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Foreword

We are delighted to present contemporary views and research on the status of the English language in higher education in the Arab World. Within an ever-increasingly changing global framework, both at the interpersonal; and functional roles of English have advanced rapidly. But what are the challenges that await non-native English speakers, professionals that are perforce operating within an increasingly Anglophone tertiary education environment? Could it perhaps hinder the accessibility of information, or even hinder perspective generated from within the Arab World to the international community? This situation may often present substantial challenges to those working in diverse fields with the Arab World and beyond.

Alternatively, could English serve as the necessary academic *lingua franca*, allowing thousands of specialists in diverse fields to share information, knowledge, benefits and peace among the international community? This publication represents a collection of some of the great many interesting and thought-provoking submissions presented in the annual international conference of Arab Society of English Language Studies (ASELS) at The Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V University of Rabat. It is hoped that this issue will therefore address the controversies that have emerged as a result of a noticeable disparity between the rapidly-changing status of the English language in the MENA region and the continuous efforts on the part of policy-makers to respond to these changes.

Editorial Board
December 2016
Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Flipped English Language Classroom in Higher Education

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Abstract
Flipped teaching is a pedagogical model in which the roles of the instructor and the students in a flipped context are redefined. Within this unique pedagogical context, researchers suggest that, in order to maximize the learning process for students, assessment should follow a student-centered approach (Talbert, 2015; Honeycutt & Garrett, 2014). Utilising assessment as a learning tool through layering and scaffolding in the flipped context engages students in the learning process, encourages continuous assessment of student learning, creates opportunities for implementing critical thinking, helps students gain a deeper understanding of concepts, allows formative feedback and eventually yields improved outcomes. This formative assessment approach of layering and scaffolding has been considered to “motivate students” (Spangler, 2015). Layered assessment in the flipped context also becomes a student-centered learning strategy, a means to informally gather feedback about students’ learning and a tool to help instructors refine their teaching. This paper aims to fill the gap in the literature with regards to utilizing assessment for learning and evaluative purposes. It aims to share formative assessment strategies for flipped English language learning, share assessment types which worked in a flipped English language learning classroom, classroom assessment techniques to refine teaching, assessment tools, resources, share recommendations to challenges and propose solutions for effective assessment in a flipped English language learning setting.

Key words: Assessment for learning, Classroom assessment techniques (CATs), Performance assessment, Scaffolding and layering of assessment, Student centered learning.
Introduction

English language learning over the past decades has become increasingly important in the Arab region. English has also become the language of instruction in most of the Arab universities (Mahmoud, 2015). Many graduate students travel to English speaking countries either for work or to pursue further studies, and accordingly require mastery of the English language. Consequently, pedagogical reform in the Arab region today is advocating for the development of higher order thinking skills for English language learners and learning that transfers skills (Mahmoud, 2015). This in turn, has led to initiatives on the part of educators in the Arab region to reform assessment.

Reform in assessment for English language learners in higher education in the Arab region meant shifting from traditional assessment which largely depend on recalling information to assessment which require students to perform a task. Such educational reforms are in line with the rapid change taking place globally. Learning experiences which challenge students are taking higher education institutions in many countries to a new level of pedagogical practices. The worldwide call for radical transformation in teaching in higher education, aims to prepare undergraduate students for their professional future by developing their language skills, cognitive skills and ability to function globally (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

The Shift from Traditional Teaching to Flipped Teaching in Higher Education

Educators in higher education institutions in a number of countries have gradually made the shift from the traditional classroom to a more flexible blended learning approach. Reflecting this is the rise of flipped classrooms (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000). The instructional foundation of flipped teaching is supported by research which focuses on student centered learning and the effectiveness of the approach in increasing student achievement (Chaplin, 2009; Freeman, 2007; Michael, 2006; Akinoglu and Tandogan, 2006; Prince, 2004; Mazur, 1996). Flipped teaching is part of a blended learning model where students are actively involved in constructing their learning process (Hamdan, Mcknight, McKnight, & Arfstrom, 2013) and where the roles of the instructor and the student are reconstructed. The new roles of the instructor and the students in a flipped teaching mode as indicated in U.T. Wollongong’s Hybrid Learning and Assessment Learning, Teaching & Curriculum, are indicative of a more communicative student centered learning and teaching approach:

Table 1
Role of students and instructors in a flipped teaching mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Role</th>
<th>Instructor’s Role</th>
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<td>Watching videos or screencasts of mini online lectures and completing readings with either quizzes or tasks.</td>
<td>Assigning students screencast videos with readings &amp; research tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in self-paced activities (e-learning hot-potato quizzes or activities)</td>
<td>Uploading short and engaging academic videos, PowerPoint presentations or screencasts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for tasks on e-learning for the face to face activities which will take place in class, identifying questions to ask the</td>
<td>Creating online activities related to the screencast videos or readings such as hot-potato quizzes, socrative.com, web-uest tasks, short answer questions, forum discussions, scaffolded tasks,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Flipped English Language Classroom

The challenge facing English language educators in higher education in the Arab region is how to leverage the students’ learning experience (Mahmoud, 2015). In a second language learning context, this means adjusting the teaching and assessment strategies in order to develop the learners’ language skills in terms of linguistic accuracy, fluency and lexical appropriacy through a student centered approach. Assessment in a flipped English language classroom can be a mix of traditional assessment and performance assessment. The reason behind this combination is that traditional assessments, do not always help instructors to accurately measure the language proficiency of English language learners (Jenelle, 2004). According to the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>teacher during the face to face session.</th>
<th>worksheets (for in-class feedback).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Producing work for feedback in class</td>
<td>Designing worksheets which prepare students for class debates or presentations in order to enable students to receive formative feedback during class, or that students can continue working on at a deeper level during class with peers or individually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flipped teaching was successfully implemented in the contexts of science (Bergmann & Sams, 2012), maths (Fulton, 2013), language learning (Fulton, 2013; Ullman, 2013) and in higher education settings with pharmacy students (Ryan, 2013). It was further explored by two Colorado Chemistry teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams in 2007. In their book Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day (2012), they highlight the effectiveness of the flipped approach.

Flipped teaching is an alternative model of instruction in which digital technologies are used to shift lectures out of the class hours in the form of screen-cast videos to introduce new concepts. Face to face teaching time is used for students to engage in critical thinking, apply language skills and participate collaboratively with peers to construct knowledge (Pluta, Richards, & Mutnick, 2013). During flipped teaching face to face class time, educators monitor their students’ progress through ongoing formative assessment and provide them with feedback relevant in the moment (Gojack, 2012). Flipped teaching is a student-centered learning approach which focuses on active learning.

Multiple studies have been cited by leading researchers such as J. Michael and E. Mazur highlighting that flipped teaching capitalizes on the time available with the instructor and makes it possible to increase the focus on language development and the application of higher order thinking skills (1996). In a traditional classroom setting, students “use such time for note taking” (Missildine, Fountain, Summers, & Gosselin, 2013). The effectiveness of the flipped teaching model is well supported by research regardless of the discipline in the belief that “good teaching should always limit the passive transfer of knowledge in class while also promoting learning environments built on the tenants of student inquiry, collaboration and critical thinking” (Musallam, 2014).

Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Flipped English Language Classroom

The challenge facing English language educators in higher education in the Arab region is how to leverage the students’ learning experience (Mahmoud, 2015). In a second language learning context, this means adjusting the teaching and assessment strategies in order to develop the learners’ language skills in terms of linguistic accuracy, fluency and lexical appropriacy through a student centered approach. Assessment in a flipped English language classroom can be a mix of traditional assessment and performance assessment. The reason behind this combination is that traditional assessments, do not always help instructors to accurately measure the language proficiency of English language learners (Jenelle, 2004). According to the
Guidelines for the Assessment of English-Language Learners (Pitoniak, Young, Martiniello, King, Buteux, & Ginsburgh, 2009):

ELLs should have not only multiple opportunities, but also multiple ways to show what they know, and that assessment specifications should include a variety of item and response types that may lead to assessments on which ELLs are more likely to be able to show their strengths. For example, items with visuals, performance tasks, or oral responses are sometimes suggested as ways to allow ELLs to better demonstrate proficiency (p.11).

Graded and Non-graded Assessment

The main purpose of assessment as a learning tool or formative assessment, is to help instructors support students’ learning in an engaging and motivating approach. Assessment during the middle of the semester or summative assessment at the end of the academic year, are tests which aim to measure to what extent a student has achieved the learning outcomes. Assessment for learning on the other hand, is not for grading. In simple terms, summative assessment is to evaluate achievement, while formative assessment used as learning tool, is practice.

A flipped teaching context supports the administering of ongoing formative assessment. Assessments designed for a flipped context, serve to create meaningful opportunities for interaction about learning between instructors and students. Recent research has shown that assessments well designed for a flipped English language classroom, provide opportunities for diverse students to demonstrate their knowledge and at the same time, accurately measure the proficiency level of English language learners (Lee, 2005). Research literature on assessment, suggests that the primary purpose of assessment is to serve learning. In a flipped teaching mode, assessment for learning has proved to be the most effective for English language learning and student achievement. This paper aims to share best practice with EFL/ESL/EAP educators who are considering implementing assessment as a learning tool in a flipped English language classroom and information on its effectiveness and clear examples of how to implement it with students with Arabic as L1 in higher education. The same strategies can be adapted to learners in different contexts.

Assessment for Learning: Benefits

Assessment for learning in a flipped English language classroom, integrates the processes of teaching, learning and assessing. A range of formats are used in order to assess the performance of students allowing them to demonstrate that they are able to construct meaning and use language skills appropriately (Stiggins, 1987). Research has shown (Brame, 2013; Fulton, 2012) a number of positive outcomes for implementing assessment as a learning tool in a flipped English language classroom:

- Increased student engagement and motivation
- Supports metacognition
- Enables frequent and individualized formative feedback,
- Enables immediate clarification of misconceptions
- Facilitates peer interaction and peer evaluation,
- Opportunity for use of higher cognitive functions in class,
Assessment for Learning: Strategies

Strategies that aid assessment for learning are scaffolding of tasks and layering of assessments. Teachers might be familiar with the concepts of layering and scaffolding, but may not necessarily understand the rationale behind why these techniques are effective or what is it about a particular scaffold that helps English language learners perform better on assessments for learning (Hobsbaum, Peters, & Sylva, 1996). Scaffolding tasks and layering assessments in a flipped English language classroom, encourage students’ independent learning, give them greater autonomy and develop their higher order thinking skills simultaneously with language development.

Scaffolding Tasks

Using simplified tasks according to the language level of the test takers and scaffolding the input in a test situation, is considered an appropriate strategy and, hence, totally justified as a mechanism for authentic/performance assessment (Lewkowicz, 2000) in a flipped English language classroom. Research introduces scaffolding as a means to provide opportunities for English language learners to learn and demonstrate understanding as well as to further develop their English language skills (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Scaffolding includes content scaffolding, task scaffolding and material scaffolding (Allen & Dickson, 2016). There are two essentials to keep in mind when scaffolding: modeling and practice. Throughout the learning process, students should be able to watch their teacher demonstrate each step in the task. Modeling allows students to understand both how to perform each step and why each step is important. Knowing how and why leads to students’ successful performance of the task. Modeling error detection and correction is important. At the same time, students, either individually or as a group, must have the opportunity to work collaboratively to practice the task or the strategies that were modeled.

Layering of Assessment

In a flipped English language learning classroom, assessments are administered before-class, in-class and after-class. Before class assessments are primarily meant for concept checking and guiding students’ learning to understanding new topics, vocabulary and constructing knowledge. Students are exposed to language as input through online screen cast, academic videos, readings, and activities prior to class. Research shows that before class material presented through screen-cast videos has a big impact. Students and teachers have also expressed a preference for videos over reading material for class preparation in a flipped context (Herreis & Schiller, 2013). Activating learning prior to the face to face class sessions ensures that class time is an opportunity for students to actively exercise their language skills and critical thinking. Moreover, the formative feedback provided during the online flipped class time, helps instructors clarify knowledge and misconceptions so as to ensure students are able to “organise their new knowledge in a way that is more accessible for future use” (Brame, 2013, p. 3).

To ensure the success of the face to face teaching session and active engagement of students with the assessment material in class, the before-class video content should be matched
Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Flipped English Language

Khalil & Fahim

with a small task or assessment in-class. Student-led discussions are exceptionally effective in engaging students immediately with the online material administered before-class. Misconceptions as a result are cleared at an early stage of the teaching session and the teacher can easily identify areas that require recapping or whether to re-teach a particular point in grammar or reinforce a certain language skill. In-class tasks are scaffolded to guide and support the learning process while the assessments are designed to activate higher order thinking skills and create the opportunity for students to practice their language skills within a conceptual framework. The flipped classroom promotes what Bonwell and Sutherland (1996) call “an active learning continuum that moves from simple tasks on one end to complex tasks on the other” (p. 5) This is achieved by partially moving away from traditional tests in the classroom such as multiple choice and gap filling questions towards performance assessments which require students to perform a task as opposed to selecting an answer. Performance assessments often require students to demonstrate through a task their ability to evaluate, analyze, synthesize and apply what they have learned. Students are also encouraged to create new meaning in the process as well. After-class assessments in the flipped mode reinforce the development of language skills through additional independent practice and instructor feedback.

Performance assessments in general allow more student choices in determining what is presented as evidence of language proficiency. English language learners are accordingly able to demonstrate their language proficiency in multiple ways. In-class assessments include student-led discussions, presentations, debates, writing argumentative essays with multiple drafts, peer evaluation, peer feedback on writing drafts or oral presentations, self-evaluation using checklists and rubrics.

Using Rubrics to Promote Learning

For any assessment to yield accurate outcomes, a well-designed objective and validated scoring rubric or marking criteria is required. Rubrics play an important role in the success of assessment for learning. Rubrics support learning by making expectations and criteria explicit, as well as facilitate feedback, peer and self-assessment. Within a flipped teaching context, rubrics are used both to familiarize students with the performance standards expected of them and as a guiding checklist for their learning process. At the same time, rubrics used as a learning tool help shift the students’ focus from simply completing an assessment to paying attention to the quality of the language skills they produce on the assessment. When rubrics are shared with students and descriptors are explained during the face to face teaching sessions, a common understanding of performance standards is set. Students are given ownership in deciding how far up the scale they want to advance their learning. Additionally, rubrics and checklists are used for peer editing and peer review hence encouraging learner autonomy and a greater sense of ownership towards language learning. Rubrics also work as checklist for self-evaluation and constructive feedback on either presentations or written assignments. The research literature on self- and peer assessment (Dochy, Segers, & Sluijsmans, 1999; Topping, 2003) affirms that it is strategic for students’ learning to be involved in giving and receiving feedback.

