

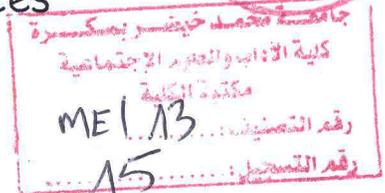
The Peoples' Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education

-University of Biskra -

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

- Department of English -



"Some Factors that Hinder the Assimilation
Of Linguistic Courses "
Case Study: The First Year Students of
English at Mohamed Khider University. Biskra

A Dissertation prepared for the requirement

Of a Magister's Degree in Language and Civilization

Prepared by:

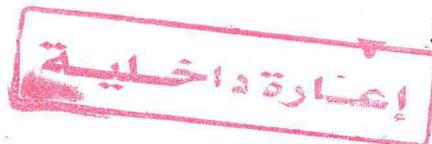
Rabehi Salima

Jury Members:

Chairman: Dr.Aboubou.H

Examiner: Dr.Menani.N

Supervisor: Dr.Ghouar.O



2006

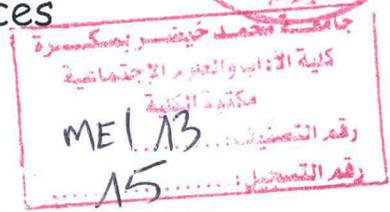
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In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

« Yasin. I swear by the Wise Koran that you are sent upon a straight path.

This is revealed by the Mighty One, the Merciful, so that you may warn a nation who, because their fathers were not warned before them, live in heedlessness. Most of them deserve Our punishment, for they are unbelievers.

We have bound their necks with chains of iron reaching to their chins, so that they cannot bow their heads. We have put barriers before them and behind them and covered them over, so that they cannot see”

***To my late Grand Mother
“Bentaleb Khadidja”***

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Dedication :

This modest work is lovingly dedicated to :

- ❖ *First of all my dear mother "Halima" to whom I owe a great debt.*
- ❖ *My dear brothers and sisters: El-hadj, Mohamed, Kaddour, Sakfiria, Souad, Wahiba, and Touta who surrounded me with their care and love.*
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- ❖ *All persons who will have the occasion to read the work.*
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ABSTRACT:

One of the major problems that face language learners, especially those freshers of first year level, is in their understanding of the Linguistic courses. To examine this problem, the present work sets out to study some of the factors that hinder the assimilation of those courses. Along this study, we have been trying to answer the following questions: why do the new students of English have such difficulties in assimilating the Linguistic courses? Why are they unable to achieve good results despite the teachers' competence? Is the problem due to the newness of the subject? Is it linked to the students' background knowledge of the language? Or it has a relation with the difficulty in understanding the Linguistic terms?

Our main objectives are to spot the light on the students' deficiencies in Linguistics, to propose remedial material to overcome these deficiencies, and to sensitize students to the importance of Linguistics to improve their language knowledge.

We found it appropriate to adapt the descriptive method in order to deal with the theoretical part of this investigation. However, separate questionnaires were addressed to both participants to find what the responsible aspects of the problem are. In addition, we've used another tool in the form of interviews with both partners for the sake of having their spontaneous reactions concerning different points.

We have suggested that if the syllabus of Linguistics will be taught in a graded manner, this will improve our learners understanding and assimilation of this course.

المخلص :

يعتبر مقياس " اللسانيات" من المقاييس التي تسبب الكثير من المتاعب للطلبة (ولا سيما الجدد منهم)، و الكثير من الإحراج للأساتذة. هذا يعود أساسا إلى عدم قدرة الطلبة على إستيعاب و تحصيل الدروس و المحاضرات بالشكل المرضي، من هنا جاء إهتمام هذا البحث و الذي يحمل العنوان التالي: " بعض العوامل التي تعوق إستيعاب طلبة الإنجليزية - مستوى سنة أولى - لدروس اللسانيات"

يقوم هذا البحث بتسليط الضوء على بعض العوامل التي تثبط الإستيعاب المطلوب لمحتوى الدروس و إدراك الأهداف المنشودة من تدريس هذا المقياس. من خلال هذا البحث حاولنا الإجابة على الأسئلة التالية :

- لماذا يجد الطلبة الجدد في قسم الإنجليزية – بجامعة محمد خيضر- بسكرة- هكذا صعوبات في تحصيل دروس اللسانيات ؟.
- ماهي العوامل الخفية و المباشرة لهذه الظاهرة ؟
- لماذا يبقى هؤلاء الطلبة عاجزين على تحقيق نتائج أحسن على الرغم من مهارة بعض الأساتذة؟ و للإجابة على هذه التساؤلات و إقتراح بعض من الحلول الناجعة، إعتدنا على مردود الطلبة و الملاحظات الميدانية للأساتذة. وجدنا من الملائم إتباع المنهج الوصفي لدراسة هذه الظاهرة و هذا الإختيار يعود لأن غاية البحث هي القيام بدراسة شاملة لظاهرة عجز الطلبة على تحصيل و إستيعاب دروس اللسانيات.
- إعتدنا في بحثنا هذا على الإستمارات الموجهة لكل من الطلبة و الأساتذة لرصد مواطن هذا العجز في الفهم.

و في الأخير توصلنا للنتائج التالية: ملمح الطلبة لا يعكس توجههم و مستواهم العلمي، نقص التأطير المؤهل، عدم تمرن الأساتذة على منهجية فعالة، نقص الوقت، و عدم وجود المنهاج .

Résumé:

Un des problèmes principaux qui se posent à des étudiants de langue, particulièrement ces freshers du premier niveau d'année, est dans leur compréhension des cours de linguistiques. Pour examiner ce problème, le travail actuel s'est mis à étudier certains des facteurs qui gênent l'assimilation de ces cours. Tout au long de cette étude, nous avons essayé de répondre aux questions suivantes: pourquoi les nouveaux étudiants de l'anglais ont-ils de telles difficultés en assimilant les cours de linguistique? Pourquoi ne peuvent-ils pas réaliser de bons résultats en dépit la compétence des professeurs '? Afin d'essayer d'étudier la question et suggérer les solutions appropriées, nous avons compté beaucoup sur la rétroaction des étudiants et les observations du champ des professeurs. Nous l'avons trouvé approprié pour adapter la méthode descriptive afin de traiter la partie théorique de cette recherche. Cependant, des questionnaires séparés ont été adressés aux deux participants à la trouvaille ce qui sont les aspects responsables du problème. En outre, nous avons utilisé un autre outil sous forme d'entrevues avec les deux associés pour avoir leurs réactions spontanées au sujet de différents points. Les résultats ont prouvé que le problème est partiellement dû à la mauvaise maîtrise des étudiants de la langue cible en général et à la teneur des cours de linguistique en particulier. D'ailleurs, c'est le manque de formation des professeurs dans les méthodes d'enseigner la linguistique; aussi bien que la teneur du programme conçu, qui est inadéquat pour les étudiants de la 1^{ère} année. En outre, nous sommes venus à la conclusion que pour atteindre la méthodologie proportionnée pour enseigner la linguistique, plus de temps devrait être ajouté. Ceci permettra non seulement à des praticiens de fournir à leurs étudiants l'information si essentielle pour le cours mais aussi bien leur donner un espace beaucoup plus large pour la pratique. De tels éléments sont indispensables pour une meilleure et pleine assurance du programme d'une façon évaluée afin d'améliorer la compréhension et l'assimilation de ce cours.

INTRODUCTION

Language, as a vital subject, had been given a special interest many years ago; concerning its origins, its nature, and its role in the human life, as well as its study. And it is still attracting the attention of many scholars. Among them, we name **Bloomfield (1935)** who argued that “*language plays a great part in our life*”. Also, **Yule (1996)** in his work “The study of language” stated that:

“Many questions about the nature of language are still unanswered, and linguistics is a relatively new field. In fact, any individual speaker of language has a more comprehensive ‘unconscious’ knowledge of how language works than any linguist has yet been able to describe”.

On the other hand, when it comes to its study, linguistics is the field concerned. Linguistics is usually defined as “**the scientific study of language**” (**Loreto Todd, 1987**). Indeed this is the common definition shared by many researchers of the field, as it will be mentioned in the first chapter (section one).

The present work is going to focus on “Linguistics” as a new subject or a module taught to students of first year level at the university. Throughout this research we are going to spot the light on “Some factors that hinder the assimilation of Linguistic courses by first year students of English at Biskra University”. It is mainly done for the sake of knowing what are the students’ deficiencies in Linguistics particularly. We’re looking for those weaknesses in such a module and at the same time we try to find the way through which we can strengthen them. Although linguistics, as a new subject to these beginners seems to be difficult to a certain extent, it is still important and useful to be studied at their level. This refers to its worthy contribution to their understanding of the English language through its notions and vocabulary items.

The first thing that has attracted us to carry out this research is the low grades we have noticed concerning linguistics at almost all levels from first year to fourth year level ; but our main interest here is focused on first year students precisely. The phenomenon of getting bad marks in that particular module is recurrent, that is why we have raised the following questions :

- Why do the new students of English “Freshers” face difficulties in understanding linguistics?
- Why the learners are still unable to assimilate that module despite the teachers’ competence?
- Is the problem due to their teacher’s method?
- Is it linked to their background knowledge of the language?
- Or it refers to some other hidden factors?

Answers to these questions will be provided in the coming sections, but we supposed that if those learners will be taught appropriately following a graded syllabus, they would achieve the best results in linguistics. Of course, each work has certain objectives to be achieved and our objectives in this case are to see whether it is the students’ fault; to the lack of knowledge or to the designed syllabus. Moreover, this work aims at filling the gap between the subject matter “Linguistics” and its receivers “first year students”; and this will be possible in the only case when the learners put in their mind that linguistics is a module like the other modules “grammar, phonetics, oral & written expression, ...etc) in which they can get good marks, and therefore achieve a better level.

To overcome such a problem, it requires a special interest from both its teachers and learners. For the teachers, it needs a good preparation in terms of the vocabulary to be used to convey the message to students. While for the learners, it requires a better concentration that would help them master the main aspects of language not only its use.

The choice of the method:

This work followed the **Descriptive Method through** which we are going to state the necessary information according to the following reasons:

- No previously set experiment to test.
- To understand the problem we need to describe the situation of Teaching Learning Linguistics.
- To describe a phenomenon we have to observe the people “students” for whom it is significant.
- And before we suggest a solution we need to prove its necessity.

It will be done through two main parts: a **theoretical** part and a **practical** one. The former will deal with all aspects that have a close relation with the subject. It includes three chapters, each chapter includes different sections, and each section includes different points or elements. The first chapter concerns a general overview about Linguistics: its leaders, as well as, its history. The second chapter concerns a course design: the criteria to be taken into account to design whether a syllabus or a course, the role of both partners (teachers and learners), and also their interaction in the classroom. While the third one tackles the major element of that research which is: some of the factors that hinder learning including the psychological and the social

factors, as well as, the cognitive abilities. The latter will seek to answer the questions raised previously. It includes three parts also which concern the questionnaires addressed to both: teachers of Linguistics and first year student of English at Biskra University, the academic year (2003-2004). In addition to the interviews with both participants, as well as, the classroom observation during some Linguistics' sessions.

Sampling:

The population of the study is a random sample. It concerns all of the first year students of English "2003-2004". The only variable taken into account is their grades in both Linguistics' official exams.

Since we are talking about the learners' deficiency in assimilating Linguistics, our interest is on those who have got the "low grades" from 0/20-9.75/20, getting such marks indicates that there is something wrong; otherwise there is no problem with such a module therefore there is no need to such a research.

Despite that students, even at advanced levels as second , third , and fourth years have such a problem with Linguistics ; we have chosen the first year students to be our study's population for the simple uncommon reason that is the newness of the subject to those freshers in the first place which is not the case at the other levels.

CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW ABOUT LINGUISTICS

Introduction:

This chapter, as the title implies, aims at giving a general overview about Linguistics. The latter includes a definition to “Linguistics”. Then a general idea about the main leaders of the field. After that, we mention the different types or branches of Linguistics. Finally, we give a brief survey of the history of Linguistics. It concerns the achievements realized in the field from the ancient times of the the Greeks and the Romans, moving to the so-called movement of the Comparative Philology; until we reach the twentieth century Linguistics that is known as the Modern Linguistics. All these items will be presented through two main sections.

I: WHAT IS LINGUISTICS?

1 Definition: There is one common definition to the term “Linguistics” shared by almost all the linguists. The definition says that “**Linguistics is the scientific study of language**” (Lyons, 1970, p.7), (Corder, 1973, p.82), (Crystal, 1992, p.45). The same definition is also found in French saying that “*On définit généralement la linguistique comme la science du langage*”. (Mahmooudian, 1981, p. 39).

This means that linguistics as a field of investigation is concerned with the language as its object of study following a scientific way. Looking at the former statement concerning “Linguistics”, one should pay attention to the terms “scientific” and “language”. When saying that the study is scientific this implies

that there was an unscientific study of language. The latter concerns the traditional linguistic studies as it is mentioned in the following quotation:

“The implication of this frequently used definition of Linguistics is that there is, an unscientific study of Language ... The contrast between modern and traditional studies, the traditional studies being regarded as unscientific”.
(Corder, 1973, p.82).

Like the other studies, Linguistics investigates the language as any other phenomenon following the principles of any scientific approach: observation, stating a hypothesis, then developing a theory based on objectivity and logic.

Indeed, (Corder, 1973, p. 83) mentioned that:

“One account of the scientific method proposes that its starting point is observation of the data. On the basis of this observation, hypotheses about the nature and regularity of the phenomena under investigation are formed. Using these hypotheses, predictions are made about the phenomena, which by further, now controlled observation or experiment, are confirmed or falsified. A hypothesis, confirmed by experiment, becomes a theory about the matter in hand.”

In addition to its scientific characterization, the study of language has another feature which differentiated it, (from other studies) was its independence of the other disciplines. Since the study of language in earlier times was closely related and dependent on the other disciplines such as philosophy, logic, and others. As a result of this reliability, some scholars at that time felt the need to such independence and from then, started working for its realization. This element is well-expressed in the following:

“One topic that commonly finds a place in discussions of the status of linguistics as a science is its autonomy, or independence of other disciplines..., in the past, the study of language was usually subservient to and distorted by the standards of other studies such as logic, philosophy, and literary criticism.”
(Lyons, 1970, p.8).

Another objective of this autonomy is to make linguistics independent at all levels in terms of principles methods, as well as its own termed vocabulary as it is illustrated here:

“What distinguished the “linguistics” study of language or linguistic linguistics was its autonomy or independence of other disciplines. Linguistic Linguistics (or as it has recently been called, theoretical linguistics) establishes its own categories and terminology which it does not share with either of the other approaches.” (Corder, 1973, p. 81).

Moving to the second term “language”, the first thing to be said about it is that “language” attracted the attention of many scholars from a long time ago. This interest in language was interpreted through its consideration as an object of study. It is also regarded as a phenomenon that can be investigated as many other phenomena.

Moreover, language is something we know as well as something we do. Language is something we know, for the simple reason that one could ask any question to have some knowledge about one language or another. And it is something we do since we perform it in different acts through different skills such as reading, writing or speaking.

“Language is something we know. We ask some one if he knows French or German, or if he knows some word or other. It is also something we do. We write, read, speak well or badly. In this case we are treating it as skilled behaviour which we have to learn, and which improves through practice”. (Corder, 1973, p. 20).

2. Major Figures of the Field:

Besides what is said above, one could not move to the types or subfields of Linguistics without mentioning a sort of general knowledge about the leaders

of the field. Among them, we are going to talk about: Leonard Bloomfield, Noam Chomsky, David Crystal, John Lyons Edward Sapir and Ferdinand de Saussure.

Bloomfield (1887 – 1949) US linguist known primarily from his book “Language” (1933), which was the dominant influence on a whole generation of linguistics. Bloomfieldianism was mainly characterized by its behaviouristic principles for the study of meaning, its insistence on rigorous discovery procedures for establishing linguistic units, and a general concern to make linguistics autonomous and scientific. It was a formative influence on structural linguistics. Its pre-eminence waned following the emergence of generative grammar in the late 1950s. (Crystal, 1992, p. 1314).

Chomsky (Avram) Noam (1928 -) US linguist, professor of Modern Languages and Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose theory of language known as Transformational Generative Grammar revolutionized work in linguistics in 1957, when his monograph syntactic structures was published. Several of his later works introduced new directions into linguistic theory, notably aspects of the theory of Syntax (1965), Language and Mind (1968), and Knowledge of Language (1986), (*ibid*, p.15).

Crystal, David: was born in Lisburn, Northern Ireland, in 1941. He obtained his PHD in 1966. His research has been mainly in English Linguistics, particularly intonation and stylistics, more recently he has been working in the field of language acquisition, with special reference to pathology, and the

implications for Speech Therapy. He is also interested in developing the relationship between Linguistics and Language teaching schools.

He is the author of “Linguistics”, “Intonation in English”, and many other works as well as he is editor of the Journal of child Language (Crystal, 1971).

Lyons, John: He was born in 1932 and educated at St Bede’s College, Manchester, and Christ’s College; He took his first degree in classics in 1953 and the Diploma in Education in 1956. In 1961, he took up a lectureship in Cambridge. Since 1964 he has held the University of Edinburgh. He was the first editor of the Journal of Linguistics (1965-9) and his publications include Structural Semantics (1963), Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics (1968) and Chomsky (1970). (Lyons, 1973).

Sapir, Edward (1884 – 1939) was an American anthropologist-linguist, a leader in American structural linguistics, and one of the creators of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. He was born in Lauenburg, Germany. He was the pupil of Franz Boas, teacher of Benjamin Whorf. He taught at the University of Yale. He was one of the first who explored the relations between language studies and anthropology.

Saussure, Ferdinand De (1857 – 1913) Swiss linguist, widely recognized as the founder of modern linguistics, whose views are outlined in his posthumous “Cours de Linguistique Générale”, published in 1913. His conception of language as a system of mutually defining entities was a major influence on several later schools of linguistic thought. His theoretical insight,

include the distinction between langue and parole, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, synchronic and diachronic, and the nature of linguistic sign. (Crystal, 1992, p.63).

3. Types of Linguistics:

Concerning the types of linguistics or as they are called the subfields of linguistics, they are interested in the same main object of study that is language, but they are distinct from each other in their treatment of the subject matter through different perspectives. As a result of this difference, we find the emergence of the following subfields:

a. Anthropological linguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies language variation and use in relation to human cultural patterns and beliefs. It has been especially concerned with non western languages, as found throughout the Americas, and has emphasized the ways in which these languages influence each other and can be grouped into types. The subject is sometimes distinguished from linguistic anthropology, a branch of anthropology which explores the place of language in the life of human communities (Crystal, 1992, p.10, 11).

In other words, this subfield of linguistics aims at studying the language in relation to culture. Its major interest was on the investigation of the languages that were found throughout the Americas and their impact on each other.

b. Applied linguistics: is the application of linguistic theories, descriptions and methods to the solution of language problems which have

arisen in a range of human, cultural and social contexts. One of the main contexts for its application is the exploration of problems in language learning and teaching and for many; the term is used with almost exclusive reference to this field. However, the term applied linguistics is used in relation to other fields, such as: literary studies (stylistics); translation studies; lexicography; language planning; as well as specific branches of linguistics such as clinical linguistics and critical linguistics. (*ibid*, p.03).

In other words “Applied Linguistics” as the term implies has one main interest in putting on the linguistic theories into practice for the sake of solving the language problems that may appear in several contexts. When saying “applied linguistics”, for many, this means that the interest is only in finding solutions to the problems that arise in the language learning / teaching process. So one should pay attention to that, since “applied linguistics” has a close relation with many other fields of study.

c. Clinical linguistics: A branch of applied linguistics in which methods and theories of linguistics are applied to an analysis of language handicaps such as spoken and written disorders or to an understanding of sign languages for the deaf. (*ibid*, p.07).

