**The Importance of Theory and Practice in TEFL**

It is overtly stated that both theory and practice are must components to make a teacher qualified to practise his profession (Kennedy, 1993; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the same way, Widdowson (1990, p.1) presents teaching as “a self-conscious enquiring enterprise whereby classroom activities are referred to as theoretical principles of one sort or another”. Therefore, in this view, teaching is a venture where both theoretical principles and practical activities collaborate and complete each other. In fact, theory is a source of intuition for first practices in teaching and it is also a power of judgement on it. Of course, theory should be proved in practice (either experience or experiment) before being adopted. Nevertheless, individual practice can be also considered as a source of theory provision if it is proved and well evaluated. Teaching practice (experience) is seen as a critical appraisal that may lead to theory adaptation and adjustment to change (Widdowson 1990; Brandt, 2006).

Therefore, a qualified EFL teacher is to match between units of theory and practice. These units are respectively *principles* and *techniques*. The role of EFL teachers is to find adequate actualisation of principles as classroom techniques, taking into account their specific context. Wallace (1991, p.15) differentiates between two kinds of knowledge in TEFL: *received and experiential*. Equipped with received knowledge in TEFL, the trainee is to be familiar with “the vocabulary of subjects and matching concepts, theory and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession”. Experiential knowledge is developed by practice of teaching and to a lesser extent through observation.

**Linking Theory and Practice in Teacher Training**

Just like in all other professions (e.g. pharmacy, nursing, etc.), there is always a gap between theory and practice in TEFL (Wallace, 1991; Harmer, 2001). Bridging this gap, for novice teachers, is by no means an easy task. This issue is known in EFL circles as *knowledge...*
transfer. For instance, Bartels (2005) claims that it is necessary for an EFL teacher to have a high level of Knowledge about Language (KAL), but this knowledge is not the only requirement to be a good L2 teacher. Hence, the problem does not lie in KAL only, but also in its transfer in practice.

The main concern among EFL trainers, curriculum designers and student-teachers as well is what KAL should include. Popko (2005) describes KAL as an umbrella term that includes all language aspects that EFL teachers should cover: linguistic, applied linguistic and metalinguistic aspects (Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Assessment, Second Language Acquisition, and EFL Methodology). According to Andrews and McNeill (2005) also, these are the main aspects of knowledge about the underlying systems of language that enables teachers to teach effectively, and consequently these are the fundamental facets of any adequate PS training programme.

The Challenges of Non-native EFL Teachers

Non-native teachers’ task is more difficult than native teachers’, because they have, first, to communicate in English, for the noble reason to ensure maximum exposure to the target language (TL), with pupils who share with them the same L1, and above all, to convince them to do so (Britten, 1988; Fareh 2010). This is what Harmer (2001, p.131) calls the “Please Speak English” issue. The second challenge – the one of theory – is that non-native EFL teachers should cover a set of ELT theories mainly about linguistics and the nature of language and second language learning upon which they will build their teaching; otherwise, their practice in classrooms will be mere carbonic copies of the teaching they experienced as EFL learners. In addition, they have to master specific skills (practice) that qualify them for the profession of ELT teaching as time and place requires.

Many studies were made to trace in detail the hurdles facing EFL teachers in many non-native English speaking countries, not least in the Arab world. For instance, a study was undergone by Fareh (2010) seeking for the challenges in EFL teaching, in Arab countries, resulted in the categorization of a number of problems in the teaching/learning process:

- Inadequate adoption of EFL teaching methodologies which is mainly due to the inadequacy of teachers’ training. Fareh (2010, p.3602) argues that “although many of these teachers are BA degree holders, most of them have no teaching certificates that qualify them for teaching.”
- EFL teaching is not learner-centred; it is rather teacher-centred: a fact that neglects the different factors among learners which may inhibit good learning.
- Learners’ aptitude, preparation and motivation are other barriers facing EFL teachers in the Arab world. In this study, not few teachers claim that students are uneducable, impolite, unable to think, incapacitated or they do not want to learn...
- English is taught as isolated skills (grammar alone; reading and writing, the same) rather than integrated skills (for example, grammar in reading). Fareh (2010) calls this issue Compartmentalization vs. Whole language approach.
- Lack of emphasis on developing skills, and the best example is EFL examination which is based on rote learning with no room for creativity such as critical thinking and problem solving...
- Many complains were made about teaching material mainly textbooks: the first of these is that EFL textbooks are very large to be covered in one year, while their levels are higher than the learners’ achievement. Also, many books are said to be culturally inappropriate, with many irrelevant topics, which may influence learners’ motivation.
• As a result of the ways of teaching, assessment is not appropriate since two crucial linguistic skills are not tested in most of the official exams in the Arab world (speaking and listening).
• Learners do not profit from sufficient exposure to English since the use of Arabic is a frequent phenomenon in classes. In addition to this, teachers’ speaking time is always superior to students’ speaking time.

Methodology
The present research is a needs analysis; needs analyses are procedures followed to accumulate information about students’ needs in terms of their learning. In this study, the researchers attempt to obtain a general idea about what EFL students need to meet at the university level to be professionally qualified teachers. The purpose of the needs analysis conducted in this research is to identify the possible gap between what EFL students in the research site are able to do and what they need to be able to do in future professional sites. It is to this end that it could be said that at many times learners’ long-term needs are decided for them, not by them. Richards (2001, p.53), on this point, comments that “needs analysis [...] includes the study of perceived and present needs as well as potential and unrecognized needs”.

As to the procedures for making needs analysis, many choices are available to the researchers in the field (questionnaires, self-ratings, interviews, meetings, observations, learners’ language samples, case studies…) (Rhodes et al., 1997; Remesal, 2011). However, no one of these tools is without drawbacks: a fact that compelled the researchers to follow a ‘triangular approach’ to maximize the accuracy of the research. Triangulation is in fact the major means of validating any research, especially in social sciences. Considering the issue of triangulation, the researchers used two different research instruments to look for EFL students’ needs in terms of PS training which are: questionnaires and interviews.

As to the design of the instruments, the questionnaire was divided into two parts: The first dealing with students’ theoretical knowledge; the second with teaching practice. Part I was completely built on two close-ended questions:

a. To what extent do you know and understand the following?
b. How useful do you find the following to enhance your teaching?

The participants had five choices ranging between ‘very low’ and ‘very high’ for question (a), and between ‘not useful’ and ‘very useful’ for (b) (Likert Scale Questionnaire). These two questions were asked about the areas supposed to cover KAL teachers need in their profession. These areas were classified in their turn into four rubrics:

2. The Foundation of EFL Education.
4. EFL Teaching Methodology and Assessment.

Part II of the questionnaire was meant to investigate the transfer of the previous four areas in teaching practice. Likewise, the interview was based on a number of questions investigating the same areas of KAL, mentioned above, and their practice in teaching. (See the final drafts of the questionnaire and interview in the Appendix)

Sample Population
The sample population differs in size according to the data collection tool employed. The subjects considered through questionnaires are “Licence” (equivalent of BA) EFL students
enrolled in the Department of English at Tlemcen University. Respondents of the questionnaire were 108 out of 158 enrolled. As to the interview, it was relied on to approach EFL inspectors. There are four EFL inspectors covering the ‘Academy of Tlemcen’ (the first authority charged of education in the state of Tlemcen). One inspector is reserved for secondary school EFL teachers and the three others for middle school teachers. The axis of the inspectors’ mission is to observe and qualify novice EFL teachers, and sometimes to organize in-service training programmes for practising teachers.

The Study Proper

The researchers approached all students through a questionnaire designed to look for their needs to be qualified for the EFL profession. Since students were divided into four groups, it seemed preferable to administer the questionnaires for each group separately to manage easily the process. Questionnaires were distributed during the classes of the modular session of TEFL. Administering the questionnaires during classes was to ensure high rate response, regarding the considerable presence of students; and also to realize that the target population filled the questionnaires themselves. The procedure took in all cases between 15 and 20 minutes.

After the first procedure, it was time to interview EFL inspectors. After designing the interview schedule, the researchers were always to prepare the Dictaphone before each recording, and explain to the interviewee the way it better works and especially the appropriate position of the microphone and the distance that should be kept to ensure a good quality of sound. Having the interview schedule in hand, the interviewers read the questions and the inspector answered. The use of the Dictaphone did not forbid the researchers to take some remarks that could not be recorded, mainly body language such as hands gestures, nodding and smiling. Directly after finishing the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recordings orthographically.

The Results

Questionnaire findings and interview results show a great extent of compliance. Little mismatch was noticed.

The Questionnaire Results

Since the questionnaire contained different parts and numerous details, the researchers thought it would be preferable to deal with each rubric of each part separately, to make the outcome of the questionnaire clearer and the discussion easier. Five tables are presented to illustrate each rubric.

Part I

Rubric 1: Fundamental Language Concepts

The results of the first part of the questionnaire are presented in table 1, shown below. The first remarkable feature is that the highest percentages of the students’ answers about their knowledge about the nature of language, functions of registers in English, the structure of the English language and patterns of oral and written discourse were in the column ‘moderate’; Respectively, 51.85%, 52.77%, 43.51%, and 43.51% thought that these former areas as ‘useful’ in their EFL teaching. As to ‘the relationship among listening, speaking, reading and writing’ (1.3), 37.96% of the respondents considered their knowledge in this area as ‘high’, and 64.81% saw it as ‘very useful’ in their future career.
Table 1

*Results of Fundamental Language Concepts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Knowledge</th>
<th>Usefulness in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The nature of language and basic concepts of language systems.</td>
<td>AF*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF**</td>
<td>00.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Functions of language register in English.</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>01.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The relationships among listening, speaking, reading and writing.</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>01.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 The structure of the English language and conventions of written and spoken</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>01.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rubric 2: The Foundation of EFL Education

Table 2 illustrates the results obtained from the students’ answers about their knowledge in the area of EFL education. As to ‘knowledge about EFL education foundation’; note that the number of students whose knowledge in this area is ‘low’ and ‘moderate’ was equal (40 students), which represented 37.03% for each group. Likewise, there was not a great difference between the results of the respondents having ‘low’, ‘moderate’, and ‘high’ knowledge about ‘types of EFL programmes’ (29.62%, 35.18%, and 28.70% respectively).

Concerning research findings related to EFL education, 43.51% of the students have ‘moderate’ knowledge in, while the second largest percentage (34.25%) represented the ones who have ‘low’ knowledge in the area. Then, 32.40% estimated their ‘knowledge about techniques to urge learners to use TL rather than L1’ as ‘high’.

Table 2
Results of the Foundation of EFL Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Knowledge</th>
<th>Usefulness in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ver Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ver Low</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modera h</td>
<td>Hig h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hig h</td>
<td>Ver Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hig h</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 EFL education foundation.</th>
<th>AF*</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RF*</td>
<td>03.7</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>37.03</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>06.4</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>32.40</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.2 Types of EFL programmes, their characteristics, and goals.</th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>05</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>01.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>35.18</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>04.6</td>
<td>09.25</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>37.03</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.3 Research findings related to EFL education.</th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>05</th>
<th>37</th>
<th>47</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>04.6</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>43.51</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>03.7</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>35.18</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)
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2.4 Techniques urging learners to use TL not L1.

**AF** 07 21 29 35 16 11 06 20 11 60

**RF** 06.4 19.4 26.85 32.4 14.8 10.18 05.5 18.51 10.1 55.55

*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)

Rubric 3: 1st and 2nd Language Acquisition Processes

Table 3 provides detailed results. From one side, the students’ answers about their knowledge about L1 acquisition process (3.1) were divided between three columns ‘low’, ‘moderate’ and ‘high’ by the percentages of 26.85%, 34.25%, and 24.07% respectively. This is while their answers concerning knowledge about L2 acquisition process (3.2) were more discriminate by 37.03% for ‘moderate’ and 35.18% for ‘high’. As to 3.3, the interrelatedness of the two processes in TEFL, 43.51% of the respondents have ‘moderate’ knowledge, followed by a group representing 27.77% of the respondents who thought their knowledge to be ‘low’ in the area; nevertheless, this number was not very far from the one which represented the respondents considering their knowledge as ‘high’ in the same area (22.22%).

Table 3

Results of 1st and 2nd Language Acquisition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Knowledge</th>
<th>Usefulness in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Theory related to L1 development.</td>
<td>AF* 09 29 37 26 07 23 17 50 10 08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Theory related to L2 development</td>
<td>AF 01 15 40 38 14 05 10 41 17 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Interrelatedness of L1 and L2 processes.</td>
<td>AF 03 30 47 24 04 17 15 39 20 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The role</td>
<td>AF 03 13 39 39 14 09 09 34 16 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessing Professional Quality in EFL Pre-service Training

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of the linguistic environment in L2 acquisition.

RF 02.7 12.0 36.11 36.1 12.9 08.33 08.3 31.48 14.8 37.03

3.5 Difficulties in learning English.

RF 02.7 25.9 46.29 20.3 04.6 08.33 10.1 39.81 09.2 32.40

*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)

Rubric 4: EFL Methodology

Next to the fact that 42.59% of the answers about the extent of knowing EFL instruction planning were ‘moderate’, there was not a great gap between the ones with the answer ‘low’ and the others answering ‘high’ since the former represented 24.99% of the total answers; the latter, 23.14% (data are not tabulated). As to techniques and methods in TEFL (4.2), the majority of the answers were limited between ‘moderate’ and ‘very high’. Then, it could not be denied that the majority of the respondents had ‘moderate’ knowledge about strategies to foster communicative competence among EFL learners (4.3); however, there were other numbers that could not be neglected as well: 23.14% answered ‘low’, and 26.85% claimed that their knowledge in the area is ‘high’. In this way, the results were balanced to a high extent.

Table 4

Results of EFL Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of Knowledge</th>
<th>Usefulness in Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Factors and procedures in planning EFL instruction.</td>
<td>AF*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Methods and techniques for EFL instruction.</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Strategies fostering communicative competence.</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The use of technology in EFL teaching.</td>
<td>AF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4.5 Strategies for classroom management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>52</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>09</th>
<th>32</th>
<th>22</th>
<th>39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>01.85</td>
<td>15.74</td>
<td>48.14</td>
<td>27.77</td>
<td>06.48</td>
<td>05.55</td>
<td>08.33</td>
<td>09.62</td>
<td>20.37</td>
<td>36.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 The issue of method transfer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AF</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>28</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>29</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>05.55</td>
<td>25.92</td>
<td>36.11</td>
<td>26.85</td>
<td>05.55</td>
<td>06.48</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>47.22</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>19.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*AF= Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)

Part II

Questions of the second part of the questionnaire were concerned with the teaching practice sessions organized at the Department of English. It is paramount to mention here that only 36 students out of 108 were attending teaching practice sessions. The results were summarized under the following rubric:

Frequency of Topics Practice in Teaching

Results are provided in table 5, mentioned below. The first attracting result was that 19 out of 36 trainees respond that they ‘sometimes’ practice guided classroom observation. Actually, the trainees used to observe their peers’ performance; however, they never observe a qualified teacher practising his profession as part of their teaching programme. Nevertheless, 12 respondents did not deny that they never practice guided classroom observation. In addition, the majority of the trainees’ answers, about the practice of EFL skills training, self-evaluation and EFL teaching methodology, were between ‘never’ and ‘sometimes’. Conversely, the highest percentages of the answers to the questions that concern trainer’s evaluation and lesson planning graded between ‘sometimes’ and ‘always’.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency of Practice</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Guided Classroom Observation</td>
<td>AF*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF**</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>08.33</td>
<td>52.77</td>
<td>00.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. EFL Skills Training</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>38.88</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teaching Freely</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>27.77</td>
<td>13.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trainer’s Evaluation</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>08.33</td>
<td>05.55</td>
<td>38.88</td>
<td>27.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-evaluation</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>38.33</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. EFL Methodology in</td>
<td>AF</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RF</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As to the last question, respondents were given a free space to add anything they thought they need or wished to see during their years at the Department of English. It resulted in a number of needs at several levels, which were categorized as follows:

a. **Linguistic Competence**: Some of the students wished they worked more on the four skills, not least the oral/aural.

b. **Communicative Competence**: Many of the respondents agreed that their knowledge is passively accumulated without finding any environment where to practise their English.

c. **Theoretical Side in EFL Teaching**: A considerable number of students claimed that what they have seen in TEFL and Psycho-pedagogy was not sufficient in terms of volume; consequently, they wished if there were more sessions in these two important modules.

**Inspectors’ Interviews Results**

While EFL students are apt to give an opinion about their own needs in the PS training, they are not necessarily the only people to know about their needs. As a cross-validating exercise, the researchers took the route of asking another population, which is highly concerned with the issue of EFL teachers’ development; this population is EFL inspectors who were approached through a semi-structured interview.

First, as to the question about the problems at the level of the structure and conventions of the English language, all of the EFL inspectors agreed on the fact that newly-recruited teachers are still ‘suffering’ from this side. Two of them agreed that pronunciation comes as the first hurdle in front of novice teachers; grammar comes after, then stress and intonation to less extent. Another informant added that novice EFL teachers have a better grasp of written academic English rather than spoken English. He claimed that their conversational English is low. However, the fourth interviewee claimed that this issue is not due only to lack of knowledge of these areas, but rather to lack of practice.

When asked about the novice EFL teachers’ knowledge about the foundation of EFL education and types of EFL programmes, three of the EFL inspectors believe that the problem is not only in knowledge, but how to use this knowledge. Novice teachers may know many concepts, but they fail to see the relevance of this mere theory in teaching.

In what concerns the understanding of the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition, their interrelatedness, and their uses in EFL teaching, the first interviewed inspector saw the issue more complex than that. He claimed that we should be aware that the linguistic situation in Algeria obliges us to take into account L1 (Arabic), FL1 (French), and FL2 (English). Consequently, this may lead not only to Arabic interference in the teaching/learning of the TL (English), but also to the interference of French, which may result in negative transfer (though English and French have many cognate forms in common). The others claimed simply that novice EFL teachers cannot differentiate between L1 and L2 acquisitions, which always leads to pedagogical translation: that is the teaching of English in the same fashion Arabic is taught.
The first remark made by one of the interviewees, when asked about novice teachers’ knowledge of the EFL methodology, is that an EFL teacher is a practitioner not a theorist. They all shared the same opinion that newly-recruited teachers may have a sound theoretical knowledge about the different subjects of EFL methods; however, this was acquired just by rote learning to pass exams, not to be practised in classrooms. One of them added that he had no little doubt EFL students have never met a situation where to put theory in practice.

In a nutshell, there was a general agreement among inspectors that EFL students cover, to a certain extent, the areas of EFL foundations and programmes, EFL methods and L1 and L2 acquisition processes, though sometimes not enough, still they cannot transfer all this knowledge in their teaching. The problem lies in the system of teaching and assessment experienced by EFL students, at the level of university: they found themselves learning by heart several definitions and concepts, not to see their practical relevance in EFL teaching, but simply to re-export their knowledge to their teachers in written exams. Strictly speaking, EFL students may know, but they lack the know-how. Awareness about the factors that may influence EFL learners and knowledge about assessment procedures seem to be the last things to talk about in the current EFL formation. Even theoretically, EFL students need more knowledge about these two important issues in EFL teaching/learning. It seems that these two areas are considered as advanced stages in EFL teaching that could be tackled during or after a period of teaching: this is the only evidence to explain why these crucial points are neglected.

**Discussion of the Main Results**

In the beginning of this research, it was suggested as a first hypothesis that the EFL PS training programme in use at the University of Tlemcen is not entirely adequate, since it depends mainly on EFL teaching theory embodied in the modules of TEFL and Psycho-pedagogy. After analysing the data collected through the two research instruments, the present research revealed that this programme lacks many facets of EFL PS training, not least a compulsory teaching practice programme. It is to this end that the current PS training cannot be said totally adequate: a fact which confirms the first hypothesis put forward by the researchers.

In the second hypothesis, the researchers suggested that EFL students need a PS programme that provides them with training on EFL teaching methodology, EFL teaching skills, assessment, educational psychology and language acquisition theories. After the procedures of data collection and analysis, the findings of this research showed that this hypothesis is true to a high extent. The topics and the activities suggested in this hypothesis were proved to be crucial in EFL PS training. However, this does not forbid the emergence of other results which represent other areas to be introduced in the students’ PS training, or the need to foster some already existing areas.

First, it cannot be denied that the current PS training programme provides the students with some courses in EFL Methodology and Educational Psychology; however, the students deal with these subjects ‘only’ theoretically. They have no occasion where to meet this abstract knowledge in real situations. The research shows also that EFL students cannot benefit from these courses without seeing their relevance in EFL classrooms. In other words, EFL methodology and educational psychology were presented by the researchers to be useful courses in EFL PS training, but the research adds that it is of paramount importance that these two areas need also to be covered from a practical side as well. Furthermore, it is true that the researchers pointed to the importance of teaching L1 and L2 acquisition theories to EFL future teachers in...
the second hypothesis, but they discovered, after categorizing the research results, that there are other factors to be taken into account. The first of these is that students need to see, in real situations, how their native language (Arabic, which they share with pupils) can influence the teaching of English. Future teachers should cover this highly important knowledge to avoid any negative influence of Arabic on EFL teaching and employ any possible positive interference in facilitating English teaching. In addition, the research unveils another fact which is dependent to the Algerian context and which also influences the teaching of English. The Algerian linguistic context is characterised by the existence of the French language (FL1), which is taught in Algerian schools before English. French is known among linguists to have plenty of linguistic similarities (also known as linguistic affinities, or cognate forms) with English, with also many linguistic “false-friends”. However, these facts, which are highly influencing in TEFL, seem to be totally neglected meanwhile. Therefore, the current PS training programme lacks the introduction of the importance of the French language as a crucial subject in EFL teaching, and also it needs to foster the teaching of L1 acquisition theories and its influence in TEFL.

As to assessment in TEFL, the results obtained go hand in hand with what was mentioned in the hypothesis. This area is almost ignored among EFL students save for some few accumulated theoretical definitions. Strictly speaking, the research provides evidence that teaching techniques of assessment and evaluation to future teachers is very important and should have its share in the PS programme in use, as it was suggested by the researchers in the beginning.

Likewise, the study unveils the absence of a compulsory teaching practice programme. In other words, attending PS training sessions is optional. This implies the absence of any space for students to be trained on EFL teaching skills: an activity that was pointed to its weight in PS training in the review of literature.

However, there was a striking new result that appeared after the data analysis process which is that newly recruited teachers are still ill-trained at the linguistic level. In addition to what was introduced in the second hypothesis, this research also revealed that the linguistic level needs to be more fostered in the EFL students’ training, especially the phonological level since the three research tools overlapped in the students’ weakness in conversational English in comparison with their written English.

To sum up, one can say that the EFL PS training held at the level of the Department of English at Tlemcen University needs to be enriched from two sides, depending on the area in question: theory and/or practice. As it is mentioned above, the current study highlights a number of theoretical areas which are totally neglected which should be introduced in the current PS programme to be at the level of EFL future teachers’ needs and expectations to be professionally qualified, and others that are dealt with but need to be more promoted either in theoretical courses or in practice sessions. The latter fact makes clear the importance of teaching practice in the transfer of student-teachers’ knowledge and the practice of many activities and skills that qualify them for the EFL teaching profession.

Recommendations for Change in Teacher Education

The results of the current study gave a clear image about what EFL students at the Department of English at Tlemcen University need to attain professional quality in TEFL. These
needs were classified into two categories: needs in terms of theory related to EFL teaching and needs in terms of practice. As to the students’ needs in terms of theory, the results of the current research were analogous to a high extent to what was introduced, in the literature review, to be crucial knowledge in the preparation of future EFL teachers. The PS training programme in use, in our research site, needs first to foster the teaching of the language itself (pronunciation, grammar, writing, etc.) and to help the students to immerse themselves in linguistic environments to practise what they learn. Also, what was touched at the end of this research is that students need a great work at the level of educational psychology and TEFL, since the results indicated that these students could acquire just little knowledge in these two important subjects in the form of abstract definitions and concepts, while ignoring lot of other crucial areas. In addition, first- and second- language acquisition theories seemed to be neglected among these students, as well as assessment techniques which are totally dismissed in the current PS training programme. Generally, the results of this research call for the adoption of a PS programme which, on one hand, assures a good and sufficient preparation in the English language in all levels of linguistic analysis and which provides ample space for language use (linguistic environments), and on the other hand, it gives a share for all knowledge areas that are considered among specialists as must conditions in the ‘building’ of competent EFL teachers: EFL teaching methodology, educational psychology, assessment techniques and L1 and L2 acquisition theories, etc.