Students’ feedback on their performance is tied to the rubrics. The rubrics serve as a tool to help students identify their areas of strength and areas of development. According to the rubric both teachers and students can identify appropriate remedial strategies which can be adopted for developing and improving language skills. Using rubrics to guide and support students in a
flipped English language classroom follows the “pedagogy of contingency” (William, 2006) structure which ensures that the learning process is kept on track. Helping students during the learning process to link the rubric descriptors to the quality of their language proficiency demonstrated during an assessment has been noted to result in better student achievement. There is a strong conviction that the use of performance assessment in combination with rubrics has a positive impact on students’ efforts and learning (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). Research argues that the use of rubrics in supporting assessment as a learning tool “has shown to be beneficial for students’ learning, motivation and study situation at large” (Jonssson & Svingby, 2007, p. 138).

English language learning requires application of the language skills in an appropriate learning environment in order for students to appropriately demonstrate their language proficiency. Performance assessments lower the affective filter and hence the learning environment is less stressful for English language learners. Flipped classrooms free up more face to face time for administering performance assessment and formative feedback. However, a successful flipped English language classroom, does not sacrifice one assessment type for another. English language learners need to demonstrate their language skills both through a balance of traditional assessment and performance assessment. The differences between traditional assessment and performance assessment are indicated as follows:

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<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Difference between traditional and performance assessment</th>
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<td><strong>Traditional Assessment</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Indirect Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrived</td>
<td>Recall/Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-centered</td>
<td>Indirect Evidence</td>
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</table>

Effective Assessment Types in a Flipped English Language Classroom

The principles supporting assessment in the flipped classroom are grounded in theoretical understandings of active learning (Bonnell & Eison, 1991; Meyers & Jones, 1993; Silberman, 1996). Theoretically, assessment as a learning tool, is a broad term that “involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (Bonnell & Eison, 1991, p. 2). Assessments administered as a learning tool are usually less stressful for students, supportive in nature and result in positive washback. Examples of assessment for learning which are well suited for a flipped English language classroom include the following:

**Web-Quest**

Web-Quest has been promoted by foreign language educators to support students’ active learning in the English language classroom (Altstaedter & Jones, 2009). Web-Quest tasks prompt
higher-level thinking, and are designed to address topics or issues that exist in the real world encouraging students to use a variety of reliable sources to present multiple points of view, hence making the tasks authentic. Web-Quest helps scaffold tasks and often requires students to work as part of a group and present the information to an audience. The process is scaffolded and guided by modeling and practice. The requirement of presenting to an audience compels students to focus on the quality of their performance in demonstrating their language proficiency. The tasks on the Web-Quest are developmental in nature as they progress from knowledge and understanding to analysis, evaluation and application.

**Portfolio Assessment**

The constructivist approach to teaching and learning puts the student at the center of the learning process and accordingly, advocates evaluation through performance assessment such as portfolio (Baturaya & Daloglu, 2010). Constructivists advocate portfolios as a more “effective” way to assess English language learners taking into account their linguistic and cultural differences (Duckworth, 2006). Portfolios “facilitate the process of making linkages among assessment, curriculum, and student learning” (Asp, 2000, p. 221) helping instructors monitor how instructional goals are met in light of the progress individual students make (Shulman, 1987). In a flipped English language classroom, portfolio assessment “creates an atmosphere for student centered learning, which requires active student involvement” (Baturaya & Daloglu, 2010, p. 413). Portfolio assessment capitalizes on the strategy of guiding students to reflect on their performance and the need to plan a route for improvement in subsequent attempts. Feedback on portfolio assessment is individualized and tailored to each student’s learning. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), highlight that a successful portfolio should exhibit a collection of the students’ work, a selection by the student of the highest quality writing to show case, and a reflection on their performance.

**Writing Assignments**

Initial input for the English language learner in the flipped mode using screencast videos helps activate the writing process prior to the student’s participation in the face to face session. Screencast videos can cover a range of essential areas in the development of language learning for L2 students, such as, how to structure a paragraph, how to use correct sentence structure, how to paraphrase or how to maintain academic honesty and avoid plagiarism. With such input taken care of out of the class face to face session, the face to face time in the classroom is used to assess students’ writing through essay writing and drafting.

The writing process in the flipped English language classroom can be assessed at different stages using different formats. Initial assessment is based on the students’ ability to research a topic and brainstorm ideas on an online forum with peers. The second stage of assessment is the drafting of an outline and peer editing, planning and organizing an essay independently and using a checklist to edit either their essays (self-evaluation) or peer editing. The instructor feedback on drafts during face to face time involves a robust discussion with students about their individual performance and remedial activities to boost language development. This stands in contrast to traditional assessment. Writing assignments which require multiple drafts, improve the chances of L2 learners in engaging with language production offering them unique opportunities to express their language competence than through a traditional multiple choice exam, a timed in-class test or final exam test on essay writing.
The final stage of assessing the writing process in a flipped English language classroom, is through submission of a soft copy on Turnitin.com. Students can use the service as a learning tool to help them detect plagiarism. Students can re-write their essays and re-submit them multiple times. The originality report produced by Turnitin.com helps students identify areas of weakness in their writing and accordingly are prompted to improve the quality of their writing while adhering to the requirements of academic honesty.

The assessment of students’ progress in the flipped English language classroom in the form of a writing portfolio, actively involves students in their own evaluation, yielding higher levels of student engagement. Portfolio assessment also creates an interactive learning environment between the instructor and the students where discussions of progress are frequent and feedback is ongoing. Darling-Hammond (2006) explains that “assessments that require students to evaluate …, conduct research, write extensively, and demonstrate their learning, … have proven key to motivating students and attaining high levels of learning” (p. 655).

**Oral Presentations**

Effective presentation and debating skills are valuable transferable employability skills which many learners will need as graduates. By integrating them as an assessment tool for learning in the flipped English language classroom, students will appreciate the chance to practice using these skills at this stage of their higher education. Giving presentations, requires learners to invest time and effort researching a topic, selecting reliable sources, drafting, organizing slides, editing, memorising, and reviewing content.

For many students of L1 Arabic, giving presentations in English can be a challenge particularly if they have had few to no opportunities to present orally in a classroom setting prior to higher education. Hence providing scaffolding to ensure students understand the requirements of giving a presentation is vital. It is also recommended by research that instructors provide students with sample presentations (Hovane, 2009). The scaffolding of tasks allows students to internalize the language at their own pace and engage in the learning process. When students see that the skills they are learning will be useful in other situations, they are more likely to spend time preparing and practicing (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). Additionally, by giving the opportunity for learners to listen to their peers’ presentations, not only are they exposed to a variety of topics and a range of vocabulary but they are also receiving extensive listening practice. Using oral presentations in the flipped English language classroom, is an opportunity for learners to apply their language skills and practice spoken language in an authentic manner (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). The flipped classroom set up gives room for the instructor to teach/review grammar, introduce new vocabulary and administer exercises which focus on pronunciation and conversation strategies such as word stressing, repetition, chunking and paraphrasing (Gershon, 2008; Grussendorf, 2007) prior to the actual final presentation assessment. Feedback on students’ performance is based on both the linguistic and physical aspects of delivering an oral presentation in L2. A rubric with clear descriptors shared with students prior to the assessment ensures a common understanding of requirements for students’ performance and helps students focus on the quality of their language production during presentations.