From what is said above, one should draw the conclusion that “clinical linguistics” has one major objective or goal to be achieved. This aim is to apply the linguistic theories in order to analyse the difficulties that may arise in both forms of language the spoken as well as the written form.

d. Computational linguistics: or the application of the concepts of computer science to the analysis of language. This field is growing immensely, particularly in machine translation, information retrieval, and artificial intelligence

CAL Center for Applied Linguistics.

Web site : [http : //www.cal.org/resources/Faqs/Linguistics Faq.html](http://www.cal.org/resources/Faqs/Linguistics%20FAQ.html)

“Computational Linguistics (of which mechanical translation is only the best known and most glamorous aspect) has had a considerable, and on the whole beneficial, influence on the development of linguistic theory in recent years. It has forced linguistics working with computers to formulate their rules more precisely than they might have done otherwise “(Lyons, 1970, p.215).

Computational linguistics as the term implies, has a close relation with the computer science. This relation indicates the need for the computer in the study of language especially in what concerns its analysis and the translation process which may occur more easily and rapidly with the help of the computer.

e. Educational linguistics : A branch of linguistics which applies the theories, methods, and findings of linguistics primarily to the study of teaching and learning of a native language, in both spoken and written forms, in schools or other educational settings ; also called pedagogical linguistics. It includes such topics as the study of reading and writing, language variety across the curriculum and the teaching of grammar.

(Crystal, 1992, p. 27).

This type of linguistics seeks to apply the linguistic theories and methods to investigate the teaching / learning process of language, not any language but the native one in particular. This investigation includes different themes, concerns both forms of the language, and takes place in different settings.

f. Developmental linguistics: A branch of linguistics concerned with the study of the acquisition of language in children. The aim is to provide a description of patterns of development and an explanation of the norms and variations encountered, both within individual languages and universally. Because of the particular relevance of psychological factors, the subject is sometimes called developmental psycholinguistics. (*ibid*, p.24).

Concerning this subfield of linguistics, one should say that it is specific because its main focus is on the study of the children's acquisition of their language. As the term itself shows that this study aims at explaining the gradual development of the child's acquisition of language from early stages when the child is able to produce only single words used in isolation till he becomes able to produce simple sentences, then more and more complex ones.

g. Mathematical linguistics : A branch of linguistics which studies the mathematical properties of language, usually employing concepts of a statistical or algebraic kind Areas of interest include the study of the formal properties of grammars, the exploration of parsing algorithms, and the investigation of the statistical properties of texts, in such fields as stylistics and comparative linguistics. (*ibid*, p.47).

Like the previous branches of linguistics, the latter is concerned with the study of language which is slightly different from the others. This difference is related to the tools used in the study that are of a statistical type.

h. Neurolinguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies the neurological basis of language development and use, and attempts to construct a model of the brain's control over the processes of speaking, listening, reading, writing, and signing; also called neurological linguistics. It has been particularly concerned with such matters as articulatory timing and sequencing the speech production, and the nature of language disorders. (*ibid*, p.51).

This kind of linguistics studies the language from a different angle in which the interest is mainly in the internal processes that take place in the brain and have an impact on the development and use of language.

i. Philosophical linguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies the role of language in relation to the understanding and elucidation of philosophical concepts, as well as the philosophical status of linguistic theories, methods, observations, and applications. Within philosophy, the corresponding interest is known as linguistic philosophy or the philosophy of language. (*ibid*, p.54, 55).

The latter subfield of linguistics investigates the language and its role related to another discipline which is "philosophy". This study aims at the better understanding of the so-called philosophical concepts.

j. Psycholinguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies the correlation between linguistic behaviour and the mental processes and skills thought to

underlie that behaviour, earlier called the psychology of language. The emphasis may be on the use of language as a means of elucidating psychological theories and processes (such as memory, attention, and learning) or on the effects of psychological constraints on the use of language (such as the role of memory in speech comprehension). It is the latter which has provided the main focus of interest in linguistics, where the subject is basically seen as the study of the mental processes underlying the planning, production, perception and comprehension of speech. The study of the acquisition of language by children is often distinguished as developmental psycholinguistics. (*ibid*, p.59, 60).

From what is mentioned previously, the definition of psycholinguistics can be summarized in the following; it is the study of the relationships between linguistics and psychological behaviour. Its main concern is on the study of first and second language acquisition.

k. Quantitative linguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies the frequency and distribution of linguistic units using statistical techniques. The subject's general aims are to establish principles governing the statistical regularities underlying the structure of language. Much of its work concerns the analysis of the linguistic features of particular texts (especially in literature), and the investigation of specific problems such as authorship identity. (*ibid*, p.60).

In other words, this special type of linguistics is mainly concerned with the linguistic units in terms of how they can be distributed as well as how many

times they may appear. In addition to its interest in the analysis of literary texts in particular.

l. Sociolinguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies all aspects of the relationship between language and society, especially with reference to such notions as race, ethnicity, class, sex, and social institutions. A distinction is often drawn between this subject and the “sociology of language” or (sociological linguistics) which tends to operate from the viewpoint of sociology, seeing language as an internal part of sociological theory. (*ibid*, p.66).

Whereas Radford et al define it as follows: “sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language use and the structure of society. It takes into account such factors as the social backgrounds of both the speaker and the addressee (...), the relationship between speaker and addressee (...), and the context and manner of the interaction (...), maintaining that they are crucial to an understanding of both the structure and function of the language used in a situation.” (1999, p.16)

Briefly saying, this type of linguistics is interested in the study of the interrelationships between language and social structure, linguistic variation, and attitudes towards language.

m. Statistical linguistics: A branch of linguistics which studies the application of probabilistic techniques in linguistic theory and description. It includes the analysis of the frequency and distribution of linguistic units in texts, and the relationship between word types and tokens (i.e the number of different

words in a sample compared to the number of times each word appears). (*ibid*, p.67, 68).

According to the term itself, this branch of linguistics is different from the other branches. This is shown in its study of language using different techniques that have a relation with the probabilities and statistics that may help in the analysis of texts.

II : A Brief Survey of the History of Linguistics

When talking about an important theme such as “Linguistics”, one should come back to its starting point since ancient times. So, as a field of study “Linguistics” had attracted the attention and the interest of many people. Those people had done great efforts in order to develop as well as to make it – (Linguistics) - independent from any other field of study.

This improvement through time makes “Linguistics” like any other theme has its own history. The latter has gone through different phases, moving from the Greek’s and the Romans’ achievements many centuries ago, to the philological movement and the comparative studies in the 19th century, till the 20th century studies which are known as “Modern Linguistics”. This idea is well expressed in the following quotation:

“Linguistic science today, like other parts of human knowledge and learning, and like all aspects of human cultures, is the product of its past and the matrix of its future. “Individuals are born, grow up, and live in an environment physically and culturally determined by its past: they participate in that environment, and some are instrumental in effecting changes in it. This is the basis of human history”. (Robins, 1967, p03).

In other words, the author in this statement would say that every science even if it reaches high levels in terms of improvement, it remains linked to its past for ever which represents its basis.

1. The first phase: The “Greeks” and the “Romans”

If one would talk about the Greeks and their achievements in the field of Linguistics, he should not forget to mention Bloomfield’s remarks of their peculiar brilliance of intellect as it is expressed in the following statement:

“The ancient Greeks had the gift of wondering at things that other people take for granted ”. (Robins, 1967, p.15).

This means that the Greeks at that time were very careful and paid attention to every single detail from which they might benefit more in their investigation of language.

Their main interest was that of grammar and writing that was early in time almost around the first millennium B.C which according to Robins (1967, p.16), “an *alphabetic system for writing the Greek language was worked out*”.

Although the Greek scholars had realized great achievements, this should not neglect the importance of the works that were carried out at the same time by other people and this is mentioned in the following:

“This emphasis on the linguistic scholarship of Greece should not lead us to deny or to ignore significant work in applied linguistics ... from the Egyptian script, progressively modified.” Robins (1967, p.13)

In addition to the Greeks linguistic works, the Romans as well were interested in linguistic studies and did their best to achieve better results. This interest is as early as their contact with the Greeks by whom the Romans were influenced to a great extent as it is said by Robins (1967, p .58) “from *their earliest contacts the Romans cheerfully acknowledged the superior intellectual and artistic achievements of the Greeks.*”

The Greeks’ impact over the Romans’ ways of thinking came back in time to the second century B.C “ *Greek thinkers and Greek learning in general entered the Roman world increasingly in the middle of the second century B.C*” Robins (1967, p.60).

While the Greeks were concerned with grammar and writing, the Romans were concerned with vocabulary. So at the end this is all what can be said about the Greeks and the Romans” achievements in brief.

As a result from what is said above, one should understand that the comparison of languages is not an easy task that could be done by anyone but it needs someone who masters well the language or languages that will be his/her object of research.

2.The second phase : “The Comparative Philology”

When moving from the early times many centuries ago B.C to the 19th century studies concerning linguistics, we’re in fact dealing with the so-called historical and comparative studies of language. So, this period was characterized by its interest in comparing languages taking into

account different aspects as well as studying their history. From the different languages that were found at that time, the main focus was particularly on one major family of languages which is known as the Indo- European family of languages, and the following statement is the best summary to this : “ *It is a common place in linguistics to say that the 19th century was the era of the comparative and historical study of languages, more especially of the Indo-European languages*”. Robins (1967, p.189).

At that period and even before, many scholars had discovered the possibility of comparing languages with one another, and that there is a sort of relationship that links languages historically, for instance they have the same ancestor language or as it is also called the same parent language. These ideas are explicitly mentioned by Robins (1967, p 195): “ *During the 18th century, and, in fact, since the renaissance, serious thought and factual investigations had continued on the historical relations between languages ... the main interest had lain in the comparison of vocabularies and structures of Modern European languages with those of Latin*” , and Crystal (1961, p.146) : “*The similarities existing between certain words and forms in Italian, Spanish, and French for example, indicated clearly that came from the same parent language.*” That is to say, since these languages have something

in common with one another concerning the form of specific words, this shows that they were one before being different and independent.

Like any other work which had lived several changes and developments through time, the linguistic works – that were done since ancient times-formed the basis for what comes after and contributed in one way or another to enrich it with some concepts and thoughts. As according to Robins who believed that: *“Linguistic conceptions of the 18th century formed much of the setting for early 19th century work.”* (1967, p.200), which in other words means that , any recent research that occurs concerning a subject that was investigated in the past and stopped at a certain level, makes from this end a new starting point to continue what was already done of course with the addition of new ideas, concepts, changes and improvements.

Well, since all the attention during this period was paid to the Indo-European languages in terms of their history and the comparison of their terminology as well as their word forms; this did not prevent many scholars from making more efforts aiming at changing the direction of the language studies from being almost purely historical towards the scientific approach which might help more in the betterment of their works. *“In large part, linguistics in the 19th century was concentrated on the historical study of the Indo-European language where in most of the advances and refinements in method and theory took place this*

period of linguistics was almost the preserve of German scholarship, and those working in it from other countries were either trained in Germany, like the American W.D Whitney, or were German expatriates like Max Muller at Oxford” , Robins (1967, p. 197). Also, this means that as the main importance was given to the Indo-European languages rather than any other language family, we found that the predominant scholarship was in the European hands as well , especially the Germans as it is mentioned previously.

As it is indicated through the title of this phase, this movement in linguistics was known as the “philological movement “ in which the investigations that were carried out on language were mainly directed to the study of words and their history. This is its meaning as the term philology implied, but according to Crystal (1971, p 143) is somehow different as it follows : “*It can be defined as the history of language and languages, and the study of the origins and development of words and their meanings*” . So , the slight difference added in Crystal’s definition concerns the study of the words’ meaning.

Now and still dealing with the same period, as it was mentioned in one of the previous quotations from Robins’ work , there were many scholars who had a crucial contribution in developing language studies from being purely historical to be scientific to some extent. Crystal (1971, p.146) : “ *The contribution of the 19 th century towards the*

development of a scientific approach to language cannot be underestimated, even though the preoccupation throughout this period was almost totally historical". That is to say, although the predominant approach to language was historical , the researchers in the field had looked for another approach to go farther with their studies, even if their steps towards the change were preliminary but they could not be neglected.

Among those, A. Shleicher who was believed to be the leader of the field at that time as it is argued by Robins (1967, p.201) : “ *In the mid 19th century perhaps the most influential and historically important figure in linguistics was A. Shleicher (1821, p.68)*”.

To close up talking about this period, one could not do so without mentioning that language as the main object of study was regarded as a dynamic phenomenon, it is not static but indeed changing all the time and this is what is said in Crystal’s quotation: “*language is continually in a state of flux, it is always changing. Latin did not suddenly become French overnight*”. (1971, p.149). In addition to the following citation said by Max Muller: “*A comparative philologist without knowledge of Sanskrit is like an astronomer without a knowledge of mathematics.*” (Max Muller, 1868, cited in Crystal, 1971, p.151).

3. The Third Phase : " Linguistics in the 20Th Century

Reaching the last phase in which we spot the light on the recent works that were interested in the study of language, taking a new direction different from that of the previous period. This phase, which represents the development of linguistics in the 20th century is itself divided into two periods.

a-The 1st period: During this period, a great importance was given to "phonetics", in other words to the study of language sounds. This aspect of language had attracted the attention of many scholars of the time. The study of language in this century was known to be descriptive rather than historical as it was previously. This change was thank to the famous figure, the founder of linguistics the Swiss scholar " Ferdinand de Saussure" and this is argued in the following : "*Significantly, the key figure in the change from 19th to 20th century attitudes was the Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure ... first made himself known to scholarship through an important contribution to Indo-European comparative linguistics*". (Robins, 1967, p. 224).

As it is mentioned above, studying language' sounds at that time were the interest of many linguists among them: **Henry Sweet, Daniel Jones, Sir William Jones, and the "Prague school scholars"**. This doesn't mean that research on phonetics was typically limited to the 20th century studies, but indeed there were some phonetic works that were done in the 19th century. According to Robins (1967, p.228)" "*During the 19th century, phonetic work drew on the progress of the allied fields of physiology and acoustics and experimental investigations were an accepted part of phonetic research by the*

end of the century", In other words, the phonetic research was carried out before this period but it was linked to other fields of study, and by the time there was a sort of improvement that led it to be independent.

In fact the works that had taken place till the time of Sweet were about the spelling reform. Then, with the appearance of the Prague School, the main focus had moved towards the "phoneme". This idea was indicated in the following statements:

« *Up to the time of Sweet, phoneticians had concerned them selves with spelling reform* » . (Robins, 1967, p. 228). « *Trubetzkoy and the Prague phonologists applied Saussurean theory on the elaboration of the phoneme concept* » . (Robins, 1967, p 229). This means that the study of the phoneme was already indicated in Saussure's theory. In addition to that, this period had lived the setting of the American linguistics which was known through its outstanding leaders: **Franz Boaz, Edward Sapir, and Leonard Bloomfield.**(Robins, 1967, p 236).

b-The 2nd period: Since the whole century was divided into two main periods according to the linguistic works that were achieved, obviously each period had its own principles as well as its own leadership. In what concerns the first part of the century, it was dominated by Bloomfield's behaviourist theory and his empiricist conception of science. Whereas, the second was predominated by Chomsky's mentalist theory and his rationalist interpretation of science (Robins , 1967, p. 216) .

In other words, each half of the century had its own leaders with their theories, their thoughts and their own views about language and how it can be studied.

The noticeable change that occurred at that time was due to the first publication of Chomsky «**Syntactic Structures**» 1957. The latter was considered as the turning point in 20th century linguistics (*ibid*, p.260). Through this work. Chomsky had introduced new principles concerning the study of language from which the 2nd half of the century was known to be the era of **transformational - generative grammar** (*idem*). According to the term itself, Chomsky's theory aimed at analysing sentences using a set of rules which are called the transformational rules.

By the time, the Chomskyan linguistics became to be known as **generative linguistics** (*Op. Cit*). While the main interest in the first two decades of the 20th century was in the study of phonetics, during the rest of the century it was moved towards grammar.

Still dealing with the same period, we reach another area of interest that concerns "**Psycholinguistics**". In this point, we should mention the following statements that agreed on the same thing: «... on more than one occasion Chomsky has declared his view of linguistics as a branch of cognitive psychology." (Robins, 1967, p. 262), and "... the most important contribution linguistics can make is to the study of the human mind; and that linguistics is accordingly best seen as a branch of cognitive psychology". (Crystal 1971, p.255). From this, one should draw the conclusion

that "psychology" plays a major role in the understanding of the human language.

Conclusion :

To conclude this chapter, one should say that research on the field of linguistics has attracted the attention of many scholars from its first appearance until the present day. This attention indicates the great importance of Linguistics and that it deserves more and more research to be carried out

Doing such investigations about the human language, the researchers look for adequate answers to all the questions that are unanswered until now.

CHAPTER TWO: DESIGNING A LINGUISTIC COURSE

Introduction:

The main objective of the present chapter is to spot the light on how to design a course in Linguistics. Before giving details to that, we are going to give a sort of general information about the syllabus including its definition and the criteria to be taken into account when designing a syllabus. In what concerns the course design it will include the importance of planning and the parameters that should be followed. Moreover, we will talk about the role of both the teacher and the learners.

In addition to their roles, we will mention the features of both the good teacher as well as the good learner. At the end, we tackle another element which is about classroom interaction. Of course, as the previous chapter, this one also is going to be divided into different sections.

I: The Syllabus

Sticking to our main element “The teaching Learning process”, indeed we’re going to deal with various aspects among which the “Syllabus Design” and the “Types of Syllabuses”.

1- Definition:

First of all one should mention what is meant by a syllabus?

“A *syllabus is a series of topics prescribed for a course of study*” according to (Higgleton et al,2001, p. 741). So, from this definition, we draw our attention to that each course of study has its own items that should be covered according to certain conditions. Moreover, the syllabus is regarded as an aid for the

teaching process, as well as a form of guidance in the selection of items to be included. This is what is mentioned in the following statement: “ The syllabus is a form of support for the teaching activity that is planned in the classroom and a form of guidance in the construction of appropriate teaching material.(White.1988,p.45)”.

While “the syllabus,(....),is the vehicle through which policy-makers convey information to teachers”. (Dubin - Olshtain.1986,p,27). From that, one could draw the conclusion that the syllabus is for a great help especially for non experienced teachers(new teachers). For instance, a new teacher without a fixed syllabus may go beyond what is needed to be taught to such or such level. So, the syllabus in that case plays the role of a guide which enables the teacher to deal with the necessary material programmed for a certain level. In addition, this syllabus is designed following some criteria as they will be presented below. Before moving to these criteria, one should mention that the syllabus design concerns both the selection of items to be learnt and the grading of those items into an appropriate sequence (Harmer.2001,p.295). This means that the syllabus designer should be selective when choosing the items concerning any course of study and order or organise them in a good manner taking into account the learners’ differences in several aspects.

2 – The Criteria of Syllabus Design :

In this part, we are going to present the factors that should be respected to design a syllabus. These criteria include the following :

1) **Learnability** : we teach easier things first and then increase the level of difficulty as the students’ language level rises(Harmer,2001, p.296). In other words, the items selected for the syllabus should be sequenced according to their degree of difficulty starting by the simplest and easiest items, then moving to the difficult ones to suit the learners’ language capacities.

2)**Frequency** :to include items which are more frequent in the language, than ones that are only used occasionally by native speakers.(Harmer,2001,p296).At this level, the order of items in a syllabus is based on how many times are these items used, so that the syllabus designer should start with the most common used items in the language till he /she reaches the rarely used ones.

