

Investigating the Difficulties faced by First Year Algerian EFL University Students in the Linguistics Course

Nesrine Aoudjit Bessai

University of Algiers 2

Nesrine.bessai@univ-alger2.dz

Date de soumission: 07/04/2018 Date d'acceptation: 10/06/2018

Abstract

The present study aims at identifying the possible difficulties encountered by a group of Algerian EFL University students when reading and writing in the linguistics. The study also seeks to investigate the approaches followed by students when tackling this content course and the strategies they make use of to overcome their difficulties. To reach these objectives an exploratory study, comprising three research tools: a linguistics test followed by a post-test questionnaire administered to all participants and a focus group interview conducted with 9 students, was chosen. The findings indicate that students' difficulties to cope with the linguistics course relate not only to their absence of strategy use, but also to their lack of familiarity with the course, their teachers' instructional practices, and their weak reading and writing ability. Based on the findings of the present study, some recommendations are suggested.

Keywords:

Linguistics - content course - reading ability - writing ability - learning difficulties - learning strategies.

دراسة حول التحديات التي تواجه مجموعة من الطلبة الجزائريين -سنة أولى جامعي انجليزية- في مادة اللسانيات

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على الصعوبات التي تواجهها مجموعة من الطلاب الجزائريين في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية خلال دراسة اللسانيات. وتسعى الدراسة أيضًا إلى دراسة الأساليب التي يتبعها الطلاب عند تناولهم لمحتوى المادة والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمونها للتغلب على صعوباتهم. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم اختيار دراسة استطلاعية تشتمل على ثلاث أدوات بحث: امتحان في مادة اللسانيات يتبعه استبيان ما بعد الامتحان تم توزيعه على جميع المشاركين ومقابلة جماعية مع 9 طلاب. تشير النتائج إلى أن الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب في التعامل مع هذه المادة تعود لنقص استعمال إستراتيجيات التعلم، وعدم معرفتهم باللسانيات كونها تدرس لهم لأول مرة، وممارسات التدريس لمعلميهم وضعف قدراتهم على القراءة والكتابة. بناءً على نتائج هذه الدراسة تم اقتراح بعض التوصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

اللسانيات - مهارة القراءة - مهارة الكتابة - صعوبات التعلم - استراتيجيات التعلم.

Enquête sur les défis rencontrés par un groupe d'étudiants algériens en -première année en EFL- en linguistique

Résumé

La présente étude vise à identifier les difficultés rencontrées par un groupe d'étudiants algériens de l'EFL dans le cours de linguistique. L'étude cherche également à étudier les approches suivies par les étudiants lorsqu'ils abordent ce cours de contenu et les stratégies qu'ils utilisent pour surmonter leurs difficultés. Pour atteindre ces objectifs, une étude exploratoire comprenant trois outils de recherche a été choisie: un test linguistique suivi d'un questionnaire post-test administré à tous les participants et une interview de groupe mené avec 9 étudiants. Les résultats indiquent que les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants pour faire face au cours de linguistique tiennent non seulement à l'absence de stratégies d'apprentissage, mais aussi à leur manque de familiarité avec le cours, aux pratiques pédagogiques de leurs enseignants et à leur faible capacité de lecture et d'écriture. Sur la base des résultats de la présente étude, certaines recommandations sont suggérées.

Mots clés:

Linguistique - cours de contenu - capacité de lecture - capacité d'écriture - difficultés d'apprentissage - stratégies d'apprentissage.

1. Introduction

One of the most important goals of instruction has always been that students should learn to read and write with adequate proficiency. However, a significant number of university students, according to the teachers of the reading/writing course, do not achieve this fundamental goal. And their failure to cope with the demands of reading and writing has an extremely detrimental effect on their self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and their ability to learn content courses such as linguistics. In a content course, students should be taught to think logically, analyze and compare, question and evaluate, and thinking cannot be separated from content. It represents a hard task for the teacher because it is easier to teach students to memorize facts and concepts and then assess them with multiple-choice tests. But in a content course that emphasizes thinking, students have to learn how to take information from different sources, solve problems, evaluate and restructure information, content instruction helps students to pursue their cognitive and academic growth while they are also acquiring academic language proficiency.

According to Rodgers, (cited in Williams & Burden, 2000), learning is facilitated when the student participates in, and gets involved in the learning process and has control over its nature and direction. A constructivist view of learning emphasizes the fact that individuals are active agents who are committed to their learning and appear to be engaged in their knowledge construction. The instruction should emphasize knowledge construction and not the transmission of information, instead of being a dispenser of knowledge the teacher has to be a guide, facilitator, and a co-explorer who encourages learners to ask questions, challenge, formulate their own ideas and hypotheses, opinions, and conclusions. In content-based classrooms, in the English Department University of Algiers 2, students are often asked to read handouts, articles, passages, etc. But writing which is a powerful learning tool is not so much used. However, in exams or tests, students are asked to provide their answers in written form. Thus, the content classes are text-driven. Konopak, Martin & Martin (1987) encourage content teachers to integrate reading-writing strategies in their teaching methods to help students learn the subject matter because reading to learn occurs mainly in academic contexts where «a person needs to learn a considerable amount of information from a text», Grabe & Stoller (2002, p. 13). Among the abilities that are required by this type of reading are: (i) to remember central ideas as well as the details which develop and support the main ideas in the text, (ii) to relate the text to the reader's background knowledge, (iii) to recognize and build rhetori-

cal frames that organize the information in the text.

The ultimate goal of teaching reading and writing in content-based courses is to build students' comprehension, writing skills, and a better manipulation of the content information. Content teachers can no longer believe that they could hand on informational text or passage to students and assume that they make full sense of it, this is a teaching mode of the past. It is a fact that regardless of the content teachers teach, they are all reading instructors. They are expected to help students in scaffolding the reading by using effective strategies, such as such as previewing, reading for a purpose, making predictions and connections, and using graphic organizers, during the three stages of the reading process. Stephens and Brown (2000, p. 9) assert that «teachers can increase their effectiveness in reaching more students by integrating content literacy strategies into their regular classroom instruction», they emphasize the importance of integrating content area literacy strategies because they increase students' abilities to internalize content and develop conceptual understanding of the subject being studied.

Students encountered difficulties in reading and writing in the linguistics course are investigated in the present research study. Hence, the research question is formulated as the following:

R. Q: Do first-year students encounter difficulties when studying Linguistics?

Two sub-questions derive from this research question:

- ◆ What are the reasons behind students' difficulties in the linguistics course?
- ◆ What do the linguistics test results tell us about the students' performance?