**The British University in Egypt’s (BUE) Experience with Flipped Classrooms**

The English Department language programme at the BUE is EAP. The programme in 2015-16 catered to approximately 3000 students of L1 Arabic. In an effort to stimulate active
learning flipped teaching was introduced to the English language classroom in two of the modules Advanced and Advanced Writing. The new pedagogy entailed modifying the assessment strategy to focus more on learning than on testing. The duration was 13 weeks. The orientation to the modules required students watch a screen-cast created by Department explaining flipped teaching, the assessment strategy and the students’ new role and responsibilities as learners.

**Best Practice**

The modification of the teaching and assessment strategy of the two English modules, consequently entailed modifying teaching material, creating interactive tasks, reviewing the learning outcomes, redesigning assessments, reviewing portfolio content, designing e-learning online tasks and creating quizzes. The tasks and materials of both modules were designed as scaffolds. Weekly layered assessments were divided into before-class tasks, in-class tasks and after-class tasks enabling instructors to include formative feedback as an integral part of the students’ learning process. Flipped tasks completed prior to class, provided instructors with important information about students’ learning and allowed instructors to be proactively prepared to address the learning needs of their students in the face to face sessions. Students at the lower end of the language level received appropriate learning support while students at the higher end were being challenged to reach their full potential. Students’ individual academic progress was closely monitored through the flipped online tasks. There was clear evidence that students who completed the flipped online tasks, mastered the learning objectives of each week. According to N. Ellis, “language processing is based on input frequency” (2002). The presentations and debates during class time were an indicator that students were able to manipulate language to express ideas, employ a range of appropriately selected vocabulary and focus on form and language mechanics. Additionally, exposing students to tasks that required evaluating, analysing and synthesising, were found to stimulate learners’ higher cognitive skills as well as develop learners’ autonomy (Rodriguez, Frey, Dawson, Liu, & Rotz Haupt, 2012). There was an overall improvement in students’ achievement levels and language development as evidenced by their grades on assignments and face to face class performance.

The Advanced and Advanced Writing modules used e-portfolios where students’ work was collected online. The e-portfolios included quizzes, essay outlines and drafts. The non-graded assessments were online hot-potato quizzes and interactive activities that reinforced language learning such as grammar, punctuation, run-on sentences, subject-verb agreement and vocabulary. In class assessments such as the diagnostic assessment administered during the first week of the semester to verify that all students had been allocated by the placement test to their appropriate language level were also included in the e-portfolios. Writing and presentation rubrics were shared with students prior to the assessments as a means to establish a common understanding of the expectation of performance at each of the language levels. Students used the rubrics as a checklist to review their essays and presentation requirements. The use of rubrics for self-evaluation reinforced the notion of learner autonomy and boosted the motivation of students to participate in peer-evaluation / peer editing.

Students who were interviewed about their experience with flipped classrooms and the new assessment strategy, acknowledged, that the ability to play screen-casts and videos as many times as needed prior to the face to face session was a feature of the flipped classroom which
they greatly appreciated. Students liked the embedded self-check quizzes and pre-knowledge tasks because they “alerted them of knowledge gaps and prompted them to review the corresponding videos again with clear objectives” (Mok, 2014).

Assessment as an Evaluative Tool of Teaching

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1993) explain that the purposes of assessment can be diagnostic, formative, or summative. At the same time, the focus of assessment can be the evaluation of the process of learning, evaluating the process of instruction, or the evaluation of both the outcomes of learning and instruction. Ongoing formative assessment in the flipped classroom provides feedback for instructors to guide their teaching and to help students improve their learning. In L2 contexts in higher education, two features are often missing from English language classrooms; pedagogies of engagement (Shulman L. S., 1999) which means creating challenging learning environments where all students engage in the learning process because the level of intellectual demand is high. Secondly, the pedagogy of contingency, (William, 2006) which ensures that students’ learning is kept on track through monitoring, follow up and feedback. Both these features of effective teaching can be implemented through classroom assessment techniques.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are simple, non-graded activities designed to give feedback on the teaching-learning process as it is happening. This strategy advocated by Angelo and Cross (1993) in their book Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers is ideal in a flipped English language classroom to assess students’ achievement and to collect meaningful data. CATs help address the following questions:

- Are my students learning what I think I am teaching?
- Who is learning and who is not learning?
- What am I doing that is useful for these students?
- What am I doing that is not useful for these students?

Like all ongoing formative assessment, CATs give teachers instant feedback about their students which can help them a) make short-term modifications to the delivery of instruction, b) identify at risk students or c) prepare for long-term modifications.

Useful Resources for Assessment in a Flipped English Language Classroom

- Educanon www.educanon.com allows you to embed interactive questions in videos related to your topic. You can either select a pre-existing video or create one of your own.

Technological Tools for Assessment in a Flipped English Language Classroom

Hot potato quizzes

The nature of flipped teaching allows greater flexibility in utilising a variety of technological tools. The most successful of these were the screen-cast videos embedded with hot-potato quizzes. Creating the screen-casts and the embedded mini-quizzes is time consuming but it is a long term investment for subsequent semesters (Fahim & Khalil, 2016)

Socrative.com

Socrative.com, allows you to create mini-assessments or pose a question (CATs) to which students can respond to immediately in real-time. Teachers can collect instant feedback and students can use their portable media purposefully.
Flipped teaching is not just limited to viewing tutorials online, but includes using every opportunity of students’ errors as a learning process. Turnitin.com, the plagiarism detection tool, enables students to view their errors, correct them and resubmit their work. The benefit is a developmental learning process of writing. Moreover, instructors can use Turnitin.com to give feedback to students online either through voice recording or written feedback.

Challenges and Solutions- Recommendations

Shifting the assessment paradigm from traditional to performance assessment in a flipped teaching and learning context requires instructors to ensure a safe learning environment for the learners where the affective filter is lowered. With the affective filter lowered, the face to face sessions will become a stress free learning environment. Asking students to watch a video explaining the setup of flipped teaching and assessment before starting the semester is helpful in setting the stage for them to accept their new roles and responsibilities as learners.

It is also necessary to ensure that there are appropriate student learning support strategies in place. Learner support strategies need to be in place in order to debilitate students’ anxiety of the flipped approach and the modified assessment strategy. Creating the opportunity for students to be prepared for class, ensures that students are not stressed or mentally overshadowed by apprehension (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2015) in the face to face teaching time. Research shows that such support strategies are effective in promoting calmness during high-stress activities such as quizzes and group discussions (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2015).