However, the investigators reached another fact that even assuring all these issues in a PS training programme will not be always sufficient, since there are frequently new emerging demands and needs among trainees. The last question in the questionnaire, that provided an open space for the respondents to mention any individual need or problem, was the source of many unexpected data. It made known the fact that each individual student has his own needs and problems. It is worth recapitulating what the students summoned for to be more fostered:

- Linguistic competence
- Communicative competence
- Theoretical side in EFL teaching methodology
- Practical side in EFL teaching methodology
- Psychological side
- Extensive readings

Every subject in the questionnaire could determine his own area of weakness; and at many times, these areas create no problem among other peers. This fact implies that a well-designed PS training programme is not to be totally based on prescribed courses and activities; yet, it is to let a margin to deal with any possible emerging individual needs. Likewise, it could be said that the focus of the PS EFL training programme is to be made on the student/trainee rather than the curriculum. In other words, the trainers are not to follow a PS EFL training programme slavishly, but they have also to take into account each individual student’s actual needs.

As far as teaching practice is concerned, what is to be summoned for is the adoption of a comprehensive, intensive and extensive teaching practice programme which should be compulsory for all EFL students. This programme should provide future EFL teachers with
ample time and maximum chances to see the relevance of theory they acquired in all what concerns TEFL, while it furnishes them with ‘models’ to imitate and to well understand how to transfer all these activities in real settings. In addition, a well-designed PS training programme is the one which lets a ‘margin’ for the discussion of emerging individual needs and does not totally dependent on prescribed activities. An effective PS training programme is to be developed in accordance with future professional environments (schools and their local communities). It should facilitate the trainees’ shift from university to schools, and an opportunity to discover the nature of real learners, colleagues and administration.

**Conclusion**

Highlighted above are the findings the researchers achieved throughout their investigation of the PS training programme at the Department of English at Tlemcen University. The researchers cannot deny that it was impossible to control some variables during data collection. First, the number of trainees attending teaching practice sessions was so limited in comparison with the total number of students (36 out of 158); furthermore, trainees had only one chance of performance for each. These facts may raise questions about the generalizability of the results obtained concerning teaching practice. In addition, the researchers could not collect information about the trainees’ competence in some areas, especially theoretical ones, which cannot be easily observed through a retrospective instrument in one session, such as knowledge about EFL teaching methodology and L1 and L2 acquisition theories. It is to this end that the study design was based on a questionnaire which could address introspection among all the students, in addition to the interview.

The results accumulated from this study raise many other questions that open the door for further research. First, questions may be raised about effective curriculum design if these results are taken into consideration. In other words, how to design a programme which includes and organises all the necessary elements in PS training? Also, further research can reveal useful ways of collaboration between institutions of higher education and pre-university schools, namely in the development of teaching practice programmes: a fact which prepares future EFL teachers for what they will exactly meet, as syllabuses and subjects, in their prospective profession.

**About the Authors**

**Youcef Messaoudi** is a researcher and a lecturer at the Department of English at Tlemcen University in Algeria. He is interested in applied linguistics and TEFL and. He has many studies in this field in the Algerian Context.

**Taoufik Djennane** is a full-time teacher at the Department of English, Tlemcen University (Algeria) specialized in sociolinguistics. His major areas of expertise are contact linguistics as well as language planning and policy. He is currently working on issues related to language-in-education policy in Algeria.

**References**

Assessing Professional Quality in EFL Pre-service Training

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Appendix 1. EFL Inspectors’ Interview

Interview #

Starting from the fact that EFL students (would-be teachers) necessitate a good preparation at university level to practise their profession, could you please shed light on the common areas in which novice EFL teachers encounter problems when teaching?

As the EFL teaching profession demands several skills and qualities, this question is preferable to be discussed at different levels:

1. The problems they face at the level of the *structure and conventions of the English language*. That is, the phonology, grammar and semantics of the language, language registers, language skills …

2. At the level of knowledge about the foundation of *EFL education*, from history and theory of EFL education to types of EFL programmes.

3. Do they know and understand *the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition*, their interrelatedness, and their use in EFL teaching?

4. What about *EFL teaching methods and techniques*?

5. After this, what to say about their awareness of the factors that may affect EFL students’ learning like personal differences among learners (age, personality, socio-economic background), variations in learning styles …

6. Finally, the last question is devoted to an important professional quality in EFL teachers which is the design, development and interpretation of formal and informal *assessment procedures and instruments*.

What are the recurrent difficulties that novice EFL teachers encounter at this level?

N.B: This is a semi-structured interview. Follow-up questions can be made depending to the situation.

Appendix 2. Students’ Questionnaire
Please complete this questionnaire with regard to the courses you had during your years in the department.

**Part I**

a. To what extent do you know and understand the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. **Fundamental Language Concepts:**
   
   1.1. The nature of language and basic concepts of language systems. (e.g. phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon)

2. **The Foundation of EFL Education:**
   
   2.1. The historical, theoretical and policy foundations of EFL education.

   2.2. Types of EFL programmes, their characteristics, their goals and research findings on their effectiveness.

   2.3. Research findings related to EFL education, including effective instructional and management practices in EFL programmes.

   2.4. Techniques to urge learners to use the target language (English) and to avoid using their L1 as much as possible.
3. **First- and Second-Language Acquisition Processes:**

- 3.1. Theories, concepts and research related to L1 development.
- 3.2. Theories, concepts and research related to L2 development.
- 3.3. The interrelatedness of first- and second-language acquisition and ways in which L1 may affect L2 development.
- 3.4. The role of linguistic environment and conversational support in second language acquisition.
- 3.5. Common difficulties (e.g. syntax, phonology, L1 interference ...) experienced by EFL students in learning English and strategies for overcoming these difficulties.

4. **EFL Methodology:**

- 4.1. Factors and procedures in planning EFL instruction, including consideration of students’ developmental characteristics and individual needs.
- 4.2. A variety of methods and techniques appropriate for instruction in the EFL classroom.
- 4.3. Strategies for fostering EFL students’ communicative competence.
- 4.4. The use of technological tools and resources to facilitate and enhance EFL instruction.
- 4.5. Classroom management strategies for a variety of EFL environments and situations.
- 4.6. Sharp awareness of the methods actually in practice and their differences from the ones experienced as learners.
Part II

1. Do you attend the ‘teaching practice’ sessions held at the level of the department?
   Yes □        No □

2. If yes; how often?
   Always □     Sometimes □    Rarely □

3. How often do you practise the following in your teaching training?
   Classroom observation for other teachers practising their profession.
   EFL skills training.
   Being given a chance to teach freely.
   Evaluation of the teaching performance by the trainer.
   Self-evaluation of the teaching practice.
   Practice of the teaching methodologies in teaching.
   Self-reliance in lessons planning and evaluation.

Do you have any other comments which might be helpful in giving an obvious idea about EFL students’ needs, in their pre-service training, to achieve professional competence? If so, please write them here.
An Exploratory Study of the Effectiveness University Website of Mohamed Lamine
Debaghine-Sétif-2-

Ikhlas Gherzouli
Department of English Language and Literature,
Mohamed Lamine Debaghine (MLD)-Setif-2- University, Algeria

Abstract
All universities around the world focus their time and staff resources for improving their websites in an attempt to mark their presence through the web. Having a university website, which provides easy access to necessary information for people, as students, teachers, researchers, and administrators, has become vital to any institution, and should thus respond to their needs. The success of any web site is partly related to how effective it is. An effective website should provide great experiences to its users such as: interactivity, attractive design, informative content and ease of use. Among these requirements, website’s design is the first thing that captures the users’ attention. A clear understanding of how best to design effective websites is therefore imperative. The available literature on websites’ effectiveness remains little and much more user-centric. As a matter of fact, this study tries to see into what web designers of MLD University consider as important attributes of effectiveness. For this, only one evaluation method was used: a checklist handed to members of the team in charge of the university website design.

Key words: university website, website effectiveness, website design.
Introduction

In this globalization era, websites are considered as key aspect of any institution’s effectiveness. A website is effective when both its users and owners achieve goals for the site. An institution’s website is essential. It acts as a conveyer of the organization’s message, culture, and visions. So, if the institution wants to inform, communicate, and provide support, there is no better way than to use its website.

There are millions of websites nowadays, and these websites may or may not reach a satisfactory level as far as users’ needs and requirements are concerned. If websites are poorly laid out this may deeply affect how visitors’ view the entire institution. Some of the reasons contributing to websites’ failure are related to the rapid advancement in web technologies, limited experience and background knowledge of designers and developers, and time constraints and resources allocation for website design and development (Micali and Cimino, 2008). Despite the fact that many websites lack the quality of satisfying their users’ needs, reliance on websites use for multiple reasons is increasing day after day. The variety of reasons to use websites such as shopping online, communicating with people, and finding information makes of websites complex systems. Subsequently, with time, the task of designing websites is becoming more challenging.

The academic domain is no exception. It is one field where websites are widely used nowadays. An academic or a university website is an educational site that consists of many sites, such as: faculty, department, program, and research groups’ sites. These sites are generally requested by students, teachers, staff, and faculty members. A university website not only serves as a platform for the institution to interact with its users, but also helps to shape its image (Mentes and Turan, 2012). Academic websites are meant to inform a wide variety of audiences. For these audiences, usability plays a big role in communicating credible information which allows universities attract and engage the academic community and visitors. However, the goal of universities should not be limited to the presentation of their academic programs and opportunities, but a major concern should be whether the image reflected by their websites is effective. To address this concern, the primary step is to go through extensive literature to identify the features and elements of an effective website.

In order to have a satisfactory website, web designers have to consider all factors concerning the features for designing a web. The purpose of this study is therefore, to: identify the attributes of effective websites as highlighted in the literature, and determine which ones MLD University web designers team mostly consider. This study focuses on web designers’ rather than web users’ perspectives. While literature on web effectiveness focused on users’ perspectives (Webster and Ahuja, 2006), I think web designers’ perspective is critical, too, in testing and developing an effective website. In this study one evaluation method was used, a checklist which was handed to members of the team in charge of the university website design.

Literature Review

Website Effectiveness

Website effectiveness is such a difficult term to define. In early literature, researchers have proposed different criteria for effective website design based on common sense and intuition. Literature focusing on the quality of information the websites provide is narrow
An Exploratory Study of the Effectiveness University Website

Gherzouli

(Katerattanakul and Siau, 1999). This is due, on the one hand to the fact that the Internet is a relatively new research area. Moreover, the people doing research in this area are likely to refrain and reflect on developments (Day, 1997). Effectiveness is manifold; for instance, a website may be considered effective simply by getting a user to access it, as it may also be judged on the extent of influence it has on its users. Key areas of effectiveness as loosely based on texts by Durham (1999), Nielsen (1993), Mayhew (1999) and Preece (1993) include: cognitive psychology, human-computer interaction, usability, professional writing, linguistics, and rhetoric. According to Simmons & Badni (2007), there are three phases of website effectiveness depending on the users’ actions, which are: before use, during use and after use.

According to them, before use refers to the time spent before reaching the website as well as the ways leading to it. The areas of before use include: revisiting a website; recommendations from colleagues or leaders in the field; advertising; website searches; chance, and the appropriateness of a domain name. A revisit to a website may indicate that either the site has been successful, or the user may not have been successful in using it the first time. Gathering insights from colleagues or leaders in the field may feed website designers with experience, as long as those insights highlight key opportunities for improvement. When making a website, the main focus is its traffic. Webmasters can get as much traffic as they want through advertising their websites. Advertising activities, to name but a few, comprise getting Google Analytics and studying the statistics carefully, making other websites have links to our website, and increasing website visibility in search engine’s organic results through search engine optimisation. Effective advertising is the strongest element about the before use phase, because strong advertising attracts users, makes them remember the site and bring them back to it. However, this possibility may not be true if the website is discovered simply by chance. Finally, having an appropriate domain name makes the website easier to find and more likely to come up in different search engines.

The second phase during use is considered as a huge area of effectiveness (Simmons and Badni, 2007). It covers: cognitive psychology (visual perception, information processing, attention, memory, learning, mental models); human-computer interaction (physical, psychological, experience, socio-cultural); usability (navigation, learnability, accessibility, feedback, satisfaction, efficiency, memorability, errors, throughput, flexibility, attitude); professional writing (comprehension of functions, value of information and inspiration, wording, community issues, users, influence, competency); linguistics (sections, choice, theme, headings, chunking, structure, cohesion, lexical density); and rhetoric (persuasive value (visual style, interaction impact, written style, aesthetics, narrative, image use), style, architecture, shell sites, content (purpose, use of text, direct, consistency, contacts, FAQs, communication statement, obvious links, clarity, initial impression)). (Durham 1999, Nielsen 1993, Mayhew 1999, Preece 1993).

Cognitive psychology

Cognitive psychology is the study of mental processes such as attention, language use, memory, perception, problem solving, creativity, and thinking. The term ‘cognitive psychology’ was first used in 1967 by American psychologist Neisser in his book Cognitive Psychology. According to Neisser (1967), cognition involves:

‘…All processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered, and used. It is concerned with these processes even when they operate in the
absence of relevant stimulation, as in images and hallucinations…given such a sweeping definition, it is apparent that cognition is involved in everything a human being might possibly do; that every psychological phenomenon is a cognitive phenomenon’ (p.4)

This definition illustrates well the progressive concept of cognitive processes.

Because cognitive psychology is related to many other disciplines, this branch of psychology is studied by people in a number of different fields. Cognitive psychology is present in neuroscience, linguistics, industrial-organisational psychology, artificial intelligence, engineering, architecture, and web design.

As far as web design is concerned, useful principles can be drawn from cognitive psychology sub-domains, namely: sensation, perception, attention, memory, and decision making to guide web designers on fundamental issues relating to: attraction of users, facilitation of users’ experience, and identification of needs and goals. Web designers’ ideas which may often be borrowed from cognitive psychology include: guidelines for colour and animation use, page layout, menu length, or even those parameters which influence immersion in the digital world. Norman (1993) points out that different kinds of cognition processes (attention, perception and recognition, memory, learning, reading/ speaking/ writing, problem solving, planning, reasoning, and decision making) are essential for everyday life but that each requires different kinds of technological support. Those cognitive processes are tackled in details in the following sections.

**Attention**

According to the psychologist and philosopher William James (1890), attention ‘is the taking possession of the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what many seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thoughts…It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state’ (p. 403)

Human attention has a critical role to play in web design implications. The look of a website is mostly the first thing users will experience, and what they see will have a profound effect on what they do and their impression about the website. The designer’s job is therefore to create a compelling experience for the web user. Using techniques like animated graphs, colours, underlining, sequencing of information and ordering of items may serve the desired aim.

**Perception**

Perception can be defined as ‘the means by which information acquired from the environment by sense organs is transformed into experience of objects, events, sounds, tastes etc’ (Roth, 1986, p.81). It is how we engage with the world around us. In other words, perception is the result of complex interactions between external visual stimulus and prior knowledge, goals, and expectations. Understanding how humans perceive things visually will help designers create better. Their job should be therefore to design representations of information in a perceptible and recognisable way, to assist the visual appearance of the website by diverting the users’ eyes, and making them attach meaning to the web’s visual elements to better remember and understand the web’s message. They should for instance, make icons and names easily recognisable so that they can be found easily when scanning a list or menu.
Memory

‘Memory is the process that allows us to record, store, and later retrieves experiences and information’ (Passer, 2009, p.333). Memory is the process of maintaining information over time (Matlin, 2005). It is also the means by which we draw on our past experiences in order to use these information in the present’ (Sternberg, 1999). Most psychological models of human memory distinguish between short-term (STM) and long-term (LTM) memory as separate but interrelated structures of the brain. STM refers to the brain’s capacity to hold information for approximately twenty seconds. It has three key aspects; limited capacity (only about seven items can be stored at a time), limited duration (storage is very fragile and information can be lost with distraction or passage of time), and encoding (primarily acoustic, even translating visual information into sounds). In contrast, LTM has an almost infinite capacity, and information in long-term memory usually stays there as long as the person is living.

On the basis of this understanding of memory, web designers should keep in mind that they should structure the web interface to reduce the need to memorise and recall things. They should also guide the users through tasks having a sequence of steps, and not forcing them to remember the series of commands or navigate to different screens to finish the task.

Learning

Learners do not understand instruction unless they become acquainted with the thing they are learning about. Carroll (1990) expresses this when talking about learning to use computer applications: ‘to learn, [users] must interact meaningfully with the system, but to interact with the system, they must first learn’ (p.77). In his edited collection Designing Interaction, Carroll (1991) and his colleagues wrote about how to design interfaces that help learners develop computer-based skills. A main point is that people prefer learning through doing, rather than learning by following sets of instructions in a manual. Preece (1993) emphasises that learning to use a new system requires active involvement of users. Preece identifies five key aspects of learning. First, learning through doing; secondly, learning by active thinking, which highlights the fact that users need guidance while using the system (p.29). If they could not interact independently with the system, this means that the system is neither clear nor suitable for them. A system should not be constructed in a way that is understood only by an expert; thirdly, learning through goal and plan knowledge. This means that people interact with interfaces to accomplish certain goals. Knowledge about people’s goals may be useful for designing intelligent user interfaces. Moreover, learning through analogy, in which web designers should use familiar user interface patterns to help users feel at home. Finally, learning from errors for error messages represent a careful design which prevents problems from occurring in the first place. Error prone conditions should be eliminated or checked, and users should be presented with a confirmation option before they commit to the action (Nielsen, 1995).

Reading, speaking and listening

People differ in their ability to use language. This difference depends on the ease with which people can read, listen, or speak; as well as the context or task in hand. Designers should therefore, accentuate the intonation of artificially generated speech voices, as these are harder to understand by people than human voices. Moreover, designers should provide opportunities for making a text large on a screen, without affecting the formatting for people who find it hard to read small text (Rodgers et al., 2011).
Problem-solving, planning, reasoning and decision-taking

Problem-solving, planning, reasoning and decision-taking are cognitive aspects of interaction design. According to Rogers et al. (2011) there are two modes of cognition, namely: experimental and reflective cognition. Experimental cognition refers to the state of mind where we perceive, act and react to events around us; whereas, reflective cognition involves: thinking, comparing, and decision taking. Problem-solving, planning, reasoning and decision-taking are processes that involve reflective cognition. These processes require a person to consciously think of his actions and decisions; to discuss with others or oneself; and finally use various kinds of physical items.

The extent to which people go about engaging in reflective cognition depends largely on their level of experience with a domain, application or skill. For instance, someone with little or no experience if tasked with a problem to solve may find himself unable to solve the problem. He will end by going through the trial and error process while using his assumptions about knowledge of other situations. In contrast, an expert if tasked about the same problem is more likely to be able to use appropriate actions while making any move. Role of designers in this context is to provide additional hidden information that are easy to access for users who wish to understand more about how to engage with tasks more effectively (Rodgers et al., 2011).

In addition to what has been discussed above, understanding web users’ thought processes for how they uncover web’s content is a wonderful way to design a website. In effect, designing an effective web requires that designers completely understand the users’ goals and the procedures they use to accomplish those goals. They need to understand how users carry out tasks and what they want to get done as well. The challenge of matching what is going on in users’ brains with the constraints and opportunities of nowadays technologies is the study and practice of creating mental processes for websites. It is also the matching of mental models with conceptual models. The section below will explain the difference between the two models.

Mental models and conceptual models

Mental models are one of the important concepts in human-computer interaction (HCI) (this concept will be explained in the next section). A mental model is what the user believes about the system at hand (website for instance) (Nielson, 2010). Or it is simply, the representation a person has in his mind about how does the object he is interacting with look, feel and work. On the other hand, the model that designers will build to communicate the design of the web with users is called the conceptual model. Once conceptual models match with mental models, users will find it easy to learn and use the web.

Human-computer interaction (HCI)

HCI is an area of research and practice that emerged in the early 1980s (Carroll, 2014). The focus in HCI is on the interactions between human users and computer systems, including the user interface (UI) (UI will be explained in the following section) and the underlying processes which produce the interactions. The contributing disciplines include computer science, cognitive science, human factors, software engineering, management science, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Online Business Dictionary 2003). To be effective, Shneiderman (1997) sees that HCI has to have certain characteristics, he posits

Well designed, effective computer systems generate positive feelings of success, competence, mastery, and clarity in the user community. When an interactive system is
well-designed, the interface almost disappears, enabling users to concentrate on their work, exploration, or pleasure (p.10).

According to Shneiderman there are many principles for the design of users’ interfaces. Those which are relevant to information access include: Providing informative feedback, permitting easy reversal of actions, reducing working memory load, and providing alternative interfaces for novice and expert users to name few.

When assessing website effectiveness the HCI factors (physical, experience, psychological, socio-cultural) will help determine users’ roles and the impact their backgrounds has on the effectiveness of websites design.

**User interface (UI)**

According to the Online Business Dictionary (2003), UI refers to the visual part of computer application or operating system through which a user interacts with a computer or software. It determines how commands are given to the computer or the program and how information is displayed on the screen. There are three main types of UI, which are: Command language (the user must know the machine and program-specific instructions or codes); Menus (the user chooses commands from lists displayed on the screen); and Graphical user interface (GUI) (the user gives commands by selecting and clicking on icons displayed on the screen).

When crafting user interfaces and websites, UI design patterns must be given careful consideration. Designers should, for instance, organise content to achieve the best possible usability (usability will be explained in the next section): implement logical page structure; lead the user to UI through minimal efforts on his part and enhance his experience; and simplify data entry.

**Usability**

According to Nielsen (2012) usability is a quality attribute that assesses how easy UIs are to use. It also refers to methods of improving ease of use during the design process. Usability is defined by five quality components, which are: Learnability (the extent of easiness with which users accomplish basic tasks the first time they encounter the design); efficiency (the quickness with which users can perform tasks); memorability (how easy is it for the user to remember when returning to the design after a period of not using it); errors (how many errors do users make, how severe these errors are, and how easy can users recover from those errors); and satisfaction (how pleasant is it to use the design).

Utility is another important quality attribute. Usability and utility are of equal importance. They both determine whether something is useful. At first glance, the two concepts do not seem to be much different. However, utility suggests that whatever the object is (software) there is an advantage to using it. It is in general the applicability, appropriateness and serviceability of the object. Utility does not state the ease with which the object can be used, and this is where usability comes.

**After use**

The last phase concerning website effectiveness is called ‘after use’. This refers to patterns of use, usability reviews, website sales, influence, and likeability. In recent research of Simmons (2010) after use concerns users taken actions after accessing a particular website, and the influence this latter had on the user. It also concerns whether the user would return to the website or not, and how would users get the information they look for in the right time.
Users experience different types of behavior after using a web. In HCI it is called user experience (UX). UX refers to ‘all the aspects of how people use an interactive product: the way it feels in their hands, how well they understand how it works, how they feel about it while they are using it, how well it serves their purposes, and how well it fits into the entire context in which they are using it’ (Alben, 1996, p. 11-15).

The field of website design is constantly changing. Thus, staying updated and creative is a big challenge that designers are to face. An effective website is the one that can keep visitors engaged and to persuade them to stay on the website and come back. Factors affecting a website’s ability to impress and engage users include an important concept which is likeability. Likeability refers to whether the user enjoys using the website and its associated applications and services. Increasing a website’s likeability is controlled by simple factors: Optimized and fresh content, page speed, organisation of the website, and the social media sharing strategy. A website will be likeable if all these principles are put together.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

About MLD Sétif-2 University Website

As stated in the title of this paper, the present research is an exploratory study of the effectiveness of MLD Sétif-2 University. This latter was created via the presidential decree of November the 28th, 2011. This university was the result of a division of the mother ‘Ferhat Abbas University’ into: Sétif1 and Sétif2 universities. The university division brought with her the creation of MLD Sétif-2 University website. The initial launch included a complete redesign of the homepage, a new content management system, a multiple language feature and a new homepage for the Central Library. The website was first created by a group of six engineers and two teachers (including the researcher). Three engineers are chiefly working for the web design; whereas the other three work at the level of the three different university faculties, all working at the vice-chancellery of Post Graduation, Accreditation and Scientific Research. The group has been managing this website since October 2013. The current website provides news and information about the institution to the public, academic and other links, email and phone directories, and access to the library. It also includes details of courses, admissions and bursaries, faculties, and departments that make up the university. The scope of services has been expanded since the website’s creation. An exploratory study of the University website’s effectiveness is vital since the university is planning to redesign its website the next months.

Research Instruments

In the digital world, there are no editors to proofread, to send back, or to reject the content of websites. The burden is therefore on the readers, surfers, or designers to evaluate carefully what they find on their university websites.

Over time, I started looking at the way university websites look like and wondering about their effectiveness. Website’s effectiveness piqued my curiosity mainly after I have been offered the opportunity to work with the team in charge of our university’s website design. As a matter of fact, I believe that being a nerve center for a global world; a university website must be effective.