2. Method

An exploratory research was chosen to meet the objectives of the present study, and it was conducted to achieve a broader understanding of the nature of the difficulties first-year students encounter when tackling a content course such as linguistics. Fifty-six (N=56) University students enrolled in a three-year English degree course in the English Department of the University of Algiers 2 participated in this study. They are all assumed to have followed a regular schooling scheme, which implies that they would have studied English for at least eight years, before entering University.

2.1. The linguistics test

The Linguistics test (see appendix A) consists of a text-based task that is

meant to assess students' mastery of some basic concepts in linguistics in addition to their reading and writing proficiency. It includes two parts. In the first part, students are invited to read a selected passage (taken from Fromkin & Rodman, 1998, *An Introduction to Language*) about human language and its features, and then in the second part, they are asked to perform four activities related to the provided passage. Students, in the first activity, are asked to read the text carefully and to provide its main idea or gist, and then in the second activity, they are expected to summarize the provided passage in the form of a relevant, well-formed paragraph. The goal of the second activity is to test students' ability to relate some new information provided in the passage to already studied and learned information. In the third activity, they are invited to infer the writers' intention as to the use of inverted commas in the expression 'talking' birds. In the last activity, students are asked to provide synonyms for five words and one expression provided in the passage. The questions asked in the test are meant to assess students' general understanding of the passage, and then their knowledge of some specific discrete points. The data collected from the test will inform us about the possible difficulties they may encounter when reading, understanding, inferring and writing their answers, and, of course, their retention of the concepts explained during their lectures. And the major goal of the questionnaire, administered to students immediately after the test completion, is to know whether they employed some strategies when answering the test questions.

2.2. The post-test questionnaire

Immediately after the test completion, students were invited to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix B) about the processes they went through when taking the test. The questionnaire consists of eight closed questions about students' knowledge of some basic linguistic concepts in addition to some of their reading and writing strategies. Students were asked about:

The time they spent reading the text: Participants were questioned about the time they spent reading the text (Question 1) to see whether they used re-reading the material or reading several times as a strategy when trying to understand the provided passage.

The strategies they used while reading the text: Participants were asked about the strategies they used when approaching or processing the text, whether they resolved to skim, scan or both (Question 2).

Remembering: whether participants made the effort to remember the passage while reading or not. (Questions 3)

The processes they went through when writing their answers: as testees are expected to write a paragraph to summarize the provided text, this question was meant to know whether they established a detailed plan before writing the paragraph. (Question 4)

The way they prepared themselves for the test: with a particular emphasis on memorization, participants were asked about their reliance on learning their lectures and notes by heart. (Question 5)

The possible difficulties they faced when looking for synonyms. In case they faced some difficulties, participants were asked about the strategies they may have used to overcome their problems. (Questions 6 and 7)

Proofreading: whether students have re-read their answers to check for possible errors or not. (Question 8)

2.3. The focus group interview

A semi-structured focus group interview was conducted with nine first year student (selected among the subjects who took the linguistic test), they were invited to reflect and speak about their learning goals, the possibly encountered difficulties and their learning approaches in reading, writing, and studying linguistics, their perceptions regarding the reading and writing skills. They were also asked to describe their memory strategies, to provide a number of personal perceptions regarding success, their learning experience, and their motivation. In the last part of the interview, students were expected to describe some of their teachers teaching practices.

3. Results:

3.1 Results of the linguistics test

◆ General test results

The test was corrected and marked out of twenty points following the test correction we elaborated. The following table exhibits the score assigned to every question:

Table 1: Test scoring

	Score	What is expected from students
Question 1	points 6	To write an efficient and relevant summary
Question 2	points 4	To read, infer and guess effectively
Question 3	points 4	To guess and deduce the writers' intention
Question 4	points 6	To provide the appropriate synonyms

If an answer were incomplete, miswritten (spelling & grammar mistakes, lack of coherence and cohesion) or did not contain the appropriate information (lack of relevance), the student was not granted the total score. Table 2 exhibits the final score obtained by every student in the administered test.

Table 2: First-year students scores

Student	Final score 20/						
S01	13	S15	03	S29	09	S43	07
S02	06	S16	13	S30	08	S44	09
S03	13	S17	9.5	S31	15	S45	08
S04	07	S18	14	S32	07	S46	05
S05	8	S19	4.5	S33	09	S47	6.5
S06	07	S20	15	S34	11	S48	09
S07	11	S21	11	S35	11	S49	08
S08	11	S22	06	S36	11	S50	09
S09	14.5	S23	05	S37	9	S51	08
S10	11	S24	05	S38	11	S52	09
S11	11	S25	8.5	S39	8.5	S53	16
S12	04	S26	13	S40	06	S54	08
S13	14	S27	14	S41	11	S55	02
S14	14.5	S28	16	S42	11	S56	09

The results in the table above represent the final scores obtained by the 56 first-year university students in the linguistics test. The results reveal the following:

- ◆ 8% of the students (three students out of fifty-six) obtained a score that is below average and 42% of the students (24 students out of fifty-six) got a score that is above average.
- ◆ 50% of the students (twenty-eight students out of fifty-six) have a score that is between 08/20 and 11/20. The majority of students have scores that are quite close to the average mark 10/20.
- ◆ Ten students have very low results (between 02/20 and 06/20), and only thirteen students out of fifty-six are successful with marks ranging from 13/20 to 18/20.

