

## **Introduction**

We have chosen the sample of 4<sup>th</sup> year student of English (advanced learners) as our case to the following objectives: to know basically the extent to which these learners are able to use English through their testing in Biskra university; to know if the form and design of their testing are to cover the needs of teaching and testing English in order to know its deficiencies, if there are ones, and to find the remedial as final solutions at the end. For these above reasons, we are going to compare the theoretical features of testing English learning at an advanced level with its practical field in Biskra University.

### **III.1. Analysis of Questionnaire for Teachers of 4<sup>th</sup> year Students in English Department at Biskra University**

#### **III.1.1. Approaches to Testing Advanced Learners in English Department of Biskra University:**

The approaches, to be employed in testing 4<sup>th</sup> year English students at Biskra University, are as follows:

	Communicative approach	Structuralist Approach	Other
Teacher 01	+	-	Eclectic
Teacher 02	+	-	
Teacher 03	+	+	
Teacher 04	+	-	
Teacher 05	+	-	
Teacher 06	+	-	

**Table02: The approaches to test English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

#### **Comments:**

The noticed above is that most teachers of 4<sup>th</sup> year students consider the communicative approach as a suitable one for testing their students. They regard the reasons are that it is efficient and includes the main skills of language; however, we notice that teachers (02 & 03) regard that testers must be eclectic in testing, and use the appropriate approach that fits the situation of these testees as well as the testers' objective behind this test.

A. The material to be tested in the case of fourth year students of English at Biskra University is as follows:

	Knowledge about language	Language ability (i.e.skills)
Teacher 01	-	+
Teacher 02	+	+
Teacher 03	-	+
Teacher 04	+	+
Teacher 05	-	+
Teacher 06	-	+

**Table03: The material involved in the test of English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

There is an agreement between all of the teachers (testers) about testing language ability (its skills) through the exam held in Biskra University; however, teachers (02&04) argue that they test the knowledge about language –presented in program content. And the skills are tested beyond this knowledge.

B. Most teachers agree on that they test language ability through the use of communicative approach where they involve the following skills:

	Writing	speaking	Listening	Reading
Teacher 1	+	-	-	+
Teacher 2	+	-	-	+
Teacher 3	-	-	-	+
Teacher 4	+	-	-	-
Teacher 5	-	-	-	+
Teacher 6	+	-	-	-

**Table04: The tested skills of English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

Through the table, we notice the excessive use of both reading and writing skills; besides, there is a total absence of both speaking and listening skills. In other hand, there is an agreement between teachers (01&02) that the important skills in testing foreign language learners are on both reading and writing skills. However, teachers (04&06) regard that it is on writing. Whereas, teachers (03&06) consider reading skill as important in this testing.

**III.1.2. Essential Traits Of Testing Advanced Learners In English Department Of Biskra University:**

Among the traits that characterise the English language testing in Biskra University are the following:

A. Normally, there is a consideration given to the ‘stakeholders’ (Alderson, J.C.1996) of the exam in terms of their psychological background, level and learning styles. For the case of 4<sup>th</sup> year English students of Biskra University, it is as follows:

	Psychological background	Learning styles	Levels
Teacher 01	+	-	-
Teacher 02	-	+	-
Teacher 03	-	-	+
Teacher 04	+	-	+
Teacher 05	+	+	+
Teacher 06	-	-	+

**Table05: The role of advanced learners’ background in the test of English language**

**Comments:**

The noticeable factor in designing a test, for the case of 4<sup>th</sup> year English students of Biskra University is primary the consideration of advanced learners' level (advanced level). Through the table, we observe that this is an agreement between the teachers (03, 04, 05&06) as a main trait for the testing. For the psychological background is considered as a second interest. Whereas, language styles are considered less important for the teachers (02&05).