In this study one evaluation method was used: A checklist handed to members of the team in charge of the university website design. Through the method of evaluation, I aimed to meet the website’s designers who will share their vision, inspirations and expertise with us. I also attempted to gather general information about the current website. Effectiveness criteria for
assessing the effectiveness of MLD Sétif2 University were developed based on an extensive review of the literature. The checklist used in this study was originally developed by the Management Centre International Limited (MCIL). MCIL is a management consultancy that is based in England, but operates on a world-wide basis. The checklist is available on: www://mcil.co.uk. It provides a structured way to establish how well the website is performing. The website effectiveness review is conducted by examining eight different sets of criteria. These criteria include: first impressions, navigation, content, attractors, findability, making contact, browser compatibility, and user satisfaction. Other useful information and knowledge of users criteria have been deleted being irrelevant to the context of the study. The checklist was tailored to suit the requirements of the present study since not all criteria are relevant to Sétif 2 University context. The use of the checklist requires scoring each website issue out of ten, where the score 0 means not applicable at all, 1 means extremely poorly represented, and 10 means extremely well represented. The intended participants of the study are all members of the team in charge of the university website design. This is extremely important because most issues in the checklist cannot be properly addressed with a single visit to the website. Those issues require the reviewer to get the group’s replies. The intended participants were introduced to the MCIL checklist and asked to record their opinion about the website, on a scale from 1 to 10. The final chosen criteria to be used in the evaluation includes the following. First impressions (URL, download time, readability, home page on one screen, KAP, depth of site, contact details, credential validation, are users’ registration to get into the site); navigation (ease of use, site map, return to home page from any page, internal search engine, internal links, broken links, text as well as graphic links, visibility of navigational links, and using frames); content (useful information, degree of substantiated information, level of interaction, use of valuable graphics, use of valuable animation, use of valuable sound, reviews testimonials and certifications, digestible quantity of content, up-to-date, multiple languages, accessibility for disabled people, terms and conditions, FAQs, availability of follow up discussion); attractors (competitions, special offers, freebies, breaking news, providing external links, newsletter, others); findability (intuitive URL, advertising); making contact (visibility of email and other details, response time to enquiries, use of online forms, telephone contact numbers, and telephone call back); browser compatibility (Internet Explorer version, Netscape Explorer Version, Macintosh, Monitor Compatibility); user satisfaction (reliability of the site, clicks to completion, acknowledges order/request, order/request tracking online, and use of cookies).

Findings
Scorings of website effectiveness checklist depend on nine criteria. As explained previously, each website issue is scored out of 10. Issues with 0 score are not applicable at all to Sétif 2 University website. On the other hand, issues with the score 1 are poorly represented in the site. Finally, issues with the score 10 are well represented in the website. The following tables give display results of key issues used to evaluate the website effectiveness with regards to each criterion. The researcher made sure that all participants score all features representing all the evaluation criteria of the website.

Table 1. Scores for Website First Impressions Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores /10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive URL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results drawn from this table reveal that users need to scroll up and down to see everything on the screen. The homepage is not above the fold. Moreover, the depth of the site is poorly represented, and credential validation is absent from MLD University website design. The site respects six general requirements of the professional visual design; these are: Intuitive URL, download time, readability, KAP, and contact details. All five requirements marked a score of 10 for each. First, the MLD University website URL is short, simple and intuitive. The homepage is small and quick to download; to the best knowledge of the researcher it is digestible in 5 seconds. Moreover, the website pages are readable, clear and easy to understand. Different direct links to key action points are visible on the homepage, too. The website provides to its users an immediate clear path to contact information (email addresses and telephone numbers).

**Table 2. Scores for Website Navigation Features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site map</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Home Page from any page</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal search engine</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal links</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken links</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text as well as graphic links (ALT tags)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigational links visible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open multiple windows</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>60/90</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>66.66%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 2 it can be concluded that six out of nine navigation features are applicable to MLD University website. These features include: ease of use of the navigation system, site map, return to home page from any page, text and graphic links, visible navigational links, and open multiple windows. The websites navigation system provides direct access to different content and services on the site. Users of MLD University website have an alternative method of navigating the site via its site map, and navigation can be carried in multiple open windows. Users are also provided with visible navigational links that are consistent throughout the entire site. They cannot get lost while navigating the site since a link back to the homepage is constantly provided. MLD University website contains internal links that are poorly represented; whereas broken links and internal search engine do not exist.
Table 3. Scores for Website Content Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of substantiated information</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of interaction</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of valuable graphics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of valuable animation</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of valuable sound</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews, testimonials and certifications</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content in digestible quantity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-to-dateness</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available in multiple languages</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility for the disabled</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms and conditions</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQs</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of follow up discussion</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>43/140</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>30.71%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of table 3 show that MLD University website provides useful content for its users. This content is digestible in quantity since it is broken up into accounts of information. Designers of MLD University website always try to avoid long texts. The content is also supported by the use of graphics and it is available in three languages. Making the site’s content available in multiple languages will serve the aim of accessing a wider range of users.

The results also reveal that designers of MLD University site do not pay enough attention to date of last update, degree of substantiated information, and level of interaction.

According to MCIL tool, information published on the web should be evaluated under five headings. These headings comprise: Authority (who is responsible), currency (dates for site’s creation and updates), coverage (outline of the content), objectivity (statement of biases), and accuracy (information available for cross checking). The content on MLD University website is verified by the vice-chancellor in charge of Post Graduation, Accreditation and Scientific Research. He is the one responsible for approving the pages. However, this fact cannot be verified on the site. The website provides clear headings to illustrate the content’s outline; and sources of information and factual data are clearly stated. Nevertheless biases and dates when the site was created and last updated are not provided.

The results of the above table also show that MLD University website does not use animation, sound, reviews, testimonials and certifications, accessibility for disabled people, FAQs, and follow up discussion. Concerning terms and conditions, the researcher thinks that this criterion is purely business oriented. It is about payment procedures, goods supply and services details. Thus, it is automatically not applicable to the website under study.
Table 4. Scores for Website Attractors Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitions</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special offers</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freebies</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking news</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of access by External links</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>0/70</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 4 it can be concluded that MLD University website does not use any of the above stated attractors.

Table 5. Scores for Website Findability Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive URL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive keywords</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of metatags</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of frames</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advertising</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offline advertising</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online recommend a friend</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner and affiliate sites</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>20/80</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>25%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from table 5 that the intuitive URL (has already been confirmed in results of table 1) and Keywords that MLD University site use make this latter easy to find. However, there is no use of metatags on the website. Features designed for search engine performance (use of frames) and advertising, which got a zero score are not important to MLD University website. Again, these features are applicable to business sites.

Table 6. Scores for Website Making Contact Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email and other details visible</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic email response</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal email response</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of online forms</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone contact number provided</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone call back offered</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>30/60</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of table 6 reveal that on MLD University website emails and other details are visible. Moreover, personal email responses and telephone contact numbers are provided. However, the website does not use online forms, automatic email response and telephone call back.

Table 7. Scores for Website Browser Compatibility Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet explorer (1-5)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netscape Navigator (1-4)</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resizeability (Monitor Compatibility)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>20/40</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results displayed in this table show that MLD University website uses one browser (Internet explorer) and a compatibility monitor.

Table 8. Scores for Website User Satisfaction Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Scores/10</th>
<th>Responses/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robustness/ reliability of the site</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicks to completion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge order/ request</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order/ request tracking online</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing a pre-inclusion</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total score for section</strong></td>
<td><strong>11/50</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>22%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results show that users can find what they are looking for on the website due to clicks of completion. These latter are well presented on the site. Unfortunately, the site is frequently crashing or off line. This problem may bring users away.

Discussion

In this study, web designers’ practice in terms of web effectiveness criteria provided in the checklist has been translated and scored. The findings as presented above represented a comprehensive list of important considerations web designers should take into account when designing and developing university websites.

First impressions are always important. Whether this is fair or not, users will judge an institution depending on what the website looks like. These impressions depend on many factors: layout, colours, spacing, texts, and more. The website’s target audience must know it exists. They must be able to find it as long as they want to access it. Finally, the website must attract a reasonable number of visitors and users. As regards MLD University website, results revealed
that the website respects in general the requirements of a good visual design (Table 01). It looks good, organized, with uncluttered layout, and text blocks are easy to read.

Being offered an easy way to use the website is critical for an amazing user experience. Moreover, users must be able to access a download page even if their computers or surfing devices are impaired in some ways. Compared to other criteria scores, the navigation criterion of MLD university website registered the highest score (66.66%) together with first impressions criteria. Website navigation is important to the success of users’ experience. Creating the website navigation system at the beginning of the design process will influence the overall design of the web page layout and help in the development of the website.

The website has only seconds to capture interest. Without valuable and useful content, the website will fail to fulfill its objectives. When evaluating the content of the MLD University website, results showed that many issues need more attention and revision. It is important to proofread the content thoroughly before adding it to the site. A use of sound and animation is highly recommended. Moreover, the frequently asked questions section is an important element, which needs to be included in the MLD University website. It is important because it introduces the site to unfamiliar visitors. Last but not least, I think accommodating people with visual and auditory disabilities must be a priority for website’s development.

To achieve website effectiveness, it is recommended to use attractors such as: breaking news and newsletters. Finally, I think that although the MLD University website is not compatible to as many Internet viewers as possible (limited use of browsers), and does not use cookies; making contact remains very easy through the website. However, it is highly recommended for MLD University designers to consider creating alternate pages for those incapable to view the enhanced site. Using metatags is also crucial to enhance display on smartphones.

Conclusion

Effectiveness of a website plays a central role in establishing a healthy interaction between the university and its stakeholders. The research has shown that the website’s effectiveness checklist used in the study elicited some in-depth design factors. Results highlighted the MLD University website effectiveness issues that received little or no attention, as it provided details about existing website characteristics. The results has identified the strengths and weaknesses associated with the current university website. However, the study is limited because the checklist used in this research is best used in a comparative way. Comparison will show how the website under study compares with other chosen sites. Moreover, the review should be constantly repeated to see how the site continues to compare to others. The study used a tailored version of MCIL with deletions only. No other criteria have been added to the ones kept for the sake of the study. A consideration of all other elements of website effectiveness, which are not part of the checklist, such as cognition, memory and the like would go beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, considering the web designers perspectives only is not enough; in fact users’ suggestions and criticism regarding the website should be taken into account as they can serve as a guide to designers. Finally yet importantly, decisions to change the way the university website is designed rests upon the academia and web designers.
About the Author
Ikhlas Gherzouli has been teaching English over twelve years both in middle school and university. She graduated from Ferhat Abbas University with a BA degree in English Language and from Abderahman Mira University with a Magister degree in English Didactics. Miss Gherzouli taught many courses both to graduate and postgraduate students including: Grammar, Oral Expression, Listening Comprehension, Phonetics and Phonology, Méthodologie du Travail Universitaire, Perfectionnement de la langue Anglaise, Neuroscience, Méthodologie de la recherche Scientifique, Recherche Documentaire, and Translation. In addition she is a member of the Quality Assurance Cell and University Website Design Team of Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University. Miss Gherzouli’s interests include: teacher professional development, action research, ICT, quality assurance in higher education and curriculum development.

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Autonomous Continuing Professional Development for Algerian University Teachers of English

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University of Blida 2 (Ali Lounici), Algeria

Abstract

The educational landscape in Algeria has been undergoing significant changes in recent years. Increasing globalisation of academia, economy and culture has highlighted the need for learning English as a tool for education, academic research and publishing, as well as economic and political activities. Efforts to promote the learning of English language cannot overlook teaching quality as an important contributing factor. Yet, the issue of continuing professional development (CPD) that should empower teachers to tackle current as well as new challenges may be receiving little attention in Algerian higher education. There have been attempts to bring the topic to the fore as Algerian universities have started to initiate some work towards quality assurance. Before resources are invested in promoting CPD for teachers of English, we certainly need some systematic analysis and description of the current situation. This paper reports on a survey of sixty-three teachers of English from fourteen Algerian universities. The purpose of this research is to identify: 1- current CPD policies, forms, and stakeholders’ attitudes, 2- strategies to enhance CPD for better quality ELT and 3- strategies to promote autonomous CPD. On the basis of the findings from the analysis of data collected via a thirty-four-item questionnaire and a focus group, the researcher assesses the current situation of CPD for ELT teachers in Algerian higher education especially in the departments of English and makes some suggestions for improving it. The researcher discusses the challenges and opportunities in current CPD and then attempts to make a case for a CPD that is primarily initiated and managed by the teacher and that this model would be much more effective than institutionally-based models.

Key Words: continuing professional development, autonomous, English teaching and learning, higher education, Algeria
Introduction

In the last two decades, there has been a strong drive towards higher effectiveness and achievement in education. There is a tremendous body of literature emerging especially from governmental institutions that push educational institutions towards demonstrating a significant return on the investment in education (cf. SEDL, 2000, SHEEO, 2005). Starting in the 1980’s, the accountability trend which appeared strongly in the USA (especially with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and then the United Kingdom has now become an international trend surfing on the waves of globalisation. The ranking of national educational systems and universities (PISA, Shanghai Ranking, etc.) in most countries has certainly ignited unprecedented competition between higher education institutions and countries. A strong but easy-to-use tool has hence become available to anyone (specialist and lay people) to discuss the effectiveness of universities.

This research is an attempt to assess the current teachers’ professional development policies, forms, and stakeholders’ attitudes towards them in Algerian departments of English. Then, the researcher discusses strategies to enhance CPD that can lead to a better teaching quality. Challenges and opportunities in current CPD are discussed and recommendations made for an autonomous CPD managed by the teacher, which might be a model that is more productive than others.

1. Literature Review

The Algerian educational system has become an area of substantial reforms in recent years. The requirements of a globalised academia and economy have highlighted the need for developing English language as a tool for learning, academic and economic communication. Success in achieving this goal requires higher teaching quality. In the following section, the researcher discusses the link between higher quality in English language teaching and learning, the preparation of teachers to teach, their in-service professional development and the role of teacher autonomy as a potential solution to challenges facing CPD practice.

1.1 Goal of Education: Effective Quality Learning

One thing that all stakeholders should agree on is that one major role for education is to aim at efficient learning. Efficiency can be defined in simple terms as the achievement of optimal learning with available and/or minimum financial, human and time resources. In their effort to increase their effectiveness and hence ranking among other institutions, many universities have been undertaking systematic self-examination of the different factors that determine the quality of their performance. A lot of literature (cf. Ellis, 1993; QAAHES, 2000; Eurydice, 2006; Martin, 2007; HEA, 2008; Badrawi, 2009) discusses quality assurance policies and tools.

1.2 Role of Teaching / Teacher in Achieving Quality Learning

The success of any educational institution can be measured by a number of parameters which include and are not limited to: how well learners are trained, the degree of learners, teachers and other employees’ satisfaction, the rate of learners’ success, etc. Achievement in these areas is determined by the contribution of university managers, teachers, learners, parents and material resources. Teachers are key contributors to the degree of a university’s achievement. Therefore, as Simerly decades ago noted, universities started initiating programs for the professional development of their teachers (1976, p. 1).
Whether we adhere to the approaches that see teachers as the source of knowledge and skills to be acquired by students or to those for which they are facilitators of learning, teachers have key responsibility for the learning of their students. Research (cf. Eysan et al., 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Salinas et. al., 2006; Wong, 2007) has shown that teachers can foster or undermine learners’ academic achievement. Eysan et al.’s investigation found that students perceive that teaching method and teacher behaviour as main causes of their academic failure (1996).

1.3 The Requirement of Teaching Skills
Teachers can make a positive contribution to their learners’ achievement if they possess the necessary skills. Although there may be different views about what teacher preparation and development need to focus on (cf. Simerly, 1976, p. 2), it is still possible to have some agreement about some skills. To be able to foster optimal learning in their students, teachers of English as a foreign language need to be equipped with the required teaching skills as

1. sufficient proficiency in English,
2. ability to prepare, plan and present lessons,
3. ability to manage classes and deal with disruptive behaviour,
4. ability to communicate efficiently with colleagues and learners,
5. ability to assess learners’ learning,
6. ability to use of modern tools like ICT to enhance teaching

1.4 Necessity of Good Pre-service Teacher Training
The above list of teaching skills is of course not exhaustive; but it is quite representative of the skills necessary to enable teachers to contribute optimally to their learners’ academic achievement. Although some dispositions for teaching can be believed to originate in personality, character and education of teachers, many of the skills for teaching require and/or are better developed through training. There is a general belief that teachers must be prepared for teaching and that the quality of teacher training determines the quality of their teaching and consequently their learners’ achievement (cf. Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2009). Data collected over a six-year period by Darling-Hammond et al. showed that teachers with a formal teaching preparation produce significantly higher achievement gains with their students than uncertified teachers do (2005).

1.5 Necessity of Good Continuing Teacher Development
Whether with a comprehensive quality preparation for teaching or with insufficient training, teachers should probably carry on developing their teaching skills throughout their careers. This requirement is quite reasonable considering that teacher training can do a lot to prepare teachers for teaching but cannot reasonably prepare them for everything. Besides, changes that occur in the syllabus, characteristics of the learners, working conditions, etc., produce new demands in terms of skills and knowledge that were not covered in the teacher training period. Therefore, teachers are required to update and maintain their teaching skills (as some skills can suffer attrition). Continuing efforts to develop and stay as efficient teachers are necessary to ensure a sustainable teaching quality.
Professional development must meet a number of quality conditions to be worth the investment of tightening human, time and financial resources. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education Professional Development Team,

[Quality professional development for teachers] (1) focuses on teachers as central to student learning; (2) focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement; (3) respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of individuals within the school community; (4) reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership; (5) enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, and technology; (6) promotes continuous inquiry and improvement; (7) involves collaborative planning; (8) requires substantial time and other resources; (9) is driven by a coherent long-term plan; and (10) is assessed by its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning (1994).

Besides, quality teacher preparation and development should empower teachers with

1. Capacity to make decisions, engage in self-directed action and development
2. Awareness of the range of options available, alternatives to current teaching practice
3. Awareness of their beliefs; which is the first step to make reform possible. Understanding behaviours requires understanding beliefs.

1.6 Challenges to Good Continuing Teacher Development

Despite the widespread adherence to the importance of investment of time, money and human resources in projects and activities that are meant to foster the professional development of teachers, reality - even in the richest countries of the world - does impose some limits to what can be done in this area. Major challenges to good continuing teacher development include the following:

1. **Financial resources** are often fewer than needed due to the international economic crises. Many oil producing countries like Algeria have recently begun to feel the fall-outs of lower oil prices. Even in the world’s largest economy, the United States of America, many sectors including health and education have been mandated to cut expenses. In these circumstances, education cannot ask for bigger or even similar budgets allocated in better economic conditions. Education has to function with whatever is available in financial and human resources. Some CPD forms like going on scholarships in English speaking countries to enhance English proficiency and hone teaching skills demand considerable financial resources.

2. **Time**: Many teachers would complain that time is not available for activities like action research, reading about teaching methods, learning new technologies to use in teaching, attending colleagues’ classes for peer observation, participating in conferences, etc.

3. **Negative Attitudes**: The attitudes of people towards engaging in continuing professional development determine significantly the extent to which they are going to oppose or support CPD policies and activities. In other words, little can be done to engage teachers who believe they are good or experienced enough to make any further learning or CPD futile.
1.7 Overcoming Challenges for Good Continuing Teacher Development

Most of the challenges cited above can be alleviated by a model of continuous professional development in which the individual teacher has the main leverage in selecting goals and forms of CPD, planning actions, mobilising the resources and assessing the outcome of these. The model can be called autonomous CPD. Teachers as autonomous learners and autonomous persons are probably needed as role models for students. Autonomous teachers always seek ways to improve themselves and influence their learners in a positive way and do not wait for opportunity to be granted to them (self-empowerment). For Lamb, an autonomous teacher learns how to develop autonomously through critical reflection (2008).

In an autonomous model, the teacher enjoys the freedom and responsibility to actively seek to develop their teaching skills using the resources (time, energy, materials, and human) that are available to them when and where it is most suitable to them. He/she can / must choose the CPD activities that suit the resources that they can mobilise without adding excessive load to their professional and social responsibilities. These forms - suitable for an autonomous CPD model - are illustrated under Implications below.

To be able to manage their own professional development, teachers need to be empowered with attitudes and skills that are required for autonomous development. Webb examined teachers’ exercise of autonomy. He found out that the participants exercised autonomy by adapting mandatory curriculum and assessment policies to the needs of their learners in order to improve student achievement. The teachers’ ability to do so relied on their professional expertise, prior teacher preparation, and research (Webb, 2002, p. 47). During teacher training especially, teachers need to be provided with opportunities to develop their professional skills to exercise autonomy in adapting their teaching to their learners’ needs. Those needs change across generations, geographical contexts, etc.

2. The Study

2.1 Background of the Study and Research Questions

Algerian higher education has been going through significant changes in recent years. The architecture of degrees has changed to match European standards based on the Licence – Master – Doctorate (L.M.D) model. New modules have been designed with often new contents to teach. In the field of English language teaching and learning, increasing globalisation of academia, economy and culture has highlighted the need for promoting the learning of English as a tool for academic performance, and economic and political communication. Efforts to achieve this goal must aim at developing better teaching practices in ELT as they represent an important factor. Yet, the issue of teacher preparation and continuing professional development (CPD) that should empower teachers to tackle old as well as new challenges seems to have received little attention in Algerian higher education. There have been attempts to bring this issue to the fore as Algerian universities have started to initiate some effort towards quality assurance. To inform policies and investment of financial and human resources in promoting CPD for teachers of English, there is certainly a need for some systematic analysis and description of the current situation. This research aims at contributing to the literature about CPD for Algerian ELT teachers in higher education. It reports on a survey of sixty-three English teachers from fourteen Algerian universities. The purpose of this research is to answer to the following questions:
1. What are the current CPD policies, forms, and the stakeholders’ attitudes?
2. What strategies can be implemented to enhance CPD for better quality ELT? And
3. What strategies can be implemented to promote autonomous CPD?

2.2 Rationale of the Study

Research similar to the present study is needed because continuing professional development is essential for promoting and maintaining good standards for teaching/learning. Besides, decisions and projects concerning CPD must be informed and guided by sufficient data about the current situation of the field. Another reason for this study is that there seems to be little research about the issue in the context of Algerian higher education.

2.3 Participants

This study aimed to survey a random sample of a thousand teachers in Algerian departments of English. More than a hundred and fifty (150) teachers (about 10 per cent of the total population) were approached by email and thirty (30) face-to-face to participate in the study. Sixty-three teachers returned the completed questionnaire.

The participants teach in the four regions in Algeria; which may make the sample rather representative of the whole population. The respondents come from fourteen (14) universities:
- North-Centre of Algeria: Thirty-eight (38) teachers from the universities of Algiers 2: Six (06), Blida 2: Twenty-six (26), Medea: Two (02), and Tizi Ouzou: Four (04)
- Southern Algeria: Three (03) from the universities of Adrar: One (01), Laghouat: Two (02), - Eastern Algeria: Sixteen (16) from the universities of Annaba: Eleven (11), Bejaia: One (01), Guelma: One (01), Oum Al Boughi: One (01), Sétif: Two (02)
- Western Algeria: Six (06) from the universities of Mostaghanem: One (01), Oran: Three (03) and Tlemcen: Two (02).

In terms of experience in teaching EFL, of the sixty-three (63) teachers who returned the completed questionnaire, 31.75 % have been in ELT from 1 to 3 years, 28.57 % from 4 to 10 years and 39.68 % over 10 years. The respondents are experienced enough in the field with an average teaching experience of 10.50 years. 68% of them have worked in Algerian departments of English for more than four years and thus can be expected to know well the CPD situation in Algerian universities.

Teachers are the main stakeholder as far as CPD is concerned. Nevertheless, an extension of the present study should survey more management. About 20 % of the informants were or are currently holding managerial positions (Head or Deputy Head of university English departments).

2.4 Data Collection Instruments and Data Analysis

2.4.1 Focus Group

The British Council organised two ELT conferences in Hammamet, Tunisia in February 2013 and in Marrakech, Morocco in February 2014. ELT practitioners from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya convened to discuss professional development for ELT teachers in their respective countries and exchange experiences. A team five (5) EFL teachers from five Algerian universities held intensive discussions to reflect and analyse the current CPD situation for ELT in Algerian higher education. The researcher took notes of the ideas and conclusions discussed by the participants. Those notes informed the design of the survey questionnaire described below.
Data from the focus group are also used along with questionnaire data to discuss the research questions.

### 2.4.2 Survey Questionnaire

To collect primary data in order to answer the three research questions formulated above, the researcher designed **Professional Development for University Teachers of English – Questionnaire** (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consists of three parts and thirty-four (34) items. The respondents were invited to select a scale out of nine to inform the researcher about:

1. Their and other colleagues’ attitudes towards CPD at university (Part 1 of the questionnaire) with scales ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 9 = ‘strongly agree’;
2. The CPD activities they have been using and how often (Part 2); with scales ranging from 1 = ‘I have not tried this activity yet’ to 9 = ‘I regularly do this activity’; and
3. Their opinion about the teaching skills that CPD should develop in EFL teachers with scales ranging from 1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 9 = ‘strongly agree’.