3)**Coverage** :some words and structures have greater coverage(scope for use) than others(Harmer,2001,p296). In other words, the syllabus designer should pay attention to the selection of items keeping in mind how they will be covered during an academic year for example and this gives him the opportunity to put some items prior than others.

4)**Usefulness** :the reason that words like book and pen figure so highly in classrooms is because they are useful words in that situation. (Harmer, 2001, p.296). From this, we draw the conclusion that the items of any syllabus should be organized on the basis of their appropriateness to each situation, for instance the words language and system are useful words in a situation where we are talking about linguistics.

These are the criteria that should be followed and respected when designing a syllabus in general. But what about the syllabus of linguistics designed for 1st year students of English. Does it follow :

- * all these criteria ?
- * some of them ?
- * none of all ?
- * others ?

To answer this question, we will see the answers of the teachers of linguistics to 1st year students of English at Biskra university.

Still dealing with the same element “*the syllabus*”, moving to a new aspect that is about its types. In fact, according to many people there are different syllabuses, which are limited by Harmer to six types. Those syllabuses are : the grammar syllabus, the lexical syllabus, the situational syllabus, the topic-based syllabus, the functional syllabus and the task-based syllabus. While Dubin and Olshtain agreed on the point that there are different shapes that a syllabus may take. These shapes are five : the linear format, the modular format, the cyclical format, the matrix format, and the story-line format.

II: “ How To Design A Linguistic Course ”?

Indeed, within this section, we are going to talk about the course design in general; then how to design a course in linguistics in particular. In the first point, we are going to mention the parameters that should be taken into consideration when designing a course. While in the second we are going to apply those parameters on a linguistic course.

1. How To Design A Course ?

Before planning a course or a lesson ,one should answer the question why plan at all? In other words , what is the need for a course design? To answer this question, one should mention that a lesson plan is beneficial for both the teacher and the students. For the teacher, especially the one without experience, it gives him/her a sort of confidence of what is to be done in class, what are the elements his/her students should achieve and what will be their way to get

there. For the students it shows that the teacher had spent a part of his/her time thinking about them and what to be given. So planning in general helps both partners of the teaching/learning process since it gives the teacher an advanced idea about his/her coming lessons depending on the elements covered in the previous ones. While it gives the students a sort of confidence that let them react positively. But the plan remains a set of possibilities for the course which may or may not be realized during a programmed session. It depends on many factors that may allow or prevent that, for example a teacher designed a course in “Listening Comprehension”, he put certain items to be covered in a session of one hour and half, but in reality he couldn’t do that because the tape recorder didn’t work and he was obliged to read the text many times, to discuss with his/her students. As a result one hour and half was insufficient to achieve the teacher’s aim of that lesson.

And this is shown in the following quotation: “ ... , *all sorts of things can go wrong : equipment not working, bored students, students who’ ve ‘done it before’, students who need to ask unexpected questions or who want or need to pursue unexpected pathways ...etc .*” (Harmer, 1998, p. 121).

After talking about the aim of planning, we move to the points that should be taken into account .Before giving details about these parameters, one should mention the following quotation

« Coming up with a course design is a dynamic mix of juggling and doing jigsaw puzzles. Juggling because there are a lot of different aspects to keep in mind and keep moving between – the balls a Juggler has to keep in the air. Jigsaw puzzles because we are taking different pieces and shifting them around until they fit to make a satisfactory picture”

(Dudley-Evans & St John 1998 p .162).

Starting with this statement, in fact, makes things clearer. In other words, to design a course or plan a lesson is not a matter of linking different items in a

certain sequence then presenting them to learners. This is quite wrong , because the lesson plan indeed is a combination of items that deal with one major point sequenced in a logical order to be presented to learners. And this should be done in a manner which leads to the satisfaction of students' needs. From what is said above, one should draw the conclusion that teachers should take their time in designing their courses to satisfy their students' needs as well as to realize their objectives set for each lesson.

2 – The Parameters Of Course Design:

Coming back to the points that the teacher has to pay attention to, first of all we start with the *students' differences and needs*. Concerning the students' differences, we mean here that the *teacher* has to know about their age, sex, number in class, and their likes. In addition, he should ask some questions about their qualities, are they co-operative? Are they easy or difficult to control? Are they quiet or talkative? Are they motivated or not? So, as according to Harmer (1998, p.122, 23) this is needed especially for new teachers since the experienced ones have all this information in their heads this is on the one hand. On the other hand, the teacher should keep in mind that the students' needs a special interest. For instance, some of them need more information about such or such items; others need more practice to improve their understanding; while some others need varied activities.

Second , *the material* to be used during the lesson should get its part of interest. So in that case, the teacher should know what will be used, whether a tape recorder, an overhead projector, photocopies or any other tools. This will help

both the teacher and the learners in carrying on their work appropriately. This gives the teacher the opportunity to vary the activities in order to attract the students' attention and keep them motivated. Because if he/she keeps using the same material for each activity in the course, this will demotivate the learners. To conclude this point, the teacher should use varied material to avoid repetition and boring situations in class, as well as, to achieve successful lessons. Third and the last point here concern the *timetabling*. By timetabling, we mean how many sessions per week and how many weeks per an academic year. So when the teacher knows about the time given to such or such course per week, this helps him/her limiting the content of his/her lesson. For instance, in a grammar course of one hour and a half per session permits the teacher to set the necessary items that could be covered in that time. This enables him/her to organise the elements for each course depending on the elements set in the whole syllabus. As a result, the teacher while planning his/her lesson, should be careful of all these elements and try to apply them to reach a successful course design.(See appendix .6)

III: “The Role of Participants”

In this particular section, a major emphasis is going to be on both partners of the teaching/learning process: the teacher and the learner. In fact, we're going to spot the light on some features that should be found in both participants to facilitate the work for both of them and lead to success at the same time .

1. “The Teacher”:

Before speaking about the teacher and his/her role in the teaching / learning process, one should start with the dictionary definition given to the words: **teach** **teacher**, and **teaching**. *To teach* as a verb means to give knowledge to (an individual, class, etc.) to make someone learn or understand. *A teacher* is someone whose job is to teach, especially in a school. While *teaching* is defined as the work or profession of a teacher, and this is what is given in the Harrap’s Chambers Pocket English Dictionary (Higgleton et al ,2001, p.749). In addition to this definition, some teachers use different expressions to describe their job as it is stated in the following quotation:

“Teachers use many metaphors to describe what they do. Sometimes they say they are like actors because ‘we are always on the stage’. Others think they are like orchestral conductors ‘because I direct conversation and set the pace and tone’. Yet others feel like gardeners, ‘because we plant the seeds and then watch them grow’.”

(Harmer .2001.p.56).

Well, I personally agree with what is said a above because the profession of teaching is a profession where the teacher has the opportunity to inform the learners taking different ways that lead him /her by the end to achieve his /her goals successfully.

a- “The Teacher’s Role”:

When saying the teacher’s role, this is too large in fact since we are going to be unfair to some extent if we restrict the teacher’s role to only one role. So before stating the roles that a teacher plays in the classroom, we should mention this statement : “ *If (the teacher) is indeed wise, he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind .”* (Gibran 1991, p.76

cited in Harmer, 2001.p.56). From this we obtain the result that the teacher is asked not to provide all the needed knowledge to his / her students but to show them the way that let them getting it making their own efforts, using their own mental capacities.

Now we come to the point in which we set the teacher's roles. As s/he may be a provider of knowledge, s/he may be facilitator, also s/he may be a controller as well as an organiser ; s/he may be an assessor as well as a prompter ; s/he may be a participant as well as a resource ; and s/he may be a tutor as well as an observer.

So from the stated roles , we draw the conclusion that the teacher can act differently depending on the situations that he may face in each class, and this what is going to be mentioned below respectively.

***Provider of knowledge or facilitator:**

As a provider of knowledge, the teacher acts in such a way almost in all cases in class. This knowledge may be provided in a sort of instructions given to do certain activities, or in a sort of illustrations to clarify a special piece of information. Whereas, s/he acts as a facilitator in the teaching/ learning process especially in the case of learner- centred classrooms in which the lesson's success or failure is measured depending on the activity taking place by learners not on the teacher's performance. So the teacher here intervenes only when it is needed.

*** Controller or Organiser:**

As a controller indeed the teacher here is responsible of all what is going on. S/he gives the instruction, provides the necessary information, offers help whenever needed, etc. Doing so will give bad results among which an over-reliance on the teacher and some of the students will be neglected since the class acts as a whole. While as an organiser, the teacher will direct the learners how to do such activity. For instance, s/he gives them a piece of writing that should be done in the form of small groups. This will result in the involvement and readiness of students to do something new for them and enjoyable at the same time.

*** Assessor or prompter:**

Acting as an assessor, the teacher is going to grade his/her students, to correct them and offer them feedback. In this case, the students should be aware of this assessment in order to measure their level and make more efforts to perform better. Acting in such a way, the teacher should be careful and pay a great attention to his/her learners' reactions especially when the grades are low. While s/he can play the role of a prompter and this works well when the students for example are asked to hold conversation orally. In doing that, they may forget something and the teacher can remind them in a discreet way.

This will help them thinking in a creative way and give them a sort of support and courage, they need.

*** Participant or resource :**

When the teacher is playing the role of a participant, s/he intervenes as a part of the class, as one of the students, s/he offers feed back by the end of the activity and this is quite enjoyable for the learners. Despite the good atmosphere that takes place in that case, the teacher should not exceed his/her student's level. As a resource, the teacher is almost needed to guide the students especially when doing group works or some presentations. To do their work correctly, the students may ask for their teacher's help, for instance asking about where they can find that or that information, how they can do such or such thing. But this should be done in a careful way to avoid having spoon-fed students.

*** Tutor or observer:**

Acting as a tutor, this helps more in the case of research papers or pieces of writing that will take place in small groups or pairs. The relationship between the teacher and the students here is slightly different from that in the previous roles. It is somehow private. In spite of the fact that acting in such a way will enhance the learning process, the teacher should try to give the same degree of importance to all of the students since some of them may feel neglected. Whereas as an observer, the teacher may take notes on students' performance. This is of a great help since it gives the teacher the opportunity to measure the success of his/her lessons including both the activities and the materiel used and this permits him/her making changes if necessary of course (Harmer, 2001, p56-62).

So as it is indicated above, the teacher's role changes according to the situation taking place in class.

b – “The Features of a Good Teacher” :

In fact to say this is a good teacher, there are many characteristics that should be available. This was the interest of many people, among them Harmer who in his work “**How to Teach English**” 1998, tried to find an answer to the question: *What makes a good teacher?* His attempt resulted in the following:

- A good teacher should make his /her lessons interesting so you don't fall asleep in them.
- A good teacher must love his/her job
- A good teacher should have his/her own personality
- A good teacher should be an entertainer
- A good teacher must be approachable
- A good teacher should try and draw out the quiet students and control the more talkative ones
- A good teacher should be able to correct student without offending them
- A good teacher is ... someone who helps rather than shouts
- A good teacher is ... someone who knows our names

So from the answers mentioned above, the good teacher should know how to attract his/her students attention to what is going to be presented in class and keeping them motivated. Also, s/he has to love the profession of teaching since this is of a great impact on the students to react positively. Another element is the teacher's personality that should be clear from the first time. Moreover, s/he

has to give the students opportunity to talk with him/her whenever they have problems. Finally, s/he must be helpful. Above all, Harmer summarised all these answers in only one simple answer which says that : “ *good teachers care more about their students’ learning than they do about their own teaching*”. (1998, p.03).

2- The Learner :

In what concerns the student or the learner, the main focus here will be on who is the learner? as well as the characteristics of a good learner. The former will be presented in the form of a definition to the term itself. While the latter will be about the features that contribute immensely to make a good learner.

a : Who is the learner ?

To answer this question, we need, in fact, to know what is meant by the words : **learn** and **learning** at first. *To learn* as a verb means to be or become informed of or to hear of something to gain knowledge of or skill in something through study, teaching, instruction or experience. *Learning* means the knowledge gained through study. This is the information given about these words in the Harrap’s Chambers Pocket English Dictionary. (Higgleton et al. 2001, p.397). So from this definition, we get the result that the learner is someone who gained knowledge of something through different ways among which we’ve teaching. To talk about the learner more precisely, there is one crucial element that should take a great interest that is the “**learner’s age**”. Many people believe that learners of different ages learn differently. This has a relation with the rate of learning. They believe that younger learners (children) learn faster than the older ones (adults) especially in what concerns the learning

or acquisition of foreign languages. In such a case, for instance children are able to acquire or to learn new languages (foreign, non-native) faster than the adults. Since children born with this innate ability that gives them the opportunity to acquire many languages at the same time which is not the case with most of the adults. According to Harmer (2001, p.37) “ *People of different ages have different needs, competences, and cognitive skills*”. As a result, the difference in learner’s age has a great impact on their learning rate and success. While in some cases it allows them to learn successfully, and in others it prevents them to do so and it will lead them to failure.

b :The Features of a Good Learner :

As it is mentioned in the previous point about the teacher, there are some characteristics that should be found in the good teacher. Indeed there are some features that should be available to describe the learner as being good. So many research works have been done to answer the question who are the good learners ? To answer this question , they find it difficult somehow since learners are different in terms of their background ,their attitudes towards the language, their past experiences of learning and others. So for most teachers the good learners are the ones who do their homework, the result of that as according to Harmer (1998.p :7) “...*doing homework is the trademark of a good learner*” . The good learners should have the desire to learn. They should be motivated, should have a positive attitude towards their subject as well. In addition, they should be interested and involved in the subject. Moreover the good learners should take responsibility for their own learning (Harmer.1998, p :7-9).

This is from Harmer`s side, while from Rubin and Thompson`s side, there are other features among which the good learners are : “ *students who can find their own way,.....,who are creative, who make intelligent guesses, who make their own opportunities for practice, who make errors work for them not against them*” . (Rubin & Thompson,1982 cited in Harmer.2001.p.42). So this adds that good learners should have creative thinking as well as to benefit from their errors and not taking them as a negative point that may stand as an obstacle in their learning process. Also, they should be self-reliant, in fact in this case, they learn by their own, trying to find whatever piece of information they may need, so that they will be independent from their teachers.

From what is said above, one should draw the conclusion that good learners should be really interested in their subject, really motivated since its up to them to be so (its something from within the individual). Another element is that they should be responsible of their learning, should do their best to improve their level and to perform much move better. So at the end, “ *good learners...don’t just wait to be taught* ” .

3 : "Classroom Interaction" :

Before talking about Learner Instructor Interaction, one should mention that there is a sort of interaction which cannot occur if learners do not understand the content as it is argued by Ariza and Hancock (2003). Whereas Graddol (1993) points out that many language issues need to be addressed to ensure learner understanding the counsels that the linguistic and communicative competence of learners needs to be determined.

As it is said the classroom is the workshop of learning. During the learning process, both partners the teacher and the learners interact with each other discussing, exchanging ideas , as well as gaining more knowledge about a particular subject. Doing so, both participants have a certain amount of talk.

a : The Amount Of Teacher Talk And Student Talk:

In most cases, the great part of talking time is occupied by the teacher while the learners will benefit from the small part of that time .As according to Chaudron “ *teachers tend to do most of the talking* ”. (1988:p.50). So teachers should not take the major part of the talking time but should let the students talk most of the time especially when they are language learners. In fact, the learners need that time to improve their abilities, to practice more and perform better as well to reach a certain level of mastering such a language. In addition, teachers should encourage their students to talk, to express themselves using that language, and this is what is indicated in the following statement :

"getting students to speak - to use the language they are learning is a vital part of teacher's job. Students are the people who need the practice , in other words, not the teacher. In general terms, therefore, a good teacher maximises STT (Student Talking Time) and minimises TTT (Teacher Talking Time)" (Harmer 1998, p04). Moreover, good teachers should know how to benefit from their talking time neither to exceed the limits nor to use less than the normal amount. They should have a sort of balance. In other words, they should maximise their students talking time but at the same time, they should intervene when it is needed whether to recapitulate what was taking place or to discuss with them. This is what is mentioned by

Harmer in the following : "*TTT can be terribly over-used. Conversely, a class where the teacher seems reluctant to speak is not alternative either.*" (ibid).

b: "Teacher And Student Interaction " :

The success of the teaching / learning process is based on the appropriate relationship between its participants : the teacher and the student. That is to say , both learners as well as their teacher need a certain atmosphere to carry out their tasks in a good way. Such atmosphere will be present when they have a direct contact with each other ,when they exchange ideas and discuss together, and when they think together to solve a problem if any .This means that they share responsibility for their teaching /learning process. So, briefly all these tasks are considered as interaction activities that should take place in any classroom especially in the case of language learning classrooms in which they will be for a great and a special help for learners and this is viewed by Chaudron when he said: "*conversation and instructional exchanges between teachers and students provide the best opportunities for the learners to exercise target language skills, to test out their hypotheses about the target language, and to get useful feed back.* " (1988, p.118).

As a result, interaction between participants is beneficial since it gives students a chance to practice the target language, to know more about it through the four skills they may use : listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Also, it helps them to know about their level of mastering such a language from their teacher's remarks and corrections. From doing so, they will be aware of their level and try to do the necessary remedial exercises that may enhance their learning.

To realize such a goal, there is one crucial point that should be taken into account which is the teacher's manner in talking with students. Many people believe that the way teachers talk to their students is the same as parents talk to their children but in fact this is quite wrong. Both teachers and parents have the skill of *rough-tuning* which they share together. For experienced teachers, it is quite normal to use rough-tuning when speaking to their students, while new ones give much more interest to their students' comprehension to use it as a measure for their own speaking style (Harmer, 1998, p. 03).

Another aid which has a great impact on promoting target language learning is the questioning behaviour of teachers. As according to Chaudron :
" The teachers' questions constitute a primary means of engaging learners' attention promoting verbal responses, and evaluating learners' progress". (1988, p :126). This means that students will be involved in the teaching / learning process, they will be active rather than passive. In this case, the teachers' questions will be as stimuli which require the students' responses whether orally or in a written form. While with both sorts of response, the learners get the opportunity to exercise both skills speaking as well as writing. Such an interaction will be as a kind of assessment from the teachers' part and will give the students an idea about their level whether there is an improvement or not.

Besides what is said previously about classroom interaction, there are ten principles set by Wilga M. Rivers. She called them :

“ *Principles of Interactive Language Teaching*”. These principles are stated as follows :

- The student is the language learner.
- Language learning and teaching are shaped by student needs and objectives in particular circumstances.
- Language learning and teaching are based on normal uses of language, with communication of meanings (in oral or written form) basic to all strategies and techniques.
- Classroom relations reflect mutual liking and respect, allowing for both teacher personality and student personality in a non threatening atmosphere of cooperative learning.
- Basic to use of language are language knowledge and language control.
- Development of language control proceeds through creativity, which is nurtured by interactive participatory activities.
- Every possible medium and modality is used to aid learning.
- Testing is an aid to learning.
- Language learning is penetrating another culture, students learn to operate harmoniously within it or in contact with it.
- The real world extends beyond the classroom walls ; language learning takes place in and out of the classroom.

From these principles, one could draw the conclusion that learning a language requires a sort of responsibility from the students' side as well as much more support from the teacher's side to help the students in mastering a language and how to be able to use it fluently. Also, teaching a language requires teachers who should be careful of their learners' differences in terms of age, background, opportunities for language use as well as their cognitive abilities and their attitude towards studying such a language. So taking into consideration all these points, the language teacher should plan or design the courses according to his/her student's needs. Moreover, the language learner needs more practice in order to measure his/her level and makes the necessary changes to perform much more better.