Table 3: Percentages of the obtained scores

	2-7	8-11	13-16
(Number of students (N	15	28	13
(%) Percent	27%	50%	23%

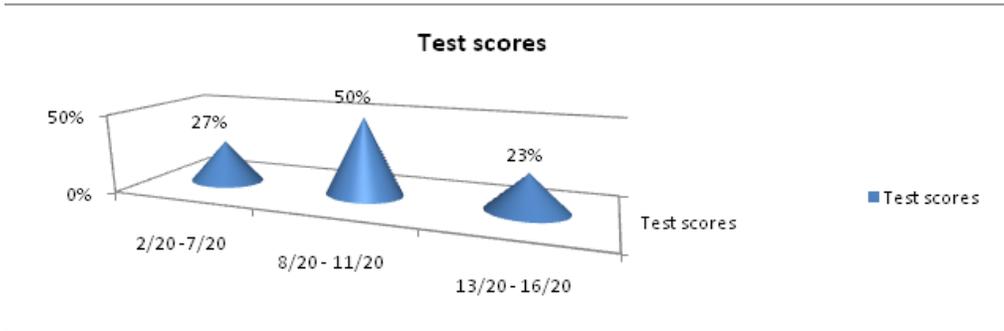


Figure 1: First-year linguistics test results

■ Test results for every question

The linguistics test is a reading comprehension one consisting of four questions that are approximately equally marked. The questions were meant to assess first-year students' general comprehension of the text and then their detailed comprehension, their ability to understand the general idea behind the provided passage and more specific points. Interpretation and evaluation levels of understanding in reading comprehension have also been integrated into the test; students must identify the authors' intention. In the first question, which was marked out of 6 points, students were asked to write a coherent and well-organized paragraph to summarize the most important points covered in the supplied text. The results showed that forty-two students out of fifty-six were able to write acceptable and efficient summaries (their scores range from 3 to 4 out of 6) in good English. The remaining fourteen students were unable to produce a well written and organized summary, their language proficiency was very low, and their scores range from 0 to 2 out of 6. In some cases, the written summary was longer than the provided passage. Two students did not even bother themselves to summarize the passage.

In the second and third questions, students were asked to identify and infer the authors' intention and to draw conclusions from the information provided. The results indicate that the majority of students faced difficulties in understanding the passage and manipulating the information provided. When asked to infer the writers' intention behind the use of inverted commas in the expression 'talking birds', most of the students were not able to guess effectively. Knowing that their linguistics teacher provided them with a similar activity in the classroom, he used the expression 'animal language' between inverted commas instead of 'talking birds'. However, just a few students made a link and showed their ability to understand the passage and make a connection between the information

previously studied in the classroom. Sixteen students out of fifty-six did not answer the question correctly.

The same problem was faced by students when answering the question related to deaf children. The authors of the passage stated that deaf children’s ability to learn a language had a certain implication for language learning, so students were asked to describe this implication. Again, most of them were unable to answer this question correctly. In some cases, some respondents rewrote exactly what was written in the passage without even trying to paraphrase the information to show their understanding. Fifteen students were unable to answer the question effectively. Besides, students showed weaknesses in writing coherent, well-formed sentences, in some cases, the assessor was unable to understand the answers. Concerning the last question (providing synonyms), the results indicated that a large majority of students, i.e. 58% encountered difficulties when looking for synonyms. Thirty-three students could not find the appropriate synonyms. Only Thirteen students got a score above average. The conclusion that can be drawn from the test results is that a large number of students encounter difficulties in understanding and processing the text. We can notice weak results as we are getting a little deeper at the level of understanding of the text. The Interpretation and evaluation seem to be a hard task.

3.2 Results of the first-year post-test questionnaire

■ **Responses to question 1:** How many times have you read the passage?

Table 4: the time spent reading the passage

Once		Twice		More	
N	%	N	%	N	%
18	32%	06	11%	32	57%

The results suggest that 57% of first year students read the text several times. Reading several times is a strategy that seems to be used by more than half of the students.

■ **Response to question 2:** How did you approach the passage?

Table 5: reading strategies employed by first year students

Read it quickly (skimming)		Read it carefully for the details (scanning)		Both skimming and scanning	
N	%	N	%	N	%
14	25%	05	9%	37	66%

Concerning the reading strategies used by students when approaching the passage, the results show that 37 students, i.e. 66% of students recognized having used both skimming and scanning whereas 14 students (25%) read it quickly, and only 5 students, i.e. 9% just scanned the provided passage. The majority of students seem to rely more on skimming and scanning as reading strategies than the others.

- **Responses to question 3:** Did you try to remember the passage while reading?

Table 6: Remembering

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
26	46%	30	54%

The data obtained suggest that more than a half of the total number of students, i.e. 54% did not try to remember the passage while reading it. This strategy is employed only by 26 students, i.e. 46%.

- **Responses to question 4:** Have you established a detailed plan before writing the paragraph?

Table 7: establishing a detailed plan before writing

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
7	12%	49	88%

Table 7 shows that 88% of the students taking the Linguistics test did not establish a detailed plan before writing the paragraph, only 12% did.

- **Responses to question 5:** Did you rely on learning by heart (memorization) to answer the test questions?

Table 8: Memorizing

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
45	80%	11	20%

It seems that the majority of students, i.e. 80% relied on memorization as a preparation for the test.

- **Responses to question 6:** Did you face difficulties when looking for synonyms?

Table 9: Difficulties encountered when looking for synonyms

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
56	100%	0	0%

The fifty-six students (i.e. 100%) who took the test reported having faced difficulties when looking for synonyms.

- **Responses to question 7:** If yes, what did you do to overcome your difficulties?

Table 10: strategies employed when looking for synonyms

	Looking at the context	Paraphrasing	Guessing	Dividing the word into its major components	Put an Arabic or French word
N	42	30	5	6	1
%	75%	54%	9%	10%	1%

The results indicate that students used some vocabulary strategies to compensate for their lack of knowledge and «looking at the context» is the widely used among our students (42 students, i.e. 75%). The second strategy «paraphrasing» was used by 54% of students. The least used were «guessing», «dividing the word into its major components», and «translation».

- **Responses to question 8:** Have you re-read what you wrote to check for errors?

Table 11: proofreading

Yes		No	
N	%	N	%
22	39%	34	61%

It seems that 61% of students did not re-read their answers to check for possible errors. Only 22 students, i.e. 39% checked their work.

3.3 Results of the focus group interview

The following is the list of the interview themes alongside the related questions as well as the content analysis of the results.

-Goal orientation: students’ goals for learning English at university yielded four salient categories, namely, *academic, vocational, social, and absence of goals*. Table 12 displays the categories generated alongside the samples from

the interview transcript.

Table 12: Students' answers to the goal orientation question

<u>Category</u>	<u>Samples from the interview transcript</u>
academic	S1: "my goal is to master English."
Vocational	S1: "... I would like to become a teacher." "...S2: "I've always been dreaming of becoming a teacher S3: "I want to teach but not adults, I prefer to teach pupils..." S5: "my first goal is to become a teacher at university..." S7: "... my goal is to be an interpreter..."
Social	S6: "my goal is to speak English very well and be able to communicate with others, eh...perfectly"
Absence of goals	S4: " to be honest, I didn't have any goals" S8: "Eh... No, I didn't have goals. I never thought about it!" S9: "I don't have goals, I just want to finish my studies and leave this university!"

