

Introduction

Basing on the preceding theoretical features, we have chosen, as a practical field for our study, the case of fourth year students (advanced learners). And before studying this case, we will have a look on their socio-cultural background as Algerians as well as their background of English learning from the first year of its learning i.e. 8th year in the middle school till the fourth year English at the University of Biskra.

II.1.Socio-cultural background

Algerian students are of certain socio-cultural features. Algerians were for a century and 32 years under colonisation of the French army who left a lasting effect on them in terms of socio-cultural background, especially for language. As known Algerians use so many French expressions and terms that were interfered in Arabic language.

In Algeria, French is considered as a secondary language-or as said first foreign language- after the official language, Arabic language. Then, comes English in third position which is considered as 2nd foreign language.

Algerian people use French language in everyday life, and it is used in many official documents, contracts ...etc. There are also so many educated people in French language; however, English is only heard, read, spoken, and written in the classrooms.

But recently, we can notice that the government tries to give it much more importance in all domains of life, especially in the scientific research. Moreover, we can see that students really feel in need of it, in order to be with the current rapid developing technology providing the fact that the number of the demands to study is increasing, and so does its number in English Department, especially in Biskra University.

II.2.Learning Background

II.2.1.Middle School

In the middle school, pupils academically study three years to be placed after passing the B.E.F. in the high school. They start to learn English from the second year “8th year”. In these two years, they learn some of its grammatical rules and vocabulary.

II.2.1.1. 8th year

It is the first year of learning English in Algerian schools. In this year, pupils start usually to learn the bases of English in terms of its vocabulary like school things. They also learn some rules of grammar such as formulating questions, derivation, determiners, and adjectives.

For their testing, they are normally tested in three term exams, and their evaluation is based on the average of the three exams marks. The outcome will allow them to pass to the 9th year if the score is out of total: 10/20. Otherwise; they will repeat the year as another chance if their ages permit.

The exams are usually of the same form: written; and of the same test items. Its paper starts with a text of about 70 words for reading. Its items are usually divided into three sections: the first is reading comprehension that contains, first a group of about 3-5 simple questions to check directly their understanding of the text; second is lexis. In this latter, testees are given four to six words to find out their equivalents or /and opposites from the text.

For the second section, it is the mastery of language, in which they are to formulate questions about words of a statement, to put certain appropriate determiners

in their positions, or to derive certain adjectives from their nouns or vice versa...etc. In the last section, they are usually given a group of sentences to be reordered.

Their evaluation is interpreted with a scale distributed on the three sections, considering its importance. The first is usually on 6 to 8 pts distributed on its questions. The second is on 6 pts, and the last on 4 pts. At the end, its total scale is 20/20. Finally, the resulted marks are to take the following reinforcing remarks as excellent (16-20), very good and good (12-15), and average (11-10). The scores under 10/20 are considered as under average, bad and very bad. (See the appendices)

II.2.1.2. 9th year

It is the second year of learning English where they start learning more about its grammatical rules, like tenses, comparison, passive forms and some determiners. They learn more about vocabulary through reading text, synonyms, opposites, classifying word (vegetable/fruits...etc) defining certain terms through the text.

They are to learn how to write through knowing techniques of ordering sentences of a paragraph respecting its linking words, punctuations, capitalisation, or filling its gaps or dialogues completion.

Their achievements are tested through three term exams, the same as the case of first year (see above). Furthermore, there is a fourth national exam to be held after the end of the academic year i.e. a way to place these pupils in the high school. Their marking on the resulted scores of the three exams divided on two with mark resulted from the national exam that must be up to 10/20.

Their exam papers are nearly the same as of the previous year, especially for the first section; however, there are some additions in terms of mastery of language and written

expression. For the section of mastery language, they are to punctuate certain sentences, conjugate verbs, transform passive to active or vice versa, put plural forms, make comparison, change statements to questions, classify words according to their alphabets, or find out the odd words from homogenous words.

For the written expression section, they are asked to reorder a group of sentences and rewrite them as a coherent paragraph, fill in the gaps with appropriate words, or complete dialogue.

Their marking is the same as of the previous year. The scale is as follows: (6-8pts) for reading comprehension, (6-8) mastery of language, and (4-6) written expression, the total scale 20/20. Their scores will decide their appropriate position in the high school (literal, scientific ...).