The closed-ended question type was selected to encourage participants to complete the questionnaire. Besides, to elicit more insights from them, they were invited to add more input concerning CPD activities and skills for EFL teachers not listed in the questionnaire and their own recommendations to improve CPD at university.

The participants’ responses were converted into a Microsoft Excel sheet. The average response for each questionnaire item was calculated to let emerge any existing tendencies. For the same purpose, the responses were turned into percentages for two categories by tallying the percentage of informants who responded towards disagreement (scales 1 to 4) and those who said they agree (scales 6 to 9). The full statistics of the results are presented in tables under Appendix B below.

### 3. The Findings - Discussion

Before reviewing the main findings of this study, it is useful to consider some limitations in assessing the evidence upon which the conclusions are made. Then, the data collected are combined from both instruments used in this research to discuss the first research question: “What are the current CPD policies, forms, and the stakeholders’ attitudes?” The findings are presented around the following points:

- **3.2.1 The stakeholders’ attitudes towards the current CPD policies and forms**
- **3.2.2 The CPD forms currently offered to/used by ELT university teachers**
- **3.2.3 Key Characteristics of CPD for university teachers of English**

### 3.1 Limitations to the Study

1. Self-report accuracy of information needs to be checked by other measures; which pose a big challenge as many teachers may seem too busy and not participate in research.
2. The number of participants needs to rise to make conclusions with more confidence. Research needs to overcome at least two hurdles; a low rate of returned questionnaires (below 50% in this study) and difficulty to reach participants. There is still no contact list for all ELT teachers in Algerian universities.
3. Difficulty to measure quantity of actual CPD; and
4. Difficulty to evaluate its impact on learning

3.2 Key Findings of the Study

3.2.1 What are stakeholders’ attitudes towards the current CPD policies and forms?

Participants in the focus groups held long discussions to analyse the current CPD situation for ELT teachers in Algeria. In Algeria, similarly to Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, the stakeholders’ attitudes seem to be mixed and vary especially along roles (teacher or managers) and number of years of teaching (novice vs. more experienced teachers). The participants believe that for many managers in the educational sector, CPD does not seem to be high on the agenda. The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education does pay lip service to the importance of CPD; a considerable budget is allotted every year to CPD abroad / local study days, conferences, and research teams. Most managers, according to 89.09 % of the teachers who completed the questionnaire, do not provide enough opportunities and support for teachers’ CPD (See Appendix B).

As for teachers, many of them seem to accept CPD. 52.83 % of the questionnaire respondents said most teachers are willing to participate in CPD. The data indicate a strong adherence to professional development among the informants as 93.55 % believe CPD activities are important for teachers and learners’ success. All the participants in the focus group voiced concerns that some teachers with more teaching years tend to see CPD as a burden and unnecessary intrusion in their routine activities. A lot of novice teachers, however, tend to be more willing to go on CPD. One justification for the observed lack of interest stems from the fact that CDP events may fail to have a positive effect on the advancement of the teachers’ career. The other reason relates to reluctance some teachers show, especially to certain types of CPD formats like action research, demonstration classes and class observation. Such forms do require expertise and time resources and sometimes may be construed by some teachers to question their professional competence.

3.2.2 The CPD Forms Currently Offered to / Used by ELT University Teachers

A big array of CPD formats appear to be utilized by Algerian university EFL teachers. Focus group data seem to indicate that the current major forms of CPD are coordination meetings of teachers, study days, conferences, debates, and informal conversations with peers. To a much lesser extent, only a few teachers benefit from scholarships and fellowships in English speaking countries and participate in online webinars, etc. Questionnaire data show the most frequently employed CPD activities; 94.74 % of the teachers said they quite regularly review their lessons to improve them; 90 % of them said they observe and reflect on their own teaching; and 89.29 % reported experimenting with new teaching techniques and solutions to problems they have noticed in their courses.

Questionnaire data also indicate that some CPD activities are rarely used by the surveyed teachers. The least frequently used CPD forms come as follows: team-teaching (According to 90 % of the respondents); then, giving and attending model lessons with colleagues (68 %) with an average frequency of use of 3.62/9 (9 = ‘always’); Finally, 69.09 % reported never going on scholarships / fellowships abroad. The average frequency of use for the eighteen (18) CPD forms in the questionnaire is rather considerable at 5.60/9, which means the respondents seem to use most of the forms.
3.2.3 Key Characteristics of CPD for University Teachers of English

Focus group and questionnaire data also indicate that the current continuing professional development activities for EFL teachers in Algerian higher education present the following key features:

1. **Quantity vs. Quality**: Emphasis is put on the quantitative aspect of CPD more than qualitative parameters. Managers and teachers’ attention appear to be focused on meeting the requirement for holding activities for professional development. Little attention seems to be devoted to how well these activities are conducted and their impact on the quality of teaching.

2. **Assessment**: 76% of teachers said that the impact of CPD activities on students’ learning is rarely evaluated with an average frequency use of 3.80/9. And for 56.86% of them, those activities are not followed up to ensure that the knowledge and skills gained are implemented by teachers.

3. The focus group identified a key characteristic which is that the focus of CPD activities at university seems to be on developing **specialist knowledge** not on teaching methods and skills.

4. Opportunities offered by universities (scholarships, conferences and study days) are rather **top-down** (vs. bottom-up); decisions are mostly made centrally by management with reduced participation of teachers. Yet, 66.67% of teachers said CPD is rather voluntary (vs. compulsory).

5. **Costly**: Focus tends s to be on institutional CPD forms that require financial, time and administrative resources (especially scholarships abroad, team research projects and conferences). Therefore, only 30.91% of the respondents have frequent access to scholarships abroad because of the high cost (travel and hotel expenses).

6. More **individual** than **collaborative**: 60.42% of teachers said CPD is mostly an individual endeavour. The most frequently used forms of CPD mentioned above are done individually (See Appendix B: The highest regular use for items 5, 8, 14 and 15 in part 2 of the questionnaire)

7. CPD is still largely done in the traditional **face to face** mode. Yet, using ICT and **on-line** activities on the Internet, social media, email, etc., seems to be picking up, especially with younger teachers. 54.55% of the questionnaire respondents reported sharing teaching resources and experience with colleagues online; and 61.82% said they watch videos and/or listen to podcasts about teaching methodology.

8. Some CPD is **inquiry-based**. 78.57% of the participants said they do research on issues related to teaching; and 77.36% reported reading about teaching methodology. In Algeria and in many other countries, higher education teachers’ research is now the single most important factor in promotion (**The publish or perish paradigm**).

In summary, the data collected seem to reveal different attitudes held by the stakeholders towards engaging in continuing professional development at university. The data also show the variety of formats used in various degrees of frequency. The analysis of the data from the focus group and the survey questionnaire has let some characteristics of CPD emerge. Based on these findings, the following section puts forward some strategies to enhance CPD for better quality ELT with a particular emphasis on an **autonomous** model as a possible solution to overcome the challenges to CPD discussed above.
4. Implications

This section discusses some implications on the basis of the data presented above under the review of the literature and the study. This discussion is structured around the second and third research questions, i.e. 2. “What strategies can be implemented to enhance CPD for better quality ELT?” And 3. “What strategies can be implemented to promote autonomous CPD?”

4.1 Strategies to Enhance CPD for Better Quality ELT

In the previous sections, the researcher has made a brief characterisation and analysis of the current situation of CPD for ELT teachers in higher education in Algeria. Based on this analysis, a few suggestions are considered for improving this situation. With regards to the challenges discussed above and related to limited resources especially time for teachers, and for CPD actions to be more engaging (and therefore more successful), CPD should better offer maximum flexible opportunities and the least time and space constraints. Better CPD actions should

1. **Be efficient:** Clearly offer maximum return on investment (the more benefits are visible to teachers the higher their engagement will be to attend, initiate and follow up CPD projects); they should also benefit a maximum number of teachers as higher efficiency leads to higher sustainability over time.

2. Require minimum resources (time, travel, energy and money) which will increase chances of projects getting up and running quickly;

3. Require no or minimal top management approval and support as the latter is often slow to respond and sometimes resistant to initiatives;

4. Require minimum number of action performers (people responsible for planning, running and following up CPD activities); The smaller the number the easier to carry out tasks and the necessary coordination;

5. Be reciprocal/collaborative with no threats to the face of participants hence reducing adversity, anxiety and animosity and improving collegiality and collaboration; CPD success stories should be shared for emotional support.

6. **CPD- Convenient time table:** Abdal-Haq remarked that school schedules generally do not offer sufficient time for CPD activities during the school day (1996). 69.08% of our questionnaire respondents complained that time is not available for CPD work (tight teaching time tables). Rényi calls for restructuring work schedules to incorporate CPD in the teachers’ daily work (1996). Development opportunities should be made available during school hours. For instance, if teachers with common courses, learners, etc. are scheduled on the same days, chances are that they will meet and collaborate more.

7. **Creating favourable conditions for CPD to occur:** One free slot every teaching day will probably increase opportunities for teachers bumping into each other, meeting, holding informal conversations, sharing experiences and collaborating on mini projects for CPD. Simple sharing of successes and challenges will boost collegiality and morale (So! I’m not the only one struggling with the issue!). Rooms needed that are inviting to teachers (comfort, enough chairs, tables, coffee, water and tea, etc.) will attract teachers to the same place. Provision of simple tools is important. 83.33% of teachers said necessary tools for CPD like appropriate rooms are not sufficiently provided.

8. Making CPD **more productive** by extending benefits to the community by sharing the outcomes of CPD events in all available means (handouts, emails, social media, etc.).
9. **High Quality: Evaluation of CPD impact** and a regular review of current CPD forms to ensure quality of actions;

10. **Develop more teaching skills (vs. specialist knowledge):** 82.83% of the questionnaire respondents suggested that university teachers of English need to develop more their teaching techniques, especially assessment skills (98.28%) and class management skills (93.44%).

11. Give **incentives** especially career promotion for active and productive participation CPD activities.

### 4.2 Autonomous CPD as a Feasible Solution to Overcome Constraints

The belief or fact that teacher preparation and development is not top of the agenda for many university managers makes the need for **autonomous** CPD critical. 89.09% of the questionnaire respondents complain that most managers do not provide enough opportunities and support for teachers’ CPD. With little or no support from their institutions, some EFL teachers are confronted to worries about finding resources especially time and money and left to wonder: **What can I do to support my own professional development?** In these conditions, it may be more efficient to consider oneself (the teacher) as the main initiator, manager and resource provider for one’s CPD. Teacher preparation should help foster teacher autonomy and develop their ability to manage their own professional development. 94.83% of the questionnaire respondents agree that EFL teachers need to improve their capacity to manage their own professional development.

**The Hub Model:** The proactive teacher will stand as a **hub** for CPD activities and initiate, organise, mobilise resources, support, etc., for himself/herself and for a community (may be a small team) of other willing teachers. If the ‘hub teacher’ succeeds in convincing his/her team of the great personal and professional benefits of the activities, they will probably become hubs themselves and move on to attract other reluctant teachers; Hence an exponential expansion of participation. **Autonomous** CPD, however, will be successful if it meets certain conditions:

1. **Collaboration:** Autonomous professional development should not be confused with individualistic work. Teachers can and should learn a lot from their peers through department, local, national and international networking. Simple **sharing of resources and opportunities for CPD** and the wealth of resources for CPD available on-line with an ELT community via the Internet can bear considerable benefits. Collaboration and mutual help will foster collegiality which, according to Shah, “plays a vital role in augmenting teacher professional growth and development, job satisfaction, organizational and professional commitment as well as school quality and student performance” (2012, p. 1242).

2. **Pooling Resources:** Autonomous CPD is more effective when resources (intellectual, time, material) are combined. Subject and department-wide coordination on curriculum, teaching and assessment, debates and informal conversations with peers, adapting or adopting solutions/materials devised by others will generally produce more benefits than working in isolation. The resources of the community/team are almost always richer than the individual’s.

3. **Demystifying CPD:** Fostering a broad awareness among teachers that many CPD forms are very accessible to them and cost effective (time and other resources) and do not require managers’ approval. For example, they can engage in informal chats with colleagues about issues and solutions, new ideas, etc., watching selected webinars or their audio while...
travelling, selecting new teaching resources from open access wealth available on the web, etc. Teachers simply need to know that there is a lot they can do for their own professional development.

Conclusion

Algerian higher education is undergoing profound changes. But there seems to be little discussion of teaching quality and much less of teacher development and training. The training of university teachers in particular seems to be taken for granted or simply overlooked. The literature on teacher training and development in Algerian contexts confirms this impression by its striking scarcity. However, economic imperatives are exerting pressure on universities for higher quality and performance. Algerian universities have started to initiate some institutional effort towards quality assurance in recent years. Assuring quality in Algerian departments of English goes certainly through quality teaching which is an important factor in students’ academic achievement.

In order to contribute to gathering data necessary to inform decision-making about CPD policies and practice, this study investigated the Algerian context using a focus group and a survey questionnaire of sixty-three teachers of English from fourteen Algerian universities. The purpose of this research was to identify: 1- current CPD policies, forms, and the stakeholders’ attitudes, 2- strategies to enhance CPD for better quality ELT and 3- strategies to promote autonomous CPD. On the basis of the findings from the data analysis, the researcher assessed the current situation of CPD for EFL teachers in Algerian higher education and made some suggestions for improvement. The researcher discussed the challenges facing CPD and then attempted to make the case for autonomous CPD. According to this recommendation, CPD should be primarily initiated and managed by the teacher to alleviate constraints. Teacher preparation should promote in future teachers an attitude that accepts and seeks life-long learning and build their capacity to manage their own professional development.

As the challenges teachers face ask for innovative ways to overcome them, continue to develop professionally and thrive, it is hoped that these recommendations will encourage more teachers to engage in effective CPD to develop professionally in order to continue to experience success and a higher sense of career satisfaction.

About the Author:
Maamar Missoum
With a BA in English Language Teaching from the University of Blida, Algeria (May 1993) and an MA in ELT from the University of Algiers 2, Algeria (December 2007), Mr. Missoum has been involved in ELT since October 1993 in secondary (1993-2002) and higher education. He has served as part-time teacher of grammar, linguistics, oral communication and listening comprehension with the department of English, University of Blida, Algeria (1993 -2002). From August 2002 to March 2007, he managed and conducted on-site training in English and French languages for national and expatriate employees in petroleum companies in Southern Algeria. Since March 2009, he has been a lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Blida 2, Algeria. He has taught undergraduate courses about research methodology, reading, speaking, listening and study skills and a course on issues in language learning & teaching to MA students. He was a member of the scientific committee of the same department from May 2009 to June 2013.
Mr. Missoum supervises term papers prepared by final year English degree students and MA students’ research dissertation. And he has attended and presented in several national and international conferences and workshops on ELT.

References


Appendix A: Professional Development for University Teachers of English – Questionnaire

Dear colleague!

CPD or Continuing Professional Development includes any activity that is meant to maintain or improve teachers’ teaching and ultimately students’ learning. This questionnaire aims at exploring your experience, opinions and recommendations concerning professional development for Algerian university teachers of English. Information provided here will strictly be used anonymously for research purposes. Thank you for accepting to complete this questionnaire!

Mr. Maamar MISSOUM – Lecturer, Department of English, University of Blida 2

Biography: I have been teaching English at university for ____ year (s) as a part-time teacher and ____ year (s) as a permanent teacher at the university (ies) of ............................................. I have taught the following courses:

........................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................
NB: If you work or have worked in other sectors like secondary schools, please consider only professional development activities initiated by universities and for university teaching.

**Part One: Attitudes towards CPD (Continuing Professional Development)**
What is your opinion about the following statements related to CPD in your university? (Please circle a number from 1 to 9; 1 means ‘I strongly disagree’ ……… 9 = ‘I strongly agree’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>strongly disagree…strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Most teachers are willing to participate in professional development activities.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Most department, faculty and university managers provide enough opportunities for and support teachers’ professional development.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>CPD activities are important for teachers and learners’ success.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Current CPD activities have improved my teaching skills.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Necessary tools for CPD like appropriate rooms, computers, data show, etc. are sufficiently provided.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Time is available for CPD activities (teaching time tables are adequate).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>CPD is mostly voluntary (teachers are free to do/attend or not)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>CPD is mostly individual (teacher alone)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>The impact of CPD activities on students’ learning is evaluated.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CPD activities are followed up to ensure that the knowledge and gained are implemented by teachers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part Two: Your CPD Activities (Current CPD Situation (The CPD activities ELT teachers are engaged in))**
How often have you been undertaking the following activities? (Please circle 1 number from 1 to 9; 1 means ‘I have not tried this activity yet’ ……… 9 = ‘I regularly do this activity’). Other activities can be added in the empty lines below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>How often?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>I share teaching resources and experience with colleagues face to face.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>I share teaching resources and experience with colleagues online.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>I take part in the design or review of course programs.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>I take part in teaching workshops.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>I observe myself and reflect on my teaching.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>I keep a journal to record and reflect on my teaching experiences.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>I do (alone or with others) research on issues related to teaching.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>I review my lessons (to improve them).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>I do team-teaching (teach a class with colleagues).</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I collaborate with colleagues to design exam papers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I attend study days and conferences on teaching methodology.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I watch videos / listen to podcasts about teaching methodology.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I give / attend a model lesson.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I reflect on the objectives, content and exams of courses I teach and how well my students have learnt from them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I try out new teaching techniques / solutions to problems I have noticed in my courses.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I read documents about teaching methodology.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I attend coordination meetings of teachers of the same module.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I have been on scholarships / fellowships abroad.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>(Left empty to allow respondents to add other activities)</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Autonomous Continuing Professional Development

Part Three: Recommendations for Improvement: In my opinion, the areas university English teachers need to develop more are… (Please circle a number from 1 to 9; 1 means ‘I strongly disagree’ ……… 9 = ‘I strongly agree’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Teachers’ teaching techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Teachers’ communication skills with colleagues and learners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Teachers’ assessment skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of modern tools like ICT in teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Teachers’ class management skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Teachers’ ability to manage their own professional development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Other?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Other recommendations to improve the CPD of university teachers of English: ……………
..........................................................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................................................
The Effects of Electronic Dictionary Use on Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Retention of EFL Students

Chaker Hamdi
Department of English, Constantine University 1, Algeria

Abstract
The dictionary is an essential learning tool for second and foreign language (L2) learners. Yet, the effects of dictionaries, either in printed or electronic form, have never been systematically investigated in the Algerian context. Consequently, this paper compared readers’ L2 text comprehension and vocabulary retention across two dictionary conditions. Reading time, dictionary usage, degree of comprehension, and recall of words were the dependent measures employed. Forty-four EFL sophomores were assigned two reading tasks under two conditions: using a printed dictionary (PD) at one time and an electronic dictionary (ED) at another. The presentation mode of the reading tests was on computer screen alone. We used a piece of monitoring software (MS) to record the subjects’ lookups in the ED condition and to take notes of the time each subject needed to finish the reading task in both conditions. A paired-samples t-test was then conducted to test the research hypotheses. As for the vocabulary retention tests, we administered a pretest and posttest to the subjects in both lookup conditions (PD and ED), and an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare memory for words. The analysis of information revealed that the ED enabled the subjects to read the text in significantly less time than the PD did. It was also found that the subjects looked up significantly more words in the ED than in the PD. However, the results indicate that the type of dictionary accessed does not significantly influence comprehension. With regard to vocabulary retention, the findings revealed that PD lookup fosters better recall of vocabulary. It was concluded that EDs would be effective and motivating aids to reading comprehension but could be detrimental to vocabulary retention.

Keywords: Electronic dictionary, printed dictionary, Log files, reading comprehension, Vocabulary retention
1. **Introduction**

   Recently, and as technology develops, the prevalence of conventional PDs has slowly declined due to the remarkable advancements in computer-mediated aids. So in addition to PDs, various types of electronic reference materials have become increasingly available to L2 learners, creating more options for coping with unknown or partially known words. These materials, including pocket electronic dictionaries, CD-ROM dictionaries (CDs), and online dictionaries, have the potential to enhance L2 learning significantly with their features such as the ease and speed of look-ups, the quantity of information, the variety of search roots, and multimedia capacity (Nesi, 1999). Although the term “electronic dictionary” encompasses a variety of devices and technology, the present study focuses only on the dictionary stored in CD-ROM and installed on a computer.

   Along with many countries in the Arab world, Algeria is one of the counties where CDs are becoming particularly popular. One major reason for their popularity is due to their extremely cheap price in comparison to PDs. In addition, most CDs are shared and downloadable from the Internet, so it just takes a few tricks and clicks on the Web to have the most popular and up-to-date English dictionaries installed on one’s computer. With this variety of dictionaries in print and CD-ROM formats on the market, Algerian learners of English now have as wide a range of choices as ever.

   To the best of my knowledge, although more Algerian EFL learners appear to take advantage of CDs nowadays, no research has been carried out on how EFL learners use them and how they might affect L2 learning.

   In an attempt to fill in the aforementioned research gap, the present study looked into the use of CDs compared with PDs in relation to L2 learning. In particular, the researcher tried to examine the potential effects of students’ use of CDs and PDs on their reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. For that matter, the study addressed the following research questions:

   1. Will there be any significant difference in the reading time between the two dictionary conditions (CD and PD)?
   2. Will the two dictionary conditions allow any substantial difference in the reading scores?
   3. Will there be any noteworthy difference in the number of look-ups between the two dictionary conditions?
   4. Is there any correlation between the type of the dictionary used and the degree of vocabulary retention?

   In the light of the above questions, the following hypotheses have been put forward:

   1. Students will spend less time reading the text in the CD condition than in the PD condition.
   2. Comprehension performance will be higher in the CD condition than in the PD condition since CDs are expected to promote better reading comprehension.
   3. Students in the CD condition will look up more words to comprehend the text than in the PD condition.
   4. Students will remember words better after using PDs than using CDs as the words looked up in the PD will be better retained than those looked up in the CD.

2. **Literature Review**

   2.1. **Dictionary Use and Reading Comprehension**
Although they use dictionaries in the four language skills, L2 learners use them predominantly while reading (Béjoint, 1981; Chon, 2008). Several studies examined learners’ use of dictionaries in reading comprehension as it is “a very private matter, occurring as the need arises, and often behind closed doors” (Nesi, 2002, p. 1).

Language teachers repeatedly get perplexed about the role of dictionaries in reading. Many of them often discourage the use of dictionaries believing that dictionaries do not help students to understand vocabulary in context and because students overuse them at the expense of developing their self-confidence and the ability to guess from context (Bensoussan, Sim & Weiss, 1984). Similarly, teachers’ worries over vocabulary learning may result from students’ using bilingual dictionaries too blindly, or from students expecting a one-to-one correlation between their own language and English (Stein, 1990).

As far as reading fluency is concerned, researchers and educators are concerned that students’ excessive checking of dictionaries interferes with short-term memory and hinders the comprehension processes (Knight, 1994), and, in this way, dictionaries can be cognitively disruptive. A student must know how to spell the word, stop reading, search for the word in an alphabetical order in the dictionary, and then select the appropriate connotation or sense. This is believed to suspend the process of forming a cohesive connection on both sentence and text level. As a result, the frequent lookup may interrupt the flow of concentration and make reading a process of word-by-word decoding, in which the whole meaning is often missed (Summers, 1988; Scholfield, 1982). Moreover, Rhoder and Huertzer (2002) claimed that students might not be motivated to stop reading each now and then to look up a word which is represented in a short abstract text, so students may skip those words hoping that the context will explain them.

Despite researchers’ and educators’ concerns, recent research has shown that dictionary use can benefit language learners. Those who are in favor of using the dictionary in L2 learning suggest that dictionaries can be helpful to learners because, after all, their main use is for lexical information, which is of the utmost importance in L2 learning (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). Consulting a dictionary during reading is “an integral part of the reading process” (Bensoussan, 1983, p. 341), as it helps the reader to find the meaning of the difficult vocabulary, ascertain its meaning based on contextual information, and learn more meanings of the word in other contexts, with different collocates and constructions. This view is also reflected in dictionaries being commonly considered among the language learning aids much favored and mostly used by language learners (Laufer, 2011). In addition, there is evidence that dictionaries facilitate not only vocabulary acquisition (Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996; Knight, 1994; Luppescu & Day, 1993) but also comprehension of texts (Knight, 1994).

### 2.2. Moderate Dictionary Use

A review of the relevant literature concerning L2 dictionary use while reading suggests that selective dictionary use may lead to improved comprehension and efficient vocabulary development (Prichard, 2008). In the reading process, dictionary use usually competes with guessing, or just ignoring unknown words. Good readers make good choices about when to use each of these; they do not use the dictionary exclusively, and often do so after making attempts at guessing. Hosenfeld mentioned (as cited in Wang, 2007, p. 6): “It is not that successful readers never look up words . . . but only after efficient strategies have failed”.