-Students' perceptions regarding the importance of having goals generated just one category, namely, **a source of motivation and push and may lead to success**. E.g. S2: «Regarding me, it is *highly important* to have clear learning goals, before the start of the academic year, I have to fix some goals, and I will *do my best to reach those goals*, I will be *motivated*»; S5: «it is highly important. If we don't set goals, it will be difficult to succeed»

Students' difficulties and learning approach (s) while studying Linguistics: the nine students involved in the interview admitted having faced some difficulties in the linguistics course. The students associated those difficulties with four major reasons:

Newness or novelty of the course S6:«I found it *a bit difficult* because it was **new**», S9:«this module was *difficult, new and strange*», S1:«I have to admit that studying linguistics was difficult because *I wasn't familiar with the module...*», S7: «it was difficult, I mean I was like oh my god what's this, what's linguistics, I felt that it was philosophy at first especially with the origins of language, **it was weird for me**»

-The absence of adequate learning strategies, S9: «*I didn't know how to study this module*»; S2: linguistics was quite difficult for me, I was not really acquainted with the terminologies of linguistics, and I actually faced some hardships and difficulties ... because *I did not know how I should study and work in this module*"; S1: «I have to admit that studying linguistics was difficult... I felt that I could have done better, *but I didn't know how to deal with*

this module»

-Inability to understand the teacher’s expectations S5: «... in the first semester I faced some difficulties, and I didn’t obtain a good mark because *I didn’t understand what the teacher wanted from us*, only this semester I worked well»

-The teaching practices S4: «It was a reading session. In every session *we have to read the handout, I wasn’t aware of its significance*. And I find it very difficult to understand what I read ... *the teacher was not helpful at all*»; S4: «*The teacher wanted us to read and read and read ...*»

Students’ approaches and employed techniques when studying Linguistics yielded twelve categories, namely, **summarizing, highlighting important information, paraphrasing, using a dictionary, translating, simplifying, using context, memorizing, cooperating with others, making associations, remembering, and taking notes**. The generated categories and the samples from the interview transcript are presented in the table below:

Table 13: students’ approaches and employed techniques when studying Linguistics

Category	Samples from the interview transcript
summarizing	S1: “...I always summarized the lessons” S4: “I use summarizing ” S5: “I summarized lessons”
Highlighting important information	S2: “... and I circle, highlight keywords” S3: “in all the modules, I highlight difficult words...”
Paraphrasing	S2: “I circle, highlight keywords and I paraphrase them” S7: “my own strategy or technique was to summarize the handout given by the teacher after understanding, and I also paraphrase the lessons
Using dictionary	S3: “... and use the dictionary to understand and find the synonyms”
Translating	S3: “..., and when I find a difficult word I translate it into Arabic”
Simplifying	S3: “I try to simplify words for me” S4: “I use summarizing, memorizing and simplifying ”
Using Context	S2: I try to grasp the meaning from the context .
Memorizing	S2: “I rely on memorization sometimes when I don’t understand” S7: “I certainly rely on memorization , to remember things which require rote learning” S8: “I take notes and learn them by heart ” S9: “ I learn the handout by heart ”
Cooperating with others	S7: “I memorize through group work and communicating with my friends” S6: “I like to keep in touch with other groups and benefit from their experience”

Making associations ((Linking	S7: <i>"I try to relate the information I learn to my brother's birthday, my phone number to remember (for example)"</i>
Remembering	S1: <i>"I remember them by rewriting them, I make some research about the keywords just to have more information and remember it. It was beneficial"</i>
Taking notes	S8: <i>"I take notes and learn them by heart"</i>

-Students' perceptions of the importance of reading and writing skills: all students agreed about the importance of these two language skills, reading & writing, for academic studies and success. They consider that reading and writing are more important than speaking and listening to succeed at university. S4: «... *they are essential to survive and have our degree*»; S5: «*everything we do at university is based on reading and writing*»; S2: «for me, I consider *reading and writing as very important skills because our exams do not rely on speaking, we are asked to read and write most of the time*»; S9: «they are very difficult. I think that this module (Reading & Writing) is *the most important one, it is easy to study listening and speaking, not reading and writing*».

-Students' Reading Strategies: When analyzing the content the students' answers to the question "You are supplied with a text to read and some questions to answer or activities to perform (such as finding synonyms, summarizing the text...) how do you approach the task? Only 6 students answered this question, their quotes and the categories generated by the content analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 14: students' reading strategies

	<u>Samples from the interview transcript</u>	<u>Categories</u>
S2	<i>"First of all, I try to do the first reading without going into details just reading, then in the second reading I try to look for the for details and answer the questions in the order they were given to me. It's scanning and skimming"; if we are asked to provide synonyms, I try to go back to the passage and try to ... if it's a noun I look for a noun if it's a verb I look for a verb etc... I read the text for deep understanding then I try to find synonyms relying on the context or I try to guess."</i>	Skimming Scanning Answering the questions in the order they were given Using word categories Using context Guessing
S3	<i>"I read the text once for general understanding, and I try to guess the synonyms but I always make mistakes, I find it so difficult."</i>	Skimming Guessing
S4	<i>"I try to understand the meaning of the whole paragraph or passage, and then I find synonyms by trying to guess or find the meaning from the context. I don't feel at ease when I am asked to provide synonyms"</i>	Skimming Guessing Context

S5	<i>"I skim and scan the text then I answer the questions"</i>	Skimming Scanning
S6	<i>"I skim the text then I scan, and for the vocab, I try to guess"</i>	Skimming Scanning Guessing
S8	<i>"I don't know. Eh... I read many times and then I answer. But I have always problems with synonyms"</i>	Reading several times

Most of the students being interviewed about their reading strategies reported having faced difficulties when looking for synonyms. S3:«I try to guess the synonyms, but I always make mistakes»; S4:«*I don't feel at ease when I am asked to provide synonyms*»; S8:«I don't know. Eh... I read many times and then I answer. *But I have always problems with synonyms*»

-Learning Strategies: interviewees were supplied with a list of learning strategies and were asked to say which of these activities they are most likely to do while studying. The students' used and unused learning strategies are displayed in the table below:

Table 15: Students' learning strategies preferences

	Organizing material	listening attentively and mentally answering questions	Guessing	Looking for opportunities to use English	remembering by making mental associations	summarizing every lecture	translating	reviewing notes taken in the class after each lesson	planning your learning	reflecting on your learning
S1	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	√	√
S2	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	√
S3	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	√
S4	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
S5	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
S6	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	√
S7	x	√	√	x	√	x	√	x	x	x
S8	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
S9	x	√	√	x	x	x	√	x	x	x

Table 15 shows that out of the ten provided learning strategies, the most used are: **listening attentively in class and mentally answering questions; guessing; translating**, and only four students (S1, S2, S3, and S6) are used to **reflect**

about their learning. The other suggested strategies are not employed by our subjects when learning.