It is so clear that these exams are based on these pupils' knowledge about language (grammar and vocabulary) as a priority in their teaching and testing. For its skills: both reading and writing skills are used, but as secondary parts. The most useful test items are cloze procedure, true/false, gap filling, transforming sentences/words, ordering and sometimes multiple choices. The choice of these direct test items is for attain objective evaluation, and so do its scores.

II.2.2. High School

In high school, students are to study three years. In all of them, they study English, but with little bit difference from one stream to another (literal, scientific, technical...). It is more important for foreign languages, literature and Islamic sciences than scientific and technical streams. The differences reveal in its examinations as well as its evaluation (coefficient).

II.2.2.1. First year

There is not much difference between the 9th year in the middle school and 1st year in the high school. They study basically English grammar use and its vocabulary. They learn more grammatical expressions and new terms through longer texts, on which they ameliorate their reading comprehension, but as secondary. In addition, they learn to write short paragraphs independently using their own words.

For their examinations, they are to be tested in three term exams, and their evaluation is the same as the previous years at the middle schools (see above). For the exam papers, they are introduced by a text of about 100 words. Its test items are divided in three sections: the first is always about text reading comprehension that consists of around 5 questions, and then they are, as usual, asked to use the text to find out some synonyms and opposites of a given group of words or phrases.

For the second, mastery of language, they are usually asked about transforming verbs in their appropriate tenses by giving them clues like adverbs of times, passive form, direct/indirect speech. They can also be asked to classify certain words in appropriate groups. And, for the third one, they are usually asked to write a paragraph of a limited number of lines with detailed instructions or/and a set of expressions to be

involved in their writing. And they are sometimes given a choice of two sets of paragraphs or a dialogue and a paragraph. Their marking is always the same (see I.2.1.1./I.2.1.2.)

II.2.2.2. Second year

For the second year, there is not much difference between this year and the previous one. Students are to learn more grammatical expressions and rules, and vocabulary use. They also learn rules of pronunciation and stress. They sometimes practice live listening by the teacher reading a text aloud in order to answer certain questions, or to fill in the gaps of certain statements. They sometimes write down short paragraphs or complete a dialogue, and read aloud a passage in the textbook. In this year, students start to practise the language skills, but as secondary.

For their examinations, they are the same as the previous year in terms of the involved test items types or the skills (reading/writing), evaluation and marking criteria (see above).

II.2.2.3. Third year

It is the final year in the high school for the student who will pass the baccalauriate exams. They are to complete studying more about essentials of grammar; however, the four skills are involved as secondary activities.

Their examinations are the same as usual; however, the scores they attain at the end of the school year as bases for decision making in order to place the winners in the appropriate college. It is, of course, the business of the baccalaureate-national exam. The resulted scores from this last exam, up to 10/20, determine the success or failure of

the students. The baccalaureate exam paper and those of the three term exams are the same as the previous years, and so do the evaluation and the marking criteria.

Sum-up:

Data involved	Teaching					Testing				
	8 th	9 th	1 st h/s	2 nd	3 rd	8 th	9 th	1 st h/s	2 nd	3 rd
grammar	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
vocabulary	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
language skills:										
-reading	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
-speaking	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
-listening	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
-writing	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

+ =taught or tested

- = not taught or tested

Table 01: Sum-up of teaching and testing process from the middle schools up to high schools

Comments:

Through the above table, we notice that there is much importance given to grammar and vocabulary that are both taught and tested in all the three years. Concerning the four skills, we find that they are taught all together starting from the before final year (2nd year in high school); however, writing is taught and tested in all the years. For the testing of the skills, we find only reading and writing in the exam paper.

II.2.3.Their Streaming

Winners of the baccalauriate exam take their score sheets and go to the center of registration where they put their application form in which they choose 8 specialities in a certain order according to students wills, their streams and scores attained in the baccalaureate.

After collecting these application forms, a committee designed in the vice-presidency of pedagogy to check these scores sheets as well as the choices of its owners. Their placement is primarily given to their scores and their streams in high school then come their choices. If they correspond to the required scores of the speciality they choose, they will be placed in it. Otherwise; they will be placed in the second choice they put in the application form. And if they cannot, they are to be placed in the third and so on and so forth. Whereas, those who have the total average up to 12/20 can choose whatever choice they want.