In addition, the teaching/learning process of a language should take place in a good atmosphere where both participants feel comfortable and interested in each other. Such atmosphere enhances learning and leads to full participation that is of a great help to the students.

Another crucial element in learning a language is knowing its rules and how to apply them in order to use it correctly. Besides all these elements, there are others. Among them the interactive activities that may function as stimuli for the students. The latter pushes them to use the language and communicate with each other. More than that, language teachers should go beyond the old material they were used to work with, but instead they should make use of all the new material available such as : the CD-ROM, the videodisc and the Internet. This will enable the students to get contact with native speakers and know more

about their cultures and social lives. There is still another element which may help students in their learning that is “ *Testing*”. The latter should be interesting , should be a learning experience itself, and motivational. In other words, to benefit from tests, the teachers should let their learners enjoy having a test through their way of asking questions.

To finish talking about these principles, one should end with that learning a language is a task which needs a special interest since it is not limited by the classroom walls but in fact it could take place outside the classroom as well.

Conclusion :

In concluding terms, one could say that the good planning of either the syllabus or the course is of a great help to both partners of the Teaching/ Learning process. They will be aware of their way to reach their goals. Besides, both of them should feel the responsibility to achieve the best results.

Furthermore, the learners should do their best to understand the material taught, and this will be possible with their participation in class, their discussion with both their teachers as well as their classmates. Such interaction let them involved in the learning process, hence, it gives them the chance to exchange ideas and get much more knowledge.

Chapter Three: Some Factors That Hinder Language Learning

Introduction:

This chapter deals with the major element of the present work that is some of the factors which stand as obstacles in the process of learning a language. The latter concerns different aspects among which we have : the psychological, and the social factors, in addition to the cognitive abilities. Within the first point, we will talk about motivation, the learners' differences in terms of aptitude and learners' styles and their impact on learning. The second tackles the student's attitude toward language learning and their socio-economic status showing their direct influence on the learning process. While the third and the last point talks about the learners' cognitive abilities in terms of perception and attention, and their impact too. In what concerns their presentation, they follow the same way used in the previous chapters.

I: Psychological Factors

1 – Motivation:

The term motivation has attracted the attention of many psychologists long time ago. That is why it has been defined differently. For instance, McKay and Hornberger said that “*Motivation refers to the combination of desire and efforts made to achieve a goal; it links the individual's rationale for any activity such as language learning with the range of behaviours and degree of effort employed in achieving goals*”. (Gardner, 1985 cited in McKay and Hornberger 1996, p05). Whereas, it was defined as : “... *human motivation to learn any particular thing was accounted for in terms of what biological needs were being met during the early learning years and what kind of*

reward or reinforcement was provided for early attempts to learn". (Williams and Burden, 1997,p.112). While in the following : "*Motivation was defined in terms of the press, i.e. to release the tension and satisfy the needs*". (Murray, 1938 cited in Williams and Burden, 1997, p113).

From these statements, one could draw the conclusion that motivation has a close relation to our needs. This relationships leads to the satisfaction of those needs and the realization of those goals. In our case, the needs to be satisfied and the aims to be achieved are learning a language. Motivation alone is insufficient to fulfil the main objective, but instead, it requires a special effort. Moreover, motivation to learn a language is similar to that to learn any other thing. For instance, at early stages the human being " a child " has some biological needs such as : asking for food, for water, or for help when facing any problem. When satisfying such needs and guiding that child to eat or drink in the right way, as well as showing him how to overcome the problem, you're in fact making him learn something which deserves a reward. The same thing will happen in the case of language learning especially a second language. Being motivated to learn a second language is a way to fulfil many goals, as it is mentioned in the following statement : "*Achievement in language learning is many sided : some students wish to become linguists, translators, interpreters, and so forth ; others to get prestigious jobs ; others to survive on other courses taught in the new language (perhaps competition with native speakers); others, in some parts of the world, to identify with the other language community*" (McDonough, 1981, p155). So each student has an objective to be achieved through learning such a language. Yes we agree that

motivation is an essential element for learning in general and learning a language in particular. As well as many people agree that it has a great impact on the students' success or failure in learning such a language. According to McDonough (1981, p148) : *“Most language teachers will agree that the motivation of the students is one of the most important factors influencing their success or failure in learning the language”*. In other words, motivation is a crucial element that influences the learning process whether in a positive or a negative way, it still depends on the learner himself. Indeed, motivation is of a great help in increasing learning. The responsible of learning in the first place is the learner himself whether being highly motivated or not motivated at all. So motivation is a factor that enhances rather than hinder learning in almost all the cases.

As according to Rivers (1997) , *“Motivation, strong or weak, is always there. It is the task of the teacher to discover the springs of motivation in individual students and channel it in the direction of further language acquisition through course content, activities in and out of the classroom ...”*. This means that the degree of motivation differs from one individual “ student ” to another. So the teacher's role is to guide such motivation to reach better results with students rather than motivating them.

As it is mentioned before , motivation itself is an influential element and at the same time can be influenced either internally i.e. from within the individual, or from the external environment. That's why , there is a distinction between two main types of motivation : the **intrinsic** motivation and the **extrinsic** one. Before stating the definitions of these two kinds of motivation ,

the cognitive psychologists proposed a definition to the term motivation. They said that : “ *Motivation may be constructed as*

- *a state of cognitive and emotional arousal,*
- *which leads to a conscious decision to act, and*
- *which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and / or physical effort*
- *in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals)*

(Williams and Burden , 1997, p. 120)

From this, we result in that motivation is strongly related to an emotional state of mind that pushes the individual to act in order to achieve an objective set in advance.

Coming back to both types of motivation, in brief, one could say that intrinsic motivation is closely related to the individual’s satisfaction from within himself. In other words, when he is internally interested in doing the action to please himself and no one else. Whereas the extrinsic motivation has a close relation to the external rewards that may be gained as a result of doing such action. This means that the individual is motivated to feel the others’ satisfaction such as getting good marks to please the teacher for instance (Williams and Burden, 1997).

To finish with this element, one should say that motivation could be regarded as an obstacle depending on the learner himself. This means when the learners is motivated but don’t know how to benefit from this motivation , this will lead him to failure.

2 : Learners' Differences :

Actually, all learners are different from each other. This difference includes their aptitude as well as their learning styles.

It is obvious that each individual is different from the others and this difference should be taken into consideration by the teachers. According to McDonough : “ *All teachers know that some of their students will cope easily with the learning material and activities and some will not. Some will succeed and others will not*”. (1980, p.130).

As it is stated previously, learners' differences could lead to failure if they are neglected by the teacher. Therefore, the language teacher in particular should be aware of these differences and deal with his students depending on that ; especially when choosing the learning material. Among these differences we start with **learners' aptitude**. Long time ago, there was the so-called Modern Language Aptitude Test (MALT) suggested by Carol and Sapon (1959). This kind of test aims at measuring the learners' achievement. As it is argued by McDonough : “ *Aptitude generally refers to a disposition to be able to do something well .*” (1981,p. 134) . This means that each individual possesses a sort of ability which makes him capable of doing any task perfectly , which is in our case learning a language. Consequently, since all people have such kind of ability , all of them can learn a language, especially a foreign “second” language but the difference here is in the learning's rate. Some of them can learn faster than others. This doesn't mean as according to some researchers that people with a low aptitude for language learning will fail and those with a high aptitude will

succeed . Each learner is responsible for his own learning , each learner is aware of having strengths in some skills such as : Speaking and Listening, as well as having weaknesses in other ones such as : Reading and Writing. So the learner needs to improve his strengths and work more to compensate for his weaknesses.

Another point of view is expressed in the following :

“ Peter Skehan , for example believes that what distinguishes exceptional students from the rest is that they have unusual memories , particularly for the retention of things that they hear .” (Skehan 1998 : 234 Cited In Harmer 2001 : 41)

As it is said by Broersma *“ Good language aptitude is a wonderful gift , but it is not everything.”* The result we obtain from Skehan’s and Broersma’s expressions is that normal students should not compare themselves with exceptional students, but instead they should cope with the real learning situation to improve their level .

For instance, if there are learners who are bad in memorization , they should make much more effort to improve this sort of weakness . At the end , aptitude is really important for language learning if the learner knows how to deal with its different degrees (high or low) ; otherwise it will be a factor that hinders his success, this is on the one hand. On the other hand, **“learner styles”** are another crucial factor especially for the psycholinguistic researchers . They described student learning styles in their own way using their own words as they have deserved the individual behaviour . Among them Keith Willing who produced the following descriptions :

- *Convergers* : these are students who are by nature solitary , prefer to avoid groups , and who are independent and confident in their own abilities. Most importantly they are analytic and can impose their own structures on learning. They tend to be cool and pragmatic .
- *Conformists* : these are students who prefer to emphasise learning ‘ about language ‘ over learning to use it . They tend to be dependent on those in authority and are perfectly happy to work in non-communicative classrooms, doing what they are told . A classroom of conformists is one which prefers to see well-organised teachers .
- *Concrete learners* : though they are like conformists , they also enjoy the social aspects of learning and like to learn from direct experience. They are interested in language use and language as communication rather than language as a system. They enjoy games and group work in class.
- *Communicative learners* : these are language use oriented. They are comfortable out of class and show a degree of confidence and a willingness to take risks which their colleagues may lack. They are much more interested in social interaction with other speakers of the language than they are with analysis of how the language works. They are perfectly happy to operate without the guidance of a teacher.

Learning styles adapted from Willing 1987 quoted in Skehan (1988 : 247-250) cited in Harmer (2001 : 43).

So being aware of the different learning styles found in a group “class” gives the opportunity to the teacher to do his best for the whole group as well as for each individual within it. From the descriptions listed above, one could say that each style of learning may help in some cases and be an obstacle in some others. For instance, convergers as being independent and satisfied with their own capacities may foster their learning in some situations while they need to be concrete learners in some others. Whereas to be a conformist learner is suitable in some cases but in some others he should be a communicative one.

“For example, an individual who needs more cooperative learning to interact with others, may respond better to an assignment that necessitates group communication

(...), while a more field independent individual might prefer an individual assignment with time to be introspective". (Savard, Mitchell, Abrami, and Corso, 1995 cited in Ariza and Hancock, 2003).

Consequently each learner style works in some learning situations and does not work in others. For instance , during an oral expression course, the learner has to interact, to communicate with the other members of his class whether the teacher or the other students. Being self-confident in one's own abilities is a good thing in fact, but in such a case the convergers can not be totally independent ; they should talk to others, exchange ideas with them and use the language "L2". From these different learner styles, we obtain the result that the teacher should recognise the differences found within the students of each class and treat them accordingly; otherwise some of them will be neglected, hence, will not succeed.

II : The Social Factors

1. Attitude Toward Language Learning :

Concerning that point, it is obvious that the learners' attitude toward the language whether positive or negative has a direct impact on learning. Of course, if it is good, it will foster learning ; otherwise, it will hinder it and results in failure. So the language learner in particular should know that he is not learning a subject like any other subject. This means that the language learner should be aware of the historical background of that language, its culture , its political, economic and social status in his country as well as all over the world.

For instance, the students of English at Biskra University, first year level, should not judge the language in terms of being good or bad just according to their personal impressions. Indeed, they should look for more information about its origins and its development through time. Moreover, they should know more about the culture taught through it. In addition, knowing its present status in all fields as being an international language; language of science and technology, language of globalization, language of civilisation and history, language of communication. Therefore, having such background knowledge about the language you're learning is of a great help to each individual learner.

As it is argued by Wade and Tavris "*People have attitudes about all sorts of things*" (1990, p. 663). Moreover, they believed that "*Attitudes influence how people see the world and the attributions they make to explain events*". (*idem*). From these two statements, one could understand that people look at things and think about them differently. In our case, we're much more interested in students' attitudes towards language learning particularly. Some of them may think about English as a prestigious language through which they may obtain prestigious jobs ; also it may help them to travel abroad and communicate with people easily. While some others don't think so i.e they learn English just for the sake of learning as if they are learning any other subject. They have no ambition to go abroad that's why they don't care so much about it whether they achieve a good or a bad level. As a result, the positive attitude will be a motivating factor to realise a set of goals; whereas when it is negative it will hinder learning.

2 : The Socio economic Status of Students :

Good and Brophy stated that : *“Among individual difference variables used to describe particular students or even entire school population, the most important may be socio economic status (SES) and social, class”* (1990, p 584). This indicates that apart from the students’ needs and their cognitive levels, the teacher should know their social background as well. It does not depend only on the learner’s ability to learn such a language ; but also on the attitudes shared by either the members of the society where they live or the closest people to them whether parents or friends. According to Kral : *“the lack of progress of a student in language course may not be due to a lack of language aptitude, but rather to a shared value that language study is for “sissies”, not “machos”*. (1994, p.15).

This means that when people of the same society share such a negative attitude toward language learning as being a feminine study ; such attitude will influence the student’s level of achievement either girls or boys in a negative way as well.

Turning back to both terms the SES and the social class, they are defined differently by Good and Brophy. They consider the SES as a cold, impersonal statistic compiled from indices such as type of occupation, years of education, size of income, quality of housing, and desirability of neighbourhood. Whereas the social class usually is defined in a more personal way that expresses local prestige and respectability (1990, p584). The same idea is expressed in the following statement : *“ Persons are high in social class to the extent that people in their*

community describe them as respectable, influential or prestigious ». (Miller and Parcel, 1981, cited in Good & Brophy 1990, p 584).

In other words, the learning process is influenced by the society or in particular the social class to which the students belong as well as by its members and how they look at them as being classified to a high rank. Besides the impact of the society as a whole on learning, the learner's parents are also another influential part. As Laosa argued that : “ *In any case, parental education level is especially important to teachers because it is linked to parental interest in and attitudes toward education*”. (1982, cited in Good & Brophy 1990, p 584). This shows that another element that the language teacher should take care of is the learner's parents degree of education as well as their kind of jobs. Being aware of such private side of their students, the teachers will know more about how to deal with each individual learner.

Moreover, parental education level whether high or low, in both cases parents always look for the best to their sons and daughters. If they have a high level of education, they expect their children to reach the same level too ; and if they have a low education level, they will be more aware of the value of education and want their children to do the maximum in order to realise what their parents could not achieve. Good and Brophy make another distinction between the so-called **Disadvantaged** and **Advantaged** parents. The first concerns parents at the lowest SES level, while the second concerns parents at the highest SES level. As it is expressed in the following statement : “ *The major difference between disadvantaged and advantaged parents is that the former lack the*

knowledge that would enable them to obtain things they want ". (Hess, 1970 cited in Good & Brophy p. 586). To achieve a good level, learners should live in an atmosphere that encourages them to do so. Providing such an environment is the responsibility of parents in the first place. This will be possible only if parents talk and discuss with their sons and daughters in different subjects concerning all fields of life ,and encourage them to understand and live new experiences. So living in such a way could improve the learners' cognitive capacities, therefore push them to success; otherwise they fail in their studies.

III: The Cognitive Abilities :

*** The Perception:**

In fact, perception is one of the most influential factors that has a great impact on learning. Like any other characteristic, perception differs from one individual to another. Before moving to the definition of the term perception, it is important to start with the following:

Minds that have nothing to confer

Find little to perceive

“William Wordsworth”

According to Wade and Tavriss , perception is defined as : “ *The process by which the brain organizes and interprets sensory information* “ (1990, G 9 Glossary). While Morin defines it as follows : “*La perception est un processus par lequel l'individu organise et inteprete ses impressions sensorielles de façon à donner un sens à son environnement*” (1982, p.56). Furthermore, many researchers, argued that perception is a very complex mental process indeed and at the same time it is of a great help to the individual to interact with his external world. In his own point

of view, Morin said that : “ *Sans la perception, l’interaction de l’individu avec son environnement serait impossibleEn ce sens, la perception a un effet déterminant sur la réponse de l’individu aux stimulations de son environnement*” (idem).

So without such an ability, we cannot react to the stimuli we get from the external environment. Therefore, we cannot understand what is going on around us. For instance, when a teacher give an activity to his students, the instruction of this activity will be perceived differently. This indicates that each individual learner will interpret or understand the activity depending on his own cognitive capacities. Some will find it easy, while others will find it difficult. In this case their perception is influenced by their feelings towards such a subject. Wade and Tavis said that :

“ A camera doesn’t care what it “sees”. A tape recorder doesn’t ponder what it “hears”. A robot arm on a factory assembly line holds no opinion about what it “touches”. But we human beings are different. Not only do we care about what we perceive, but our thoughts and feelings can influence our perceptions”.(1990, p.192).

If the activity given is in grammar, the students who have no problem with grammatical rules, who believe that such a subject is very important in their studies as language learners, who find themselves in need to know more about it so that they reach a better level will understand the activity taking into account all the previous points. Besides perception, there is another cognitive ability which influences learning. This concerns “**Attention**” which is according to Wade and Tavis : “ *A fairly stable opinion towards a person, object, or activity, containing a cognitive element (positive or negative)*”. (1990, G2 Glossary). In our case, this opinion is toward learning in general and learning a language in

particular. For instance, when the learner believes in that he is in need to learn such a language, this may push him to pay more attention to it so that he will achieve the best levels ; otherwise he will not care about it at all.

Conclusion:

At the end of this chapter, all what we would say is that all of the factors mentioned above have a great influence on learning in general and learning a language in particular. So the learners should pay attention to those factors and try to benefit from them. It is up to them to enhance their learning rather than to hinder it through those factors. This does not deny the teacher's responsibility by being aware of his learners' different styles, different attitudes toward learning, and their different social backgrounds. As a result, sharing responsibility for learning is the best way for achieving the best outcomes.

Introduction:

While in the first part of this research, we've gathered all sorts of information that have a direct relation to our subject. Also, we've raised many questions for which we're seeking the adequate answers in this second part. So to reach this purpose, we've relied on three data gathering tools. The major one was the questionnaires addressed to the first year students of English at Mohamed Khider University of Biskra and the teachers of Linguistics. In addition, we've held interviews with both of them and attended many Linguistics' sessions to take some remarks about the teaching learning process of this particular module. Like the previous part, this part as well is divided into two main sections. The first includes the analysis of both the questionnaires and the interviews held with both participants. The second includes the classroom observation during different Linguistics' sessions.

I : "The Questionnaire's and interviews' Analyses "

1-1: With Students:

First of all, this questionnaire is addressed to 1st year students of English at Biskra University, promotion 2003-2004. The population of the study as a whole includes 201 students; among them we have 164 girls around 81, 59 % of the whole number and 37 boys around 18, 40 % of the whole population. Concerning the sample's population, we have 90 girls around 76, 27 % and 28 boys around 23, 73 %. The sample is chosen based on the grades that the students got in Linguistics in the first and the second official exams. The study is interested in those who got the lowest grades starting from **1, 75/20** to **9, 75/20**.

The questionnaire contains 30 different questions. Some of them are about the nature of the subject “Linguistics”, its terminology, and its way of teaching. While some others are about the time allotted and the reference books. And still others about the exams’ questions, the teacher’s evaluation as well as what would they suggest concerning the subject matter.

The interview is done for the sake of filling the gaps that we have not covered through the questionnaire. It aims at having the direct response of students concerning the different questions asked as they will appear in this paper. The questions, in fact, deal with various points among which: the learners’ opinion about Linguistics, their feelings toward such a module, the linguistic exams and their results, as well as their choice of studying the English language as a specialty

Item 01: “The students’ Problem in Linguistics”

1- Do you think that your problem in the Linguistics Module lies in:

- a- the difficulty of the subject
- b- teacher’s method
- c- your level

How?