-Memorization: the students' responses to the question «Do you have a good memory?» show that 7 students (S1, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, and S9) consider they do not have a good memory, only interviewee 2 & 3 said they have a good memory. The students' responses to the question "Do you remember what you see, what you hear, or do you remember by repetition? Indicate that most of them remember by visualizing, only two students referred to hearing, and another student said he needed all of them. S1: «I remember things that I see»; S2: «what I see»; S3: «what I see, I rely a lot on vision»; S4: «*Vision*»; S5: «*what I hear and what I see*»; S6: «What I see»; S7: «*Almost all of them*»; S8: «what I see»; S9: «what I see». The content analysis of the interviewees' responses to the question: «What are the techniques you use for memorizing vocabulary or concepts, theories ...?» generated the following categories: **repetition, using the vocabulary in sentences, rewriting, mnemonic, and using a dictionary.** S1: «**repetition**»; S2: «**using them several times**»; S2: «**using them in sentences**»; S3: «**repetition**»; S4: «**repetition and rewriting**»; S5: «**Repetition then rewriting**»; S6: «**Imagine the term, gestures**»; S7: «I look up the meaning at the **dictionary** and focus on the example they give»; S8: «**repetition**»; S9: «**rewriting**». The interviewees' responses to the question: «To what extent do you rely on memorization in your everyday learning?» indicate that all of them rely on memorization, however, some of them rely on it heavily, e.g. S2: «**I rely on it and only on it**»; S3: «*I rely on memorization*»; S4: «*I always rely on memorization*»; S6: «*at university you need to memorize a lot, understanding is not enough*»; S8: «*I always learn by heart but the day of the exam I don't work, I don't know why*»; S9: «*I learn by heart most of the time*»; and others less, e.g. S1: «it's not a must that you memorize what you learn, *I rely on it but not all the time*»; S5: «when I rewrite I memorize»; S7: «*sometimes I need memorization*»

-Students' Perceptions regarding success, their motivation, and their learning experience: this topic generated three questions: Do you consider yourself a successful learner? Are you highly motivated, and do everything possible to learn? What do you think was missing in this first year of graduation in terms of learning and teaching? The interviewees' responses to the first question show that 6 participants do not consider themselves as being successful, e.g. S1: «**no**, because I always have the feeling that something is missing, I have a problem with reading. But I get good grades»; S2: «*I don't regard myself as a*

successful learner»; S3: «me too»; S4: «***I am not successful***, I am not sure to pass to the second year. I have very bad marks»; S8: «***No, I am not successful***»; S9: «No». Only three participants regard themselves as being successful, e. g. S5: «***yes I consider myself a successful student*** because I am keen on learning, I attend all sessions. But there is this feeling that I could have done better»; S6: «***Yes, I am a successful student***. I have good grades compared to others»; S7: «***I am successful in terms of grades***, but I know that my level is not very good. I don't think that I learned a lot this year». What is worth noting when analyzing the students' quotes is their perception of the notion of success, the majority of students reduce success to obtaining good grades. Only one student (S7) spoke about her level and the amount of knowledge she learned. The students' responses to the question about motivation indicate that those who consider themselves successful (the final students' results provided by the administration showed that these students got a final score above 12, and thus can be regarded as being successful) are highly motivated e.g. S1: «***Yes, I am very motivated***»; S2: «***I am very motivated*** and I am working very hard to get the scholarship»; S3: «***I am motivated***»; S5: «***I was very motivated at the beginning of the year, but now I am not***. There are so many problems in the department». The three remaining students (who repeated the year, according to their final scores) do not seem motivated at all, e.g. S4: «***I am not motivated at all***, I have a lot of problems»; S8: «I did not obtain good marks, so ***I am not motivated***. I feel I think of changing the university»; S9: «***No, I am not motivated***. I just want to finish and leave this university».

The content analysis of the students' answers to the question: What do you think was missing in this first year of graduation in terms of learning and teaching? Generated the following categories: **lack of practice**, e.g. S1: «***practice was missing. Teachers rely too much on theory***, they just read the handout, and explain it theoretically in an abstract way»; **Teachers' role(s)**, e.g. S4: Teachers ***don't simplify*** concepts, they ***don't facilitate*** things for us. We are first-year students with no experience....they don't pay attention to our backgrounds and what we learned before, for them we are supposed to know many things, but it is not the case." **Teachers' lack of experience**, e.g. S2: «I wish that the module of study skills was given to ***a more competent or experienced teacher***. It is an important module that could help us a lot, but we did not benefit from it because of the teacher». **The absence of discussions and students' involvement**, e.g. S7: «It is good to involve students in presentations. To let them express themselves. We have this problem with speaking, we are shy, ***we are not given the oppor-***

tunity to speak»; S2: «*We were not involved at all, no discussions, we missed new, motivating activities we were just given handouts and asked to read them*».

-Teaching practices: three questions emerged from this topic. (1) Have you ever been taught how to read a text quickly, to find synonyms, to summarize a passage, or to memorize important information by your teachers? Eight students answered by «No», interviewee (S1) spoke about the reading/ writing teacher who just taught them how to read a text, S1: «**just how to read a text in the reading/writing module**». The interviewee (S2) referred to the study skills teacher who did not teach students these strategies, S2: «*Even the study skills teacher did not teach us these important things*».

(2) Was studying the study skills course a beneficial experience? All students answered by «No», and interviewee (S7) went further by saying: «I hate it because of the teacher. No practice just concepts»

(3) Do you believe that it would be helpful if teachers integrate the teaching of some language learning tips and techniques in their respective subjects or in a course such as the study skills? All students consider that it could be a beneficial and helpful experience, «yes, *it would be very helpful!*» S1: «we don't know how to work, or how to study, *I think it is the responsibility of every teacher to help us in this field*».

4. Interpretation of the results

The nine first-year students involved in the interview admitted having faced some difficulties while studying linguistics. The students associated those problems with four major reasons: newness or novelty of the course, inability to understand the teacher's expectations, lack of appropriate strategies and their teachers' instructional practices.