Nation and Coady (1988) also considered looking up words in a dictionary as the last means of checking a guess, and the guess was only made if the use of the wider context did not provide the meaning. Jones (1995) contended that dictionary use is an effective strategy for learners of English. Such a claim, however, does not necessarily mean that dictionaries are the
sole or the best source of linguistic knowledge, but that dictionaries are one of the tools that learners make use of to figure out the meaning of words (e.g., deducing the meanings of the unknown words from the clues in a text).

2.3. Computerized Dictionary Use

Recent developments in computers have triggered a whole line of interest in computerized dictionaries, online dictionaries, or vocabulary glosses integrated into language learning software or web pages. The latest development of glossing can be seen as computerized dictionaries distributed either in CD-ROMs or through the Internet.

Computerized dictionaries have appeared and offered a wide range of possibilities for the EFL classrooms. Torres and Ramos (2003) highlighted some of the features of computerized dictionaries such as interactivity, quick access, multimedia effects, and extra features. Computerized dictionaries solve the slowness of the process of PDs; some believe that the ease and speed of computerized dictionary lookup might encourage more dictionary use and reading (Weschler & Pitts, 2000). Similarly, Hulstijn et al. (1996) suggested that, because computerized entries are easier to use than the traditional ones (PDs), students will be more likely to use them, unlike the time consuming process of finding information by leafing through PDs.

Moreover, Leffa (1992) compared the efficacy of electronic dictionary glossaries with the traditional PD on text comprehension in a translation task among 20 university students enrolled in a beginner EAP course. Leffa found that the electronic dictionary users understood more of the passage than those who used PDs, 86% and 62% respectively, and the former needed 50% less time to translate the passage. Leffa asserted that in traditional dictionary usage, the learner loses the context of the passage during the time it takes to locate the dictionary entry. He proposed that with a computer dictionary, the speed of access allows the context to remain in the short term memory and, thus, accelerates the comprehension process.

However, in spite of the fact that CDs solve the slowness of process of PDs, some believe that the ease of use may result in shallow processing of the looked up words and will therefore be detrimental to retention. While the ease and speed might encourage more dictionary use and reading (Weschler & Pitts, 2000), the convenience might not be a good thing for vocabulary learning (Stirling, 2003), as the increased speed of CD lookup may be at the expense of engagement and deeper processing of the words resulting in less vocabulary learning (Peters, 2007).

Overall, more research has to be done to explore the effects of CD use on L2 learning, and how such dictionaries are used, or how they might be used (Nesi, 1999). In the following section, the CD use patterns of some Algerian EFL students will be explored.

3. Instruments and Data Collection Methods

3.1. Participants

Forty-four EFL students (females: 30, males: 14, M age = 20.25, age range: 18-30 years) took part in this study. The students were in their second year of study in the Department of English at Constantine University 1 in Algeria. The main reason for our choice of the sample is that students, at this level, with more English learning experience than freshmen, are expected, and at times required, to try some outside readings by themselves. To fill this need, students very often find themselves under situations where they have to cope with longer texts and entirely new vocabulary items during reading. So, to ease this burden, they would feel it necessary to use dictionaries to facilitate their understanding. The subjects consisted of homogenous male and
female students, all sharing similar educational and linguistic backgrounds, and were regularly taking classes in ‘Oral Expression’ with the researcher.

3.2. Data Collection Tools

3.2.1. Reading tests from the TOEFL PBT

This study employed two authentic reading tests adapted from the TOEFL Paper-based test, and each test included ten multiple-choice questions aimed at assessing the students’ overall understanding of the text and some words and structures. The texts were identical in length and difficulty (word count: 370, 368).

3.2.2. Dictionaries

Two types of dictionaries were used by the students in this study: a paper dictionary of the students’ own choice, and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary on CD-ROM. The reason for allowing the students to use their own PDs was to make them feel at ease using the dictionary that they were more familiar with, thereby eliminating any unwanted variables related to the unfamiliarity with the dictionary layout and organization of information, which might invalidate the results of the experiments. Since the PDs used in the study were brought by the students themselves, it was assumed that the students were familiar with them.

3.2.3. Monitoring Software

A piece of MS installed in the students’ computers was set to record the students’ lookups in the CD condition, and to take notes of the exact time each student needed to finish the reading tasks in both conditions. The information recorded by the MS was electronically saved in log files concealed in the students’ computers for later retrieval by the researcher (See Figure 1 for MS features used in the study).

![Figure 1. Time and lookups’ recording features in the monitoring software](image-url)
Enabling the **Window Title Monitoring** feature will start monitoring and recording all applications windows titles on the computer to see what files have been opened and closed, all marked with a timestamp. Similarly, enabling the **Keyboard Monitoring** feature will start the keystroke spy to monitor and log all keystrokes and everything typed during monitoring sessions.

### 3.2.4. Vocabulary Tests

The vocabulary tests were adapted from the “501 Vocabulary Questions” book published by LearningExpress (2003). The aim of the book is to measure students’ knowledge of words generally encountered in textbooks, newspapers and magazines, and especially in standardized tests like the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or the GRE (Graduate Records Examination). This book was chosen by the researcher for its high practicality in assessing L2 learners’ vocabulary.

The vocabulary pretest required supplying definitions for ten supposedly unknown words in ten sentences. The words were printed in **bold** face and were considered to unlikely be known to a fair proportion of students, in view of their proficiency level.

The vocabulary posttest was divided into two parts (5 target words each): The first part was a “multiple-choice” test in which the words were given with a very little contextual support. There were four choices per item: one key (correct answer) and three distractors (options other than the correct answer). Each item of the test required picking the appropriate word. The second part was a “fill in the blank” test in which the words were given alone. The test required filling the blanks with the right word.

### 3.3. Procedure

#### 3.3.1. CD Use Training

The study took place in a computer lab during the researcher’s regular class and under his supervision. Prior to the experiments, the students received 15 minutes of training and watched a short video tutorial about the features and main search functions in the CD. The subjects were briefly introduced on how to use the mouse to move the cursor and then left-click inside the search box of the CD, which was all they had to do in the computer if they wanted to find out the meaning for a given word in the text. The students were then allowed to freely practice on their own so that they interact with the computers and become familiar with the search process and interface design of the dictionary. Since most of the subjects were familiar with computers, this seemed to offer no difficulty for them.

#### 3.3.2. Procedure in Reading Comprehension

The presentation mode of the reading tests was on computer screen alone. The reason for this was to allow the MS to capture the time each student spent on reading. The tests were administered in two separate sessions. In the first session, the students read a text and answered comprehension questions with access to a CD. The MS recorded the students’ look-ups without them being aware that they were being monitored for their lookup behaviour. In the second session, the students read another text with access to a PD. However this time, they were instructed to report on the words they had looked up in the dictionary by themselves. It is noteworthy that there was no time limit set on the reading tasks, and that the students were allowed to use the dictionaries whenever they found it necessary. They were instructed to open the reading files by themselves and then save the changes and close the files as soon as they have finished doing the tasks, so that the MS could make notes of the exact time each student started and finished the reading tasks. Reading time was calculated through subtracting the file-opening time (Starting Time) from the file-closing time (End Time).
3.3.3. **Procedure to Test Vocabulary Retention**

In order to test students’ vocabulary retention, the researcher administered a pretest and posttest to the subjects in both PD and CD lookup conditions. The tests were administered only on paper since the only tested variable was word recall. The time taken to find the target words in the dictionaries was not considered for it is not a variable of interest.

To account for the problem of test wiseness, the researcher assigned 22 students -half of the sample- to the PD lookup condition and the other half -22 students- to the CD lookup condition. It would have been impractical if the same students did the pretest and posttest in one condition, and then did a similar pretest and posttest in the other.

In the pretest, each group of the students were instructed to supply the definitions for the words in bold in the sentences using either a PD or a CD. However, they were not informed that a vocabulary retention test would be given regarding the words looked up in the pretest. The researcher also made sure the students did not take any notes regarding vocabulary outside the test room in that they were neither allowed to use mobile phones nor rough papers.

After a week lapse, the students were given the posttest to measure their retention of the words they looked up a week earlier. Yet, this time, students were not allowed to use any dictionary type, but were encouraged to rely only on their memory.

3.4. **Data Analysis**

IBM SPSS Statistics version 21 was used to analyse the data retrieved from the log files. Descriptive statistics including the calculations of the means and standard deviations were produced for every variable in the study. Inferential statistics including Independent and Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to examine if there were any significant differences between the two conditions regarding the reading time, reading scores, lookup frequency, and vocabulary retention. Such calculations allowed the researcher to check the hypotheses. The significance level in this study was set at $p = 0.05$.

4. **Results and Discussion**

4.1. **Reading Time**

Table 1 indicates the means and standard deviations for reading time in PD and CD conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed CD-ROM</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>00:40:08</td>
<td>01:14:48</td>
<td>00:54:16</td>
<td>00:06:55.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>00:24:23</td>
<td>01:04:30</td>
<td>00:43:29</td>
<td>00:10:12.79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 1, the students spent 54.16 minutes on average reading the text in the PD condition. In the CD condition, reading time was reduced to 43.29 minutes. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether the mean difference between the two conditions is statistically significant (See Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2. T-test results for reading time
The results indicate that there was a highly significant difference in the reading time for PD (M = 00:54:16, SD = 00:06:55) and CD (M = 00:43:29, SD = 00:10:13) conditions; t (43) = 7.559, p = .000. These results suggest that using the CD does have an effect on reducing the time spent while reading. Specifically, our results suggest that when the students used the CD, they managed to read the text in significantly less time than when they used the PD. Therefore, our hypothesis which stated that students would spend less time reading with access to a CD is safely validated.

### 4.2. Reading Scores

Table 3 indicates the means and standard deviations for reading scores in PD and CD conditions.

**Table 3. Means and standard deviations for reading scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>1.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>2.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, the students scored 5.84 points on average in the PD condition, and 6.14 points in the CD condition. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether the mean difference between the two conditions is statistically significant (Table 4).

**Table 4. T-test results for reading scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.295</td>
<td>2.258</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>-.982</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that there was not a significant difference in the scores for PD (M = 5.84, SD = 1.751) and CD (M = 6.14, SD = 2.075) conditions; t (43) = -.868, p = .390. These results suggest that there were no significant differences in the two conditions on the comprehension measure, and that the students’ performance was fairly the same regardless of the type of dictionary used. Therefore, our hypothesis which stated that CD use would promote better comprehension scores is refuted.
4.3. Number of Lookups

Table 5 indicates the means and standard deviations for the number of lookups in PD and CD conditions.

Table 5. Means and standard deviations for number of lookups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed CD-ROM</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>3.785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, the students looked up 5.82 words on average in the PD condition and 7.05 words in the CD condition. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether there is a significant difference in the number of look-ups in both reading conditions (See Table 6).

Table 6. T-test results for number of lookups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in the number of lookups for PD (M = 5.82, SD = 1.782) and CD (M = 7.5, SD = 3.785) conditions; t (43) = -2.082, p = .043. These results suggest that the students looked up significantly more words in the CD than in the PD. Therefore, our hypothesis which was that students would look up more words in the CD than in the PD is validated. Due to the differences in the search effort associated with each type of dictionary, searching through PD pages to find a word would naturally require more effort than simply typing in the unknown word into the CD definition window. So the students were probably reluctant and unwilling to use their PDs so often while reading.

4.4. Vocabulary Retention

Table 7 indicates the means and standard deviations for the number of words recalled in PD and CD conditions.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for recalled vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Printed CD-ROM</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.109</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.763</td>
<td>.376</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 7, the students remembered 4.91 words on average in the PD condition and 3.82 words in the CD condition. Since each half of the subjects did only one test
type, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to find out whether the difference in recall of words between the two test groups (CD and PD) is significant (See Table 8).

Table 8. T-test results for recalled vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>t-test for Equality of Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>2.82 .10</td>
<td>2.45 .018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>2.45 .019</td>
<td>35.3 .444</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that there was a significant difference in the vocabulary recall scores for PD (M=4.91, SD=1.109) and CD (M=3.82, SD=1.763) conditions; t (42) = 2.457, p = 0.018. These results suggest that PD use really does have an effect on memory for words. Specifically, our results suggest that when students look up words in a PD, their memory for words increases. The difference in word retention might be attributed to the effort and relatively longer search process involved in using the PD, unlike in the CD where the look up process is quick and effortless. Our hypothesis which argued that the words looked up in the PD would be better retained than those looked up in the CD is validated.

5. Conclusion

In the study, we attempted to examine the effects of CD use on reading comprehension and vocabulary retention of some Algerian EFL second-years. The findings are in line with previous studies which investigated the effects of CD use on L2 learning. They indicate that the CD was much more motivating and exciting to learners and thus encouraged them to look up more words. The results also suggested that CD use reduces reading time significantly, thereby alleviating the effort needed to read long texts. However, the results do not provide evidence that dictionary type affects text comprehension.

On the other hand, significantly lower recalls were found on lookups performed with access to CD. This indicates that processing lexical information more elaborately through scanning a PD leads to better retention. This deep semantic processing enhances memory by creating memory traces that are stronger than the ones created when the items are superficially processed in CD lookup.
Since dictionary use research is relatively new in the Algerian context, similar studies are needed to generate more understanding in this interesting area of research. Such studies may consider changing the setting, population, or data collection methods probably through choosing a bigger sample and video-taping students’ CD lookup behavior by using specific screen-recording software widely available on the Internet.

About the Author

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References


The Effects of Electronic Dictionary Use on Reading

Hamdi

The Implementation of a Linguistic Ability Test as a Selection Basis in Learning English as a Foreign Language

Lamia ELMECHTA
Faculty of Arts and Languages, University of Mentouri Brothers, Constantine 1

Abstract

The aim of the current paper was twofold: first, to design a test of linguistic ability on the basis of a cognitive perspective; and second, to examine its effects on success in foreign language learning. Two cognitive linguistic abilities, namely language aptitude and working memory, were highlighted and predicted to be components of the target measure. To this end, a test of each of the so hypothesized components was administered to sixty subjects (freshmen) at the department of Letters and the English language, university of Mentouri Brothers, Constantine 1. Correlations were subsequently made between the obtained scores in both tests, and principal component analysis was conducted to determine the final linguistic ability measure. A further correlational study was carried out to investigate the relationship between this latter, as with its hypothesized components, and foreign language learning achievement. The results substantiated significant interrelationships between all the variables. These results would recommend the implementation of this test in foreign language learning.

Keywords: cognitive perspective, correlation, language aptitude, linguistic ability measure, working memory
Introduction

There is clear evidence of failure in achieving success in a foreign language caused by cognitive and linguistic disabilities at the department of letters and the English Language -University of Mentouri Brothers, Constantine 1. This calls upon a prompt implementation of an entry test for learners who wish to engage into a tertiary language instruction. In the early 1980s, a test of proficiency was administered at the University of Constantine as a procedure for selecting learners who opt to learn English as a foreign language (EFL); the results were rather successful. The test was no longer taken for unknown reasons. The present study came as a reaction to resurrect the idea of implementing a test before engaging into a language program; however, the scope was somehow different. More explicitly, the current test aimed at assessing a set of cognitive linguistic capacities rather than proficiency. To this end, two abilities, that is language aptitude and working memory, were opted for and were predicted to be components of the overall linguistic ability measure. Before starting the analysis, a literature review of the opted components was provided.

1. Review of the literature

1.1. Language aptitude

The concept of aptitude, or language aptitude, is used to refer to the ability to learn a foreign language (Carroll & Sapon, 1959). Debates have raged back and forth about the nature of this capacity. While some linguists (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005) have asserted that aptitude is a general ability associating it with the overall cognitive capability intelligence (IQ), others (e.g. Carroll & Sapon, 1959; Skehan, 1998) have emphasized its componential nature through highlighting a set of distinct capacities that underlie it, namely phonemic ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning ability, and memory ability.

Another debate has been on whether this construct is a fixed or developed ability. Some experts (e.g. Carroll, 1993; Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 1998) have speculated that aptitude is a fixed capacity which develops very early in the child’s life and allows individuals to acquire additional languages, whereas others (e.g. Grigorenko et al., 2000; Sáfár & Kormos, 2008; Gass & Selinker, 2008) have advocated that it is relative to development putting emphasis on the role of learning experience.

Owing to the rudimentary need to learn foreign languages for military purposes, aptitude measures flourished mainly between the 1950s and 1960s (Urbina, 2004). Two tests have emerged to become recognized as prominent measures of aptitude: the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll & Sapon, 1959), and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) (Pimsleur, 1966). The MLAT test comprises five subtests that are language-bound, namely, number learning, phonetic script, spelling clues, words in sentences, and paired associates (Carroll and Sapon, 1959). The PLAB subcomponents, on the other hand, are not entirely linked to the assessment of language aspects but also to some psychological factors such as motivation. The PLAB components are, hence, the following: grade point average, interest in foreign language learning, vocabulary, language analysis, sound discrimination, and sound-symbol association. (Pimsleur, 1966)

The role of language aptitude in foreign language learning has long been an intriguing issue in SLA research. A debate has been on whether or not this ability has an impact on learning an L2. Some researchers (e.g. Ehrman, 1998; Bowden, Sanz & Stafford, 2005; Sáfár & Kormos, 2008) have affirmed that aptitude tests are only associated with traditional methods of language teaching, mainly the audio-lingual method, and that they have no influence on communicative language teaching classrooms. Other experts (e.g. Skehan, 1998; Ellis, 2003, etc.) have
contended that aptitude remains to play a role in communicative language teaching practices. For instance, Skehan (1998) and Ellis (2003) have emphasized that aptitude components have a noticeable impact on learning different aspects of the foreign language (e.g. phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary). Similarly, Krashen (1981) and Robinson (2005) have emphasized the impact of this capacity in different learning contexts. While Krashen has claimed that aptitude functions more under formal settings, i.e. when attention is required, Robinson has asserted that it functions more under informal settings when learning takes place unconsciously.

1.2. Working memory

The term working memory (WM) is defined as “a limited capacity system allowing the temporary storage and manipulation of information necessary for such complex tasks as comprehension, learning, and reasoning” (Baddeley & Hitch, 2000, p.418). It was introduced in 1974 as a reaction to Atkinson and Shiffrin model of information processing (1968) which centered the simple process of storage. Baddeley and Hitch model of WM (1974) has divided this system into three main subcomponents referring to them as the phonological loop, the visuo-spatial sketchpad, and the central executive. A further subcomponent, that is the episodic buffer, has been recently added to the model (Baddeley, 2000).

As far as working memory capacity (WMC) is concerned, although there has been agreement that the construct of WM is a limited-capacity-system, researchers have disagreed on the number of items that can be stored or processed in it. Some psychologists (e.g. Miller, 1956) have claimed that an individual’s working memory capacity is $7(\pm 2)$ chunks; others (e.g. Cowan, 2000) have advocated that this capacity is unitary and cannot hold more than $4(\pm 1)$ items.

Measures of working memory vary. However, two major tasks have been proved reliable, viz. Reading Span Tasks or RSPAN (Daneman & Carpenter, 1980), and Operation Span Tasks or OSPAN (Turner & Engle, 1989). In these tasks, two main processes of memory are assessed: recall-process, i.e. recalling unrelated items, and manipulation of information process, i.e. doing something that interrupts recall such as reading in RSPAN (Daneman and Carpenter, 1980), or judging the accuracy of sentences or mathematical operations in OSPAN (Turner and Engle, 1989).

The active process of working memory plays an important role in learning in general and language learning in particular. Regarding the latter, Miyake and Shah (1999) have averred that WMC is quite focused on notably in beginning levels where there is a control of attention. In advanced levels, however, individuals depend less on this ability because of automaticity in processing information.

The association between language aptitude and memory capacity is not a recent issue. Since the emergence of aptitude research (Carroll & Sapon, 1959), memory ability has been tabulated as an indistinguishable component. Nevertheless, it was the passive recall of information that was considered. Recently, attention has shifted to the active process of working memory, basically after the emergence of Baddeley and Hitch model (1974). Some researchers (e.g. Miyake and Friedman, 1998; Sawyer and Ranta, 2001) have proposed working memory as an important aspect of aptitude. Besides, Robinson (2002) as well as Kormos and Sàfar (2008) have provided empirical evidence on the relationship between the two constructs where their findings have revealed close associations. Since then, the link between aptitude and working memory has triggered the consideration of working memory as the central component of aptitude.
The Implementation of a Linguistic Ability Test

The provided literature review of the aforementioned cognitive linguistic capacities substantiates their crucial role in foreign language learning. Despite the fact that SLA research calls attention to the application of aptitude tests as a selection basis for students who engage in foreign language learning, criticisms have been directed to these tests emphasizing their failure to predict success. Therefore, the present study has come with a new perspective in language ability testing through not only considering traditional aptitude measures but also through involving the active capacity system that is ‘working memory’. In so doing, a correlation between these variables is required, and an examination of their impact on foreign language learning achievement is also stipulated.

2. The study

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Subjects

A representative sample of sixty participants was drawn from a population of 300 freshmen learning English as a foreign language at the department of Letters and English, Faculty of Letters and Languages, University of Mentouri Brothers, Constantine 1. The sample comprised fifty females (≈ 83%) and ten males (≈ 17%). It is noteworthy that the idea of between-sex differences was not taken into consideration, for the essential reason that this would take us too far from the purposes of the present study. The age of the participants ranged between 19 and 20 with the mean (M=19.61).

The reason behind opting for this sample was twofold: first, assessing one’s language aptitude requires him/her to be new in the foreign language (the chosen participants were made sure to have just passed their baccalaureate and have their first year of exposure with EFL program at university); and second, there is a claim (Schneider & Detweiler, 1987, in Miyake & Shah, 1999) that working memory capacity is better revealed at beginning and intermediate levels where the process of attention is highly controlled in comparison to advanced levels where the process becomes automatic.

2.1.2. Measures and procedures

1. Language aptitude measure

Language aptitude measure was a paper-and-pencil measure that included four subtests assessing phonemic ability, memory ability, grammatical sensitivity, and inductive language learning ability, respectively. This test was taken from the MLAT measure (Stansfield, 2013) with some adaptations to fit the participants’ proficiency level.

a. Phonemic ability subtest

In this subtest, the subjects were given six tasks to solve. These tasks measured sensitivity to the different sounds of the foreign language as with memory ability. In the first task, which assessed the individuals’ awareness of different pronunciations, the subjects were asked to cross the differently-pronounced word. In the second task, which was a multiple choice task, they were instructed to select the correct spelling of the given words in order to evaluate their recognition of the form of these words. In the third task, which assessed the ability to associate sounds with symbols, they were given phonetic transcriptions and were told to write corresponding words. In the fourth task, they were asked to write transcriptions for given pseudowords to assess their ability to distinguish between long vowels, short vowels, and diphthongs. In the fifth task, which was also a measure of sound-symbol association, the participants were instructed to read...
words that were not spelled in a usual way (i.e., they were written approximately as they were pronounced). It is worth mentioning that this task assessed the students' vocabulary as well. In the sixth task, which measured primarily auditory memory ability, the subjects listened individually to a set of sentences produced by a native speaker; then, after each sentence, they were asked to write down what they could remember. This task was also a measure of vocabulary skill.

b. Grammatical sensitivity subtest

This subtest was a multiple choice task that measured the individuals’ sensitivity to foreign language structures. The subjects were asked to select the correct grammatical function of the given words. Here a variety of grammatical functions were presented (e.g. subject, verb, object, conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating), simple past tense, interrogatives, perfect tenses, conditional, Prep+ noun, Not+ infinitive, and discrimination between “wh” questions and between relative pronouns, etc.).

c. Inductive language learning subtest

This subtest assessed the subjects’ sensitivity to foreign language structures as well as their inductive reasoning skills. A set of words and sentences were given in the foreign language (an invented language in this case), and the subjects were told to infer their corresponding counterparts in English or do the opposite task. Time allocation for this test was 60 minutes. Concerning the scoring procedure, the score 100 was given as the score of perfection and was distributed on the three subtests. Phonemic ability subtest received the highest score (i.e. 50) for encompassing a large number of tasks in comparison with the other subtests. The second subtest was scored out of 30 and the third out of 20 as it contained the least number of tasks.

