

Introduction

Testing of English language learners at an advanced level in Biskra University dates back to 2002 which marks the first graduated students. It is, from that time, characterised by certain recurring traits. In this dissertation, we will analyse the features of the testing procedure in English Department at Biskra University with particular reference to a sample of advanced learners (4th year students of English of 2005) as a case of study.

This work is held for certain reasons. There is a huge difference between what the advanced learners are tested about and what they are to face in the teaching field: middle schools, high schools and universities. This difference reveals once they are graduated where they face the problems of communication, exactly when using the oral language for presenting lessons as teachers or even when using English outside classroom with peers or native speakers. These deficiencies badly affect the stakeholders' level as well as the level of ones' future pupils or students.

This study aims at getting a global image about testing procedures held in Biskra University with these advanced learners. As a result, we will find out the advantages and drawbacks of testing procedures in this region from Algeria, this is done in order to find out remedial for its deficiencies if there are any. The remedial can be a group of solutions that are agreement with the testees and their testers.

To handle this dissertation, it is divided into three chapters: the first one is devoted to the theoretical features of English language testing that are current all over the world. The second is devoted to advanced learners background from the first year of

learning English till the university, with particular focus on their socio-cultural background in Algeria. The third chapter is devoted to the critical analysis of the case of testing 4th year students of English at Biskra University.

The used data gathering tools are basically the questionnaires directed to the active and passive members of the testing foreign language at English Department of Biskra University: teachers and advanced learners. In addition, we use the sample of questions taken by these advanced learners, and the sample of presented lectures along the year as well as the sample of examination questions taken before coming to English Department of Biskra University.

Basing on the above tools, we use the method of case study for this thesis. First, we gathered the information to be a resource for the analysis of the case. Second, we traced back the past of the advanced learners to know their socio-cultural backgrounds as well as their learning. Finally, we analyse testing procedure features in Biskra University through the tools we have.

For we have observed the consistent use of the same testing procedure from 2002 up to 2005; however, the graduated classes have faced problems of communication with both native and non-native English speakers. This makes us wonder about what is beyond this problem. Is it because of the teachers' way of testing? Do they apply the communicative approach to testing English language? Do they test and evaluate the communicative competence or only linguistic one? Do they test all the four skills of communication? Do they involve written and oral tests? Do they use the appropriate test items that really reflect the learners' abilities to communicate? Are they objective or subjective when evaluating? Is it because of certain administrative reasons (timing,

setting, and large number of students....etc)? Or are there other reasons far from the testing process, like society or the advanced learners' psychological background?

The problem may reveal first in the way of testing. In other words, the communicative approach to testing English language learning is not appropriately applied. So that Communicative competence is not well tested and evaluated. This issue is due to the use of only written tests, so the skills of communication are not all involved in testing process. And the objectivity of the evaluation is due to the testers' appreciations.

Second, administrative reasons such as the designed language program and other variables like timing, setting, and large number of students may hinder the testing process. Certain other variables can also hinder the appropriate procedures to take place. They can be social. For its attitude toward English, the society can be an important factor in this problem that it gives less importance to this language. They can also be psychological. Graduated students may not be self-confident to use oral language for social attitude.

To perform this work, there were some difficulties. The first thing is the shortage of time. Second, the large number of advanced learners who cannot possibly be taken in their totality; thus, we took just a sample of 200 students. Despite of this, there was also another issue only 57 students whose thoughtfulness urged them to reply to the questionnaire: 28.5% of the devoted sample. This was the major challenge we faced along the research process; however, the teaching community has been of great assistance.