Conclusion

Implementing assessment as a learning tool in a flipped English language classroom for L2 students, is a major change in the teaching pedagogy and the assessment strategy of the English Language Programme modules at the BUE. Much of the success of implementing assessment for learning at the BUE, depended on investing effort in highlighting the educational benefits to academic staff, students and obliterating the psychological obstacles to implementing the change. The five key strategies of effective assessment for learning in a flipped classroom can be summed up as follows: a) clarifying and understanding the criteria for success, b) effective discussions and tasks which elicit evidence of learning, c) providing feedback that moves students’ learning forward, d) activating students through peer evaluation as instructional resources for each other, and e) activating learners sense of ownership towards their learning. These strategies can be adapted by instructors to work in their local context.

As a twenty-first century pedagogical approach which effectively utilises technology and active learning to transform students’ learning experiences, assessment for learning within a flipped English language classroom context, successfully met the dynamic pace of generation Y (Fulton, 2012; Millard, 2012). Additionally, the flipped classroom framework freed up time for assessment practices which focused on developing the underpinning language skills of students necessary for effective communication. Despite the strong evidence found by research on the positive impact of assessment as a learning tool on students’ engagement in the learning process and motivation, it is important to note, that in the field of English language education, little research to date, has scrupulously studied whether assessment as a learning tool in a flipped
language classroom has a direct effect on enhancing the proficiency level of English language learners (Hung, 2015).

In an effort to add to the research literature on assessment in a flipped context in English language learning, this paper has presented a structured approach to implementing assessment as a learning tool using active learning strategies, shared successful and effective assessment types, best practice, useful resources and recommendations to overcome challenges. The English Department at the BUE in its commitment to delivering quality UK higher education to students in the Arab region will, despite the positive outcomes of implementing assessment as a learning tool in flipped English language classrooms, continue to refine the teaching and assessment strategies of the English language programme. Further implications for research will consider the lack of sufficient professional development for building instructors’ assessment capacity to support English language learning needs of L2 students in higher education.

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Assessment as a Learning Tool in a Flipped English Language  

Khalil & Fahim


The Status of English in Language Policy Models Proposed for the Moroccan Multilingual Context

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Abstract
This paper suggests a language policy model for Modern Morocco, which can respond to both, the national needs of identity and the demands of Globalization. These two needs are the two major forces that shape the status of the various languages involved in the Moroccan sociolinguistic context, including English. The paper concisely describes how different sociolinguistic phenomenon produced by the ex-colonial powers shape the status of the different languages involved in the Moroccan multilingual context (i.e. language conflict, language competition, language selection and linguistic militantism). It also gives a detailed account of the different approaches and language policy models proposed by various Moroccan intellectuals and linguists in order to face such a de facto multilingualism. Finally, it proposes a multidimensional model that may contribute to reducing tensional relations between the different linguistic varieties cohabiting in Morocco, meeting the requirements of the Moroccan identity, and responding to the needs of modernity, prosperity, science and technology imposed by globalization.

Key Words: English, Globalization, Language Policy multilingualism, Sociolinguistics
Introduction

Like many other developing countries, Morocco, which was under the colonization of both France and Spain, had to face a very controversial situation with respect to its Arabic identity and the imperatives of modernity and prosperity, which require the maintenance of foreign languages (i.e. French). It is between these two major forces that the evolution of the status of English has been figured out in this paper.

Several linguistic varieties cohabit nowadays in Morocco: Arabic – language “de jure” – has a legal status, but suffers from the Francophone realpolitik, which made it stagnant and not responding to the increasing needs of modernity. Darija is a variety of Arabic, which consists of an indefinite number of accents. Tamazight, a language that actually refers to three main dialects: Tarifit, Tachelhit and Tasusit. However, at the beginning of this third millennium, Tamazight could “forge a place” within the educational system. The efforts to release a super-linguistic structure, based on the structural similarities of its varieties, finally gave birth to Tifinagh and raised its status to the second official language of the country.

In reference to foreign languages, while French does not actually have the status of a foreign language, even if the political discourse presents it as such, it enjoys a “de facto” official status. The presence of English, Spanish and some other languages in the educational system corresponds to the international power of their supporting countries and the demands of the Moroccan linguistic market.

The situation concisely described here is due to several factors, such as the political decisions imposed by the Panarabist ideology (Al-kawmiyah), the establishment of the Francophone model in the country, the ex-colonial past of France and Spain in the Kingdom, the new renaissance of the Tamazight movement and the “policy of openness” towards other civilizations of the world that the Moroccan government has adopted in the years since independence.

In the absence of well-defined language planning, the above-mentioned factors contributed to what some linguists call “chaotic multilingualism” (Cheddadi 2011, 56-57). Hence comes the need for language planning that clearly determines the functions of national, local and foreign languages in the various domains of social life, especially in the field of scientific research and in the educational system. In fact, in schools, multilingualism represents a reality that is very difficult to handle.

In fact, the exposure of students to several languages at the same time has transformed the Moroccan school into a laboratory of experiments and created a feeling of linguistic insecurity for both instructors and students, which has resulted in low and unsatisfactory academic outcomes. In addition to that, the illiteracy rate in Morocco remains high (45% according to the World Bank) and results in complicating the language issue and leads to a non-recognized pluralism backed-up by the intellectuals who possess the power.
Perhaps the Moroccan multilingualism is not a sign of cultural prosperity but one of sociolinguistic disease. The marginalization that is exercised, at various levels of society, toward Arabic, combined with the increasing appreciation of foreign languages, particularly French, are clear signs of such disease. In addition, in the absence of true political willingness to overcome this chaotic situation, the learning of foreign languages will continue to have the effect of replacing Arabic and hampering its development and normalization, as opposed to enriching it or allowing its access to university scientific spheres.

Additionally, in the absence of diagnostic studies that can help articulate an explicit and comprehensive language policy, this linguistic crisis will persist and the different problems that emerge from the coexistence and contact of various languages, such as language conflict (especially between Arabic, French and Tamazight), the issue of selecting the language of instruction (Arabic, French and recently English), the real status of Standard Arabic and its relation to the Moroccan accents, the status of Tamazight varieties, the future of foreign languages, and the issue of linguistic militantism will never be solved. That is to say that in the absence of language planning that clearly defines the domains and functions of all the languages incorporated in the Moroccan linguistic repertoire, giving the huge gap between the “de jure” and “de facto” policy that the Moroccan government uses to deal with language issues, an overloaded militantism that instrumentalizes language in political discourse becomes a very common practice among Moroccan linguist activists.

Despite the try of the Moroccan policy makers to consider all the components of the Moroccan linguistic repertoire and articulate a language policy that brings balance to its linguistic market, the new language policy model, mainly embodied in the new Constitution and the Charter of Education and its subsequent documents, has complicated the linguistic situation in Morocco. Ibn Farouk, for example, asserts that the coexistence of several languages within the same educational and administrative spheres of state necessarily gives rise to serious problems, and signs of a linguistic crisis are not only visible but also persist and worsen despite the measures taken by the state (Ibn Farouk 2004).

This dire situation has urged many intellectuals and sociolinguists to propose a variety of models and proposals with the hope of bringing back stability and balance to the Moroccan linguistic scenario. In the following, we are going to introduce these models and explore how each one of them relates to the status of English.