2. Working memory test

WM test was displayed on a data show. It contained four subtests that measured the subjects WMC: Reading Span tasks (RSPAN), Operation Span tasks (OSPAR), Anagrams, and Listening Span Tasks (LSPAN).

a. RSPAN subtest

This subtest assessed two capacities, viz. reading capacity and recall capacity. In this subtest the participants were asked to read an increasing number of sentences (2 to 8) with an element at the end of each sentence to recall. This element might be a letter, a number, or a word. To mention, the sentences were taken from Daneman and Carpenter (1980) reading span tasks and were adapted to fit the Algerian socio-cultural context. This means that the words that seemed unfamiliar to our participants’ culture were omitted and were replaced by more familiar words to ensure the results. Fifteen tasks were given to the participants with an increasing number of sentences in each task (2 to 8) to read and elements to recall.

b. OSPAN subtest

This subtest measured the students’ mathematical ability and recall capacity. In this task the participants were presented with simple arithmetic equations to judge or solve with a letter, number or word to recall. In this subtest, eleven tasks were given with an increasing number of items to recall (2 to 7). This subtest was taken from Turner and Engle (1989) and Kane and Engle (2003) operation span.

c. Anagrams subtest

In this task, the participants were exposed to lists of jumbled letters for a short time (5 seconds for each), and were asked to remember the letters and make meaningful words out of them. This task was taken from Carter’s book of intelligence tests (2005). This task was included
under working memory test as it measured both recall ability (i.e. remembering the jumbled letters) and manipulation of information capacity (i.e. making meaningful words). This subtest measured the participants’ vocabulary as well.

d. **LSPAN subtest**

In this task, the participants were asked to listen to an increasing number of sentences (1 to 7) and judge whether or not they were meaningful, then they were asked to recall the last word in each sentence. This task was also adapted from Daneman and Carpenter WM tasks (1980). Time allocation for this test was 60 minutes. Concerning the scoring procedure, the score 100 was given as the score of perfection. Although the participants used two processes, viz. attention process (reading, counting, or judging) and recall-process, the scores were devoted to recall only. The score 40 was given to RSPAN, 25 to OSPAN and LSPAN, and 10 to anagrams.

As for the administration procedure, it is worthy to state that both working memory and aptitude measures were handed to the subjects during the same days. The period devoted to these measures was nine consecutive days (the number reflected the division of the subjects into nine subgroups). This stems from the belief that taking the tests at the same time allows for providing the same conditions to the test takers. Working memory was administered the first early in morning (at 8.30) so that higher cognitive processes were activated, and was followed with a break of 30 minutes; then, the second measure was handed out. The participants were given a break between the two measures to decrease boredom and increase their motivation to carry out the tests.

### 3. Foreign language learning achievement

The subjects’ language learning achievement was assessed through taking their average in the modules they were taught during a whole year in learning English as a foreign language. The overall average gave insights about general linguistic and communicative skills of the students at specific proficiency levels. This means that the students were assessed according to the standards and objectives of learning. The students overall achievement was, hence, the sum of the obtained average in both semesters of learning EFL. As far as scoring is concerned, similar to the previous variables, the highest average point (20) was converted into the value 100 and the individuals scores were also converted and explained according to this value.

#### 2.1.3. Statistical analysis

In designing a linguistic ability test and scrutinizing its effects on foreign language learning achievement, two statistical techniques were carried out, viz. correlation and principal component analysis (or PCA). Correlation was used between a set of variables: aptitude and working memory, aptitude and foreign language learning achievement, working memory and foreign language learning achievement, and the final linguistic ability test and foreign language learning achievement. Principal component analysis was conducted to investigate the final overall linguistic ability measure.

### 2.2. Results and discussions

#### 2.2.1. The correlations between language aptitude and working memory

The first step we went through in our analysis is examining whether there is a strong linear relationship between the two predicted components of the overall dimension ‘linguistic ability measure’. In doing so, a correlation between these variables was required. To measure this correlation, we adopted the technique of the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation between aptitude scores and working memory scores. (Field, 2005)
Having used the formula $r = \frac{\sum xy}{\sqrt{\sum x^2 \sum y^2}}$, the results revealed a correlation of (.54). The critical value of $r$ for one-tailed test at (0.05) level of significance and with 59 degrees of freedom is (.25). As the obtained value for the correlation between aptitude and working memory (.54) is higher than the critical value (.25), we would say that the results are indeed significant. This means that these capacities are interrelated and, hence, allow us to predict that aptitude and working memory would decompose an underlying dimension that is referred to as linguistic ability measure. The confirmation of this prediction demanded the application of the principal component analysis (PCA) technique. An explanation of this technique and the procedure used to conduct it are discussed below.

2.2.2. **Principal component analysis**

Principal component analysis (PCA) is a dimension reduction technique. It is used in exploratory factor analysis (Field, 2005). This technique is utilized to reduce the number of observed correlated variables into a smaller set of obtained variables called components. In the present study two measures were administered, and each measure encompassed a number of subtests: three subtests in aptitude measure and four subtests in working memory measure. As we hypothesized that these measures intend to measure a common construct (linguistic ability), all the subtests must also assess the very same construct.

The first step in PCA was checking whether the seven subtests in aptitude and WM tests were interrelated. The same technique of correlation (i.e. Pearson correlation) was applied to evaluate the strength of association between them. SPSS was used in measuring this correlation. The results are displayed in the following table. The first part of the table exhibits the value of $r$ between each subtest, and the second part demonstrates the levels of significance in each case. This is a list of abbreviations used in the following correlation matrix and the subtests they refer to:

- **PC*** phonetic coding ability
- **GS*** grammatical sensitivity
- **ILLA*** inductive language learning ability
- **RSPAN*** reading span tasks
- **OSPAN*** operation span tasks
- **ANG*** anagrams
- **LSPAN*** listening span tasks

**Table 1.** Correlation matrix of aptitude subtests and working memory tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>ILLA</th>
<th>RSPAN</th>
<th>OSPAN</th>
<th>ANG</th>
<th>LSPAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLA</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>.322</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPAN</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSPAN</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.531</td>
<td>.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANG</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.380</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.531</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSPAN</td>
<td>.354</td>
<td>.298</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sig.(1-tailed)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in the above table indicate that most of the correlations are significant. Only one variable (RSPAN) is observed to show a weak relationship with two other variables: PC (.19) and ILLA (.20). Before proceeding further, one needs to examine whether there are any issues of multicollinearity (values close to 1) or singularity (values close to 0) that might cause problems in PCA and, accordingly, entails the omission of variables (RSPAN in this case). Since almost all the significance levels are below 0.05, and all the values of correlation are less than (.90), one would say that there is no singularity in the data; similarly, the value of the determinant (0.000114) is observed to be higher than the required value (0.0001), which indicates that there is no issue of multicollinearity as well. This means that PCA is appropriate and all the variables will be kept.

The appropriateness of PCA depends also on the adequacy of the chosen sample. In checking whether the sample fits this type of analysis, two methods are selected in SPSS software in the box of descriptive statistics: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity. The following table exhibits KMO and Bartlett’s findings.

**Table 2. KMO and Bartlett’s test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy</th>
<th>.706</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s test of Approximate Chi-square</td>
<td>121,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KMO values vary between 0 and 1. Field (2005) stipulates that values near 0 indicate diffusion in the pattern of correlations, while values near 1 indicate that patterns of correlations are relatively strong and that factor analysis (PCA in this case) would yield to reliable components. Similarly, Kaiser (1974, in Field, 2005) recommends that acceptable values should be greater than (.5). The data in table 2 show that the value of KMO is .70 (> .5) for the Chi
square of distribution with 21 degrees of freedom and (.000) significance level. Therefore, the high value of KMO confirms the appropriateness of PCA.

Having assessed the appropriateness of PCA, I moved to the next step which is extracting factors from variables. In order to extract factors, the method of Principal component analysis is chosen in SPSS, for the aim is to investigate whether a single component would be revealed or some hidden factors would emerge. SPSS software identified 7 initial eigenvalues at first (i.e., the same number of variables). The following table demonstrates the results of extraction.

Table 3. Total variance explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Initial eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of squared loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>45,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>14,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>.852</td>
<td>12,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td>9,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>7,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td>7,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>3,231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table demonstrates that the first variable represents a large amount of variance (45.69%), while the six remaining variables represent small amounts. One factor greater than 1 is, thus, extracted as an eigenvalue. This eigenvalue is displayed again and the percentage of variance is explained in the column of Extraction, Sums of squared loadings. The value is the same as the one before extraction, what was different is that values lower than 1 were discarded. The results, accordingly, confirm our prediction of a common existing component. More explicitly, language aptitude and working memory will be, subsequently, considered as subcomponents of the overall dimension ‘linguistic ability measure’.

The final step in PCA is loading the variables (i.e. the seven subtests) onto the obtained component (i.e. linguistic ability measure) in order to examine interrelationships with it. In so doing, SPSS software requests that loadings that are less than 0.4 should be discarded. The following table represents the loadings of each variable onto the final component.

Table 4. Component matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>components</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>.665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLA</td>
<td>.653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data in table 4 reveal that all the seven subtests in aptitude and WM measures (i.e. phonetic coding ability subtest, grammatical sensitivity subtest, inductive language learning ability subtest, RSPAN, OSPAN, anagrams, and LSPAN) load highly onto the final component. This means that these subtests will all be kept for the final linguistic ability measure. The latter will, therefore, encompass two general subtests and seven tasks. The following diagram is, accordingly, designed to summarize the final linguistic ability measure with its two decomposing subtests and seven tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSPAN</th>
<th>.562</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSPAN</td>
<td>.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANG</td>
<td>.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSPAN</td>
<td>.541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3. The correlation between linguistic ability and foreign language learning achievement

Having proved the existence of a general linguistic ability and its corresponding measure, one should study its effects on learners’ foreign language learning achievement. The technique of correlation was used to examine these effects. As indicated previously, linguistic ability was but an outcome of a set of correlations and principal component analysis between two administered measures. This means that there was no determined score for this measure. Therefore, a common score should first be given to both aptitude and WM tests before carrying on the analysis. The procedure followed to score this test was to set the value 100 as the score of perfection and to divide it onto the two subtests. This means that aptitude and WM received equal scores (50). After setting a score, the subjects’ scores in the two measures were themselves converted into the value 50 and their general linguistic ability was determined by the sum of these measures.

The link between the learners’ linguistic ability and their language learning achievement was, then, measured using the same adopted statistical technique. Pearson correlation results display an r of .43 (> .25). The results, therefore, reveal a significant relationship between linguistic ability measure and foreign language learning achievement.
After having proved a significant association between linguistic ability and foreign language learning achievement, the relationship between this latter and the composed subtests of linguistic ability measure was assessed.

2.2.4. The correlation between aptitude and achievement and working memory and achievement

The same statistical technique was used to examine the effects of the confirmed linguistic ability subcomponents (i.e. language aptitude and working memory) on foreign language learning achievement. After using the formula \( r = \frac{\Sigma_{xy}}{\sqrt{(\Sigma_{x^2})(\Sigma_{y^2})}} \), these are the results exhibited in table 5:

Table 5. The correlation between aptitude, WM and language learning achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language aptitude</th>
<th>Working memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language learning achievement</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The critical value of \( r \) for one-tailed test at (0.05) level of significance and with (59) degrees of freedom is (.25). As the obtained value for the correlation between language aptitude and foreign language learning achievement is (.43), and between working memory and foreign language learning achievement is (.29), one would conclude that both variables show a significant link with foreign language learning achievement.

Conclusion

The current article provided empirical evidence on the existence of an overall human cognitive linguistic capacity. This capacity was the result of strong established relationships between two predicted abilities, namely language aptitude and working memory. The study demonstrated also a close association between the umbrella construct (linguistic ability) as with its constituent factors and foreign language learning achievement. The significant proved results would recommend the implementation of a linguistic ability test as an entry test for learners who engage in learning EFL to ensure success. The article might also provide suggestions for future research to expand this linguistic ability measure through an integration of additional components that are related to other cognitive capacities.

Notes

1 **SLA**: an abbreviation of second language acquisition.

2 **Pseudo-word**: a made up word, that is, a string of letters resembling a real word in terms of its phonological structure but doesn't really exist in the language.

3 **Eigenvalue**: it is calculated in factor analysis to find the number of factors.
About the Author
I am a teacher assistant at the department of Arts and the English Language, University of Constantine 1. I hold an MA in Language Sciences and currently pursuing my PhD studies (I am in my fourth year of PhD studies) in Didactics of Foreign Languages. My research inquiry involves a combination of Psychology, Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition. The title of my thesis is ‘the Effects of Language Aptitude, Working Memory, and Verbal Reasoning as Aspects of Linguistic Intelligence on Foreign Language Learning Achievement’.

References


The Implementation of a Linguistic Ability Test


The Impact of an Extrinsic Reward in Intensive Reading Activities on Learners’ Intrinsic Motivation and Performance

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Abstract
Notwithstanding the incontrovertible role of reading in English as a foreign language in advancing students’ literacy levels, not all students are successful readers, nor are all of them endowed with the desire to read. This paper is rather an attempt to scrutinize the long-term impact of a literacy-related reward, a type of extrinsic rewards, on concurrently learners’ intrinsic motivation and reading performance. A total sample of 91 LMD students enrolled in the second year—at the Department of Letters and English Language, Mentouri University Bros.—was partaken in two experimental conditions. In the no-reward condition, the subjects were involved in reading and performing intensive reading activities, whereby the reward was internal to the experimental activities. In the reward condition, the same subjects performed intensive reading activities; however, their successful performance was rewarded tangibly by a short story. The major findings substantiated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two experimental conditions, submitting that short stories were a good incentive to enhance adult students’ intrinsic motivation as well as performance during an intensive reading practice phase.

Keywords: a literacy-related reward, extrinsic rewards, intensive reading activities, intrinsic motivation, reading performance
Introduction

Central to the role played by motivation, as a key factor for learners’ scholastic achievements, in second/foreign language learning, successful foreign language learning also compels the language learner to surmount all the impediments encountered when mastering the four skills of that language. As a salient language skill, reading, however, remains a challenging task for many EFL learners. Indisputably, undergraduate students require high level reading skills, awareness, appropriate utilization of a number of reading strategies to ease the wide range of reading required from them, and in actuality a desire to read. In an endeavour to enhance learners’ reading motivation as well as reading performance, and reciprocally promote proficiency gains, many teachers adopt different motivating strategies, such as rewards. Nevertheless, the use of rewards in learning settings remains contentious. Some researchers (e.g., Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Flora, 2004; Brophy, 2004) believed in their positive effects, submitting that they can be a very effective motivating strategy in producing long-term desired behaviours. Others (e.g., Kohn, 1993; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999), on the other hand, condemned their use in virtue of their detrimental effects on learners’ intrinsic motivation in learning. The raison d’être of this research is that students of English as a foreign language were constantly observed to display serious problems and lack of interest when they read different academic subjects, and that reading, as a language skill, is not independently taught at the Department of Letters and English Language, Mentouri University Bros. To refine upon previous work on extrinsic rewards’ effects (Deci, 1971; Marink & Gambrell, 2008) so that it most directly fits the present research setting, we attempted to implement a new motivating strategy during a reading practice phase by initially arousing the subjects interest to read and perform reading activities in the classroom, for no extrinsic reward; then we offered an extrinsic reward, namely short stories, to elicit information about their levels of intrinsic motivation with regard to the reading activities, which would improve, remain the same, or decrease, and by the same token, whether or not there is a room for this new motivational environment to ameliorate or impede their reading performance.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Reward defined

The word reinforcement, which is parallel with the term reward, was initially utilized by behaviourists (B.F.Skinner) to mean any consequence that strengthens the behaviour it follows and increases the likelihood for that behaviour to transpire in comparable situations. To put it another way, any consequence can be a reinforcer granted that it enhances students’ task performance and their participations in analogous tasks.

1.2. The controversy over rewards’ effects on intrinsic motivation

If intrinsic motivation, in many laboratory investigations, was repeatedly delineated in relation to the time participants persist at performing something (e.g., solving puzzles), when the reward is no more dispensed (Deci, 1972) and self-report of enjoyment, then intrinsic motivation, pertains to this work, is defined as students’ persistence and the enjoyment they gain from reading and performing variety of intensive reading activities under the command of a reward based-system.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (Deci, 1980; Deci & Ryan, 1982) addresses the value of people’s perception of perceived competence and autonomy in enhancing intrinsic motivation, and concurrently it warns against the detrimental effects of external events on intrinsic
motivation. It substantiates how the effects of external events, specifically rewards, rely upon how they affect perceived self determination as well as perceived competence. In this regard, the term interpersonal context has been utilized to denote the social settings (such as, home, classroom) under which rewards are administered, and the extent to which they are controlling or non-controlling. Thereupon, interpersonal events (e.g., rewards, feedback) have two aspects: an informational aspect (indicators of competence and self-determination) and a controlling aspect (controllers of behaviour), as Deci and Ryan (1985) presumed.

The informational or feedback aspect refers to significant information about performing effectively the target activity, personal progress, or it even provides performers with information that can assist them in becoming more efficient at the target activity in a future performance (it informs about competence). Accordingly, rewards having the possibility to inform about learners’ skills instil into them high perceived competence as well as self-determination. The controlling aspect, on the other hand, heightens an external locus of causality and thereby diminishes intrinsic motivation. A reward is experienced as controlling provided that it is administered in an interpersonal style that presses students to think or behave in a specific way. Since the informational aspect of external events (rewards) conveys both self-determination and competence, intrinsic motivation is likely to be promoted.

However, espousal of the aforementioned claim discerned (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001) that rewards undermine intrinsic motivation. The rationale is a change in perceived locus of causality. When individuals are intrinsically motivated, the locus of causality is internal: They perform a task as it provides them with an internal satisfaction. On the contrary, the locus of control alters from internal to external when recipients perceive their performance to be more amenable to external factors (e.g., money). They perceive themselves controlled by the environment, performing the task due to mere external factors—and this is what rewards generally do to behaviour. It indicates that the informational or controlling aspect of rewards is more strongly dependent on a reward’s type, contingency, and expectancy, respectively.

Tangible rewards (e.g., money, trophy, prizes, and certificate) are any symbolic rewards that are offered in response to someone’s performance. It is worth noting that the effects of extrinsic tangible rewards are heterogeneous. Accordingly, rewards that are announced at the beginning of an activity (expected) are deemed to be harmful and lessen motivation. Conversely, rewards that are administered at the end of an activity (unexpected) are not (Deci et al., 2001; Cameron & Pierce, 2002). Task-non-contingent rewards (Brophy, 2004), as the first example of reward contingency, correspond to expected rewards that are presented to participants for taking part in an experiment, a task which they are not obliged to complete. People, under this type of reward contingency—not decreasing their performance—are merely rewarded for their presence, neither for completing a task, nor for achieving high standards. Task-contingent rewards (Brophy, 2004) are made conditional on engaging and completing the target activity, regardless of any standard of performance. Completion-contingent rewards are regarded to control behaviour since they do not enhance perceived competence. Another type of reward contingency is performance-contingent rewards or performance-dependent rewards (Brophy, 2004). Essentially, this reward contingency is largely dependent on students’ performance, in that they are delivered when students attain a definite standard level. In other words, when students successfully perform the target activity so that a standard of excellence is reached, rewards are then delivered. They are controlling since performers are required to meet absolute performance standard to earn them.
However, they can also be informational as long as they convey positive competence feedback: Rewards are offered as a result of meeting a level of excellence.

Kohn (1993) strongly deemed rewards to be a failing strategy to heighten behaviours’ outcomes. Virtually, rewards do not motivate learners to do something; they rather coerce them to receive the rewards. Together, rewards and punishment manipulate behaviour. They are only efficient in ensuring impermanent compliance; nevertheless, they are ineffective in producing long-term desired behaviours or attitudes alterations or even advance performance. Given that the reward is always contingent on doing something, once the reward system or punishment ceases, people go back to their old behaviours. In like manner, the effects of “do this and you will get that” are identical to “do this or here’s what will happen to you”. Making students think about what they will earn in return to their performance diminishes risk-taking, creativity, and intrinsic interest in the activity as they will concentrate on receiving rewards, and that their work is driven by the reward. Therefore, rewards undermine the behaviour they are intended to enhance.

Flora (2004) extremely disputed Kohn’s (1993) claim who considered reinforcement to look like carrot-and-stick. She regarded it as a failing approach to motivation since it is built merely upon negative reinforcement. “The carrot-and-stick criticism generally reflects an ignorance of the reinforcement process and is a tiny disguised insult to professionals who use or advocate the use of reinforcement to ameliorate human problems” (Flora, 2004, p. 27). The assumption that rewards undermine intrinsic interest in an activity has also been challenged. If a student is offered an extrinsic reward for reading, then to read voluntarily will not occur. It rather conveys how reading becomes a means to obtain a reward rather than reading is the reward per se. Reinforcement is very effective for humans’ accomplishments and in compelling them value their behaviour, and thus it enhances desired outcomes.

In Cameron and Pierce’s (1994) meta-analysis, which was republished by Eisenberger and Cameron (1996) who in fact added divergent groupings studies, they distinguished between verbal versus tangible rewards, tangible rewards as expected versus unexpected, expected rewards as contingent on task completion or performance versus rewards that are not dependent on completion or performance. They separately scrutinized task-non contingent, task contingent, and performance-contingent rewards. The findings illustrated that verbal rewards increase significantly “free-choice” and self-reported interest. Whereas, tangible rewards, expected tangible rewards, and non-contingent rewards undermine the behavioural measure of intrinsic motivation, but not self-reported interest. Performance-contingent rewards have no overall significant effect on the “free-choice period”, but significant effect on self-reported interest. Task-contingent rewards undermine both “free-choice” and self-reported interest. Nevertheless, unexpected tangible rewards and contingent rewards have no significant thwarting effects on intrinsic motivation. Therefore, they concluded that there is no reason not to use rewards in educational settings for the rationale that their detrimental effects can be effortlessly prevented.

Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999), on the other hand, harshly criticized the preceding meta-analysis’s findings, for they incorporated studies that used dull and boring tasks. It is because intrinsic motivation has been defined in relation to interesting tasks and that rewards undermine intrinsically interesting tasks, with boring tasks, therefore, there is no intrinsic motivation to decrease.

Deci et al. (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of 128 studies that examined the effects of all rewards on intrinsic motivation, but for interesting tasks only. The results indicated that rewards can have both incremental and detrimental effects on intrinsic motivation. Their findings
strongly supported cognitive evaluation theory’s claim. Free-choice behaviour was undermined by engagement-contingent, completion-contingent, performance-contingent, tangible, and expected rewards. Self-reported interest was also diminished by engagement-contingent, completion-contingent, tangible, and expected rewards. Nevertheless, tangible rewards were found to be harmful for children than college students, and performance-contingent rewards did not negatively affect self-reported interest.

Later on, Pierce, Cameron, Banko, and So (2003) inquisitively investigated the effects of rewards on 60 undergraduate students’ intrinsic motivation during a puzzle-solving task to falsify the claim that rewards undermine intrinsic motivation. Some subjects in the experimental group were offered $1.00 for attaining increasingly demanding performance standards, others for accomplishing a constant performance standard, and the control group was not rewarded. The major findings indicated that subjects who were rewarded for meeting increasingly demanding performance standards spent more time on the experimental task during the free-rewarded phase vis-à-vis the other groups. The findings of the subjects’ self-enjoyment of the task displayed that there was a short-term loss of intrinsic motivation by the experimental groups than the control group. Pierce et al. (2003) concluded that rewards for meeting progressively demanding and attainable performance standards can be used in different settings to enhance performers’ preference for challenging activities and thereupon increase intrinsic motivation.

Chen and Wu (2010) conducted another investigation to examine the longitudinal effects of rewards on extensive reading activities. The Elementary School Students’ Reward Experience Questionnaire was used to inspect the reward’s type, contingency, and expectancy that were received during the time of their enquiry and students’ attributions for receiving these rewards. Another questionnaire was submitted to concurrently measure the subjects’ pre- and post-reward reading motivation. The results of the 772 surveyed pupils, from four different elementary schools in southern Taiwan, revealed that the reward’s type and attribution predicted intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation, and the intangible reward and effort attribution bolstered pupils’ intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation. Luck of attribution, reward expectancy, and contingency, on the other hand, predicted negatively intrinsic reading motivation. The researchers recommended that teachers would use rewards to inspire students to read, they should be, however, intangible and attributed to effort rather than luck.

The preceding empirical studies represent discrepant findings that substantiate how rewards can have negative, positive, or neutral effects on intrinsic motivation’s measures, whereas the effects are limited to divergent sets of conditions. How to effectively offer rewards in educational settings and to mediate their effects for better scholastic achievements are still controversial among researchers as far as the findings are not unified.

2. Hypotheses for the Present Work

The research predicts that if we create a reward-based system during an intensive reading practice phase (through the use of an extrinsic reward to signify learners’ excellent performance in the target tasks), both students’ intrinsic motivation and performance would be probably enhanced. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

- If an extrinsic reward is delivered for meeting a standard of excellence in the intensive reading activities performed in the classroom, then learners’ intrinsic motivation would be enhanced.
- If an extrinsic reward (short stories) is administered for learners’ successful performance in the reading comprehension activities, then learners’ performance would be improved.
3. Method

3.1. Subjects
A random sample of 91 students enrolled in the second year was drawn from a population size of 671 (537 females and 134 males) LMD students of English as a foreign language, at the Department of Letters and English Language-Mentouri University Bros., and assigned to two experimental conditions, during the academic year 2013-2014. Participants were 79 (11.77%) girls and 12 (1.78%) boys between the ages of 19 and 38 years old (M = 21.21, SD = 2.60).