B. Teachers, in this case, some procedures as common traits between their exams in order to achieve better conditions to hold the test, and satisfy the needs and abilities of 4<sup>th</sup> year English students of Biskra University. In the following, we have these traits:

	Clear and understandable test items	objective test items	long and various items	providing an appropriate climate
Teacher 01	+	-	-	-
Teacher 02	+	+	-	-
Teacher 03	+	-	-	-
Teacher 04	-	+	-	-
Teacher 05	-	+	-	-
Teacher 06	-	+	-	-

**Table 06: Common traits of the test of English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

Through the above table, there is an agreement between teachers (testers) on: the necessity of objective test items when considering the audience [internal factors] (see above) for the teachers (02, 04, 05&06). And that test items must be clear and understandable for all. Besides, teachers of 4<sup>th</sup> year English at Biskra University regard

that there is no need of providing an appropriate climate, and long and various test items.

C. The reliability of test of English language advanced learners is regarded as follows:

	Yes	No
Teacher 01	+	-
Teacher 02	+	-
Teacher 03	+	-
Teacher 04	+	-
Teacher 05	-	+
Teacher 06	-	+

**Table07: The reliability of the test of English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

The noticeable thing, here, is that there is some teachers (01, 02,03&04) regard English language test of 4<sup>th</sup> year English at Biskra university as reliable. However, teacher (05) regards it as unreliable. For those who are for its reliability, they justify this as follows:

1. There is a use of objective test items.
2. It is appropriate to produce the output set of knowledge presented previously as an input.
3. There are no inhibitions.
4. It allows careful thinking to English language advanced learners.
5. It reflects nearly the real level of advanced learners.
6. It is specific.

For those who are against its reliability, they have the following reasons:

1. Time allotted is not proportional. As a result, the material to be tested will be sacrificed.
2. Learners are exposed to oral aspects, but tested in writing.
3. The large group of students makes the test unreliable.
4. If the material to be tested is comprehensive, the test are; thus, unreliable.

C. Validity of the test of English language advanced learners at Biskra University is as follows:

	Yes	No	Somehow
Teacher 01	+	-	-
Teacher 02	-	+	-
Teacher 03	-	+	-
Teacher 04	+	-	-
Teacher 05	+	-	-
Teacher 06	-	-	+

**Table08: The validity of the test of English language advanced learners at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

Through the table, most teachers (01, 04, and 05) consider the test as valid; however, there are others (02&03) who are against this view. Whereas, teacher (06) consider it as relative. For the first view [validity of this test], they justify it as follows:

1. It is reliable, it is valid.
2. It is a way to grasp a precise idea when testing students' levels.
3. It is a way to reflect the efficiency of teacher's teaching, and as a part of it.

For those who are against its validity they justify this by the following:

1. It does not reflect the learners' language acquisition.
2. It does not reflect the actual level and knowledge.

3. It has no systematic bases.

### **III.1.3. English Language Test Design For Advanced learners at Biskra University:**

To design a test, one must follow certain procedures to do so (see I.4) through which the teachers must hold ones' tests. In the following passages, we are going to see the way to design a test for English language advanced learners (4<sup>th</sup> year English) at Biskra University.

#### **III.1.3.1. Type of Tests Held in English Department of Biskra University:**

Advanced learners at Biskra University are exposed to certain tests that are conducted for certain academic purposes which determine their types. Teachers of foreign language advanced learners (4<sup>th</sup> year English) at Biskra university regard their testing purposes (types) are as follows:

	Placement	Diagnosis	Achievement	Proficiency
Teacher 01	-	+	-	-
Teacher 02	-	-	-	+
Teacher 03	-	-	-	+
Teacher 04	-	-	+	-
Teacher 05	-	+	-	-
Teacher 06	-	-	+	-

**Table09: The type of the test. English language advanced learners (4<sup>th</sup> year English) at Biskra University.**



**Comments:**

Through the table, we notice that tests are of the three types for academic purposes: diagnostic, achievement and proficiency; however; the first type “placement” is not considered at all.