1. The Open Monolingualism Model

For Al‐Awraghi, until today, the language choices adopted by the Moroccan State in the educational system respond more to political exigencies than to cultural or functional ones. Such politicization and ideologization of language is so pervasive that it is not possible to craft a coherent language policy. For example, despite the presence of many languages in the educational system (French, English, Spanish, German and Italian), the compulsory character of French and its use as a language of instruction in comparison with the optionality of the other languages can only be explained by the degree of political power that the Francophone elite has in the country. Also, the officialization of Tamazight
and its inclusion in the educational system, despite its variability, local character and poor functionality came as a response to the political pressure exercised by the Tamazight movement. To Al-Awraghi, opting for such a politicized multilingualism has a negative impact on the whole nation, but particularly on students who are unable to gain proficiency in any of these languages. He adds that in Morocco the majority of citizens are not fluent in any language and the mixing of codes is deeply rooted in the society (Al-Awraghi 2005).

After distinguishing between closed monolingualism (the exclusive use of a language in instruction, as is the case in France, United States, England, Spain, etc.), which is more suitable for the most advanced nations, and open monolingualism (the parallel use of a national language and other foreign languages in instruction, as is the case in Morocco), which is more suitable for developing nations, Al-Awraghi recommends the latter as an alternative to such a politicized and unplanned multilingualism. He further explains that open monolingualism consists of adopting Arabic as a national language and introducing foreign languages in the educational system based on their functionality and ability to connect the Moroccan student with the international community. To him, this is the only way to avoid social fragmentation and eliminate the code-mixing phenomenon, which leads to linguistic incapacity, intellectual perturbation and the extension of a very superficial culture.

However, the following guidelines should be considered in the course of applying his model:

- **Learning Arabic should be compulsory for all citizens, while linguistic openness should be optional.**

- **The selection of a language must be on the basis of its rich cultural content and not on the basis of political pressures.**

- **The introduction of a language in the educational system should be aimed at extracting the necessary expertise for the development of the country, not at achieving ideological ends.**

- **The relationship between Arabic and any other foreign language must be conceptualized as a complementary relationship, and not one of competition, conflict or struggle for power.**

To Al-Awraghi, for this model to be correctly implemented, language acquisition planning should be founded on two bases: The first of these is constantly (at all stages of education) exposing citizens to Arabic, for the purpose of weakening and eliminating what Al-Awraghi calls "Laghat and Lakat" (non-sense language mixing and borrowing), which characterizes Moroccan society and disturbs its identity and future. In parallel to this process, all those foreign languages that allow access to global cultures – not only those that are imposed by political force – should be offered through the educational system. If applied, this model entitles English – insofar as it is an international and global language – to a better position within the Moroccan linguistic context.
Based on the above-mentioned guidelines, it seems that Al-Awraghi is for a pragmatic multilingual model instead of an unnecessary multilingualism that is prevalent in both the social and educational spheres and puts the ideal linguistic balance between national and foreign languages at risk. The latter is favoured by the state and weakens both individual and national identity and all the values associated with them; proof of it is the current situation of Moroccan schools, where the learning of several languages in parallel to the national language and local varieties is not only time-consuming but also, and above all, very expensive and damaging to the psychology of students. Therefore, openness towards foreign languages should be guided by the desire to gain knowledge and expertise, not to weaken the Arabic language.

2. The Supported Monolingualism Model

According to FassiFihri, the current Moroccan state’s policy favours linguistic conflict between the languages that make up the national identity (Arabic and Tamazight) and foreign languages, especially French. This conflict benefits those who have political power at the expense of a harmonious multilingual environment that can benefit the entire society. He further notes that there is a financial interest behind the perpetuation of such a conflict, which goes a long way toward explaining the inconsistency in post-independence language policies and the changing attitudes of the elite towards them. This notion is supported by the fact that the same intellectuals who in the past were for Arabization are currently in favour of Francization, and those intellectual Amazighs who never had a negative attitude toward Arabic now see Arabophones as conquerors of the country (FassiFihri 2007). He concludes that in Morocco there is an increasing level of "language pollution," founded on an immature approach to multilingualism.

Since there is no country in the world that supports linguistic division within its boundaries, or takes a foreign language for a national one, FassiFihri recommends a supported monolingualism, which consists of a language policy that perceives Arabic as the only language that can fulfil the function of national language. In addition to Arabic, he proposes a purposeful multilingualism, where foreign languages should be incorporated in the Moroccan educational system with the purpose of allowing access to other cultures and enriching the structure of Arabic when necessary. To him, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the use of a foreign language in domains where there is a need for it and its generalization in all aspects of life, including those where it is not needed. He further recommends a multilingualism that is aimed at transforming the linguistic reality from competitive juxtaposition to a purposeful diversity. FassiFihri proposes the following guidelines for his model:

- Establish an identity rooted and continuously modernized national language. To him, Arabic is the best – if not the only – candidate for this function.

- Opt for a "cumulative and supported multilingualism” founded on the functions that each language can have in the society, and not based on political criteria. That will lead to the consideration of more than one foreign language, not only French.
• Introduce foreign languages only at the high school and university stages, since introducing them as early as the national language disturbs not only the process of learning Arabic but also the learning of foreign languages.

According to Al-Fihri, these guidelines should prevent foreign languages from taking over the functions that the national language has, and open the doors for them to contribute to the betterment of Morocco, in a prioritized way: French, for its historical, political, strategic and economic power in the region; English, for its scientific and technological value; and Spanish, for its geographical, historical and progressively international value.

3. The Econo Communicative Model

To Ibn El-Farouk, the establishment of a unifying and rational linguistic policy in Morocco requires the consideration of both the communicative and the economic values that different languages can ensure for the Moroccan state. For that purpose, Moroccan language policy makers should consider three dimensions: the national dimension, the Panarab dimension, and the international dimension. The first dimension requires the consideration of Arabic and Tamazight; the second one can be achieved only through Arabic, while the third one requires the consideration of English and French (Ibn El-Farouk 2004).

In reference to the international dimension, Ibn El-Farouk emphasizes the importance of foreign languages, not only because of the demands of technology, economics and science, but also because of the high degree of hospitality, tolerance and openness of the Moroccan citizen towards the other. He also asserts that, in a world where relations among states are becoming more globalized, it is absolutely imperative for Morocco to adopt one or two foreign languages that allow citizens to integrate into the global community. He believes that English should be promoted for its scientific value, while French should be prioritized for historical reasons.

4. The Gravitational Model

Messaoudi proposes a gravitational model that theoretically rests on the SwaanAbraam model (2002). This model compares the relationship between languages to the hierarchical order of galaxies. For Messaoudi, in Morocco, there are few spoken Tamazight varieties that are organized around a central language used in national communication (Arabic with its Darija varieties). Arabophones are organized around a more extended foreign language, which is French. Finally, there is a supra-international language, which is English. She concludes that any planning meant to establish a balanced relationship between national diversity and international dimensions should be founded on this model.

The implications of this model for the Moroccan sociolinguistic context should contribute to the perception of Arabic and French as the most important languages. Darija should be perceived as a lingua franca that serves for communication between all social
classes (Arabophones and Amazigophones). Tamazight, with all its varieties, should be perceived as a local language.