3.2. Measures
The measures we utilized to confirm (or disconfirm) the present hypotheses are as follows:

3.2.1. The intrinsic motivation inventory
A modified version of the self-report measure of intrinsic motivation, namely the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI) was correspondingly administered at the end of the no-reward and reward condition in an ordinary Written Expression tutorial session. The rationale is to quantify the students’ situational levels of intrinsic motivation with regard to the target tasks, to determine the change (if there is any) the extrinsic reward would bring to their intrinsic motivation, and to strongly ascertain that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can have additive influence on reading activities. The modified version of the IMI contains 20 items on a five-point Likert scale (from 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neutral, 4 = agree, to 5 = activities they performed in the classroom, during the two conditions, 4 items measure their perceptions of competence, 4 other items unveil the effort they put to achieve these intensive reading tasks, 4 items tackle the value/importance they place on these tasks, and the last 4 items detect how the motivational environment would contribute to lowering or raising their anxiety.

3.2.1. The pre-and post-reward reading comprehension tests
A pre-test-post-test design is the second measurement we followed to concurrently determine the students’ pre-and post-reward reading performance. The subjects took both tests in an ordinary Written Expression tutorial session. The pre-test was adopted from TOFEL and the post-test from Mikulecky and Jeffries (2001). Although the topic of the pre-test is different from that of the post-test, both tests have a medium length passages that are divided up into two exercises. The first exercise contains 6 multiple-choice questions, with four alternatives for each. It reflects the subjects’ understandings of the passages in terms of their main and supporting ideas as well as their abilities to synthesize information. Whereas, the second exercise, which I constructed myself, consists of 6 vocabulary questions (word meaning) that is intended to measure their comprehension of the passages through indicating their understandings to some important key words. Hence, both tests assess the subjects’ critical understandings of the texts by emphasizing on their mastery of word meaning, determining relationships among ideas, and drawing conclusions. The rationale for pre-post tests is to reveal whether or not creating a reward-based system in intensive reading activities would contribute to advancing the subjects’ comprehension skills, which would be reflected by an improvement in their reading comprehension performance from the pre-test to the post-test.

3.3. Research design
This work is rather an exploratory study that purports to examine the nature of the causal impact of extrinsic motivation on students’ intrinsic motivation and performance during their
achievements in a reading practice phase. To this end, we launched reading in the classroom (specifically in Written Expression sessions) where learners spent class time or extra-class time reading different materials and performed intensive reading activities (e.g., multiple-choice items, pronominal questions, yes/no questions, true/false statements, summarizing, and vocabulary questions). The treatment of interest was to create a reward-based system in reading sessions. Therefore, participants were assigned to two experimental conditions. Experiment one took place during the first semester and lasted approximately two months. It is pertinent to say that one month elapsed before the second experiment was conducted. This experiment was carried out during the second semester and lasted approximately three months. The reading materials, the questions’ type, and the researcher’s intervention (reward) are what made the first experiment different from the second.

3.3.1. Experiment one

Experiment one is the no-reward condition. The ultimate focus of this experiment, which was run during the first semester, is to create and maintain indulgence in reading by driving learners to devote some of their class or extra-class time reading different materials and performing some reading activities for no extrinsic reward, but as an end in them. The reward is internal to the target activity. The reading environment in the no-reward condition proceeded as follows:
- Learners were engaged in silent reading for approximately 20 minutes (the allotted time for reading varies based on the length and complexity of the topics).
- Then, the teacher called on for volunteers to answer the questions relevant to the content of the passage.
- Whole class debate to discuss students’ answers was to follow.
- Students were provided with immediate feedback on their responses.

3.3.2. Experiment two

This experiment is the reward condition. In the second semester, the students were involved in reading different materials and performing intensive reading activities, whereby the desired behaviour was rewarded tangibly by a short story. In this regard, the reward is external to the activity. Clearly, the choice of offering short stories rather than relying on other reinforcers (for example, marks or verbal rewards) is not to coerce the subjects to compete for the reward, nor feel controlled or gain recognition, but due to the closeness of the reward (short stories) to the desired behaviour (reading), and to contribute to raising their awareness of the message that is carried through the reinforcer we dispensed (reading). This is why we conducted two quasi experiments to investigate the longitudinal impact of the use of such literacy-related reward on the target population’s intrinsic motivation as well as reading performance. The incentive reading environment proceeded as follows:
- At first, learners were engaged in silent reading for approximately 20 minutes (the allotted time for reading varies based on the length and complexity of the topics).
- Then, the teacher called on for volunteers to answer the reading comprehension questions.
- Students’ answers were written on the board.
- Whole class discussion, to decide on the correct answers, was to follow.
- Correct answers were rewarded extrinsically, but incorrect ones were not punished; they were just provided with another chance. Accordingly, our schedule of reinforcement was as follows:
Diagram 1. Schedule of Reinforcement in Intensive Reading Activities

Teacher -> student -> consequence
asked question; answered correctly; a short story was administered

Teacher -> student -> consequence
asked question; answered incorrectly; amelioration of behaviour; second chance
short story was administered

- After rewarding the desired behaviours, some students were asked to read the text out loud in front of the whole class.
- Students were provided with immediate feedback on their responses.
- Finally, they, in each reading session, were allowed to critically respond to the subject read by verbally expressing agreement or disagreement with the ideas of the texts (do you agree with the writer’s opinion? Why?) as well as share their opinions with their classmates.

4. Results
The fact that the data are not independent (rather it is dependent), as the same subjects were measured twice (paired data) before and after our motivational intervention (reward), a t-test for related samples was utilized to determine the significant differences in students’ intrinsic motivation and reading performance under the two experimental conditions.

4.1. Results of the IMI in the no-reward and reward condition
Individual item scores were summed to provide us with the total scores of each item on the IMI. However, before moving to the analysis phase, the scores of the negatively worded items (Q8, Q12, Q14, Q15, Q17, Q18, Q19) were reversed scores, the overall alpha of the IMI in the no-reward condition was (.71), and the reward condition yielded an overall alpha of (.80), indicating high internal reliability of this measure in the present work. We can notice that the reliability of the scale was substantially enhanced from the first (.71) to the second experiment (.80).

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the IMI’s Items in Condition 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Interest/Enjoyment M</th>
<th>Competence M</th>
<th>Effort M</th>
<th>Value/Importance M</th>
<th>Tension M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-reward</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 depicts that the means of condition 1 ranged from (2.41) to (3.70), and the standard deviations laid between (1.30) and (1.66); whereas, the means of condition 2 ranged from (2.95) to (3.96), and the standard deviations between (1.22) and (3.21). By examining carefully the means of all the items on condition 1, it is apparent that the means of the value/importance (3.70), interest/enjoyment (3.20), effort (2.72), and competence (2.80) subscales were higher than the mean of the negative predictor of intrinsic motivation (tension/pressure: M= 2.41). This can be a good indicator that the interpersonal context was not controlling to learners. In the reward condition, the means of the interest/enjoyment (3.42) and the value/importance subscales (3.96) were higher than the mean of the tension subscale (3.22), whereas the mean of the foresaid subscale was higher than both the competence subscale (2.95) and the effort (3.01) subscale. Indisputably, there is a substantial increase in the mean scores from condition 1 to 2.

**Table 2. The Mean Scores of Students’ Intrinsic Motivation in Condition 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD Error M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition 1</td>
<td>11.44</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>0.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition 2</td>
<td>13.3275</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.26859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 2, one can observe the mean, the standard deviation, and the standard error of the mean of the subjects in the no-reward and reward condition, respectively. The mean score of the first condition was (11.44), the standard deviation was (2.66), and the standard error of the mean was (0.27). The mean score of the second condition, on the other hand, was (13.32), the standard deviation was (2.56), and the standard error of the mean was (0.26). Hence, the mean of the reward condition is by far higher than that of the no-reward condition.

**Table 3. The Mean Difference between the IMI’s Scores in Condition 1 and 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD Error M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Condition 2 - condition 1</td>
<td>1.89121</td>
<td>3.16778</td>
<td>0.33207</td>
<td>5.695</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The output in table 3 presents the subjects’ scores in the IMI under the two experimental conditions. The mean difference between the two conditions was (1.98), with a standard deviation of (3.16), and a standard error of the mean of (0.33). With 90 degrees of freedom, and at 0.001 level of significance, the required critical value for significance for the t-ratio (one-tailed test) is not tabulated in the significance levels of the t-ratio (Guilford & Fruchter, 1978). Thus, we looked at 120 degrees of freedom as it is the highest and near to 90 degrees of freedom. As
the obtained t-ratio is much higher (5.69) than the required t-ratio (2.35), we can say that the results were highly significant.

4.2. Results of the pre-and post-reward reading comprehension tests

Whether or not the reward of the present study has advanced or impeded students’ reading comprehension performance is what the subsequent section will disclose.

Table 4. The Mean Scores of Students’ Performance in the Pre-and Post-Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD Error M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test scores</td>
<td>14.1758</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4.31687</td>
<td>0.45253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test scores</td>
<td>19.1868</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.09807</td>
<td>0.32477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 displays the mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean of the subjects in the pre-and post-tests. The mean score of the pre-test was (14.17), the standard deviation was (4.31), and the standard error of the mean was (0.45). Conversely, the mean score of the post-test was (19.18) with a standard deviation of (3.09) and (0.32) standard error of the mean. Therefore, the expected mean is higher than that of the pre-test.

Table 5. The Mean Difference between the Pre-and Post-Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SD Error M</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-test scores-pre-test scores</td>
<td>5.01099</td>
<td>4.24132</td>
<td>.44461</td>
<td>11.271</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be clearly seen in table 5, there was a mean difference between the two tests of (5.01) with a standard deviation of (4.24) and (.44) standard error of the mean. With 120 degrees of freedom, and at 0.001 level of significance, the required critical value for significance for the t-ratio is (2.35) (one-tailed test), for a two-tailed test, it is much lower, since the predicted difference (or significance) is in either direction, on the contrary of a one-tailed test which predicts a directional result, i.e. in one direction, in our case the significance of the difference between the two tests’ scores, whereas the results of the post-test should have higher means (2 higher t-ratios). As the obtained t-ratio was much higher (11.27), we can say that the results were highly significant (the post-test has a t-ratio higher than the required t-ratio).

5. Discussion

The major findings of the items on the IMI indicated that the classroom reading environment, of condition 1, was effective in supporting largely and enhancing salient positive determinants of intrinsic motivation as reflected by interest/enjoyment, value/importance, and effort, it was, however, fairly supportive for the basic innate need of competence. It is pertinent to concede that the same motivational environment was a source of making learners feel tense,
yet any foreign language learning environment is vulnerable to anxiety. Therefore, all the IMI’s items were enhanced, but they were not sufficiently supported in the reward condition.

The results of the t-test for related samples yielded statistically significant differences (as there was a notable mean difference between condition 1 and 2). It denotes that the reward was effective in enhancing all the items on the IMI through which we intended to measure intrinsic motivation. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) that the difference is due to chance and accept the alternative hypothesis (H1). In effect, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have been found to be additive in reading, resulting in a positive causal relationship.

For the major reason that the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test was (5.01) (which is not in fact equal to 0), and the t-value was higher than the required t-ratio, inescapably, the results are in the same direction of the researcher’s contention. The results of the two tests indicated that there is enough statistical evidence to say that the null hypothesis of no difference between the means is clearly rejected, and that the alternative hypothesis, in contrast, is utterly accepted. Thereupon, the statistically significant differences between students’ performance in the pre-and post-tests are not due to chance; rather, it is due to our motivational intervention. The incentive-based system in reading was effective in advancing students’ comprehension skills and did not impede their comprehension.

**Conclusion**

This paper is sought out to provide prominence to the longitudinal impact of creating an incentive-based system— as a new motivating strategy— during a reading practice phase (wherein we offered short stories in response to students meeting a performance standard in intensive reading activities) on learners’ intrinsic reading motivation and performance. We departed from the supposition that engaging learners to productively work under a reward-based system in reading would probably enhance their intrinsic motivation and performance. We further illustrated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can have additive and positive influence on a reading practice phase. Accordingly, the present results are congruent with the findings (Cameron, Pierce, Banko, & Gear, 2005) that achievement-based rewards for reading activities enhance subsequently students’ intrinsic motivation.

However, the subjects were prone to anxiety in the reward condition. This can be attributed neither to the reward’s type nor contingency, yet it is more strongly related to the reward’s expectancy. Because the reward, through time, became expected, it emerges that the motivational environment coerced learners to feel stressed (they ought to produce a desired behaviour to be rewarded tangibly in front of their classmates). In view of that, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be additive in reading, but what really matters is when the reward becomes expected. In essence, it is quite feasible to admit that students’ perceived competence is still very moderate. The reward did not instil into them high self-appraisal of their reading performance. Thereupon, as the reward became expected to our learners, it might suggest that students enjoyed the act of receiving the reward more than the reading environment per se.

The present findings have paved the way for the following recommendations:

- Integrating reading in the EFL curricula is a challenging task that requires to be rigorously thought of by senior teachers of English, at the Department of Letters and English Language-Mentouri University Bros. in virtue of its incontrovertible role in enhancing and paving the way
for students’ literacy development. Teachers would be first attuned to learners’ problems in reading through a series of reading activities at the beginning of the year, and then develop an appropriate reading curriculum to remedy these problems. In like manner, EFL teachers are also required to set up a reading program wherein it targets learners’ motivation in reading. This can be achieved by collecting data on the topics learners have preference for reading. If learners meet their interests and their needs in reading are partially satisfied, they are willing to collaborate and put high effort and may be, through time, they will internalize the value of reading and integrate it to their own behaviour.

- Together, the habit and frequency of L1 and L2 reading have become a serious handicap in the Algerian society, and I dare say we are one step away from becoming a ‘dead-society readers’. As a university researcher, it is high time to commence searching for possible solutions to this ‘epidemic’. In an attempt to foster the amount of time students spend reading in the classroom and thus ameliorate their motivation, proficiency gains, and the prerequisite skills and knowledge in the target language, another alternative motivating strategy, for adult university students, could be simply sustained silent reading. For second/foreign language learners, sustained silent reading has become one among the best strategies for improving intrinsic motivation, gains in literacy, and language development. It refers to students reading self-selected books with no assessment on what they read. Thereupon, this type of reading is not a time-consuming classwork, and it could create a desire to read (Krashen, 2004) that our students lack in the language they are expected to achieve a native-like fluency.

About the Author
Imene BILOUK is fourth year of Ph.D. studies at the Department of Arts and English Language, Faculty of Arts and Languages-Mentouri University Bros.-and a teaching assistant of English at the University of Mentouri Bros. She holds an MA in Language Sciences and currently pursuing her doctoral of philosophy in Didactics of Foreign Languages (educational psychology). Her research interests include mainly—but not exclusively—: Rewards, L2 Reading Motivation, Reading Comprehension, and Intrinsic Motivation.

References
The Impact of an Extrinsic Reward in Intensive Reading


I, Imene BILOUK, hereby declare that this written work is my original work, and affirm that this article has not been submitted to any publishing review.
Epistemological Beliefs and University English Learning Demands: The Case of First-year Students

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Abstract
Research evidence shows that epistemic beliefs, among other individuals’ affective characteristics, play an important role in the process of language learning. The aim behind the present study is to substantiate the role students’ language learning preconceptions play in predicting the success or failure of instructional methods. For this end, the epistemological beliefs of 110 freshman students enrolled in the Department of English, University of Mentouri were analysed using the Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI). The data analysis showed that university students during their entire first year hold naive epistemological beliefs (M=3.18, >2.72). This paper suggests that students’ unintended and immature views may interfere with their ability to learn the English language at the university level given that the latter is a context where there is no room for spoon-feeding and where students are expected to be mature self-regulated learners. Pedagogical implications are suggested not only to help students adapt to university demands and adopt sophisticated beliefs but also to help teachers take instructional decisions that promote students’ future conceptual change.

Key words: naive and sophisticated epistemic beliefs, conceptual change, English learning, and adapting/adopting instructional methods
Introduction

Previous research emphasized the importance of providing sufficient and more context-specific evidence to better current instructional practices. To this end, researchers studied learners from different age groups and learning contexts. In the hope of contributing to the international understanding of teaching and learning English as a foreign language, we decided to study epistemological beliefs among Algerian English learners. Why investigating epistemological beliefs and not any other individuals’ characteristics? Epistemological beliefs are the factors that help students manage and survive "the highly complex, contradictory, and evolving nature of knowledge" that they have to deal with at the university level (Schommer, 1998, p.138).

Epistemological beliefs are the assumptions that individuals accumulate about knowledge and knowing. They were first thought of as a simple process of dependent beliefs that people share about epistemological questions. They were explained in a linear model of nine stages starting from fact-oriented, right or wrong, dualistic thinking to relativistic context-oriented thinking (Schommer, 1994). An alternative conceptualization of beliefs was proposed in 1990. The latter suggested that epistemological beliefs consist of independent factors and that students can hold mature beliefs toward one dimension and naïve beliefs toward the other (Schommer, 1994). Students' epistemological beliefs include assumptions about the nature of knowledge itself (simple and certain vs. complex and changing), source of knowledge (external vs. internal) and the process of obtaining it (quick vs. gradual) (Schmeisser et al., 2013).

The importance of investigating students' epistemological beliefs is twofold. Research studies showed that all the epistemological dimensions, namely certain and simple knowledge, innate ability, quick learning and omniscient authority, are strong predictors of school achievements and successful learning (Rukavina & Daneman, 1996; Savojj, Nuisha & Boreiri, 2013). In the language learning context for example, students’ epistemic beliefs were found to have a direct effect on student readers multiple text comprehension- intertextual understanding (Strømsø, Braten & Samuelstuen, 2008; Braten, Britt, Strømsø & Rouet, 2011). Research showed that students with less evolving beliefs about knowledge and learning will find it difficult to integrate meaning and to make text-to-text connections. The impact epistemological beliefs have on academic learning is due to the fact that these beliefs also have an effect on students’ choice and use of learning strategies, problem-solving tactics, motivation, learning objectives and regulation of learning (Bernardo, 2009; Mellat & Lavasani, 2011).

In the same way, epistemic assumptions can affect the way students benefit from instructional trainings. Teachers expect their students to know certain things and based on those expectations they take instructional decisions. Teachers who take for granted that their students hold mature beliefs about knowledge expect them to understand concepts and do tasks that might be cognitively challenging for them. For example, when students who believe that knowledge is simple and made of isolated facts are asked to synthesize, they will not only do the task poorly but also might not even understand what the task is all about to begin with.

In fact, the present work is an offshoot of a larger research work that investigates the extent to which epistemological beliefs can predict the success or failure of instructional practices. Epistemological beliefs can be regarded as a mediating variable; a variable that “transmits the effect of one variable on the other, making up a causal chain” (Matthews, Deary &
Whiteman, 2009, p. 284). Teachers and researchers have to take into consideration the role of epistemic beliefs in mediating the effect of any given instruction on students’ learning.

Learners’ epistemological assumptions are subjected to change. When talking about epistemological beliefs, one has to consider conceptual change. Conceptual change is the process of evolving and reconstructing one’s beliefs, attitudes and expectations. It is fundamental for learning and academic success. Motivation and intentional conceptual change are closely related, for individuals cannot make a change by revising old beliefs and formulating new ones unless they are willing to (Patrick & Pintrich, 2001). Change in one’s beliefs is twofold: the product (the change itself) and the process (Luque, 2003). Conceptual change is “a process that demands some prerequisites. Different outcomes may result from the process, but the prerequisites to initiate the process are the same.” In addition to motivation, learners have to know what to change and how to control the change (ibid, p. 138) that is why teachers can be found very helpful in assisting students in the process of altering beliefs.

The Present Study

Participants

The participants who took part in the current study are 110 first-year students enrolled in the Department of Letters and English Language, University of Mentouri. The reasons why we have decided to work with first-year students are the following: first-year students often find it hard to adapt to university demands; they also often come from high school with a set of language misconceptions that might interfere with their future construction of knowledge. The sample was comprised of 83 female (75.5%), and 27 male participants (24.5%). As regards age, they were between 18 and 24 years of age for both sexes. For that matter, in the present work we do not aim to study any gender or age differences.

Research Instrument

To evaluate our sample’s epistemological beliefs and later, in the post-treatment phase, conceptual change, we used the Epistemological Beliefs Inventory (EBI) developed by Schraw, Bendixen, and Dunkle (2002). The EBI is a 32-item questionnaire based on the original instrument of Schommer (1990). Revisions and pilot testing of the original 63-item inventory led to the development of the version used in this study (Bendixen et al., 1998). The EBI includes the five dimensions of epistemological beliefs suggested by Schommer including: simple knowledge (items# 1, 10,11,13,18,22,24,30), certain knowledge (items# 2,6,14,19,23,25,31), innate ability (items # 5,8,12,15,17,26,32), omniscient authority (items# 4,7,20,27,28) and quick learning (items# 3,9,16,21,29). The simple knowledge subscale includes items such as: ‘It bothers me when instructors don’t tell students the answers to complicated problems.’ A sample item from the certain knowledge subscale is ‘I like teachers who present several competing theories and let their students decide which is best.’ The innate ability subscale includes items like: ‘Really smart students don’t have to work as hard to do well in school.’ The omniscient authority includes items like: ‘Students should always obey the law.’ Finally, a sample item from the quick learning subscale is ‘Students who learn things quickly are the most successful.’

This questionnaire is based on a five-point likert scale in which subjects answer by expressing to what extent they agree with the statements. Items # 2,6,14,20,24,30,31 are reverse coded; instead of giving a value of 5 to ‘strongly agree,’ we gave a value of 1. It is a cumulative scale; the general score is obtained by adding up the value of each agreement or disagreement option. High obtained scores indicate naive epistemic beliefs while low scores indicate...
sophisticated beliefs. Students with naive epistemic beliefs are likely to think that the ability to learn and excel is fixed at birth, i.e. it is impossible to improve and develop one's skills and capacities; learning is a process that either happens quickly or never at all, and that knowledge is handed down by authority and it should never be subjected to questions (Winne & Nesbit, 2009). They also think that knowledge is simple and easy to understand because it is made of unrelated small bits rather than complex and coherent wholes (Winne & Nesbit, 2009).

**Description of the Results**

**Table 1. Students’ Pre and Post Treatment Epistemological Beliefs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Treatment Results</th>
<th>Post-Treatment Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Scale Results</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Knowledge</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain knowledge</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innate Ability</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omniscient Authority</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Learning</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data were collected via the EBI survey. As can be seen in the table above the five dimensions of epistemic beliefs described earlier are reported. The mean scores of the five subscales in addition to the overall scale were used in the analysis thanks to summative nature of the instrument. Students’ beliefs were investigated at the beginning and the end of the academic year to study the possibility of promoting students’ beliefs about knowledge. In the present paper, studying for an entire academic year was considered the treatment.

The majority of participants started the academic year with naive **general** epistemological beliefs (M= 3.18>2.72). Only 5.45% of students (6 respondents) had mature beliefs towards knowledge and learning. Students held naive beliefs regarding the simple knowledge (M= 3.3>2.72), certain knowledge (M= 3.1>2.72), innate ability (M= 3.36>2.72) and omniscient authority’ (3.39>2.72) subscales. Students only had sophisticated beliefs regarding the quick learning subscale (M= 2.64<2.72). The participants thought that learning is not a process that can be accomplished rapidly. They thought that learning success is not associated with the speed of doing things and finding answers and solutions.

Unfortunately, the post-treatment general mean did not show any improvements in students’ epistemological beliefs. Spending an entire year at university, more specifically in the Department of Letters and English Language, University of Mentouri, as freshman students did not result in any conceptual change in the majority of our students. However, instead of 5.45%, 8.18% held at the end of the treatment sophisticated beliefs and showed signs of conceptual change. A raise of 0.01 was noticed in students’ post general epistemic beliefs. In fact, higher
means indicate less sophisticated epistemological beliefs. Nevertheless, after running t-test for paired samples (t (109) = -0.489, p (.626) >0.05), we found out that the 0.01 raise in the post general mean was not significant; therefore, pre and post general means are not statistically different.

At the end of the academic year, students still think that knowledge is simple (M= 3.46>2.72), certain and invariable (M= 2.91>2.72) and the ability to obtain it is fixed at birth (M= 3.41>2.72). They (N=110) also believe that knowledge is unquestionable and often handed down by authority: usually teachers and parents (M= 3.38>2.72). They thankfully still think that learning is anything but a quick process (M= 2.65<2.72). Regarding the quick learning subscale, students experienced a slight change in the mean of only 0.01. However, such post-treatment mean raise was also found insignificant (t (109) = -0.163, p (.871) >0.05). In other words, students’ assumptions regarding the quick learning subscale did not get less sophisticated.