**III.1.3.2.The Form of the Tests Held in English Department of Biskra University:**

In the fourth year of English, advanced learners are to attend two obligatory tests, not forgetting the two make-up ones. But the major feature of these tests is that all of them are *Written*, or as called pencil-and-paper one. They have to have a package of knowledge that is presented in terms of written lectures to be read and comprehended, for they will be tested on them through their testing using the appropriate grammar and vocabulary.

When coming to the class of the exam, they are to be given an exam paper that contains a group of written test items (questions)

As stimuli to be responded in the same form i.e.written. Their response must be, of course, based on their reading comprehension of the presented lectures before they come to the exam.

For the *Oral* form of tests, it does not exist at all in this final year. The advanced learners’ spoken language has nothing to deal with testing where they need written language to be displayed to their testers of the exams they attend. This situation is the same since 2002 (the first graduated group).

For its sufficiency, teachers say:

	Sufficient	Insufficient
Teacher 01	+	-
Teacher 02	-	+
Teacher 03	-	+
Teacher 04	-	+
Teacher 05	-	+
Teacher 06	-	+

**Table10: The sufficiency of English language test at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

The majority of teachers (testers) consider these written tests as insufficient or relatively sufficient. They justify this by the following reasons:

1. There is no coordination between teachers (testers).
2. The written tests are not consistent and efficient.
3. There is an absence of additional tests: classroom discussion, oral test and group work.
4. 4<sup>th</sup> year of English at Biskra University are tested on a given program of a given university at a given time.

They all agree on a completion to the written test (answering to question11) that is represented in:

- Coordination between teachers
- Additional tests: classroom discussion, oral test and group work.

***III.1.3.3. Type of Written Test items Held in English Department of Biskra University:***

Basing on the sample of questions we have in the appendix02, the type of these written test items are indirect for they all deal with the main thoughts and topics of the previous given lectures. In addition, there is an approximate absence of communication trait in these test items. The most prevailing item types is paraphrasing and transforming of the main ideas and topics of certain written lectures using the learners' own words, usually in a brief account.

In the paper of questions, test items are from 1 to 4 questions, and that can be in some papers divided into sections. For the first and /or the second questions , or in some cases the first section; the testees are exposed to answer briefly through writing a paragraph that involves the main relevant ideas using their own words, and this is the case in all the exam papers. However; the item is not clear for it does not ask for a paragraph writing in open questions, but the learners can guess this by comprehending the question through the use of certain terms like: *briefly*. Though in some cases, testers mention the way of responding.

For the last question, this is mostly an essay writing item. The testees are always asked to manipulate the ideas deeply using, of course, their own language. The majority of the papers ask clearly for writing an essay; however, some ask for not exceeding 10 lines, and it is obvious a short essay. And some ask for an essay of limited number of words.

The most common characteristics of these test items types are that MC questions are generally common among this sample of exam questions papers. The testers also give a choice of certain number of terms or of questions to be answered, in term of

paraphrasing and transforming test items, and in a form of paragraph. And this is also the case for essay writing item. In addition, in some papers, there are certain obligatory question(s) to be answered in essay, or paraphrasing and transforming test items types, in a form of paragraph. They may also have only one obligatory essay question to be responded.

Another common feature between these questions is the open questions where testees are asked to make a brief account which can be an essay or a paragraph. In addition, we can find this kind of open questions when testees are asked to respond using the word “*to answer*” to certain questions ; however, this latter can be limited in short paragraph using the word “*brief*”. Though we cannot consider these tests items as purely indirect ; they can be considered as direct because they test learners’ abilities to write using their own language , moreover, their ability to attain and find out ideas from a read lecture, article ....etc. So, writing and reading skills are tested beyond this test items.