Students in the linguistics course are expected to be active listeners, they need to listen carefully to lectures, they are also supposed to plan and write assignments to exercise their skills by assessing evidence, developing and evaluating arguments, inferring, and expressing their views. And the test's results showed that the majority of students were not well equipped to perform the previous tasks. The data yielded by the post-test questionnaire also showed that the majority of students, i.e. more than 80% did not make a detailed plan before writing the paragraph. Participants relied on rote learning as a preparation for the test, they also did not assess what they wrote to check for possible errors. The difficulties faced by this group of first-year students in the linguistics course are also linked to their weaknesses in reading and writing. Students' perfor-

mance in the linguistics test clearly shows that a significant number of students do have problems in adequately understanding the text and the questions, and writing coherent relevant answers. Even the students who participated in the focus group interviews recognized the difficulty of reading and writing effectively in the target language. However, they all agreed about the primary importance of these two language skills over the speaking and listening skills. As they are most of the time assessed on their writing performance, e.g. S2: «For me, I consider reading and writing as very important skills after listening and speaking because our exams are written, we do not rely on speaking, we are asked to read and write most of the time». S4: «They are essential to survive and have our degree». S5: «everything we do at university is based on reading and writing». They also believe that effective reading and writing may lead to academic success.

It is important to mention that the 9 interviewees were selected on the basis of their performance in the linguistics test and their general averages obtained by the end of the year, and thus the sample was divided into six successful students (they got high scores in the linguistics test, and their general average was above 13/20) and three less successful students who underscored in the test and repeated the year. When asked about their approaches and employed techniques when studying linguistics, the six first-year successful students used the following strategies: summarizing, highlighting relevant information, paraphrasing, using a dictionary, translating, simplifying, using context, memorizing, cooperating with others, making associations, remembering, and taking notes when studying linguistics. The three unsuccessful students who used to memorize (rote learning) their notes or learning by heart the handouts, and when they were asked about the way they remember materials, they answered by repetition or rewriting..

A closer examination of the students' responses regarding their approaches while studying linguistics has shown that the 9 students adopted contrasting approaches to learning, deep and surface (Marton & Saljo 1976). The surface approach (employed by the three unsuccessful first-year students) relies on the use of rote memorization and routine procedures while the deep approach involves trying to extract meaning, so as to reach a thorough understanding. The successful students were very talkative when describing their learning, and they appreciated the fact that they were given the opportunity to express themselves and to speak about their learning processes, the difficulties they met, and their teachers' teaching practices. But the three less successful students were not talkative, most of the time the answers they provided did not exceed three or four

words. Their responses were very limited and superficial, either they did not bother themselves to think and reflect before answering, or they did not possess the necessary language tools to express their ideas.

The first-year linguistics test results indicate that 58% of the total number of students got a score below the average. If we consider the fact that the test was administered at the end of the first semester, when students are in the process of revising for their exam, it suggests that students involved in the test were prepared in advance. But it was not the case for more than 50% of the total number of students. Taking into consideration these elements, we may say that the results are weaker than they should have been. Our data showed that first-year students had not assimilated some linguistic notions and that language weakness are not the unique source of their difficulties in studying linguistics. The post-test questionnaire results also revealed that some learning strategies such as paraphrasing, outlining, summarizing, memorizing, and proofreading were not used or employed by a significant number of students (mainly the underachievers). These strategies are necessary at university level, particularly when studying an academic subject like linguistics. The test results showed that more than 50% of students encountered difficulties when moving from general understanding of the text to more specific understanding and interpretation of the authors' intention. Writing well-formed and well-organized sentences or paragraphs seem to be inaccessible to these students. However, thirteen very successful students answered the questions appropriately and showed good language proficiency. The findings revealed that the successful students who performed well in the linguistics test reported higher and more frequent use of language learning strategies. This point was confirmed by the testees' responses to the post-test questionnaire.

The fifty-six students who took the test reported being unable to find appropriate synonyms when looking for synonyms. They used some vocabulary strategies to compensate for their lack of knowledge and «looking at the context» is widely used among the students (42 students, i.e. 75%). The second strategy «paraphrasing» was used by 54% of students. The least used were «guessing», «dividing the word into its principal components», and «translation». Our data show that 61% of students did not proofread their answers to check for possible errors, only 22 students, i.e. 39% checked their work. In addition to their language weaknesses, first-year students seem to face difficulties in planning, writing and editing their paragraphs, using evidence and argument effectively in writing, critically reading and analyzing academic texts. However, they re-

cognized the difficulty to read and to write effectively, mainly in content disciplines. The linguistics test's results also showed that most participants faced hindrances and challenges in reading and comprehending the text, answering the test's questions in an acceptable writing, summarizing the provided passage, but the most challenging activity was to look for synonyms.

Findings showed that most interviewees complained from their teachers' heavy emphasis on information and transmission of knowledge, and lack of practice. Some of these students reported to be good at learning the information by heart and then regurgitating it in exams or tests, but as soon as they move to another semester, the information is forgotten as it, S1: «**practice was missing**. Teachers rely **too much on theory**; they just read the handout and explain it theoretically in an abstract way», S2: I wish that the module of study skills was given to a more competent or experienced teacher. It is an important module that could help us a lot, but we did not benefit from it because of the teacher. **We were not involved at all, no discussions, we missed new, motivating activities we were just given handouts and asked to read them**», S3: «unfortunately teachers give concepts, but we feel like we lack understanding, we do not know how to use them, too much theory without practice», S4: «Teachers do not simplify concepts, they don't facilitate things for us. We are first-year students with no experience....they don't pay attention to our backgrounds and what we learned before, for them we are supposed to know many things, but it is not the case», S1: «we don't know how to work, or how to study, I think it is the responsibility of every teacher to help us in this field».

5. Implications

Teachers need to review their programs, reduce the amount of information, and raise students' metacognitive awareness and provide them with the necessary learning strategies and study skills that make them lifelong learners, learners who can cope with any kind of information and know what to do with it. Macaro (2001, p.1) argues that there is an increasing recognition in the literature that «language learning involves much more than teachers, learners simply interacting with one another and then sitting back and observing how well the learners have soaked it all up». It is a fact that «the teachers' input does not automatically lead to the learners' output, blame was put on the teaching method, and by implication, the teacher». Macaro (2001) refers to the fact that many authors tried to separate the strategies used by learners when studying and the way that teachers teach, and he seems to refute this separation «I have found it impossible to do,

the two are directly interlinked in a mutual dynamic» (p. 2).