In reference to the educational system, Messaoudi wonders about the criteria used by the State at the time of including one or more languages in school. In other words, are languages introduced as subjects or as languages of instruction? To address this question, Messaoudi suggests a tripartite approach:

- **Strengthen the position of Arabic as an official language of the country, improve the quality of its teaching in school and rigorously develops its functionality within the modern society.** To achieve this goal, she stresses the urgency of establishing the Academy of Arabic and a permanent body or institute in charge of the protection of this language.

- **To have access to sciences and be well positioned in the international context, Morocco has to be open to international languages, particularly English, French and Spanish.** In this context, Messaoudi recommends the establishment of an Institute of foreign languages, which should be responsible for the planning of these languages.

- **The protection of the national linguistic heritage, embodied mainly in the Tamazight varieties, and the conviction of Tamazight leaders that, before being Arabs, Amazighs, or French speaking, they are mainly Moroccans, and that the learning of Tamazight must, above all, facilitate the transition to standard Arabic, and not become a shell in which the Amazigh activists become enclosed.** Furthermore, Messaoudi recommends that Tifinagh should be taught in college or in high school as a minority language. Finally, she sees that IRCAM’s mission must be limited to the protection of this heritage. It should not feed linguistic conflicts, complicate the Moroccan linguistic reality, facilitate its Balkanization, or prevent the development of the country.

5. **The Glocalized Model**

In his glocalized model, Boukous proposes a multilingual policy that should take into account the Arabo-Amazigh cultural heritage and the socio-economic challenges imposed by globalization. In other words, it should balance the local, national, and global dimensions of Moroccan language policy. Boukous asserts that the ideal model for an ex-colonized developing country like Morocco is one that combines the local-national dimension with the international one, which means that it is almost impossible to opt for a single language of instruction in the educational system. He further asserts that the decision to incorporate a language of instruction in the educational system must take into account the internal structure of that language, its symbolic value in the linguistic market and its ability to satisfy professional and social needs. It is based on these parameters that Boukous proposes the following guidelines for a more convenient language planning:

- **Arabic should be the language of teaching, from elementary school to university, of subjects relating to the Arabo-Islamic civilization (language, literature, culture, arts, history and religion).** With reference to the national culture, Arabic can be used to teach literature, arts, culture, national education, history, environment, human, social, political and legal sciences.
• French should be the language of instruction from high school to university, specializing in technical, technological, scientific, economic and administrative fields.

• English should be the language of instruction in laboratories, scientific and doctoral studies centers, and in the domains of strategic, financial, and business planning.

• Foreign languages that are taught in secondary schools should facilitate specialization in higher education and professional training, especially in the educational sector.

• Tamazight should be the language of instruction of everything that is local, from elementary school to University. The meaning of ‘local’ in Boukous model is vague, knowing that Moroccan dialect is also local.

Boukous concludes that, contrary to the approach that conceptualizes Arabic as the only language of scientific education (Arabization), and those who prioritize French over Arabic in fulfilling this function (Francophones), the glocalized model seems to be the most qualified to improve the educational system. In addition, it should ensure a high level of functional complementarity between languages, put an end to the current conflict between the defenders of Arabization and Francization and open the doors for other foreign languages to contribute to the development of the country.

6. The Distributional Model

Esmili classifies Morocco among the countries that did not have a very clear strategy of how to deal with the language of the colonizer. Morocco did not give a specific status to the language of the colonizer and proceeded by "le laissez-faire" policy, which has contributed to a chaotic and absolutely unbalanced linguistic situation. Therefore, Esmili advocates for a Moroccan language policy model where each of the languages is called to play a particular role. To him, considering the various factors that shape Moroccan society, multilingualism in Morocco must be accomplished according to a precise configuration or distribution.

"Globalization, competitiveness, quality, education, training, literacy, the restructuring of economic enterprise, modernization, democracy, Islam, integration, our relations with Europe, the Maghreb, the Arab world, the MENA, and the rest of the world. Our own identity, who are we? What do we want to be? Are we Moroccans or simple import-export merchants? What is our..."
contribution to the civilizations of the world? All of these themes of reflection are founded on a monumental rock which is the problem of language”. [Translation is mine]

He further proposes the following guidelines for a well-balanced language policy:

- Since each one of them has a specific function that does not contradict the others (i.e. Tamazight varieties have deeply rooted functions related to identity and community; spoken Arabic serves as a national lingua franca and fulfills, at the same time, the role of community language; written Arabic serves as a support for written expression and communication. In its classic form, it has heritage and liturgical functions. In its modern form, it also has an international communicative function within the Arabophone world).

- Foreign languages should not take over the functions of community languages. They should be incorporated in the educational system with the purpose of understanding the cultures of other peoples and nations and carrying out literary, scientific and technical translations.

- Teaching, at all levels, must be offered in Arabic. However, students should be exposed at an early age to the learning of foreign languages, in a way that does not harm their learning of the national language.

- The State should not privilege French at the expense of other European or Anglo-American languages, mainly English, Spanish, German and Italian. Rather, it should give citizens the right to choose one or two languages in a certain learning order.

7. The Functional Interventionist Model

Bourqia who presented her model through the third magazine, “Madrasah Al-Maghribiya, insists that the officialization of Arabic requires the continuous development of its structure (corpus planning) and functions (status planning); the continuous work to reduce the differences between Darija and MSA through raising the popular awareness in reference to the value of the latter; the clear definition of the status of French in relation to the national languages and other foreign languages; the recognition that the ideologization of language policy is a very decisive factor in the escalation of language conflict; and that language policy should not be applied only to the educational system, but also to all domains of communication (administration, economy, technology, science, research, media, etc.) that ensure access to development and modernization.

It is based on these guidelines that Bourqia imagines an interventionist role for the State, which should be founded on the following principles:

- The right of each language to exist implies the recognition of multilingualism as the normal state of the society.

- The principle of functionality should ensure a relationship of complementarity between languages, not a relationship of conflict or competition.

- The need for state intervention in implementing language policy and putting an end to the distinction between de jure and de facto policies. In other words, the constitutionalization of
A language does not mean anything if the state does not respect the requirements of the constitution.

- To fight linguistic militantism that results in the ghettoization of communities while the reality of globalization requires being open towards other languages and cultures.
- The elaboration of a linguistic convention or contract, which determines the status of each language within the education

In support of this model, Kabli proposes the adoption of a plan that redefines the limits and functions of "identity tongues" (Arabic and Tamazight) and those that allow access to the modern world (foreign languages in general). Such a process should lead to the reconsideration of historical factors in redefining the status of French and Spanish. It should also lead to prioritizing identity languages in elementary education and languages of openness in higher education and scientific research (Kabli 2011).

Conclusion: Toward a New Model of Language Policy

After thoroughly analysing the post-independent Moroccan language policy models and considering the different components of the Moroccan society, the complexity that their coexistence impose, and the different cultural agendas that are activated and implemented, this paper proposes the guidelines of a multidimensional model designed to better deal with the de facto multilingual face that the Moroccan context represents today. The following platform or plan of action should be considered for the success of such a multidimensional approach:

For a more comprehensive definition of the domains and functions of all the languages incorporated in the Moroccan linguistic repertoire, diagnostic studies in the field of a great interest in developing studies that can respond to this need but a lot more has to be done. This descriptive and synthetic study hopes to partially fill this gap.