For the reasons behind the choice of these test item types, we have:

	Multiple choice questions	Essay	Paraphrasing/transforming	True/false	Open question
Teacher 01	+	+	+	+	+
Teacher 02	+	+	+	+	+
Teacher 03	+	+	+	-	+
Teacher 04	-	-	-	-	+
Teacher 05	-	+	+	-	-
Teacher 06	-	-	-	+	+

**Table 11: The preferable used test item types at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

There is a large agreement on the open questions which aims primarily to (essay writing), then come essay transforming/paraphrasing, at a final rank come multiple choice questions. This situation is for the following reasons:

1. Factor of creativity to make advanced learners think over the question.(for open question)
2. To accomodate the cognitive styles of the testees in general (for open question).
3. To train the advanced learners.
4. To hold objective test for English language advanced learners at Biskra University.
5. The choice depends on the skill teachers (testers) want to test.
6. It depends on the specific cognitive domain teachers (testers) think about.

***III.1.3.4. Teachers' Evaluation of Advanced Learners test in English Department of Biskra University:***

The final step in these testing procedures at Biskra University is as follows:

A. The evaluated communicative competencies in the case of Biskra University:

	Linguistic competence	Communicative competence
Teacher 01	+	+
Teacher 02	+	-
Teacher 03	+	+
Teacher 04	+	+
Teacher 05	+	+
Teacher 06	+	+

**Table12: The evaluation of communicative competencies in Biskra University (4<sup>th</sup> year students).**

**Comments:**

Through the table, we notice an agreement on evaluating linguistic competence first, then comes the communicative competence [the rest of competencies] (teachers01, 03, 04, 05 &06). Their reasons behind this view are as follows:

1. Linguistic competence is important for the mastery of English language, and through it advanced learners display their communicative competence, for they complete each other.
2. It depends on the nature of the course taught.
3. It depends on what the teacher aims at.

**B. Scale used to interpret the evaluation:**

Administratively, there is an official scale used in all the Algerian institutions of education which is the total scale (20/20); however, the teachers (testers) of 4<sup>th</sup> year students of English at Biskra University have their own views:

	Total scale	Percentage scale	Category weights
Teacher 01	-	-	+
Teacher 02	-	-	+
Teacher 03	-	+	-
Teacher 04	-	-	-
Teacher 05	+	-	-
Teacher 06	+	-	-

**Table13: The preferable scale for interpreting the evaluation of English language advanced learners.**

**Comments:**

Through the table, we notice that some teachers (testers) support the use of total scale, for it is largely used and easy to grade these advanced learners. Whereas, there are other testers prefer the alternative use of category weights for the following reasons.

1. They can accomodate the program and the advanced learners.
2. They can also be the best way to draw categories of advanced learners, not their lists.
3. There is an opposite view (teacher05) says that there is no difference between them, for they all are unable to evaluate the students' competence.

C. Evaluation can be subjective or objective since it depends on the test items and/or the testers

	Objective	subjective
Teacher 01	+	-
Teacher 02	+	-
Teacher 03	+	+
Teacher 04	+	-
Teacher 05	+	+
Teacher 06	+	+

**Table 14: Objectivity of evaluation in the case of 4<sup>th</sup> year students of English at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

The noticed , here, is that half of the testers(teachers) of 4<sup>th</sup> year students of English at Biskra university consider the evaluation of the test outcomes as objective for they take into account the following factors:

1. The consideration of the external factors: setting, time and question type.
2. The consideration of the social and emotional variables of the advanced learners at Biskra University.
3. The nature of the test item types and the personal appreciation of the testers since they cannot neglect the personal bias.

D. Parts involved in testing English language advanced learners at Biskra University:

The test is not only conducted to evaluate learners' learning, but it also evaluates the teachers' teaching.