Qs	a	b	c
Respondents	39	19	28
Percentage	52	25,33	37,33

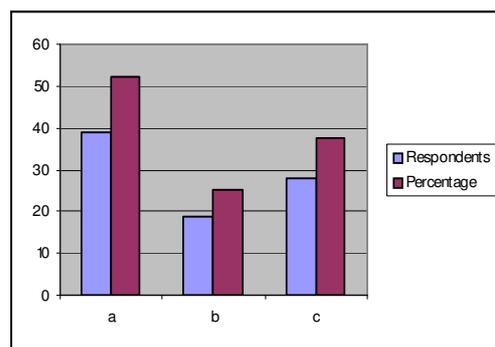


Figure. 1

As it is shown in the table and the figure above, the majority of the respondents around **52 %** think that their problem in the linguistics module lies in the difficulty of the subject. According to them it is a new subject which has a difficult terminology. It deals with philosophical themes that are so complex and can not be understood at their

level. They add also that they know nothing about linguistics before. While the minority of them **25, 33 %** link the difficulty of the module to their teacher's method. They claim that the teacher explains very quickly so that they can not follow, hence, they can not understand. They agree on that the teacher is the responsible of clarifying ideas and making them easy. Whereas still some others around **37, 33 %** think that the problem lies mainly in their own level. They argue that they have a weak level, a lack in vocabulary, as well as a poor background knowledge in the English language. To overcome such a problem, they ask for more simplification to the vocabulary used by their teachers, they ask their teachers to go slowly so that they can follow; and they suggest to have ten minutes at the end of each session to recapitulate the important points. When they interviewed they insisted once again on the difficulty of Linguistics. Also they agreed on its newness which is the case with phonetics for some of the students.

They felt afraid because of their teacher's method, way of explaining the lessons. Consequently, they did not understand, hence, they had such feeling which led them to have bad marks in the official exams. They had such fear because they have heard that it is difficult, the teacher is severe from the other students of 2nd and 3rd year levels. Such feeling refers to their own impression toward the subject in general, and the nature of the exams' questions in particular.

The conclusion drawn is that all of them share the same feeling of fear towards Linguistics. They linked it to their teacher's way of teaching in the first place. Then some of them argued that it is their own impression, while some others linked it to the other students' impressions.

Item 02: “The causes of the Problem in Linguistics”

2- More specifically, your problem is due to:

- a- difficult linguistics terms
- b- the nature of the subject
- c- your background knowledge of the language

Explain

Qs	a	b	c
R	35	28	27
P %	46	37,33	36

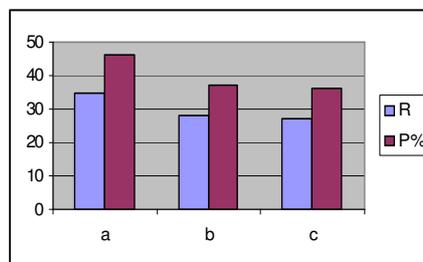


Figure .2

Within this item, we remain asking about the causes of making linguistics difficult to 1st year students. Around **46, 67 %** of them think that their problem is more precisely due to the difficulty of linguistic terms. They said that linguistic terms are ambiguous, require more explanation, and convey different meaning. The others about **36 %** relate their problem to their background knowledge of the language. They claim that they have not studied English well in their previous stages of study. Their limited information does not help them in understanding such a module. Whereas the rest around **37, 33 %** of the students insist on that the difficulty of the module has a close relation to the nature of the subject. They focus again on the philosophical nature of items, its relation with other disciplines, and the complexity of its ideas.

Item 03: “Factors of difficulty in Linguistics”

3- Are these factors causes of difficulty in Linguistics?

- a- The language
- b- New concepts
- c- Your inability to understand such a technical module. Can you elaborate ?

Qs	A	b	c
R	19	58	46
P %	25,33	77,33	36

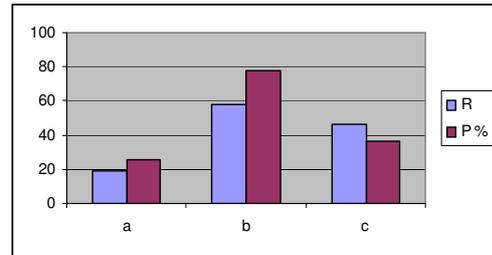


Figure .3

The third question as well is still dealing with the same element. In this case, the majority of about **77, 33 % (see figure.3)** insist again that their problem is linked to the new concepts. The others around **67, 33 %** see that the problem is with their inability to understand such a technical module. While the minority of about **25, 33 %** relate the problem to the language itself.

The majority asks for gradation concerning the presentation of new concepts to get the opportunity to understand. In their point of view, the deep sense of these new concepts prevents understanding the whole subject. Also they claim that what seems to be simple to an experienced teacher is difficult for them indeed.

Item 04: “The Negative Attitude toward Linguistics”

4- Your negative attitude vis-à-vis Linguistics is due to:

- a- insufficient time
- b- the timing scheduled for linguistics’ sessions
- c- the overloaded syllabus

How ?

Qs	a	b	C
R	34	07	20
P %	45,33	9,33	26,67

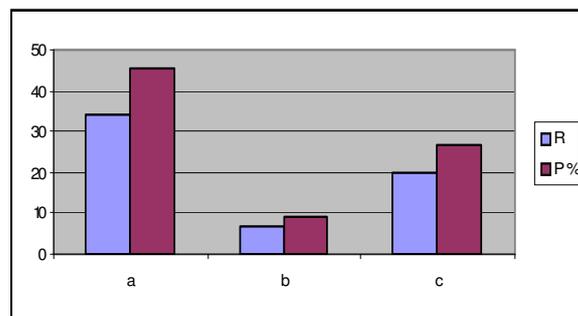


Figure .4

From talking about the nature of the module, its difficult terms, its new concepts, and the level of students as being the main factors of making linguistics difficult for 1st year students; we move now to talk about the time allotted to that module. Officially, linguistics is programmed for one session of one hour and a half per week, approximately around **42 hours** through the academic year. The students have a negative attitude vis-à-vis linguistics. For most of them **45, 33 %**, this attitude is due to the insufficient time. Others around **9, 33 %** link it to the timing scheduled for linguistics' sessions. And still some others of about **26, 67 %** think that it is due to the overloaded syllabus. According to the majority, they ask for more time since it is quite insufficient to understand well. In their opinion, it requires more time to permit discussion with the teacher. One session per week prevents the explanation of the tackled points appropriately. While the minority claim that learning linguistics in the afternoon is not good since it needs more concentration which is available in the morning; whereas others claim that they work so they can't attend all sessions.

At the end of the interview, almost all the students insisted again on that in the morning is better because they feel more comfortable, they are not yet tired, their memories are fresh; therefore they concentrate and understand much more better rather than in the afternoon.

In addition, there are others who ask for reducing the content of the whole syllabus, so that it will be possible for them to take enough time dealing with each item, therefore they will understand much more better.

Item 05: "Suggestions for Linguistics' sessions"

5- What would you suggest for the Linguistics' sessions?

- a- 60 minutes
- b- 90 minutes
- c- 120 minutes

Qs	a	b	C
R	10	34	32
P %	13,33	45,33	42,67

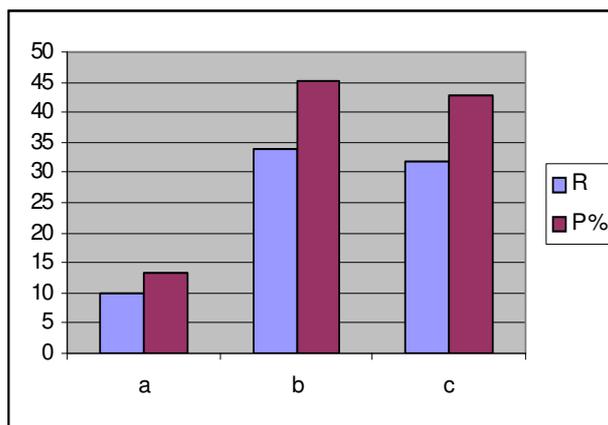


Figure .5

This is about the sufficiency of time in general, whereas concerning the students' suggestions for the linguistics' sessions we have different views. For **45, 33 %** of them, 90 minutes is so sufficient for a linguistic session, they think that if it will be longer, students will be bored and loose concentration. For some of them, it is good because it will limit the content of the course, hence they will be able to follow the explanation. The others of about **13, 33 %** claim that 60 minutes is sufficient. They think that it depends on the teacher to give the necessary information in a few time. And still others around **42, 67 %** ask for 120 minutes or to have two sessions of 90 minutes. Such a period of time according to them gives the opportunity to : more explanation, cover the whole syllabus which is long, discuss with the teacher and do more practice, as well as the chance to all of them to participate not only the good ones.

Item 06: “The Students’ inability to understand the linguistics syllabus”

6- Your inability to understand the content of the Linguistics’ syllabus is due to:

- a- the distribution of the items
- b- the lack of practicals
- c- the teacher’s inadequate explanations

d- your motivation

Qs	a	b	c	d
R	17	41	11	13
P %	22,66	54,67	14,67	17,33

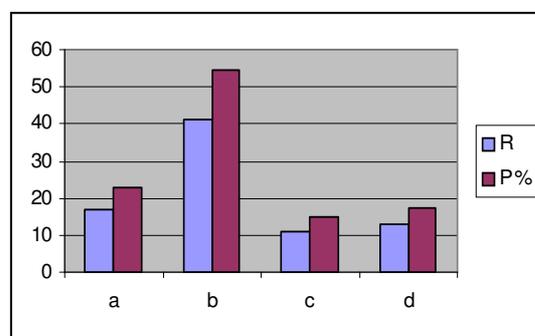


Figure .6

With this question, we are moving to know the students' inability to understand the content of the linguistics' syllabus is due to what. Around **54,67 %** link the problem to the lack of practicals, and 22,66% to the distribution of the items , the others of about **17,33 %** refer the problem to their own motivation, while the minority with **14,67 %** claim that it is due to their teacher's inadequate explanation. As a result of these statistics, we understand that most of the students feel the need to more practice which may provide more clarification to some points; while the minority blames their teachers as being the main source of the problem.

Item 07: "The learners' preferences of studying linguistics"

7- You would like to study Linguistics through:

- a- discussions with the teacher
- b- discussions with peers
- c- reading handouts
- d- other ways

Why?

Qs	a	b	c	d
R	61	12	13	04
P %	87,33	16	17,33	5,33

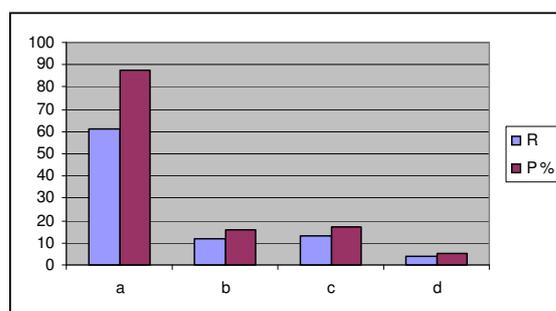


Figure .7

From the student's inability to understand such a module, we are going to look for the preferable way through which they would like to study linguistics. Answering that question, we have found almost all the students with **87,33 %** are in support to the first suggested way which is studying linguistics through discussions with the teacher. They all agree on that this is the best way of learning such a subject. It allows the teacher to know more about their level. Following such a way will make them able to participate in classroom, to exchange ideas, to have the guidance of their teacher whenever they commit mistakes or misunderstand any element. Other students of about **17,33 %** are in support to the third way that is to study linguistics through reading handouts. They consider them as a sort of reference from which they can get more information, so it enriches their knowledge. And we still have others around **16 %** who prefer studying through discussions with peers.

They agree on that in such a case they feel more comfortable, they feel at ease so that they do not hesitate to ask any question. They also add that they can correct each other.

Item 08: "The inability of achieving progress in linguistics"

8- Your inability to successfully achieve progress in Linguistics is because:

- a- the classrooms are crowded
- b- the classrooms are dimly lit
- c- the teacher's writing is not clear
- d- the teacher's explanation is not clear

Qs	a	b	c	D
R	24	07	14	28
P %	32	9,33	18,66	37,33

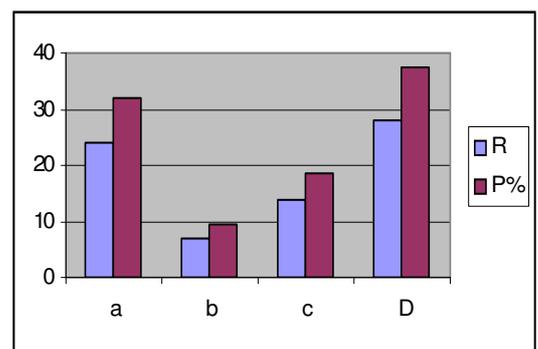


Figure .8

Now and in what concerns their inability to successfully achieve progress in linguistics, most of them around **37,33 %** claim again about their teacher's explanation which is not clear. **32 %** of the respondents claim that the classrooms are crowded. We still have **18,66 %** of them claim that their teacher's writing is not clear.

While the minority with **9,33 %** claim that the classrooms are dimly lit. Accordingly, the students in this case are asking for reducing the class size in terms of students' number per class. They also ask for more clarification in what concerns their teacher's explanation in terms of the vocabulary used.

Item 09: "How would they like to study Linguistics?"

9- You feel comfortable studying Linguistics in:

- a- small groups
- b- fairly numbered groups
- c- large sections

Would you, please, justify your choice?

Qs	A	b	c
R	65	08	03
P %	86,67	10,67	4,17

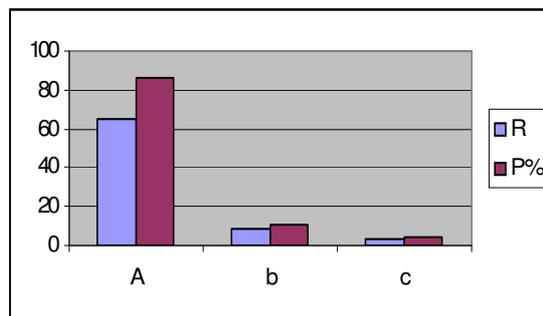


Figure .9

Within this point, we are focusing on the class size whether the students feel comfortable studying linguistics in: small groups, fairly numbered groups, or large sections. The majority of about **86,67 %** are in favor of studying such a technical module in small groups. They think that it is beneficial for both of them. For their teacher, they agree on that he will enjoy working and feel more comfortable. Whereas for them, they said that such an atmosphere encourages them to express their points of view, it helps getting all of them involved in the course, as well as it leads to a good and

an effective discussion. Moreover, learning in such a way is of a great help for both the teacher and the students which is not the case with the large sections where we find too much noise and disturbance of some students.

Item 10: “The Students’ ways of overcoming their inability to understand linguistic terms”

10- You overcome inability to understand Linguistics terms by:

- a- asking direct questions to the teacher
- b- asking direct questions to your classmates
- c- using dictionaries

Why?

Qs	a	b	c
R	45	15	27
P %	62,67	20	36

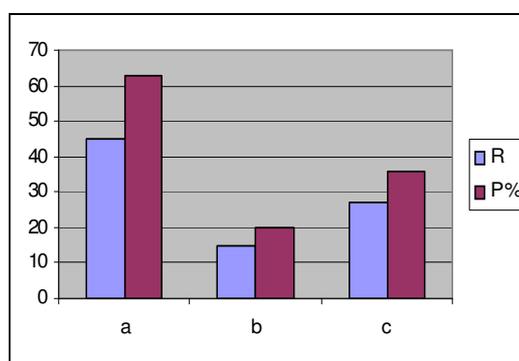


Figure .10

Again we move to another point which has a relation with the students’ way to overcome their inability to understand linguistic terms from their answers, we have found 62, 67 % of them prefer asking direct questions to the teacher. In their opinion, the teacher knows more about the subject and can provide the right information. He can also simplify things to them as being responsible of their understanding. In addition, some of them said that they prefer their teacher’s explanation since it could not be forgotten. The others of about 36 % are supporters of using dictionaries. According to them, the dictionary is of a great help at any moment especially during the revision. When consulting the dictionary we find the meaning of the word and at the same time we obtain other new words indeed. They prefer using the dictionary because of shyness

from their friends and fear from their teacher. They do not like to disturb him during the course and interrupt his stream of thoughts. And still others around 20 % who prefer asking questions to their classmates since their information is limited and they can understand each other. They also feel comfortable and free to ask about any ambiguous point.

Item 11: “Their favorite subjects next to linguistics”

11- Would you classify your favourite subjects next to Linguistics?

- a- Grammar
- b- Written Expression
- c- Oral Expression
- d- General culture
- e- Phonetics

Say why?

Qs	a	b	C	D	e
R	18	11	21	05	19
P %	24	14,67	28	6,66	25,33

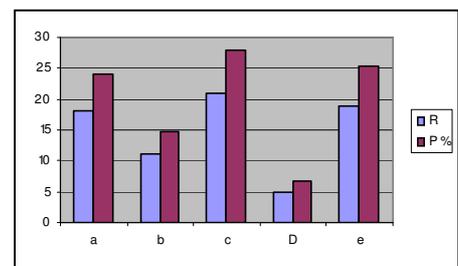


Figure .11

Concerning their favourite subjects next to linguistics, they classify the oral expression in the first place with 28 % .They give it such a priority because they would like to speak English fluently which is one of their dreams. It encourages them to hold a discussion with their teacher without any trouble. In the second place, 25, 33 % of them are interested in phonetics that teaches them how to pronounce words correctly. It helps improving their speaking skill as it has a close relation to linguistics. In the third place, around 24 % of them have chosen grammar. They think that to speak and to write a language well, they need to know the rules which govern that language and how they should be applied. Whereas some of them based their choice on the fact that they learned grammar well in the previous stages of their studies. And still others of about

14, 67 % give importance to the written expression. They believe that it is necessary to express themselves on a paper using their own words and their own style which show their personal touch indeed. While the minority with 6, 66 % are in favour of the general culture. They prefer such a subject because it deals with a variety of topics so that they obtain knowledge about different things.

Item 12: “Their opinion about delaying linguistic courses”

12- Would you prefer delaying Linguistic courses to?

a- Second year

b- Third year

Why?

Qs	a	b
R	32	29
P %	42,67	38,66

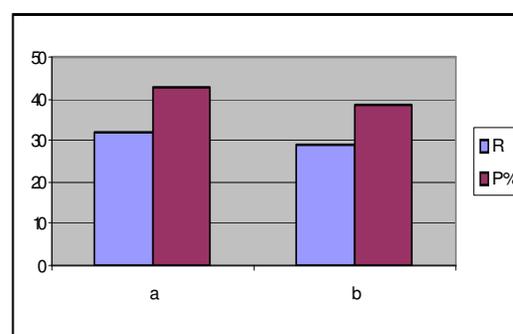


Figure .12

From their preferences concerning the different modules, we tackle their preferences about linguistics in particular. In this point, we would like to know whether the students prefer delaying linguistic courses to Second or Third year. The majority with **42, 67 %** would like to study that module in second year. They will have the ability to understand the new concepts. They will have a large store of words. They also add that at this level they will feel familiar with the language which is not the case at their level as first year students. Whereas the minority with **38, 66 %** would prefer to delay the study of linguistics to third year. They believe that at this level they will be capable of understanding such a module. Moreover, they will have a good mastery of the language.