Most students who took part in the group interview referred to the absence of strategy instruction and learning how to learn in all courses (except the reading/writing course), even in the study skills course which is supposed to help them tackle the everyday demands of learning. This can be due to the fact that teachers integrate the teaching of learning strategies implicitly, students do not seem to benefit from that instruction, or are not even conscious and aware of it. Macaro (2001, p.8) advises teachers to integrate language learning strategies explicitly. They simply need to stop and reflect on some issues such as: identifying learners' difficulties when studying, raising their awareness and increasing their knowledge of learning strategies, adopting appropriate strategy training in their respective subjects, and finally developing or adopting research tools with which they can evaluate the success their strategy instruction. It is highly important and essential for teachers to proceed to such an evaluation of their teaching, teachers need to question their teaching methods or practices, ask the kind of training materials they use, the ways they assess their students' performance in order to improve themselves. Teachers need to achieve an understanding of themselves as teachers and former learners as well to be able to comprehend their students' processes in the classroom better.

Some researchers mainly the proponents of the self-regulatory theory believe that it is the task of the learner to regulate his own learning and find better ways for improving his learning. Others, such as Macaro (2001), believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to help learners learn how to learn. He argues that it is the teacher's duty to train students to become better and more efficient learners, especially when they openly express their need for strategy training, which is the case in this study. Every teacher in his subject can integrate the teaching of a number of strategies that are relevant to his teaching context or situation. It may take the form of providing students, for example in the linguistics course, with a reading assignment with questions such as summarizing main ideas, inferring the writer's intention or looking for synonyms. The teacher can act as a model, by performing the different assignments and explaining to the students the strategies he used when summarizing, inferring, or looking for synonyms (the think-aloud tasks).

Students also have the responsibility to develop their self-regulatory skills and become active agents and participants in the learning process. They have to establish a list of learning goals to be achieved and attained and to motivate themselves and raise their metacognitive awareness. Zimmerman (2001, p.

5) asserts that students who are self-regulated are active agents in the learning process, they are «metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process. These students self-generate thoughts, feelings, and actions to attain their learning goals». In the focus group interview, respondents were asked about their learning goals and their motivation for learning. The results indicated that the six first-year, successful students do have goals for learning English at University. Their goals are academic, vocational or social, and they all seem to believe that having a list of goals is essential. Goals, according to them, are a source of motivation and push; they may also lead to success. However, the three unsuccessful students did not seem to have any goals and one of them was even wondering about the reasons behind having learning goals, S4: «...I don't understand why we should have goals!» Goal setting is a crucial element of students' motivation, self-regulation, and achievement in academic contexts. But this student failed to grasp that motivation is an essential variable that significantly influences learning. Both students and teachers have their part of responsibility when the motivation issue is raised.

The long-term sustained learning may not take place unless the teacher provides, in addition to appropriate instructional practices, sufficient inspiration, and enjoyment to build continuing motivation in learners (Dornyei 2007). This variable was found to influence different aspects of learning. In the area of language learning strategies, for example, researchers, focusing on systematic variation in strategy use of certain groups of learners, found motivation as one of the factors which positively influence strategy use. Dornyei (2001) suggests some classroom techniques that generate and maintain learners' motivation. These techniques can be grouped into three main phases: creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation. Teachers can also increase learner goal-orientedness, that is; agreeing with students on a number of goals, like individual goals related to passing exams or getting the minimum grade required for survival. The importance of setting goals stems from the fact that they direct attention and effort towards classroom tasks; they regulate the amount of effort needed; they adjust this effort according to the difficulties faced, and they encourage persistence.

Goals can exert positive effects on achievement and learning. Having a specific learning goal provides students with clarity, direction, and purpose. Students without goals do not have a plan, do not have a focus and, therefore, do not make as much progress. Having goals is a starting point for the journey of learning. An intrinsic and essential link can be established between most self-regulation

theories and goals. A goal mirrors someone's purpose and invokes quantity, quality or rate of performance (Locke & Latham, 1990), goal setting involves establishing an objective to serve as the aim of one's actions, and being able to set explicit and concrete goals is a characteristic of the strategic student. Hence, teachers can deliver this message. Dornyei (2001) insists on the fact that self-regulated learners set goals, monitor their progress toward those goals, and change their behavior according to the results they get. However, it has been noted, in the present study, that the students' stated goals were very general, thus, difficult to be met or translated into specific, concrete behaviors or actions. Teachers of different subjects can tell students what that goal looks like and teach them how to write specific goals and avoid being vague.

Students can be asked by one of their teachers or tutors to collect their writings or work samples in the different course (content or language courses) during their three years of graduation. These collections represent carefully crafted, personal investment on the part of the student, that may help him/her in better understanding his learning processes, and to assess his learning progress. Students need some training regarding the selection and the organization of their writings or papers in their portfolios. They can also be shown how to include journal entries and explain or justify their work. Martin-Kniep & Picone-Zocchia (2009, p.106) divide students' portfolios into two types: "when portfolios include primarily work that illustrates achievement, they are called showcase portfolios. When they include evidence of progress, effort, or learning processes, they are called developmental or growth portfolios." Students need to use both types because the major goal for a teacher from using portfolios is not only to know better about students' achievement but also to be more informed about students' progress and effort that contextualizes such achievement. For this reason, it is more interesting to ask students to include in the portfolio all drafts leading to a completed, final, product or work and exams that include corrections of mistakes, in addition to the integration of the teacher-established criteria for judging the work. Students can be asked to reflect and comment on the merits, shortcomings, meaning and value of their writings or work by explaining the steps they went through while completing the work, or in assessing their work and its implications for future learning goals and assignments.

The linguistics test results indicate that looking for appropriate synonyms was the most challenging activity for the first-year students who participated in this study. A large number of testees proved to be unable to perform the exercise about vocabulary. In the linguistics course, there is a linguistic metalanguage

that needs to be mastered and used appropriately by first-year students, and since students face difficulties in mastering and memorizing that vocabulary, linguistics teachers can help and support them by introducing some vocabulary learning strategies. Teachers can supply their students with a sample of vocabulary study list in which they specify the vocabulary to be learned in every session or lesson. As an example, there is a lesson in the first-year linguistics syllabus that deals with the features or characteristics of human language. In this lesson, students are expected to understand and manipulate effectively a number of concepts, the teacher can provide his students with a list of the words to be learned by the beginning of the session and then proceed to the presentation of the lesson as he is used to. By the end of the session, the teacher will ask his students to fill in the vocabulary list according to their understanding and to use their own words (paraphrasing) or making use of another language and also try to use this vocabulary in context. Students can also describe the way these words are formed. Research has shown that this kind of explicit, direct approach has a positive effect on students' vocabulary learning.