### Table 2. Pre and Post T-test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple knowledge</td>
<td>-.1602</td>
<td>.5784578</td>
<td>.0551538</td>
<td>-.269540 to -.050914</td>
<td>-2.905</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certain Knowledge</td>
<td>.1519</td>
<td>.70579</td>
<td>.06729</td>
<td>.01857 to .28532</td>
<td>2.258</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As could be observed in the table 1, an increase of 0.16 was noticed in the students’ post-test beliefs regarding simple knowledge. A t-test for dependent samples was used to see to what extent this mean difference is significant. The t-statistic is -2.905 with 109 degrees of freedom. The corresponding two-tailed p-value is .004 which is less than the threshold probability value 0.05 indicating that there is a significant mean difference between students' pre and post-treatment simple knowledge subscale results. Given that any increase in the mean implies less sophisticated beliefs, one can say that students ended the academic year with more naive assumptions regarding simple knowledge. This indicates that students do not try to put ideas together to solve learning problems and answer questions. It also indicates that students think that knowledge consists of isolated facts, and that learning is the process of memorizing bits of information.

Although students post-treatment mean regarding the certainty of knowledge still indicates naive beliefs, we have noticed a change towards more sophisticated attitudes. As can be seen in table 2 (second row), there is a statistically significant difference in scores between pre (M=3.1, Std=.52) and post-treatment assumptions (M=2.91, Std=.57), t (109) = -2.258, p (.026) <0.05. The mean drop in post-treatment results was 0.15 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .018 to .285. Students now less think that knowledge consists of unchanging facts.

### Discussion
The two aims behind this research work are: to try to shed some light on students’ learning preconceptions grounded in their previous years of studies and to investigate to what extent spending a year at university as freshman English language students would promote conceptual change. Pre-treatment EBI results indicated that students enter university with strongly held misconceptions about knowledge and learning. In addition, spending an entire academic year at university did not seem to help much in promoting students’ conceptual change. The majority of freshmen believe that knowledge is made of completely separate and unconnected simple facts rather than integrated concepts. This latter also indicates that students are unable to put together information in complex networks and are unable to construct their own knowledge, something which is vital for learning.

As for the omniscient authority dimension of epistemic beliefs, students think that knowledge is inaccessible unless provided by a source of authority: teachers, for example. Despite the fact that information nowadays is easier to obtain than any time before, students still depend on others. This finding is consistent with the fact that languages are still taught in teacher-centred environments in which students play the role of passive recipients. As a result of these omniscient authority beliefs, students also think that knowledge is unquestionable something which leaves literally no room for debate and negotiation of meaning. Admittedly, students have developed relatively more sophisticated beliefs in relation to certain knowledge. Students now, after finishing their first year at university, less think that knowledge is invariable and fixed.

The results of the quick learning subscale tell us that the freshmen under study thankfully do not think, either before or after the treatment, that learning is a process that can be accomplished rapidly or never at all. They believe that learning is an ongoing process. However, a previous study demonstrated that beliefs about the speed of the learning process were not found to be significant predictors neither of university students’ academic achievement nor of strategy choice and use (Dahl, Bals & Turi, 2005).

The present work tried to draw attention to an influential affective variable. Epistemological beliefs are suggested as a way to explain why some students do not respond positively to the offered instructional trainings and find it hard to adapt to the university environment. The main aim of this paper is to urge teachers to know about their students epistemological assumptions and take the necessary remedial instructional decisions. Simply put, students with naive beliefs have a different understanding of the nature of knowledge and learning which is not often communicated and which teachers must be aware of.

Thankfully, students’ epistemological beliefs can be changed and conceptual change can be promoted. Research evidence showed that instructional environments can mitigate naive beliefs and promote sophisticated ones. Learner-centred teaching approaches in which teachers dethrone themselves from being the centre of the instruction and give more chance to students to take control of their own learning and construct their own knowledge can promote students’ epistemological beliefs (Goldburg, 2010). For what is worth, a teacher “with more sophisticated epistemological beliefs [is] more likely to endorse student-centred instructional practices that emphasize critical reasoning” (Schraw et al, 2013, p. 268).

Constructivism, a learner-centred approach, can be suggested as a way to promote students' epistemological development given that it is "an epistemology, a learning or meaning-making theory, that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learn"
This teaching and learning approach may help change students’ naive beliefs regarding the source and certainty of knowledge. To help students understand the changing and tentative nature of knowledge, constructivist teaching allows students to experiment, question and explore the different facets of knowledge rather than just blindly swallow whatever they are presented with. Constructivist instructions also encourage students to go seek information, integrate ideas and build their own networks of information. In other words, constructivism help students understand that knowledge is not often external and handed down by authority.

In addition to learner-centred constructivist- instructions, teaching students’ critical thinking proved to promote sophisticated epistemological beliefs. According to Kienhues, Bromme & Stahl (2008), a short refutational epistemological instruction, as opposed to a non challenging informational instruction, will help change students’ epistemic assumptions from unintended to more mature domain-specific beliefs. Subjecting students to controversial topics where they have to question and argument will help students change their opinions about the certainty and simplicity of knowledge.

There are other teaching practices that can promote students’ mature beliefs (Siddiqui, 2008). Test questions, for example, should encourage students to apply and put into practice, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the learned notions. Teachers should choose test questions that address high cognitive abilities by giving students the opportunity to go beyond merely remembering the learned materials. In the same way, teachers should not adopt the ‘traditional lecture and test’ way of teaching. When teachers teach, solely, to prepare students for tests, they encourage students to adopt performance rather than learning objectives. They also encourage students to memorize whatever it was taught without any further processing or integration with previously acquired notions.

Conclusion

Epistemological beliefs are a challenging construct to investigate. Just like other cognitive and affective variables, epistemological beliefs are difficult to measure. Despite the fact that there is a plethora of research methods and instruments, there is still a need for investigation tools that tackle epistemological beliefs from different angles and in different learning contexts (Bernat, 2012). Researchers also have to study more in depth the direct and indirect effects of epistemic assumptions on learning and knowledge because “less has been said about their actual impact in the classroom and beyond” (Bernat, 2012, p. 449).

Another challenge in studying students’ epistemological development is the impact of teachers’ beliefs about learning and knowledge on their students’. Teachers’ epistemological beliefs, just like students’, experience change and influence both their teaching and their students’ learning. Teachers’ epistemological beliefs are of a great importance especially “when teachers are confronted by and engaged with changes to their practice” (Harteis, Gruber, and Lehner, 2006, p. 127). Given that the teaching industry is experiencing a lot of changes like integrating technology, e-learning and constructivist-aligned instructions, teachers have to constantly revise their beliefs.
About the Author

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ICTs Implementation in Teaching Linguistics and Students’ Test Achievement. Case of Biskra University

Salima RABEHI
Mohamed Khider University of Biskra-Algeria

Abstract
From our own experience in teaching the Linguistics course to 1st year classes of the English Branch (EB) at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra (MKUB), we have noticed the students’ poor achievement when tested in Linguistics. Such poor achievement urges us to rethink our methods in teaching such a demanding course as Linguistics. The present paper is about implementing ICTs in teaching Linguistics and its impact on EFL students’ test achievement. We hypothesize if we teach Linguistics using judiciously ICTs, the students’ test results will significantly improve. We have tested our hypothesis by teaching linguistics to a group of 25 students (1st year classes) in the language laboratory relying on the Data Show device. Our main objective is to discover the students’ attitudes towards learning linguistics in a new setting (Language Laboratory) using new teaching aid (Data Show). To collect data for this study, we have conducted a feedback interview with the 25 students who have undergone the experience of studying linguistics in the language laboratory via the Data Show. The results disclose that the implementation of ICTs used in teaching linguistics has shown its positive impact on the students’ test achievement.

Keywords: ICTs, EFL Students, Linguistics’ Teaching, Test Achievement.
1. Introduction

It is worth noting that language learning requires the implementation of new teaching methods due to the changes of the globalization era. Both teachers and learners have to engage seriously in the application of such new techniques, hence, to achieve satisfactory results. According to Yusuf (2005), “The field of education has been affected by ICTs, which have undoubtedly affected teaching, learning, and research”, in the same breath, Al-Ansari (2006) advocated that “A great deal of research has proven the benefits to the quality of education”. (Cited in Ul-Amin, n.d., p.2). In other words, no one could deny the positive effects of ICTs in the field of education. Besides, Dudeney & Hockly (2007, p.7) pointed out that “Although the use of ICT by language teachers is still not widespread, the use of technology in the classroom is becoming increasingly important, and it will become a normal part of ELT practice in the coming years”. Differently stated, if the use of ICT tools is optional nowadays, it will be compulsory in the next years.

Furthermore, the authors of ‘ICT in School Education: Primary and Secondary’ (2010, p.3) opined that:

There is no conclusive research to prove that student achievement is higher when using ICTs in the education space, either in the developed or developing countries, there is a general consensus among practitioners and academics that integration of ICTs in education has a positive impact on the learning environment.

In the same breath, they advocated that “ICTs act as and provide students and teachers with new tools that enable improved learning and teaching”. That is to say that even if experience of using ICT tools in the language classroom has shown its positive impact on the teaching learning process in general; however, when it comes to the students’ achievement in tests, it is not positive to the extent that using ICT tools leads to students’ high test scores.

The present paper aims to spot light on the deficiencies of first year students of the English Branch (EB) at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra-Algeria (MKUB) in their Linguistics course. We believe in the effectiveness and efficiency of integrating ICTs in the language classroom. On the one hand, we have attempted to teach Linguistics in the Language Laboratory (LL) using the Data Show to a group of 22 students. On the other hand, we have taught the same lectures to two other groups of 54 students in the classroom, and then the 76 students have taken the same test to see the impact of teaching Linguistics in the LL on the students’ test results.

2. Methodology

The study of the present paper concerns three groups of 86 students (1st year level) of the EB at MKUB. The researcher has taught the same lectures (i.e., same content) of the Linguistics course to one group (22 students) in the LL and to two groups (64 students) in the classroom. The lectures concern the second semester of the academic year 2011/2012 (i.e., February to May 2012). At the end of the course, all the 86 students have taken the same test, and then we have compared the test’ results (viz., grades), therefore, to see the effect of teaching Linguistics in the LL on the students’ test results. After that, we have conducted a feedback interview with the group taught in the LL. Ten questions were asked as they appear in later sections.
ICTs Implementation in Teaching Linguistics

RABEHI

3. ICTs and Language Learning

As far as language learning is concerned, decision makers in the field of education advocate that integrating ICT in the language classroom is of a great help for both pillars of the teaching learning process. According to the author(s) of ICT in Education (2014, p.1), ICT or “Educational technology is utilized by learners and educators in many settings, such as home, school, higher education, and business and professions”. Besides, Gray et al. (2007, p.407) state that “Current government policy in the UK places teachers of all subject areas under pressure to embed ICT into their pedagogic practice to improve teaching and learning”. In the same vein, Samuel and Bakar (2006, p.1) opined that “The utilization and integration of ICT tools can indeed assist students in acquiring English Language competency as well as enhance the quality of their learning experience”. Differently stated, embedding ICT in the language classroom has its immense effect on the quality of teaching.

In the era of globalization, the integration of ICT tools in the language classrooms is a prerequisite to improve the quality of teaching as well as learning. Teachers in the first place have to rethink their teaching methods and techniques. Unfortunately, some teachers and learners still resist the new changes coming with the latest reforms in higher education (i.e., LMD system). De Szendeyffy (2005, p.1) stated that “…there are still some who, due to their limited interest or user headaches (or even beliefs about technology), have not been able to foresee the immense potential of computers in their classes”. In other words, some teachers neglect the benefits of using ICT tools in their classes simply because of their limited interest or even limited knowledge to use such new tools appropriately.

In the case of the EB of MKUB, many teachers keep using their old methods and techniques and refuse to integrate ICT tools in their classes. Some teachers reported that the implementation of ICTs requires adequate training. Besides, some other teachers claimed that the insufficient number of language laboratories stands behind their resistance to the new changes. Teachers argued that ICTs tools are effective if they are available in good conditions, with sufficient number and adequate training.

4. Benefits of Integrating ICTs in Language Classrooms

There is no doubt that the implementation of ICTs in the language classroom has its positive impact on the teaching learning process. It helps teachers to raise their students’ motivation with the audio visual aids. It enables teachers to present their courses in varied ways using colors, music, etc. Furthermore, it encourages shy students to engage in learning as it gives them the opportunity to practice the language freely. Padurean and Margan (2009, p.100) stated four different advantages of ICTs in foreign language teaching including: capacity to control presentation, novelty and creativity, feedback, and adaptability. Besides, Houcine (2011, p.2) summarized the benefits of ICTs for language learners in the following four points:

- ICT increases learners’ motivation and thus enhances personal commitment and engagement;
- ICT improves independent learning;
- Learners’ collaboration and communication are more important;
- Learners’ attainment and outcomes are improved.
Furthermore, Isisag (2012, p.2) opined that “Lectures become more interesting and less ordinary which boosts learners’ engagement”. In other words, researchers from different countries in different contexts agreed that using ICT in the language classroom has proven its effectiveness in the improvement teaching and learning.

As far as the present study is concerned, the LL environment was so encouraging in that it has motivated almost all the students. It has been noticed that even those students who were used to be passive have shown their interest in the course (i.e., raising their hands to participate, share ideas with their peers and asking questions). Moreover, it has been observed that the students’ level of concentration was higher because of the way the content was presented in the slides of the PowerPoint presentation of the lectures.

5. The Analysis of the Students’ Feedback Interview

The current analysis seeks to verify the hypothesis, which is couched as follows: If we implement ICTs (namely, Data show) in teaching linguistics to first year classes, there will be an improvement in their Linguistics’ tests scores. It should be acknowledged from the onset that an interview is deemed to be the first best choice and the linchpin in the testing of the aforementioned hypothesis. In the same breath, the interview in question is mainly concerned with the implementation of ICTs (viz., data show “DS”, henceforth) within a well-defined setting (viz., language Laboratory “LL”, from now on) in teaching linguistics for 1st year classes.

We have purposely sampled one specific group of the 1st year classes. The criterion of the selection has been a less crowded class that would be taught a tutorial in Linguistics through the medium of DS in the LL. This deliberate choice of the group is premised by the fact that the implementation of new techniques and methods in teaching linguistics may enhance students’ achievements in this course as far as the degree of motivation, comprehension, and test scores are concerned.

5.1. Description of the Interview Conditions

The feedback interview took place after teaching the second semester linguistics’ lectures via data show. It is consisted of 10 questions targeting different elements such as the setting, the students’ attitudes towards the use of ICTs, the teacher’s explanation, and the test scores. Indeed, the selected group comprises 22 students, but who accepted to be interviewed were only 8. The other 14 students who didn’t accept justified their refusal with the lack of time since they were busy revising for the exams.

5.2. Findings of the Study

The present section is devoted to the interpretation and analysis of the findings of the study. The results are demonstrated in pie charts as follows:

**Question 1:** The setting in which you attended the Linguistics tutorials was
a. motivating
b. demotivating
c. neutral
Please, justify:
Figure 1. Language laboratory and learners’ motivation

The first question seeks the students’ attitude towards the setting in which they attend the language tutorials. A quick glance at the pie chart above reveals that 62.5% of the interviewed students answered that the new setting (namely, the Language Laboratory) is motivating, while 37.5% have a neutral attitude towards the setting. On the one hand, the solid majority of the respondents estimated at 62.5% justified its answer stating that it is different from the classroom. Besides, it is a new environment in the teacher knows how to send the information as it accommodates their needs. On the other hand, the 37.5% justified their neutral position viewing that the environment is important sure, but the most important thing is the students’ number “less is better” while others feel the same just as in the classroom.

Question 2: Would you consider the setting in question

a. comfortable and relaxing
b. nervousness inducing
c. neutral

Please, justify.

Figure 2. Language laboratory and learners’ comfort

Comment

The second question is a follow-up to the first question which undertakes to test the students’ attitudes towards the setting. 75% of the students viewed that the setting is comfortable and relaxing because silence and calmness are the dominant features of the new environment unlike the classroom in which they are used to get disturbed by those students standing outside.
mumbling and waffling (Emphasis added). Whereas 25% of the interviewed students opined that the setting in question is neutral neither comfortable nor relaxing nor nervousness inducing without stating the reasons behind such attitude.

**Question 3:** The use of the Language Laboratory in teaching linguistics was

a. exciting and enjoyable
b. frustrating and intimidating
c. neutral

Please, say why?

![Image of a pie chart](image)

**Figure 3. Language laboratory and learners’ excitement**

Still a third question deals with the students’ attitudes towards the use of the LL in teaching linguistics. Again, 75% of the sample in question viewed that teaching linguistics in the LL is exciting and enjoyable claiming that it enhances their degree of concentration, enables them to be independent from the handouts, improves their degree of understanding, increases Teacher-Student interaction, and raises their interest in the course as compared with the other modules. Stating that “… it becomes really a unique session in contrast with the other modules” , while the other 25% with the neutral attitude stated that sometimes it helps them summarize the most interesting ideas, and other times they fell lost between the explanation of the teacher and the slides via the data show.

**Question 4:** The use of ICTs in presenting complex concepts in Linguistics was

a. helpful in understanding the input
b. inhibiting
c. neutral

Please, explain.
In order to obtain the students’ points of view about the use of ICTs in presenting complex concepts in linguistics, we included the fourth question. Chart 4 indicates that the vast majority of the targeted population (87.5%) agreed that the use of ICTs (namely data show) is helpful in understanding the input (i.e., the complex concepts in linguistics) providing the following arguments:

- It leads the student to put all his/her concentration in the main concepts of the lecture.
- It helps the student to take the course easily even if it is difficult because the visual presentation makes it easy to understand the lesson.
- It helps discussing with the teacher.
- It is very helpful for summarizing the lectures, moving pictures and colors is a good manner to avoid boredom.
- It is clear and includes the summary.
- It helps understanding the lesson more than without the use of ICTs because students listen to the teacher and follow the presentation at the same time.

From the above mentioned reasons, we have noticed the strong agreement of the students about the positive impact of the use of ICTs on the students’ understanding of the complex concepts in linguistics. Moreover, it can be seen from chart 4 that a minority of students (12.5%) who take a neutral position and did not provide any argument.

**Question 5:** Do you think you got much profit in learning in?

a. Language Laboratory
b. Classrooms
c. Large classrooms

Please, justify.
Figure 5. Setting types and Linguistics teaching

Moving to another aspect related to the new setting (LL), we raised a question seeking where the students get much profit in learning. The answer provided by 87.5% of the interviewed students demonstrated that the LL gains the dominance over the classroom and the large classroom while only 12.5% of the participants stated that they get much profit in learning in classrooms. The first students’ team (87.5%) justified their answer stating that the environment is calm “no noise”, and undoubtedly more comfortable when compared with the large classrooms that are so noisy because of the large number of students (i.e., it exceeds 60 students). Besides, it is an opportunity to practice technology in class. The second students’ team (12.5%) gave priority to the classrooms and the secondary position to the LL, and the last position is for the large classroom where concentration and understanding can be hardly achieved.

Question 6: The use of ICTs in teaching linguistics

a. Met your expectations and needs
b. Confirmed your negative attitudes
c. You did not feel any difference

Please, justify.

Figure 6. ICTs and learners’ needs
Another question about the use of ICTs in teaching linguistics is included. 75% of the students opined that the use of ICTs in teaching linguistics meets their needs and expectations. 12.5% of the students argued that it confirms their negative attitudes, and still 12.5% others stated that they did not feel any difference. The 75% of the students justified their answer stating the following:

- It is more attractive, enjoyable, and interesting because they do not feel that the lesson is boring.
- It meets only 50% of the expectations and needs because they need more examples and exercises.
- We are living the period of technology, so using such devices would effectively help us reach the goal of the session, (understanding the content).

In addition to the questions about teaching linguistics in the LL and the use of ICTs, we included other question items about the teacher’s explanation and the students’ behavior.

**Question 7:** You felt that your teacher explained better in

a. Language Laboratory
b. The classroom
c. The large classroom

Please, explain.

![Figure 7. Language laboratory and teachers' performance](image)

The seventh question is about the students’ attitude towards the teacher’s explanation. 100% of the students state that they feel that their teacher explains better in the LL rather than either in the classroom or in the large classroom. Their strong agreement was justified as follows:

- The teacher is more comfortable with the use of ICTs.
- The teacher will not feel bored with the students.
- The teacher gains control over the main points of the lecture thanks to the use of ICTs, unlike the classroom where the teacher makes more efforts to transmit the message, in the LL is totally the opposite “S/he uses few words to mean much”.
- The teacher’s voice is clearer thanks to the silent environment, less number of students, and the teacher’s position “everyone can see the teacher (high place)”.

Besides, they also agreed that the teacher explains wherever s/he is but the new setting “LL” and the use of ICTs facilitates the task and render it better.

**Question 8:** You feel that you achieve better after

- a. Laboratory sessions
- b. Classroom sessions
- c. Both equally

Please, justify.

![Figure 9 Language laboratory and learners’ performance](image)

In the same context but moving to the second pillar of the Teaching Learning process “the student”, we raised the eighth question. The latter seeks the students’ attitudes towards their achievement as far as the teaching setting is concerned. 87.5% of the students strongly agreed that they achieve better after language laboratory sessions and 12.5% of them viewed that their achievement is the same after both the laboratory sessions and the classroom sessions. The 87.5% of the students provided the following arguments supporting their answer.

- They admit that the laboratory sessions are more comfortable and understandable than classroom sessions.
- They feel more motivated and active when compared to the classroom sessions.
- They benefit a lot from the colors used in the slides to memorize the lectures’ main ideas.
- They prefer if the lecture will be divided into two parts: the first part in the classroom for the theory, and the second part in the laboratory for the practice (more details and illustrations).

**Question 9:** You feel that your teacher scored the tests

- a. Fairer after the laboratory sessions
- b. Fairer after classroom sessions
- c. No real difference

Please, justify.
Question 9: Language laboratory and test scores

Since the core of our investigation is testing and tests, we judged it essential to address the two last questions. Question 9 is about the students’ position towards their teachers’ tests scoring. 62.5% of the interviewed students advocated that their teacher scores the tests fairer after the LL sessions without stating clear reasons behind such an answer. 25% of them viewed that there is no real difference between the teachers’ scoring of tests either after laboratory sessions or classroom sessions. 12.5% think that scoring is linked to the test paper in the first place. “I think scoring is according to the test paper (Answer paper) unless they will remember the active and good students and treat them differently”.

Question 10: Your test type and format mirrors classroom practices better

a. After laboratory sessions
b. Classroom sessions
c. Both equally

Please, explain.
and one of the students stated: “I like the module more, I understand more”. 37.5% of the students viewed that the test type and format mirrors classroom practices better after laboratory sessions while only 12.5% of the students who are for the idea that the test type and format mirrors classroom practices better equally after both laboratory and classroom sessions without stating the arguments. The noticeable thing from the provided answers through this, interview is that there is a positive attitude towards teaching ling via “data show” in the LL. In other words, teaching linguistics in a new setting with the implementation of ICTs has its positive impact on the students’ attitudes in the first place, even though the impact on their achievement is significant to some extent.

6. Conclusion

The interest in ICTs has increased with the era of globalization. Researchers in different fields especially in education have paid a special attention to the effects of implementing ICTs on improving the quality of teaching. Indeed, integrating ICT in the language classroom is a necessity to renew the teaching methods and increase learners’ motivation. Decision makers in higher education should think seriously about supplying universities with the adequate materials that help teachers cope with the new changes and achieve better results. Moreover, the class size should be reduced so that all the students could have the opportunity to learn in the LL. From our own experience, teaching a large group of 45 students in the LL is quite impossible because the students’ number exceeds the capacity of the LL (i.e., 22 booths). Briefly, we conclude that integrating ICT is beneficial unless it is available in good conditions (viz., sufficient in quantity and preceded by adequate training).

7. Recommendations

From the findings of this study, we would like to suggest the following recommendations:

- Decision makers in higher education should provide universities and institutions with sufficient equipments.
- Teachers have to change their negative attitudes towards technology to benefit from its advantages.
- Teachers should have effective training programs before integrating ICT tools in their classes.
- Learners should have positive attitudes towards ICT tools and welcome their integration in their classrooms.
- Learners should get rid of their fear to use computers and other tools which may help improving their level.

About the Author

My name is Salima RABEHI. I am 35 years old. I hold bachelor degree in English language and MA in applied linguistics. I am enrolled in PhD and up to finish. I have been teaching English for twelve years at English Branch of Mohamed Khider University-Biskra- (Algeria). Besides, I have participated in many international and national conferences as ICEEPSY 2012 and ITMAR 2014, in addition to some other study-days organized at the level of our department.
8. References