Item 13: “Their opinion about the access to reference books”

13-Do you think that the access to reference books is:

- a- easy
- b- difficult because there are not enough books
- c- difficult because the loan time is short
- d- others

Qs	a	b	c	D
R	03	47	17	16
P %	4,17	62,67	22,66	24,33

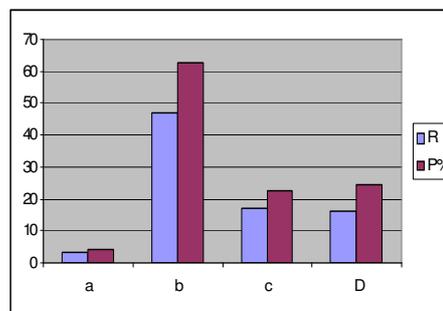


Figure .13

Before asking about the students' opinion about the exams, we ask them what they think about the access to reference books. Around **62, 67 %** said that the access to reference books is difficult because there are not enough books. The others of about **24,33 %** link the problem of books to other causes such as even if the book is available they can not understand because of its writing style and its terminology which do not work at their level. Another group with **22, 66 %** refers the problem to that the loan time is short. While only **4, 17 %** think that the access to reference books is easy. Accordingly, the students ask for extending the loan time as well as to provide more books that talk about linguistics to enable them enlarging their knowledge about the subject.

Item 14: “Their opinion about exams”

14- You feel more comfortable with:

- a- official exams
- b- take home exams
- c- research paper (exposés)

Why?

Qs	a	B	c
R	11	41	29
P %	4,67	56,67	38,66

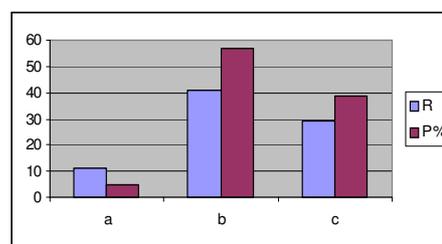


Figure .14

As it is mentioned above, in this point we are going to ask about the exams. First of all, we ask about the kind of exams with which the students feel more comfortable. **56, 67 %** of them answered that they feel at ease with take home exams. Such kind of exams obliges them to revise their lectures and store information in their minds. It fosters the individual work. It also enables them to depend on themselves and gives them an idea about their level. **38, 66 %** of them prefer the research papers. Carrying out such a task is of a great help in making students active searching for the necessary information and expanding their knowledge. Also the oral presentation of these papers gives them the opportunity to discuss with their teachers. And the rest around **14, 67 %** choose the official exams since they are obligatory and will evaluate them.

During the interview, the students added that their problem is with the questions. They are asked in an indirect way, they are ambiguous.

There are some key words in the questions which are quite new for them, so the newness of such terms misleads them to answer correctly. It is a question of time. One hour and a half is quite insufficient for a Linguistic exam particularly.

. In addition, most of them claimed that they need more time for an exam in such a difficult module. They asked for two hours at least instead of 1 h30.

Item 15: “Their opinion about the kind of activities in the linguistic exam”

15- You would like activities in your Linguistics' ex am to be:

- a- course based
- b- content based
- c- both

Why?

Qs	A	b	c
R	13	07	49
P %	17,33	9,33	65,33

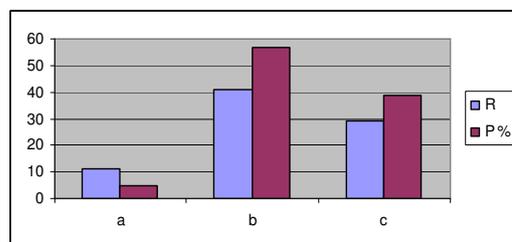


Figure .15

After asking about the kind of exams, we ask about their activities. We have asked the students if they would like the activities in their Linguistics 'exam to be course based, content based or both. The majority of about **65, 33 %** replied that they are in support to both kinds of activities. They think that they are complementary. Also both of them are interesting and they can benefit more. Whereas **17, 33 %** have chosen the first kind of activities believing that to learn by heart is an easy task. Its main source of information is the lesson. There are still others of about **9,33 %** who prefer getting content based activities .They claim that with such kind of activities they feel free to give the necessary information using their own expressions .

Item 16: “Their opinion about the linguistic exam questions”

16- You think that Linguistic exam questions are:

- a- difficult
- b- ambiguous
- c- affordable

Justify your answer

Qs	A	b	C
R	48	27	04
P %	64	36	5,33

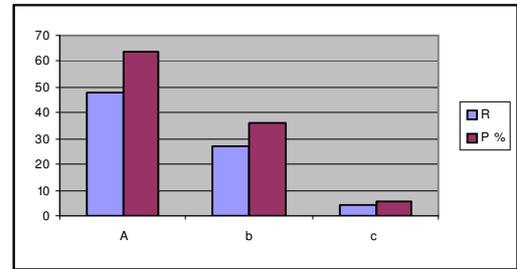


Figure .16

Now and more precisely we ask about the student's opinion concerning the questions they get in their linguistic exams. The answer was that **64 %** of them agree on that the questions are difficult. This difficulty refers to the philosophical and critical nature of questions. It also refers to the lack of understanding of the courses. On the other hand **36 %** think that the questions are ambiguous. Such ambiguity goes back to the new terms used within the questions. These terms mislead them in getting the right answer. While only **5,33 %** of the students think that the questions are affordable. They think so because the questions are concerned only with what they have seen in their lectures. They add that any exam, whether in linguistics or another subject, requires good preparation and revision.

Item 17: "Their opinion about the teacher's evaluation"

17- You think that the teacher's evaluation is generally:

a- fair

b- unfair

Why?

Qs	a	b
R	54	14
P %	72	18,66

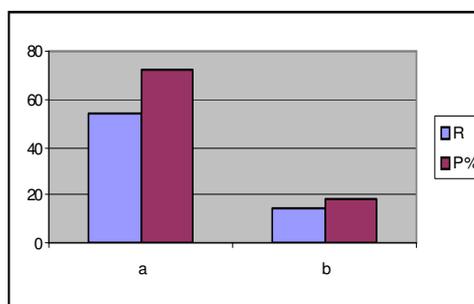


Figure .17

We are still talking about the exams but we tackle a new element which is about the teacher's evaluation. Most of them with **72 %** think that their teacher's evaluation is generally fair and only **18, 66 %** of them think of it as being unfair. They said that they have a good teacher in fact and that it is their fault to get bad marks because they do not answer appropriately. According to the first group, their teacher's evaluation is legal since he considers them as workers and who works hard will be paid in a good way of course. They agree that he never discourages them; however he gives them all what they need in terms of explanation and the proof is that there are some students who get good marks. The second group, by the contrary, blames their teacher of discussing with the good students and neglecting the others. Furthermore, he does not accept the answer even if it is correct when it is expressed differently.

Item 18: "Their preferable way of studying linguistics"

18- Do you prefer studying Linguistics through?

- a- research papers
- b- group works
- c- others

Qs	A	b	c
R	20	56	02
P %	26.66	74.66	2.66

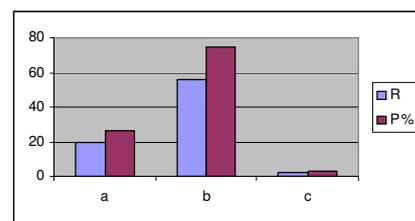


Figure .18

For a second time, we ask about through what way students prefer studying linguistics. The answer is that **74, 66 %** are in favour to the group works and **26, 66 %** of them insist again on learning through research papers for the same reasons mentioned in the previous questions.

Item 19: "Their opinion about having more tests"

Yes No

19- Would you like to get tests in addition to the official exams?

Qs	a	B
R	55	18
P %	73,33	24

We keep dealing with the same environment of exams but we want to know whether students like to get more tests in addition to the official exams or not. **73,33 %** are in favour to do so thinking that it is a chance to know about the teacher's way of evaluation as well as to get additional marks. It motivates them to make more effort. It helps them discovering their weaknesses and avoiding their appearance again. The others about **24 %** are against the idea believing that they are not in need to more tests. This belief is based on their fear of failing in these tests, so it will influence their work in the official exams. They add also that two official exams during the whole year are quiet sufficient.

Item 20: "Their role in the teaching learning process"

20- Do you think you are active rather than passive in the teaching

Yes No

/ learning process

Why?

Qs	a	b
R	32	29
P %	42,67	38,66

Tackling another element and generally speaking, we asked the students about their participation in the teaching learning process **46,67 %** of them replied that they are

active since they discuss with their teacher. Whereas **28 %** think that they are passive since they are just receiving information.

Item 21: “Their opinion about making revision of the previous items”

21- Do you like to make a revision of the previous items at the beginning of each new session? Yes No

For what reason?

Qs	a
Respondents	72
Percentage	96

Within this item, we tackle a new element that is the way they proceed in each new session. We ask them whether they like to make a revision of the previous items at the beginning of each new session or not. The answer is yes by almost all of them **96%**. Such a revision makes them ready to receive new data, helps them linking the new knowledge with that of the previous sessions, helps them to be online with the teacher, and it spots the light on the important points. It also gives the opportunity to clarify some ideas which need to be repeated again.

Item 22: “Their opinion about having more quizzes”

22- Do you feel that you need some more quizzes ? Yes No

Why?

Qs	a	b
R	55	09
P %	73,33	12

For a second time we ask them if they feel the need to have some more quizzes **73.33 %** of them replied with yes. They thought that this is a good manner of learning. It pushes them to make more efforts searching for more information. It helps them

improving their level as well as testing their understanding, while the minority of **12%** answered with no for the same reason that is the official exams are sufficient.

Item 23: “The causes of their low grades in linguistics”

23- Do you link your low grades in Linguistics to:

- a- the lack of knowledge
- b- the lack of concentration
- c- the ambiguity of questions
- d- others

Justify your answer

Qs	a	b	C	D
R	32	23	27	03
P %	42,67	30,67	36	4,17

We reach now the major element which deals with the causes of getting low grades in linguistics. The majority with **42, 67 %** links the problem to the lack of knowledge. In the second position, **36 %** of the respondents referred the problem to the ambiguity of questions. In the third position, **30, 67 %** of them thought that the main cause is the lack of concentration. Whereas the minority with **4, 17 %** does not link it to any of these causes. The first group talks about the lack of knowledge especially in terms of vocabulary, so that it prevents them expressing their ideas appropriately. The others claim that the questions are not clear so that they can not grasp their deep meaning. While the third group claims that it is a question of time. They lose concentration because they think about the organization of time so that they will be able to answer all of the questions.

When interviewing them, they added that they had some problems with other modules such as: Phonetics, Written expression, and Oral expression. Phonetics because

of its newness, whereas written expression and oral expression because they do not master both the writing and the speaking skills in such a foreign language “English”.

Item 24: “Their preferable kind of questions”

24- What kind of questions do you prefer?

- a- Yes/No questions
- b- M.C questions
- c- Others

Explain:

Qs	a	b	C
R	47	20	11
P %	62,67	26,66	14,67

In what concerns the kind of questions, the majority of the students **62, 67 %** prefers Yes/No questions. They choose that type because it is simple, easy, and clear according to them. The answer to these questions is limited and does not need more explanation. All what it requires is a good preparation and memorization of knowledge. It does not take too much time to answer and helps them getting good marks. **26, 66 %** of them prefer M.C. questions. They think that such kind of questions helps them getting more marks and all what it needs is just to concentrate, so that they can give the right answer. While **14, 67 %** of the respondents ask for having a variety of questions. They need questions that ask for defining some items, and other questions through which they can answer freely expressing their thoughts in their own way.

Item 25: “Their opinion about the linguistics exam program”

25 Do you like your Linguistics exams to be programmed?

- a- at the beginning
- b- at the end

Justify your choice

Qs	a	b
R	45	30
P %	60	40

Again we ask about the exams, but this time we would like to know whether the students like their linguistic exams to be programmed at the beginning or at the end. **60 %** of them are in support to the first choice. They think that since it is a difficult module, when they start with it they will feel more comfortable to think about the other modules. At the beginning they are still active and motivated so they can do much more better. While the others with **40 %** are in support to the second choice. They think that they will have enough time to revise well. They will be used to the exams' atmosphere. Also they agree that if they do not work well when it is programmed at the beginning, this will influence their work in the next modules.

Item 26: "Their opinion about having more practice"

26- Do you feel that you need more practice in your Linguistics sessions?

Yes NO

Why?

Qs	a	b
Respondents	69	05
Percentage	92	6.66

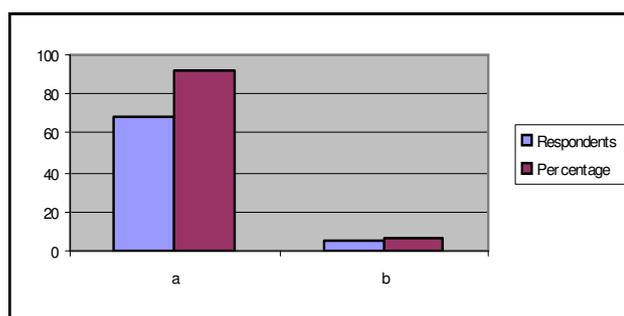


Figure .19

As it is indicated above, we ask whether the students feel the need to more practice in their linguistic sessions or not. The answer with yes is of almost all of them **92 %**. They feel such need because in their point of view, doing more activities permits

them to evaluate their understanding of the lectures. When they have practice they feel more motivated. They think that it is something very important and necessary for learning. They add that it gives an enjoyable atmosphere to the sessions and encourages them to do their best, so that they achieve better results.

Item 27: “Their opinion about limiting the content of the linguistic courses”

27- Do you think that your Linguistics course should be limited in terms of content ? Yes No

Explain

Qs	a	B
R	46	15
P %	67.33	20

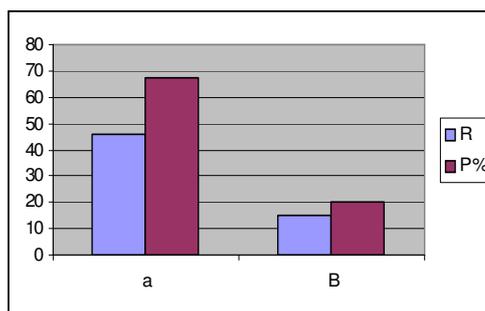


Figure .20

After asking about practice during the sessions, now we ask about their opinion concerning the content of their linguistic courses whether to be limited or not **67, 33 %** of the learners answered with yes since if the course will be long, it will be more difficult for them to follow. When it is limited, it gives them the opportunity to understand well and to concentrate more. While only **20 %** of them answered with no, thinking that they are in need to know more about linguistics and if the course is limited, this will prevent them gathering as much information as they can.

Item 28: “Their opinion about the importance of linguistics”

28- Do you think that Linguistics is an important module to be studied at your level?

Yes NO

Why?

Qs	a	B
R	57	14
P %	76	18,66

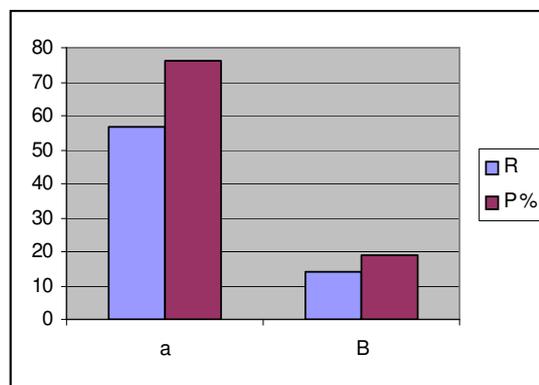


Figure .21

We are still asking about the students' opinion but in this point we ask whether they think that linguistics is an important module to be studied at their level or not. The majority with **76 %** are in support to study that module at their level as first year students. They argued that it helps them understanding how the language works and how should it be used. It is so important to study the English language successfully. It helps them to have more knowledge about its history and culture. Whereas only **18, 66 %** of them think that it is so complex to be learned at their level. It requires a high level. In addition, it does not deal with subjects that interest them in their daily life.

Item 29: "Their demand of the teacher's help"

29- Do you ask for your teacher's help whenever you feel unable to grasp the meaning?

Yes NO

Qs	a	b
R	45	26
P %	60	34,67

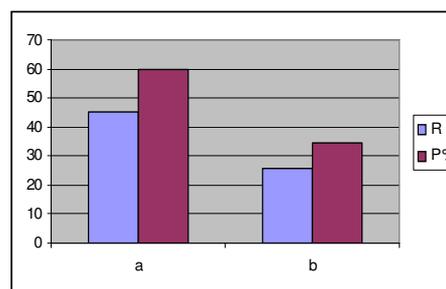


Figure .22

When it comes to their need to their teacher's help whenever they feel unable to grasp the meaning, **60 %** of them agree that the teacher is the main source of information and the provider of the true meaning. He is also responsible of their

learning. He is the only one who can help them understanding difficult points. The others of about **34, 67 %** do not agree on that. They said that they do not have enough courage to discuss or talk with the teacher at all. They would like to do so but they feel ashamed. And still some of them think that they do not have the opportunity in addition to their weak level in English.

Before moving to the last item in the questionnaire, we have interviewed them about two other elements. The first is concerned with the students' cognitive abilities to understand Linguistics. Some of them argued that they have a weak level in English. They have a poor background knowledge concerning the language. So such a lack of information makes them unable to understand and assimilate Linguistics appropriately. While some others claimed that all what they need to achieve a good level in Linguistics is more and more concentration. They thought that they are able to understand if they have the will to do so.

Whereas the second is concerned with the students' choice of studying English, some replied that it is their own choice because they generally like foreign languages especially English. It is the language of the world. Some of them like it because it was the first foreign language they learnt in their primary schools, whereas the others like it because they had a good teacher of English in their previous stages of studies.

And some others stated that it is imposed on them because it is their parents' choice on the one hand. On the other hand, it goes back to their marks in the BAC exam which prevent them getting their favourable choice which most of the time requires high grades especially in the scientific subjects as "Mathematics".

Item 30: The students' suggestions

Reaching the last point, as far as learning/ teaching linguistics is concerned, the students suggested the following:

- They would like to have two sessions per week instead of one.
- They ask for more home works, more practice and research papers.
- They need to make summaries for each lecture under the guidance of their teacher to measure their understanding.
- They ask their teachers to go slowly when they explain the lessons.
- They ask for more time to discussion.

1-2 With Teachers Of Linguistics:

The questionnaire consists of 21 questions addressed to the teachers of Linguistics to 1st year students of English at Biskra University. The questions are concerned with different elements such as : the teachers' opinion about Linguistics, the time allotted for teaching, their objectives, their way of teaching such a subject, and others. In addition, the interviews held with them were done for the same reasons stated previously within the students 'section. (See appendix.2-b)

*** The Difficulty Of Linguistics:**

As far as first year students are concerned, most of the teachers argued that Linguistics is a difficult module since it deals with new concepts and ideas that are explained in English. Such a difficulty refers to its newness and it is the first time they are going to study it as a fascinating subject of curiosity. It refers also to the vocabulary used that is most of the time beyond the learners' level .While some others consider it as being too difficult because of the poor general linguistic background of the great majority of students. When interviewed, they said that what makes Linguistics appears as “ La Bête Noire” to those freshers is usually the linguistic level of students which is very poor, weak to understand new concepts and principles. Moreover, it is the linguistic background of students which is not developed. They are not yet prepared to deal with Linguistics, their mastery of the English language does not permit them to do so. They have a preconceived idea, a previous impression about Linguistics. In addition, the terminology used on the behalf of the teacher is generally difficult to be understood at their level as first year students.

Furthermore, Linguistics is something new for the students. It is taught the same way as math, and the learners have a predisposed judgement that math is difficult ; consequently Linguistics is difficult too. Teaching such a subject requires objectivity . So concerning this item , almost all the teachers whether with a long or a short experience in teaching Linguistics argued that the students have a previous impression about the subject of being difficult . In their points of view, this is the main factor of having such a problem with Linguistics. Besides their lack of knowledge concerning the English language in general, and Linguistics in particular.