DATE:	LESSON:	WORDS:
3.11.16	Language features	Arbitrariness: Systematicity: Creativity: Linearity: Discreteness:

It is necessary for students to memorize the studied vocabulary and developing vocabulary study cards, according to Kinsella (1997), might be an effective way for fostering its memorization. The teacher can provide his first-year students with the following example of a vocabulary card and ask them to do the same for the other terms.

Term: arbitrary, Adj.

Transcription:
/ˈɑːbɪˈtrəri/

Related word forms

- Arbitrariness, n.
- Non-arbitrary, adj.

Equivalent in French :
arbitraire

Equivalent in Arabic :
اعتباطية

Definition:

- A feature of human language.
- It implies that there is no natural or logical link between the object and its name.



Dictionary definition:
Arbitrary
Subject to individual will or judgment without restriction; contingent solely upon one's discretion.

Linguistics teachers can also train their students in writing sentences of definitions. Definition is one of the most common modes of writing at the university (Brinton, et al. 2003). In Linguistics, first-year students are required to write sentence definitions of terminology in the short-answer section of the exam, and longer or extended definitions in the paragraph section of the exam. Teachers can, thus, supply students with the following pattern that has been adapted from Brinton, et al (2003, p. 104):

1. Sentence definitions are composed of four parts:

LINGUISTICS IS THE STUDY OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

2. Often, the fourth part of the definition contains the prepositions of, for, or to, or a relative pronoun such as which or that.

LINGUISTICS IS A SCIENCE WHICH DESCRIBES HUMAN LANGUAGE.

3. Frequently, sentences of definition contain a passive construction.

LINGUISTICS IS THE SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE IN WHICH THE HUMAN LANGUAGE IS STUDIED AND DESCRIBED

4. Avoid circular definitions such as the following:

LANGUAGE IS THE MEANS BY WHICH HUMANS AND ANIMALS COMMUNICATE

Linguistics teachers can then ask students to define other linguistic key concepts such as phonology, syntax, systematicity, without looking at their lecture notes or handouts.

6. Conclusion

This study was meant to shed light on the nature of the obstacles faced by a group of first year university students in a content course such as linguistics. The results indicated that the linguistics course is challenging due to its novelty. Students lack of strategy use is also another hindrance that prevents students from effectively tackling the linguistics course in addition to some teaching practices that do not stimulate and motivate students. Teachers of linguistics or any other course need to enhance their students' metacognition through a diversity of functions like planning, controlling and monitoring. Students need to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses and evaluate their daily learning to be able to progress and find a remedial solution of it through teachers' assistance and their own efforts. Teachers are expected to evaluate and revise their teaching programs of different courses taught under the LMD system to fit the students' needs, mainly the first-year students' needs, in terms of course content, language proficiency and appropriate language learning strategies that may lead to the development of effective metacognitive knowledge and abilities.

Bibliographie

- **Aoudjit- Bessai, N.** (2015). Implementing the task-based learning approach in Teaching Linguistics. *AL-LISANIYYAT* 21: 91-110.
- **Brinton, D.M., Snow, M.A. & Wesche, M.B.** (2003). Content-based second language instruction. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- **Dornyei, Z.** (2001). Motivational strategies in the language classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge Language Teaching Library.
- **Dornyei, Z.** (2007). Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies. Oxford: OUP
- **Grabe, W., & Stoller, F.** (2002). Teaching and researching reading. Great Britain: Pearson Education.
- **Fromkin, V. & Rodman, R.** (1998). An introduction to language. Fort Worth, TX. Hartcourt Brace.
- **Grabe, W., & Soller, F.** (1997). Content-based instruction: Research Foundations. In Snow, M.A., and Brinton, D.M. (1997). The Content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content. New York: Longman.
- **Kinsella, L.F.** (1997). Moving from comprehensible input to learning to learn in content-based instruction. In Snow, M.A., and Brinton, D.M. (1997). (Eds). The Content-based classroom: Perspectives on integrating language and content. New York: Longman.
- **Konopak, B.C., Martin, A.M., & Martin, S.H.** (1987). Reading and writing: Aids to learning in the content areas. *Journal of Reading*, 31(2), 109-115. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/400298222>.
- **Locke, E. A.** (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, 5(2), 117-124. Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-1849\(96\)80005-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-1849(96)80005-9)
- **Macaro, E.** (2001). Learning strategies in foreign and second language classrooms. London. England: Continuum.
- **Martin-Kniep, G. & Picone-Zocchia, J.** (2009). Changing the way you teach: Improving the way students Learn. Virginia USA: ASCD Publications.
- **Marton, F. & Saljo, R.** (1976). On qualitative differences in learning: Outcome and process. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46, 4-11.
- **Stephens, E.C. and Brown, J.E.** (2000). A handbook of content literacy strategies:

75 practical reading and writing ideas. Norwood, MA/ Christopher- Gordon.

- **Williams, M., & Burden, R.L.** (2000). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. United Kingdom: CUP.
- **Zimmerman, B.J.** (2001). *Theories of self-regulated learning and academic achievement: An overview and analysis*. In Zimmerman, B.J. & Shunk, D.H. (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives* (2nded.) Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

According to Fromkin and Rodman, deaf children can learn a language. What does this fact imply?

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

2. Explain why Fromkin and Rodman used inverted commas ‘ ’ in the expression ‘talking’ birds.

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

3. Provide synonyms for the following words and expression:

- Merely.....
- Creative.....
- Prerequisite.....
- Segment.....
- Imparted.....
- Deaf children.....

Appendix B

First year students’ post-test questionnaire

Code

Dear Students,

Once you finished completing the test, you are invited to fill in the following questionnaire which is meant to better understand the processes you went through while performing the test. We are interested in identifying the different techniques or procedures, you followed when answering every question.

1. How many times have you read the passage?

Once ...	Twice ...	More ...
----------	-----------	----------

2. How did you approach the passage?

- a. Skimmed the passage (read it quickly)
- b. Scanned it (read it carefully for the details)

c. Both

d. Others.....

3. Did you try to remember the passage while reading?

Yes ...	No...
---------	-------

4. Before writing the paragraph, have you established a detailed plan?

Yes ...	No...
---------	-------

5. Did you rely on memorization (learning lectures? Or some basic concepts by heart) to answer the test questions?

Yes ...	No...
---------	-------

6. Did you face difficulties when looking for synonyms?

Yes ...	No...
---------	-------

7. If yes, have you tried to

a. Look at the context in which every word occurs?....

b. Paraphrase?...

c. Put a French or Arabic word?

d. Divide the words into prefixes, roots and suffixes?

e. Guess

8. Have you re-read what you wrote to check for errors?

Yes ...	No...
---------	-------