	Learners	Language program	Teachers
Teacher 01	+	+	-
Teacher 02	+	+	+
Teacher 03	+	+	+
Teacher 04	+	-	-
Teacher 05	+	-	-
Teacher 06	+	+	+

**Table15: The parts of the English language test at Biskra University.**

**Comments:**

Through the table, we notice that there is an interrelation between the three parts of the foreign language test held in Biskra University. The reasons behind this are as follows:

1. Teaching and learning go together.
2. Testers can evaluate the foreign language program through testing the 4<sup>th</sup> year students of English at Biskra University.
3. Through the evaluation of the foreign language program, testers (teachers) evaluate the teachers' teaching and ability.



4. Testing is a part of teaching; it is an evaluation of teachers' impact on their 4<sup>th</sup> year students through the foreign language program.

**Sum- up:**

Through the questionnaire, we hold with the teachers of English at Biskra University, we have found out some distinctive features of testing English language advanced learner (4<sup>th</sup> year students of English). And basing on what we have for the theoretical feature of testing English language learning, they are:

1. The adopted approach, testing English language advanced learner(4<sup>th</sup> year students of English) used to convey the testers(teachers) objective which is the extent to which these testees are communicatively competent, and able to use their skills appropriately; however, there are obstacles to reach this objective , that's why, some of testers choose to be eclectic to accomodate such obstacles that are represented in terms of the obligation of applying the governments' English language program which is conventionel between all the universities of Algeria, and that supposes the use of only two skills: writing and reading in terms of a written exam; thus, testing 4<sup>th</sup> year English students at Biskra University is partly communicative.
2. For the essential traits that characterise the testing of 4<sup>th</sup> year English at Biskra University according to the testers (teachers) are as follow:
  - a. They consider primarily the testees 'level as advanced learners, and their psychological background and learning styles are esteemed secondary.
  - b. The choice of objective, understandable and clear test items are more important when considering the advanced learners in designing a test. And for it is the best way to satisfy their needs and abilities.

- c. Long and various test items are not needed, and cannot be applied for the simple reason which is the due time.
- d. Practicality, in testing foreign language advanced learners at, Biskra University, is represented through:
  - ❖ Due time: 1 hour and 30 minutes.
  - ❖ Test administration is in the hand of, at least 6 teachers per the class devoted to hold the test to provide a comfortable climate without cheating or any trouble. However, the observed is the difficulty to administer the English language test of advanced learners at Biskra University (4<sup>th</sup> year students) for their increasing number each year.
- e. It is reliable for the correspondence of its outputs to its input, and for the selection of objective test items that leads to objective evaluation.
- f. Reliability of the foreign language test at Biskra University leads to its validity in terms of its content. (Content valid). It is partly criterion-related valid for it tests partly communicative language ability (linguistic competence). As a result, its validity is not really predictive because these tests predict their abilities to write and read, but not to speak or listen. But it is concurrent since it can reach approximately the same results (students score)

3. Test design in Biskra University has certain features that are
  - a. The type of foreign language test, held to graduate 4<sup>th</sup> year students at Biskra University, is diagnostic for it reveals the deficiencies of its audience. Achievement, for it assesses the students' achievement of the presented lectures along the terms and the year. Proficiency, for it assesses two skills main skills of communication: writing and reading.
  - b. The form of foreign language tests held in Biskra University for 4<sup>th</sup> year students is only written. There is no oral test hold at all; however, testees (advanced learners) are exposed to oral aspects "live listening" by means of the teachers' speech along the sessions in the classroom, and the students' reception using their listening and sometimes their production of their speaking skill.
  - c. The test items, there is an excessive use of essay through the use of open questions intending to essay writing, in most times, paragraph writing sometimes, or the use of word, then' essay 'comes the multiple choice questions; and sometimes there is the use of true/false items. So, the indirect test items are used to assess the advanced learners' language ability beyond the knowledge about the foreign language program.
  - d. Evaluation is based on linguistic competence more than the rest of communicative competencies. Evaluation, in Biskra University, includes all its passive and active members: learners and teachers as well as the program. Moreover, its

interpretation is through a total scale official in all Algerian universities. For its objectivity is due to the test items as well as its Holders (testers) appreciations.