*** The Time Allotted For Teaching Linguistics:**

It what concerns the time allotted to linguistics, the majority of teachers claim that it is not sufficient. They think so because it does not permit the coverage of the content of the whole syllabus . In addition, they argued that such a subject needs more time to deeply cover the content of each item in the syllabus. It would also help them to work according to the learners' level and thereby be able to simplify the learners tasks . Where the minority think the opposite i.e the time allotted is sufficient. They agreed that since the syllabus is dealing just with a general introduction to linguistics.

When it comes to the Linguistic sessions whether they are well programmed within the time table or not, most of the teachers answered with no. They suggested that it would be advisable to teach this subject in the morning thinking that the students' abilities to acquire are present and their concentration is much more effective. While the others replied with yes. In other words, they thought that

the linguistic sessions are well programmed since in their point of view linguistics is simply a subject without any given priority.

*** The Importance of Teaching Linguistics and its Practice :**

Within this question, we ask the teachers about the importance of teaching linguistics starting from first year. All of them argued that it is quite important to do so for many reasons. In their own points of view, it gives the opportunity to students to “Know about” language. It prepares them to assimilate specific terminology in English and introduces them to general concepts about language. They think so because most of the other modules are directly based on language itself as well as being a new subject which has never been taught to students previously.

Concerning the practice during the linguistic sessions, the majority of teachers answered with yes. They believe that any theoretical knowledge would never be stored in the memory unless it is combined with an image drawn through an activity. Some of them ask the students to write paragraphs and sometimes essays that deal with particular topics in Linguistics. While others submit a set of questions to be discussed, and the latter serve as a guide to grasp the main ideas dealt with in the lecture. And still other teachers who give some activities rarely or do not give them at all. During the interview, we have asked them whether they give their students some activities (home works, research papers, ...etc) or not. Some of them replied yes, of course. We do so to get them used to write in the target language “English” as well as to write on specific topics “Linguistic topics” .

Others said yes ,we do in order to consolidate the acquired knowledge . While some others said that they do it rarely.

In what concerns the activities given to students, they are varied of course depending on the teacher's way of teaching. Most of them give some home works to be done individually in order to measure the learners' understanding in the first place, then to know about their writing styles.

*** The Objectives Of Teaching Linguistics:**

After talking about the importance of teaching Linguistics and its practice, we ask about the objectives of teaching such a matter.

The teachers stated the following :

- To enable the students to discuss and write on topics that may be difficult but interesting.
- To get used with the linguistic environment and master definitions of linguistic terms.
- To provide a general overview about the course itself, a kind of an introduction to what will be tackled further.

We still talk about the objectives of teaching linguistics but from another angle .This point deals with their achievement during the academic year. Most of the teachers think that it is possible if the syllabus is taught properly so they could achieve its goals. Others said that it depends on various parameters. The latter include the students' general level as well as their aptitude to learning. While some others do not think so. They said perhaps, partially, because it is very difficult for students to acquire the second language (English) and to master linguistic themes.

*** The Teachers' Way Of Teaching And The Students' Assimilation:**

Now we ask about another element that is the teachers' method in teaching linguistics. Most of them follow an eclectic method. They give a simple and direct explanation. They give illustrations through concrete, daily examples. Others make an attempt to vulgarise the course content. And still some others think that the best way to teach linguistics is through involving the learners in the lesson by class discussion.

After the teachers' own method in teaching linguistics, we look for through which way the students assimilate better. All the teachers agree with the first and the second suggested answers. They argued that their students assimilate better through discussions and by giving them handouts. In what concerns class discussion, they believe that the more they discuss with their students, the more the data will be accessible. So it helps them gathering the maximum knowledge about linguistics and language as a human phenomenon. It helps also clarifying the ideas and enables the learners to understand the new concepts. In addition, it develops the students' own points of view about the topics dealt with. While the handouts serve as an aid to memorize what is really necessary and important. They are also supposed to be a sort of consolidation to what has been dealt with so far.

*** The Syllabus And Course Design In Linguistics:**

Again we come back to the syllabus designed for first year students but in relation to their level. Indeed, the question about the syllabus design criteria was already raised in the theoretical part (see chapter II . P.30) The majority of teachers say that it is quiet O.K. It is accessible and interesting, however, success

or failure in its application depends on the methodology and competence of the teacher. For the others, it is acceptable in general terms but it requires to be detailed and adapted to the language level of students.

In addition, we have asked the teachers about the elements they will focus on if they are asked to design a syllabus. They answered differently according to their own points of view. They said that a greater part should be devoted to different branches of Linguistics (Phonology, Morphology, Pragmatics). They also insisted on the following :

- Definition of key concepts.
- Linguistic schools and language problems.
- Artificial intelligence.
- A clear sequencing of the themes and a smooth shift from one theme to another.

When interviewed ,some of them said that the syllabus designed in Linguistics for first year students is too long in comparison to the level of students .It needs to be slightly modified in terms of its content. It should talk about Linguistics more than about language. While some others claimed that it is quite good. It is just an introduction to Linguistic terms and vocabulary. But there is no coherence between the items, they need to be reordered. And if they are asked to change something in that syllabus, some of them said that they would insist more on items that speak about Linguistics. Since the module is new for those students, they should know more about it . We would review the content of that syllabus taking into account

the following points: - the students' level - the new findings in Linguistic research- and the content of the coming academic years.

We would omit families of language which should be postponed to the 2nd year.

We would add the world languages today .The content of the present syllabus is too old, it needs to be updated.

According to their own experience in teaching Linguistics ,we have asked them whether the designed syllabus followed these criteria (Learnability, Frequency, Coverage, and Usefulness) or not . some teachers replied that they didn't think so, because it is not well sequenced.

Others think yes, it is designed taking into consideration all of these criteria.

Whereas still others who think that it does not follow all of them. At least it follows the first two criteria mentioned only .

As you have noticed that the items tackled above talked about the syllabus design, so that the conclusion we can draw is that the teachers of Linguistics, especially those with a long experience in teaching such a module, claimed that the syllabus content should be :

- Reviewed
- Reordered

as well as it should include as much items about the subject as possible .

From the design of a syllabus, we move to the design of a linguistic course. Within this question, we would like to know the parameters taken into account when designing such a course. Respectively, the teachers paid attention to the following points:

- The students' level of mastery of the 2nd language.
- The content of the syllabus in terms of its length and complexity.
- The objectives assigned.
- The relation between needs and abilities.
- The topics as well as the time allotted.

We still talk about the linguistic courses, but we ask the teachers whether their students feel better when the course is limited in terms of content or not. All the teachers are in support to this idea. They argued that the more the course is limited, it enables a better understanding. Since linguistics is a new subject for first year students, the overloaded courses may cause the loss of motivation and increase learners' anxiety. This may result in a complete failure to understand the subject. They add also that it is up to the students, their level, and the degree of motivation. It is linked to the How and What they are teaching. Before moving to another element within the questionnaire, we have asked the teachers if during the course, the students follow better when they are informed about the items to be covered in each session. They answered of course, it's better because it helps them concentrating more. In addition, it is necessary because at first especially during the first month, the students came very fresh without any significant knowledge about Linguistics; they came with a total ignorance, that's why they need to be informed to be able to follow step by step. When it comes to their students' motivation, some of the teachers said that most of the time, they ask them to prepare the lessons before presenting them in class. In addition, they give them

some discussion questions. Others said that generally they give them some examples that have a relation with their daily life as a sort of challenge. Sometimes they ask them direct questions.

It's quite important. Teaching linguistics is based on classification, categorization, and the order of chronology. They try to adapt the lecture to their students' level, use a lot of comparisons. In some cases, it's also up to the teacher's way of teaching and experience.

From the answers given to the items above, we got the result that all the teachers agreed on that informing the learners about the items to be tackled in each session is so important. They argued that this gives the opportunity to their students to follow with them. In addition, all of them almost followed the same way to involve their students in the course. Most of the time they ask questions that push the learners to participate and express their points of view.

* **The Linguistics' Exams:**

Moving from all what has a relation with both the syllabus and the course to what has a relation with the exams, starting with the criteria used when preparing a test in linguistics. The first criterium taken into consideration is the assigned objectives. Then, they stated the following : the students' level and progress, the time allotted for the test, what has been taught to students in terms of content (quantity) and complexity.

However, when it comes to the kind of questions, some teachers prefer setting Yes/No questions, others prefer setting M.C questions, whereas the majority prefers using both kinds. Of course, this difference goes back to different reasons.

For those who are in favour of Yes/No questions, they think that such kind of questions obliges the learners to take a decision and to justify the answer. And those who prefer M.C questions, they believe that this type of questions is of a great help to students to get the appropriate answer. They add also that they can make use of direct questions (Wh. questions), in addition to the use of some tables, charts and diagrams. While those who are in support to both types of questions, they argued that it is always important to make students familiar with all questions type. It gives the opportunity to some students to answer, and the chance to others to recite, and the others to try.

Carrying on with the same point “Exams”, but we tackle another part that is linked to the exam mark schedule. Some of the teachers said that it is up to the nature of questions. In other words, it depends on the length, difficulty, and the importance of each activity “ question” in the whole exam. They gave more marks to questions of analysis and few to defining terms. Whereas other teachers devote **60%** of the mark to knowledge and analysis of the subject matter; **20%** to learning : assimilation of information, and **20%** to the form of language concerning grammar and vocabulary (mastery of language and written expression). According to the teachers’ experience in teaching linguistics, we asked them about the kind of activities with which their students perform better . All of them agreed that their learners prefer having many and varied activities in the exams. They think that this sort of activities provides their students the chance to answer what sounds appropriate to their knowledge . They will have a wide range of opportunities to give answers . Besides, the teacher can test all what he has taught

and students are tested in all what they have learnt . In other words , it offers the opportunity to all “categories” of students, those who have a tendency of analysis as well as those with a tendency of learning .

*** The Exams’ Results And The Students’ Level:**

From talking about the exams and their questions, we move to talk about the low grades of the students in their official exams. Most of the teachers link the problem to the learners’ lack of concentration as well as their inability to understand the questions. Some others refer it to the students’ lack of knowledge. And still some others think that it depends .

As far as the students’ level in Linguistics is concerned, the teachers link their students failure in such a module to different factors. The latter includes the following :

- Low degree of mastery of the second language (they do not understand the linguistic terms and concepts) .
- Inadequacy between the time allotted and the types of questions.
- The way of teaching this course is often not helpful to make the students able to assimilate the content .

Whereas some of the teachers argued that there is no failure in that subject or in any other one. In their opinion, school failure is due to extra educational variables and the teacher might be the cause .

Before ending with the teachers’ suggestions, we have asked about what makes the students assimilate the same module differently. They answered that it refers usually to the teaching styles i.e the different methods used by the teachers in

teaching Linguistics. In addition, the learners' styles play a major role concerning the assimilation and understanding of any subject. Also, it has a close relation to school factors. In other words, the students are not oriented to be specialized in English, it is not their own choice so how can they learn it well.

While some other teachers claimed that it can be discussed from two different angles : Teaching and Learning. The former includes the teacher as well as the content of the program (syllabus). While the latter includes the psychological side of learners in terms of motivation, their Linguistic level in terms of their mastery of the target language, and their socio economic status; for instance when they have Internet at home, more information will be accessible concerning the subject, hence it fosters their learning.

When it comes to the students' assimilation of Linguistic courses, the teachers agreed that the student's cognitive abilities are the main responsible for their understanding. While some of them added that the psychological and the social sides have a direct impact on the students' learning and their degree of achievement.

* **The Teachers' Suggestions:**

Reaching the last question which deals with the teachers' suggestions as far as teaching and evaluating Linguistics are concerned , in fact the suggestions varied from one teacher to another. Concerning teaching, they ask for:

- simplification of the themes.
- more opportunities for discussion.
- adding more time.

- adapting the content of the course to the students' level, in addition to competent teachers (specialized in “Linguistics”).

While in what concerns evaluation:

- they insist on time and types of questions to be given a special interest.
- they also wish that in the future, specific testing (questions) in Linguistics needs to be conceived by teachers of Linguistics .

II. Classroom Observation:

It is quite obvious that each teacher, whatever the subject he taught, has his own way of preparing or designing the course, his own way of presenting the data, as well as his own way of dealing with his students and coping with any situation he may face in class.

Indeed, our attendance during different linguistic sessions with different teachers and learners of different levels proved what is stated above in the previous section.

As a common point shared by almost all the teachers of Linguistics, we have noticed that they started their lectures by making a sort of recapitulation of the items tackled in the previous sessions. The latter was done through asking some questions whether orally or by stating them on the board. Doing so, the teachers aimed at linking the points dealt with already with what will be tackled in the new session. Also, they wanted to know if the students remembered what was taught before or not as well as to spot the light on any weaknesses their learners may have concerning the knowledge given previously.

The next step was that the teachers presented the elements to be covered in the new lecture as headlines on the board. With such a presentation, they wanted to get their students in contact with the content of the lesson.

They thought that it helps the learners to concentrate, hence, to understand much more better.

After getting their students' attention, they tried to make them involved in the teaching / learning process. They attempted to realize such a goal through

some discussion questions. According to them, these questions put the learners in a challenging situation, so that each one of them try to participate to show his capacities. From their answers, the teachers got the opportunity to measure their students' understanding; hence, they will be aware of their weaknesses and try to strengthen them. Moreover, for more clarification, they gave some illustrative examples which may have a relation with the real life. Those examples, in fact, may facilitate the assimilation of the new concepts presented in each item of the course.

This is about the common observation shared in all the sessions with their different teachers and learners on the one hand. On the other hand, when it came to their way of providing the students with the necessary information to be retained, it was somehow different. Some of the teachers gave handouts to the learners after explaining the course and others gave them at the beginning of the lecture. In this case, the students make some readings, and then the teacher explains moving from one element to another. Such handouts worked as a consolidating aid to the learners first to follow better, then to have the chance to improve their reading skill. Whereas to practice the writing skill, some other teachers asked their students to take notes through dictation. But in what concerns the new, unfamiliar words to the learners, they were whether written on the board or spelled orally by the teachers.

Through the latter aid, the teachers aimed at making their students used to take as much notes as they can, hence to be self reliant rather than spoon-fed students.

In other words, they keep all the session concentrating to take notes about the important points not just waiting for the material to be provided by their teachers at the end of the course.

Now and before ending our observations, we should talk about the tasks given to the learners to be done as home works. So, as for as the practice in this particular module is concerned, some teachers gave their students some activities, in the form of series of questions, to be answered as a contribution in the summary of the lessons.

Some others gave some quotations of some linguists to be explained and interpreted according to the students' own understanding. Therefore, all the learners got the opportunity to express their ideas using their own words and expressions. This also gave them the chance to write more and more using the target language.

Conclusion:

After analyzing both the questionnaires addressed to the teachers of Linguistics and the 1st year students, as well as the interviews held with both of them; we came to the conclusion that both participants of the teaching/ learning process agreed on the difficulty of linguistics.

The answers stated previously proved that "Linguistics" is an important module that should be taught to the students of English starting from the 1st year rather than to be delayed for the 2nd and 3rd year levels as according to some of the respondents.

In addition, the students confessed that part of their problem with this particular module lies on their weak level concerning the target language; so how can they deal with such a technical module as "Linguistics" with its philosophical concepts. Moreover, they linked their weaknesses to the newness of the terminology used which according to them do not work with their abilities and the poor knowledge concerning the English language.

Furthermore, the teachers of linguistics linked the problem to the students' previous impression about the subject as being difficult. Also, the lack of text books concerning the module which can be of a great help to the learners to obtain more information about it. They claimed that their teachers' ways of presenting and explaining such a course did not go with the level of all of them. In such a case, the teachers should pay more attention, so that they can transmit their message to all of the learners taking into account their differences.

Another important element that took a special interest from the students' side was the exams' questions. The latter according to the majority of the respondents was the main responsible of their low grades in this particular module. The students stated that the questions are asked in an indirect way which misleads them to get the right answers. They added that the vocabulary used in those questions is new for them as new language learners.

This is concerning the answers of both partners in the questionnaires as well the interviews. Whereas in what concerns the classroom observation, we've noticed that the theory is something and the practice is something else. In other words, for instance when some of the teachers and the students replied that one session of one hour and a half is sufficient to cover the syllabus designed, they were quite wrong since during this session they might not cover the elements designed for this single course. So the result obtained here was that the time allotted to such a module is totally insufficient. So, we would ask the responsible in the administration to add more time to give both participants the opportunity to reach their objectives. Then we ask the teachers about new ways of asking the exams' question. Also, to make one session to the whole group and a second session to the group after dividing it into two other sub-groups.

The purpose of doing so is to lessen the class size, hence, the learners will get the chance to participate and understand much more better.

From our present study, we have recognized that both the teachers and the learners are responsible of the problem and should strengthen their

weaknesses in the different points mentioned above; there before both of them will be satisfied.

At the end, we hope that our remarks will be taken into consideration for the sake of avoiding the appearance of such kind of problems.

GENERAL CONCLUSION:

Linguistics, with its noticeable importance in studying the language is given a special interest from the earliest times till now. We are also interested in it as a subject to be taught rather than a field of investigation. Along our research, we attempted to treat one of the major problems that face students in their learning.

As language learners, the 1st year students of English at Biskra University have a problem in assimilating and understanding such a new subject as Linguistics. We further looked for some of the factors that hinder their learning.

To answer the questions stated at the beginning of our present work, we have investigated the students' problem in learning Linguistics through different data gathering tools. The latter includes questionnaires addressed to both teachers of Linguistics and 1st year students of English at Biskra university, interviews held with both of them, as well as the attendance during different linguistics' sessions to observe the Teaching/ Learning process in classroom .

The result was that the problem is the students' fault in the first place in terms of their lack of knowledge concerning the English language. In addition, their lack of courage to ask about any ambiguous point. Consequently, this will result in a store of unanswered questions in their minds; so they will be unable to answer well in their exams and get bad marks.

Also , perhaps , the most important finding is that the learners recognize some of the factors that lead them to have such a problem with Linguistics . This includes their motivation, their attitude toward learning a foreign language, as

well as their cognitive abilities. Once again, the students show that their major interest is in mastering the target language so that they will be capable of using it (speaking and writing) successfully.

Another important fact we could notice is that, the key in making students assimilate Linguistics much more better is giving them more illustrative examples that have a close relation to their daily life interests. Having such challenging examples pushes the learners to be more motivated and encourages them to participate , to contribute effectively in the teaching learning process.

We have also obtained the result that teachers need more time to achieve their objectives in addition to some changes concerning the syllabus' content.

Moreover, we came to the conclusion that having practice in such a module as Linguistics is of a great help to learners in fostering their interest in learning foreign languages. So our dear students should:

- Keep in mind that there is no such an easy or a difficult subject.
- Feel self-confident in their own capacities to overcome this problem and reach better levels.
- Prevent any obstacle to stand between them and their teachers to ask for any help.

Furthermore , we would like to ask for providing experienced teachers to teach such a new subject to those freshers .Those teachers could deal well with the learners , taking into account their different styles , needs , and abilities . They have the ability to cope with any situation they may face . Also , they have a large store of knowledge about the subject so they can offer more information

about it. When saying that, we would not deny the role of the new teachers or we do not believe in their capacities but rather they should be given the chance to teach Linguistics but not to those new students.

As far as teaching learning linguistics is concerned , we would like to state the following suggestions to be taken into consideration on the behalf of both participants .On the one hand , the teachers of Linguistics should :

- Be aware of the language used when explaining the courses .In other words , they should use simple vocabulary items that could be understood easily by the students .

- Plan their lectures in a good manner that helps the learners to achieve their goals. This means that their lessons should be presented in a graded way which goes with the students' level.

- Inform their students about the items to be covered in each session . This enables them to concentrate better , hence, to understand well.