After knowing their speciality, students will register themselves in the university, then in the department of the specialty. However; for those who do not satisfy on the result they can contest for a second check.

For those who choose to study English, they must have a score up to 11.50/20 to enter this speciality, and that is the total score of dividing the attained scores of the following modules respectively: English, French and Arabic literature.

II.2.4.University

II.2.4.1.First year

This year is introductory, learners of English must know more deeply about the essentials of English: grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading and listening. These essentials are to be taught in the six modules. There is no official program to be followed in these modules, but there are certain common traits to be followed in each module and along the year.

For the language skills, they study written expression in three sessions along the week. They are to be taught techniques of *writing*, of course, using their own words that can be read through their *readings*, and respecting the grammatical rules (parts of speech) they learn in the grammar module in two sessions along the week.

They attend phonetics and oral expression modules in the laboratory. For the first one (one session along the week), learners are taught the different features of sounds (pronunciation, transcription, organs of speech), they can *pronounce* them or *listen* to them through the tape-recording. For the second (two sessions along the week), they are taught how to ameliorate *speaking* and *listening* skills by practising language through speaking and listening activities, separately or altogether at once. The two modules are regarded as complementary since they care about spoken language.

For the knowledge about language, they study linguistics and general culture modules (one session for each). For the first, they are to know about the origins and the theories of language, and some basic features of the English language. And for the second, they know about things related to English speaking countries: ways of living, education, religion, origins...etc.

Their testing is the same for all the four years of speciality; learners are to attend two main official and obligatory exams: one at the end of the first semester, the other at the end of the second one. There are also two other official and compulsory make-up exams for the failors in the two obligatory ones as other chances to place them in the 2nd year.

Their exams are written for all the modules; except for the oral expression that can be sometimes held orally. Their evaluation is based on grammar and vocabulary uses, i.e. linguistic competence as well as their manipulation of data they have read from the presented lessons.

II.2.4.2. Second year

It is a complementary and a start year in the same time. It completes the main modules of the first year in terms of the following modules: written expression, grammar, phonetics, oral expression and linguistics. They also start to study new modules: American civilisation, British civilisation, American literature, British literature.

For written expression, they start from what they end in the last year –paragraph- to move to the essay. In grammar, they start to learn the structure of the sentence after they have completed the parts of speech in the previous year. In phonetics, they study discriminating phoneme, stress, and intonation, elision. In oral expression, they learn more complex heard and spoken discourses. More details and secrets about language are studied in linguistics. Finally, they study the civilisation and literature of English-speaking countries (i.e. United Kingdom and United States of America) in: American civilisation, British civilisation, American literature, British literature.

Their testing is based on the content or curriculum of each module. They are to be tested their knowledge about the language in terms of its civilisation and literature modules, grammar, phonetics, except written expression and oral expression where they are examined in terms of their skills: writing/ reading and speaking /listening respectively.

For their evaluation, it is based primarily on linguistic competence, content achievement; however, other competencies are approximately neglected. That is interpreted in a total scale (See the previous part).

II.2.4.3. Third year

It is the before last year in which there is not much difference with the 2nd one. Students study ten modules, grammar is to be eliminated, and African literature and psychology modules are to be introduced to the modules of the last year.

Written expression -in other universities ends in the 2nd year- oral expression, phonetics will be completed in this year. For the first, they are generally to study how to write research paper. For the second, they generally study more and more complex heard and spoken discourse of English varieties. The third, they study basically English varieties.

Civilisation and literature modules of English-speaking countries are to be completed. For the two new ones, African literature and psychology, they are to study the history of African literature written in English “African literature”. For the nature of the human thinking and one’s development, since the childhood till the adulthood, are to be studied in “psychology” module.

Their testing is the same as usual, written exams for all modules, and one oral for “oral expression”. These exams are held, of course, at the end of each semester. Their evaluation and test items are usually the same.

II.2.4.4. Fourth year

Students, at Biskra University, are considered as advanced learners in the final year of studying English where their teaching of English is presented in 7 modules. These modules are basically set for knowing more about the English language in terms of literature (American /British literatures) as well as civilisation (American/British civilisations). Furthermore, there are three new added modules that can be considered as training ones that are: Applied linguistics, Didactics and psycho-pedagogy.