- Ask them some challenging questions that push them all to participate , therefore to express their ideas about the different topics discussed in class .

- Give them more practicals to foster their understanding as well as to improve their level concerning the four skills using the target language especially the writing one

- Vary the exams' questions to give the opportunity to all of their students to answer , hence, to achieve good results

- State the exams' questions in a clear manner far from any sort of ambiguity.

- Pay a special attention to their student's cognitive abilities as well as their emotional needs . In other words , when explaining the teachers should select the appropriate way that could work with all of their learners .

On the other hand , the 1st year students of English at Biskra university should :

- Get rid of their negative attitude toward linguistics in particular , in addition to their impression "previous" about it as being difficult .And having such impression stands as obstacle in their way to understand his subject .

- Read as much articles about Linguistics as possible. Such readings help them collecting the maximum of data concerning the subject .

- Not hesitate to ask for their teachers ' help whenever needed . It means that if they do not find the opportunity to do so during the session , they would do it outside the classroom .

- Be aware of being responsible for their learning ; consequently they should do

their best to improve their level concerning the mastery of the 2nd language and to achieve better results in Linguistics too .

- Prepare well for their exams . They should gather the necessary information ; also they should make group revision to discuss and exchange ideas with their classmates , hence benefit from each other .

- Read the exams 'questions carefully , understand the key words used in each question to be able to answer appropriately .In addition , they should organize their time for the sake of much more concentration .

- Organize small groups and work together in order to benefit from each other and exchange ideas.

- Work hard not only to get good marks but also to get more and more knowledge about the subject in particular and the target language in general.

To put an end to this investigation , we would say that our modest work is just a starting point upon which one could carry on other researches .We also hope that we have succeeded to treat the subject at least in an acceptable manner .

Appendix 2-b

University Mohamed Khider

- Biskra -

Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences

Department of English

"QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS"

DEAR COLLEAGUES

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire. It aims at investigating "Some factors that hinder the assimilation of Linguistic courses by first year students .Your anonymous participation will be help great to me .

*** Please , tick appropriately :**

1- As far as first year student are concerned, what do you think about

Linguistics:

a- Too difficult

b- Difficult

c- Easy

Explain ?.....

.....

.....

2- Do you think that the time allotted to Linguistics is sufficient ?

Why ?

.....

.....

3- Do you think that the Linguistics sessions are well programmed within the time table ?

Yes No

What would you suggest ?

.....
.....
4- In your own point of view, is Linguistics important to be taught starting from first year ? Yes No

For what reason(s) ?.....

.....
.....

5- Do you give your students some activities during the session

Yes No

If yes, what kind of activities ?.....

.....
.....

6- Would you please state your objectives in teaching Linguistics ?

.....
.....
.....

7- To what extent you believe you achieve them during the academic year

Yes No

Explain :

.....
.....

8- What is your own method in teaching Linguistics ?

.....
.....

9- Do your students assimilate better ?

- a- through discussions
- b- by giving them handouts
- c- through group work
- d- other ways

Justify your choice ?.....

.....
.....

10- What do you think about the syllabus designed for first year as far as the students' level is concerned ?

.....
.....
.....

11- If you are asked to design a syllabus, what elements you will focus on ?

.....
.....
.....

12- Concerning the design of a Linguistic course, what are the parameters you take into account ?

.....
.....

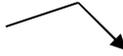
13- Do you think that your students feel better when the course is limited in terms of content ? Yes No

Explain ?.....

.....
.....

14- Do you think that your students' difficulty in assimilating Linguistics is due to :

- a- the linguistics terms
- b- your explanation
- c- both

 **Turn over, Please**

Other reasons :
.....
.....
.....

15- What are criteria used when you prepare a test in Linguistics ?
.....
.....
.....

16- What kind of questions do you set when preparing your exams :

- a- Yes/No questions
- b- M.C questions
- c- Both

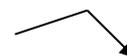
Justify your answer ?
.....
.....
.....

17- How do you set your Exam mark – schedule ?
.....
.....
.....

18- From your own experience in teaching Linguistics, do you think that your students perform better in exams with :

- a- a few activities
- b- many activities
- c- many and varied activities
- d- others

Why ?
.....

 **Turn over, Please**

19- Do you link their low grades in the official exams to :

a- their lack of knowledge

b- their lack of concentration

c- their inability to understand the questions

20- As far as your students' level in Linguistics is concerned, to what factors can you link their failure in such a module ?

.....
.....
.....

21- What would you suggest as far as teaching and evaluating Linguistics are concerned ?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Appendix 2-a

**University of Mohamed Khider
Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences
Department of English**

"QUESTIONNAIRE"

Dear students,

This questionnaire aims at investigating “Some factors that hinder the assimilation of Linguistic courses by first year students .

Your most appreciated contribution is expected to be honest and straightforward. Please read all of the questions before answering. Be sure, your identification is kept anonymous. So, please put pen to paper without any delay or hesitation .

Truly Yours
Miss S.Rabehi

*** PLEASE, TICK YOUR BEST ANSWER :**

1- Do you think that your problem in the Linguistics Module lies in :

a- the difficulty of the subject

b- teacher’s method

c- your level

How?.....
.....

2- More specifically, your problem is due to :

a- difficult linguistics terms

b- the nature of the subject

c- your background knowledge of the language

Explain:.....
.....

3- Are these factors causes of difficulty in Linguistics?

Yes No

a- The language

b- New concepts

c- Your inability to understand such a technical module

Can you elaborate ?

.....

4- Your negative attitude vis-à-vis Linguistics is due to :

a- insufficient time

b- the timing scheduled for linguistics' sessions

c- the overloaded syllabus

How ?.....

.....

5- What would you suggest for the Linguistics' sessions:

a- 60 minutes

b- 90 minutes

c- 120 minutes

Why ?.....

.....

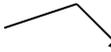
6- Your inability to understand the content of the Linguistics' syllabus is due to :

a- the distribution of the items

b- the lack of practicals

c- the teacher's inadequate explanations

d- your motivation

 **Turn over, Please**

7- You would like to study Linguistics through :

- a- discussions with the teacher
- b- discussions with peers
- c- reading handouts
- d- other ways

Why ?.....
.....

8- Your inability to successfully achieve progress in Linguistics is because :

- a- the classrooms are crowded
- b- the classrooms are dimly lit
- c- the teacher's writing is not clear
- d- the teacher's explanation is not clear

9- You feel comfortable studying Linguistics in :

- a- small groups
- b- fairly numbered groups
- c- large sections

Would you, please, justify your choice ?.....
.....
.....

10- You overcome inability to understand Linguistics terms by :

- a- asking direct questions to the teacher
- b- asking direct questions to your classmates
- c- using dictionaries

Why?.....
.....

11- Would you classify your favourite subjects next to Linguistics :

- a- grammar b- written expression c- oral expression
d- general culture e- phonetics

Say why ?.....
.....

12- Would you prefer delaying Linguistic courses to :

- a- Second year
b- Third year

Why?.....
.....

13- You think that the access to reference books is :

- a- easy
b- difficult because there are not enough books
c- difficult because the loan time is short
d- others

14- You feel more comfortable with :

- a- official exams
b- take home exams
c- research paper (exposés)

Why?.....
.....

15- You would like activities in your Linguistics' exam to be :

- a- course based
b- content based
c- both

Why?.....
.....

16- You think that Linguistic exam questions are :

- a- difficult
- b- ambiguous
- c- affordable

Justify your answer.....

.....

17- You think that the teacher's evaluation is generally :

- a- fair
- b- unfair

Why ?.....

.....

18- Do you prefer studying Linguistics through :

- a- research papers
- b- group works
- c- others

Yes No

19- Would you like to get tests in addition to the official exams

.....

.....

20- Do you think you are active rather than passive in the teaching

/ learning process

Yes No

Why ?.....

.....

21- Do you like to make a revision of the previous items at the beginning of each new session

Yes No

For what reason ?.....

.....

22- Do you feel that you need some more quizzes

Yes No

Why ?.....

23- Do you link your low grades in Linguistics to :

- a- the lack of knowledge
- b- the lack of concentration
- c- the ambiguity of questions
- d- others

Justify your answer :

24- What kind of questions do you prefer :

- a- Yes/No questions
- b- M.C questions
- c- Others

Explain :

25- Do you like your Linguistics exams to be programmed :

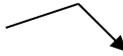
- a- at the beginning
- b- at the end

Justify your choice :

26- Do you feel that you need more practice in your Linguistics sessions?

Yes NO

Why ?

 **Turn over, Please**

27- Do you think that your Linguistics course should be limited in terms Yes No
of content ?

Explain :

.....

28- Do you think that Linguistics is an important module to be studied Yes NO
at your level ?

Why ?

.....

29- Do you ask for your teacher's help whenever you feel unable to grasp the
meaning ? Yes NO

30- What would you like to suggest as far as learning/teaching Linguistics is
concerned?

.....

.....

.....

.....

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A Course in Linguistics :

Title : The Features of the Human Language

Objective : Through this course, we are supposed to answer the following questions :

1. What is Language ?
2. What is the difference between men's and animals' way of communication ?
3. What are the Properties of the Human Language ?

Aids : Handouts to be given as a consolidating material

Timing : A session of one hour and a half

I) **what is language** ?

* **Discussion questions** :

- What do you know about language ?
- How could you define the term language ?

* **Students answers** :

- language concerns all the words we use in order to talk with each other.
- Language is the essential means of communication.
- Language is the way through which we can convey any message.
- Language is the collection of words used by people to interact with each other.
- Language is the speech used by a particular nation.

Different definitions of language :

1. « Language is a purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. »
(Sapir, 1921 cited in Lyons, 1981).

2. « From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. »
(Chomsky, 1957 cited in Lyons, 1981).

3. « Language is a systematic means of communication by the use of conventionalised signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood

meaning. » (Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language, 1961).

The difference between men's and animals' way of communication :

* Human beings :

Have an infinite number of symbols or sounds to interact with each other.

* Animals :

Have a limited number of signs or sounds to communicate with each other.

From this slight difference and the term *infinite* underlined above, we draw the conclusion that there is a sort of creativity and productivity concerning the system (language). So this leads us to mention the different properties that make of the human language a unique system of communication :

The Properties of the Human Language :

1- Arbitrariness : is generally the case that there is no « natural » connection between a linguistic form and its meaning (Yule, 1985) In other words , there is no logical link between the word and its meaning . For instance :the word « table » and its shape .

2- Displacement : allows the users of language, to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment .Animal communication is generally considered to lack this property.(Yule,1985)This means that the human beings have the ability to talk about things that happened in the past or will happen in the future .

3- Productivity : of human language (another term is « creativity ») is meant the ability that we all have to construct and understand an indefinitely large number of sentences in our native language , including sentences that we have never heard before, and to do this , for the most part, « naturally » and unreflectingly, without the conscious application of the grammatical rules » (Lyons, 1975).In other words, especially in the case of child learning language. This is the content to be covered in this session, and we still have three other properties to be discussed in the following session.

Appendix.6

SECOND TERM EXAMINATION

Question One : Compare the following words and indicate the cognate sets which suggest their common origin. (Out of 5 points)

English	German	Dutch	Swedish
tame	Zahm	tam	tam
tooth	zahn	tand	tand
kiss	kussen	kussen	kyss
water	wasser	water	vatten
fish	fish	vis	fisk

Question Two : Analyse the following words into their constituent morphemes and indicate whether the new forms of words are derivational or inflectional. (Out of 5 pts)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1- unpretentiousness (1 pt) | 2- attractive (1 pt) | 3- distasteful (1 pt) |
| 4- oxen (0.50 pt) | 5- ate. (0.50 pt) | 6- unmanly (1 pt) |
| 7- fish (0.50 pt) | 8- soundproof (1 pt) | 9- overdoing(1 pt) |
| 10- brighten (0.50 pts) | | |

Question three : Briefly explain the following concepts. No more than 2 lines for each concept (Out of 7 points)

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1- pseudocognates | 2- affixation | 3- empirical evidence |
| 4- macrolinguistics | 5- phonological competence | |
| 6- phonetic and semantic dissimilarity | 7- systems and patterns. | |

University Mohamed Khider – Biskra
Faculty of Arts and Humanities Linguistics.
Department of English
Groups : 2,3,5,6
Amph : E. 4.00 – 5.30 19/05/2004

First year.

FIRST TERM EXAMINATION

Question One : (Out of 8 points)

Write a critical paragraph comparing the traditional and modern views on speech and writing.
(No more than 10 lines).

Question Two : (Out of 6 points)

Are the “pure” linguistic and human science answers to the question “what is language ?”
complementary or contradictory ?

Explain and justify your answer (No more than 10 lines).

Question Three : (Out of 6 points)

Briefly explain 4 of the following concepts. (Two lines for each concept)

- 1- Semanticity
- 2- Skill
- 3- Verbal action
- 4- Established system
- 5- Executive
- 6- Physiological-psychological unit

Appendix 3-a

THE QUESTIONS' ANSWERS

Answers					
N° of Q.	A	B	C	D	E
1	39	19	28	/	/
2	35	28	27	/	/
3	19	58	46	/	/
4	34	07	20	/	/
5	10	34	32	/	/
6	17	41	11	13	/
7	61	12	13	04	/
8	24	07	14	28	/
9	65	08	03	/	/
10	45	15	27	/	/
11	18	11	21	05	19
12	32	29	/	/	/
13	03	47	17	16	/
14	11	41	29	/	/
15	13	07	49	/	/
16	48	27	04	/	/
17	54	14	/	/	/
18	20	56	02	/	/
19	55	18	/	/	/
20	35	21	/	/	/
21	72	/	/	/	/
22	55	09	/	/	/
23	32	23	27	03	/
24	47	20	/	/	/
25	45	30	/	/	/
26	69	05	/	/	/
27	46	15	/	/	/
28	57	14	/	/	/
29	45	26	/	/	/

THE PERCENTAGE

Answers					
N° of Q.	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	E (%)
1	52	25.33	37.33	/	/
2	46.67	37.33	36	/	/
3	25.33	77.33	67.33	/	/
4	45.33	9.33	26.67	/	/
5	13.33	45.33	42.67	/	/
6	22.66	54.67	14.67	17.33	/
7	87.33	16	17.33	5.33	/
8	32	9.33	18.66	37.33	/
9	86.67	10.67	4.17	/	/
10	62.67	20	36	/	/
11	24	14.67	28	6.66	25.33
12	42.67	38.66	/	/	/
13	4.17	62.67	22.66	24.33	/
14	14.67	56.67	38.66	/	/
15	17.33	9.33	65.33	/	/
16	64	36	5.33	/	/
17	72	18.66	/	/	/
18	26.66	74.66	2.66	/	/
19	73.33	24	/	/	/
20	46.67	28	/	/	/
21	96	/	/	/	/
22	73.33	12	/	/	/
23	42.67	30.67	36	4.17	/
24	62.67	26.66	14.67	/	/
25	60	40	/	/	/
26	92	6.66	/	/	/
27	67.33	20	/	/	/
28	76	18.66	/	/	/
29	60	34.67	/	/	/

University Mohamed Khider – Biskra
Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences
Department of English
Level : 1st year
Group : 04
Course : Linguistics

Saturday, Feb 14th 2004
Due time : 1^h 30^{min}

Fist Term Test

PART ONE (12 pts) :

*** Question One :**

1- Identify whether the following sentences are true (T) or False (F). justify your choice in case the sentences is false (F)

- a- Linguistics is the scientific study of language.
- b- Writing has often been regarded as the primary medium of language.
- c- There are no primitive or inferior languages.
- d- Humans are not the only species to have an elaborate communication system.
- e- Language is set of signals by which we communicate.
- f- Language is a system of communication .the fundamental elements of this system are
a limited number of sounds that can be combined into a finite number of combinations.

*** Question Two :**

Have a look at the items below. Then, answer the questions

- a) Objective
- b) Sophisticated language versus primitive languages
- c) Systematic
- d) Inferior languages versus superior languages
- e) General judgement and appreciation
- f) Random
- g) Subjective
- h) Scientific
- i) General agreement
- J) All languages are similar

1-Classify these items in the right column :

An ordinary person	A linguist

2- Use the above diagram to develop a short paragraph about the difference between how an ordinary person and a linguist view language.

PART TWO (08 pts) :

*** Question One :**

Read carefully the passage bellow, then, answer the questions :

Linguists in broad agreement about some of the important characteristics of human language, and one definition of language is widely associated with linguistics may be used to illustrate areas of agreement. This particular definition states that languages is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication.

1

2

3

“An introduction to linguistics”
LORETTO TODD-

- a- Why is it difficult for linguists to agree on one definition about language ?
- b- Explain the underlined parts in the above passage
- c- In what way does human language differ from the animal communication system ?

“Where there is a will, there is a way”

T.HOUADJLI AHMED CHAOUKI

Appendix 3-c

Course : Linguistics

Level : 1st year

Group : 04

Second Term Examination

PART ONE :Just remind

*** Question One (08 pts):**

- Give precise and concise definition of the following :

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 1- Phonetics | 5- socio linguistics |
| 2- Phonology | 6- psycholinguistics |
| 3- Syntax | 7- semantics |
| 4- Morphology | 8- Linguistics |

*** Question Two (04 pts) :**

Briefly , explain the following dichotomies :

- 1- Theoretical linguistics vs applied linguistics
- 2- Micro linguistics vs macro linguistics

PART TWO :Paragraph development (08 pts)

- Develop a short paragraph about one of the topics below :

Topic One :

“Linguistics is often defined as the scientific study of language”
in what way can a language be studied scientifically ?

Topic two :

Which theory about the origins of language seems quite plausible for you ?
Justify your choice.

T.HOUADJLI AHMED CHAOUKI

BISKRA UNIVERSITY

Department of English

Term : One

1st year Examination in Linguistics

Section one : Define briefly the following linguistic terms and expressions

- 1- Morphology
- 2- Macrolinguistics
- 3- Diachronic Studies
- 4- Polysynthetic languages
- 5- Synchronic

Section two : Answer the questions below

- 1- What are the main parts of language Study ?
- 2- What is the difference between phonetics and phonemics ?
- 3- If inflectional morphology studies the way in which words vary to express grammatical contrasts, so what about Derivational Morphology ?
- 4- How many types of grammar do you know ?
name them only ? (don't define them !)
- 5- What are the two basic steps we follow when we want to study 'Grammar' ?

M^R TEMAGOULT.

Good luck

Appendix 3-b

Second Term Examination in Linguistics first year students

Section one: Choose eight linguistic Terms and Define them briefly.

- Arrangement – Sentence –Phrase –Clause -
- Linguistic unit –ICA- The meaning of meaning –
- Immediate constituents – language family-
- Macro phylum –Reference -

Section two : Answer the questions below

- 1- What are the main basic steps to follow in order to display a sentence structure ?
 - 2- Linguistic elaborated a method of investigation known as the comparative method to establish relationship between languages and their groupings into “ families”. Explain this method.
 - 3- Semantics evolved through three conceptions of meaning. What are these three stages ?
- Bring your criticism about the validity of each conception ?

Mr.Temaguoult

Appendix 4-b

*** THE SYLLABUS OF LINGUISTICS 1ST YEAR ***

* Introduction to Linguistics.

Objectives :A very general approach :a tentative grammar for an introductory course in linguistics.

I)What is Language ?

Characteristics of human language.

Functions of language (individual and society).

II)Language families.

III)What is linguistics ?

The aim of linguistics

The scientific study of language

IV)The domain of linguistics

Phonology(phonetics and phonemics)

Morphology

Syntax

Semantics

V)Linguistic terminology.

Phoneme

Morpheme

Morpho-phoneme

Phrase

Word functions and their technical use in linguistics.