II.2.4.4.1. Language Knowledge Modules

II.2.4.4.1.1. Literature Modules

They are presented in two modules: British and American literatures. For the first, they are taught the most brilliant authors in Great Britain, specially its most famous playwright: William Shakespeare. They study about his life and his famous works in general, and usually during the first semester. And in the second term, they are to study and to analyse between the lines of one of his thrilling plays: either Hamlet or Macbeth.

For the second, American literature, they are usually to study the most famous authors in U.S.A. like Robert Frost, Williams Carlos Williams and Ernest Hemingway. They are generally taught about their lives. They usually analyse some extracts of their prose or poetry.

II.2.4.4.1.2. Civilisation Modules

The advanced learners have normally a complete background about the history of the two main English-speaking nations: United States of America and Great Britain in the modules of American civilisation and British one respectively.

In this year, and for the first module, they are taught the recent U.S.A. without forgetting its link to the past one, especially after and during the world wars. The main topics taught are: immigration, religion, education, economy and political institutions. For the second module, British civilisation, they study about modern Britain, and they are to study its political institutions, immigration, religion, education and economy.

II.2.4.4.2. Training Modules

In these modules, advanced learners are basically taught about the aspects of English teaching and learning processes since they will be, as expected to, teachers of English, and precisely in high school. These aspects of the language teaching/learning theory, and its practical field (classroom) as well as the main psychological features (teacher learner, classroom processes...etc) that are presented in three modules: Applied linguistics, Didactics and psycho-pedagogy.

In applied linguistics, they study an introduction to this module (about its main notions), they also study about contrastive analysis, then about error analysis. Teachers emphasise on the theory of teaching English which is based on the features of this language when teaching it.

In didactics, they are taught teaching methods and approaches, language skills...etc; then to learn how to prepare lectures for the expected students in high school. After this, they are given a week to attend some sessions with teacher in high

schools as observers in Biskra and its suburbs. This module is directed to the advanced learners who are expected to be future teachers in high schools, so they are taught how to be teachers.

In psycho-pedagogy, they are taught about the teacher/learners psychological features inside the classroom. They study the main concepts related to the learning/teaching, theories of learning, motivation, teaching/learning styles...etc. Thus, it is considered as a way to help teachers to regulate any troubles during the teaching process.

These modules are used to train the advanced learners (theoretically) on how to use English as future teachers. Adding to them literature and civilisation modules that complete the knowledge about language. These two kinds of modules are complementary, and are based on the fact that these learners are of advanced level, and who are able to use language approximately.

Conclusion

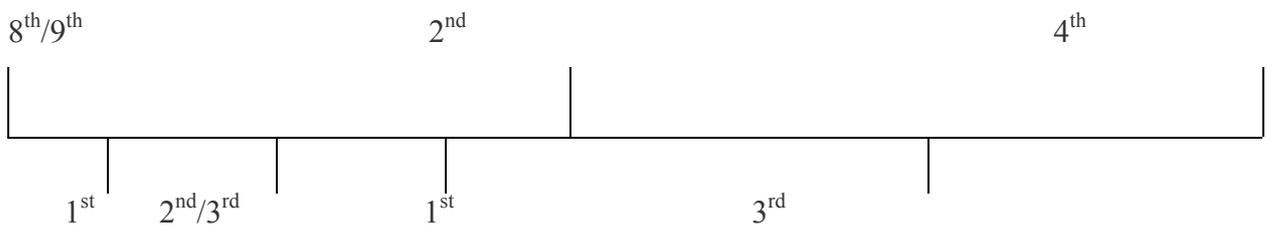


figure02: *Terms for student levels Algerian educational system in terms of English language learning*

Comments:

The above figure is a sum-up about the levels of these testees along their learning of English, from the middle school till they specialised in it at English department in Biskra University. Pupils in 8th and 9th years at middle school are regarded as beginners. In the high school, the 1st year students are considered as false beginners for they are in the pre-stage before in elementary level which is the level of all students from the 2nd and 3rd year who are to be placed in the college they will choose if they pass the baccalaureate exam.

For those who choose to study English as a speciality, they will study the 1st year to be lower intermediate, then to be intermediate in the second year. For the 3rd year, they are esteemed as upper intermediate, finally they will be considered as advanced learners at 4th year.