A true reform of the linguistic affair can be achieved only through a more comprehensive reform of the political system. That is to say, unless the Moroccan State truly adopts more comprehensive socio-political changes, including consistency between de jure and de facto policies, then any reforms – including educational ones – will not be at all relevant or significant. In fact, without filling the huge gap currently existing between the “de jure” and “de facto” policy, an overloaded militantism that instrumentalizes language as a weapon of political struggle will continue to be a very common practice among Moroccan linguist activists; and the balance that is hoped to be brought to the Moroccan linguistic market will never be achieved.

There is an absolute consensus among all sectors of the society that education in Morocco was always a failure mainly due to the very ideologized and politicized linguistic choices that have been made since independence. It follows that for a positive change to happen in this field, it is necessary that the State give up those unpopular politicized choices and embrace ones that correspond to the real needs of the majority of Moroccans.
Arabic is the most qualified language in the country to respond to the needs of identity, education, modernity, science and diplomacy. Therefore, it should be adopted as the only national and official language of the country, and should be progressively and steadily incorporated as the only language of instruction in school. Insisting on practically weakening it and empowering French will continue to generate tension and linguistic interference of spaces. Recognize that the Arabization of the educational system failed mainly due to the high illiteracy rate (approximately 48% of Moroccans are illiterates according to official sources), not because of internal problems in the structure of Arabic language.

The improvement of the corpus and status of Arabic should be a priority. That should encompass the language in the fields of science and technology. Giving other languages the same functions as Arabic will continue to generate language conflict and unbalanced competition for the same spaces. Also, the current diglossic condition of Arabic is not due to the inability of the language to unite its different varieties, but to the unnecessary and unneeded bilingualism promoted by the State. The elite and intellectuals should assume their responsibility in correcting the current linguistic situation by doing their best to raise the status of Arabic to that of a national and universal language, exactly as the Spanish intellectuals could do for the Spanish language. They should stand firm against any attempt to secularize the language, which means restricting its use to religious functions and isolating it from the daily life of Moroccans.

The Tamazight should be conceptualized as a national heritage that every Moroccan can have access to. The Tamazight movement should stop placing Tamazight in conflict or competition with Arabic, since neither its corpus nor its status qualifies it to face the challenges of globalization.

Foreign languages (especially those that had a colonial past in the country: French and Spanish) should not enter into struggle or competition with Arabic, and must admit it as the national language of the country par excellence. Any conflict with it disturbs and hinders not only its development but also the development of those foreign languages.

Foreign languages should be introduced in the educational system with the purpose of facilitating access to technology, science and cultural values of other nations. That implies removing the ambivalent and privileged status accorded to French and opening the door to other languages, mainly English. Foreign languages should be also introduced in the school system beginning in High School, which should be conceived as a preparatory stage aimed to empower students to pursue their college studies in Arabic or in any of these languages.

The multidimensional model proposed in this paper takes into account the Arabo-Islamic, the Tamazight, the Euro-Mediterranean and the universal or global dimensions. In this model, Arabic is conceived as the only national language of the country.
and Moroccan Arabic as a continuum dialectal that should work for consolidating the status and corpus of Arabic; Tamazight as a local heritage that every Moroccan has the right to embrace, French and Spanish as two regional languages, that should give Moroccans access to the Euro-Mediterranean civilizations and cultures, and English as a universal language that should help Moroccans meet the requirements and challenges of globalization.

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References
Incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL Classes

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Abstract
In a rapidly globalized world, EFL teachers are increasingly urged to incorporate intercultural competence in language classes. This paper is concerned with the incorporation of the teaching of culture into the foreign Language classroom. The main premise of the present paper is that effective communication is not limited to linguistic competence and language proficiency and that apart from enhancing communicative competence, cultural competence can also lead to empathy and respect toward different cultures as well as promote objectivity and cultural perspicacity. In fact, teaching a foreign language carries a novel culture which includes one’s religion, gender and a set of beliefs. Yet; though language and culture are so closely interwoven into each other that one cannot be conceived without the other, language is still taught as a separate phenomenon from culture and classroom activities are bereft of any instruction of foreign cultures. It is to be noted that much research into the incorporation of culture in language learning remains to be done so that the pedagogical principles of culture teaching may be articulated and applied effectively to the development of materials, and curricula. Thus, the purpose of this paper is first, to explain the ideas and theory which define what is involved in the intercultural communicative competence, and second, to demonstrate what intercultural competence would mean in practice for teachers and learners in language classrooms in an Algerian context and how to make it easily accessible in practical ways.

Keywords: cultural awareness, culture teaching, EFL, intercultural communicative competence
Introduction

Teachers/learners of foreign language (FL) have always faced a demanding task of learning/teaching FL culture, for teaching/learning a foreign language is not limited to linguistic competence, and language proficiency, but mainly incorporates, or should incorporate, some cultural elements, which are intertwined with language itself. In fact, teaching a foreign language carries a novel culture which includes one’s religion, gender and a set of beliefs. Yet; though language and culture are so closely interwoven into each other that one cannot be conceived without the other, language is still taught as a separate phenomenon from culture and classroom activities are bereft of any instruction of foreign cultures and this decontextualized method of teaching has plagued the field for many years. Indeed, today, university teachers of foreign language (FL) face a pedagogical environment in which two camps have developed: one basing its emphasis on communicative competence, the other on the importance of exposure to culture. The purpose of this exposure is to help language learners to interact with speakers of other languages on equal terms showing mutual understanding and accepting difference. It also aims at helping the learner go beyond informative communication into developing relationships with other languages and cultures, showing awareness of their own identities and those of their interlocutors. This aim is in tune with one major innovation of communicative language teaching, namely that learners need the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

The need to integrate culture in language teaching is now firmly established. The debate about whether or not to include culture in a language classroom is long past; now the discussion points to matter of effective method. Many language educators have already presented a number of valuable methods for teaching culture such as “Using role play”, developing a mental image of the target culture, ”Celebrating a holiday or festival of the target culture”, or Teaching culture through “nonverbal communication”. Despite the fact that diverse methods have been proposed to teach FL culture in language classes, the difficulties have not been completely removed.

It is to be noted that much research into the incorporation of culture in language learning remains to be done so that the pedagogical principles of culture teaching may be articulated and applied effectively to the development of materials, and curricula. Thus, the purpose of this paper is first, to explain the ideas and theory which define what is involved in the intercultural competence, and second, to demonstrate what intercultural competence would mean in practice for teachers and learners in language classrooms in an Algerian context and how to make it easily accessible in practical ways.

1. Static vs. Dynamic view of culture

ICC, as terminology patently suggests, builds on a complex term, culture (see Williams 1983). Thus, it is of immediate relevance here to define the term. But it should be noted that it is not possible to arrive at one particular definition of the concept; for definitions are numerous. Kramsch (1993.P.10) describes culture as “membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” Kramsch (1993) made another keen observation about the essence of culture, which should not go unnoticed:

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making
evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (Kramsch, 1993)

(Liddico et al, 2003) define culture as:

...a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals and lifestyles of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create. (p. 45)

Earlier models (Brooks, 1975; Nostrand, 1974) behold culture as a relatively static entity made up of accumulated facts which are merely transmitted to the learner. This perspective focused on surface features of behaviour, and did not look at the underlying value orientations; it also ignores the interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning. In opposition to this traditional view, the dynamic view of culture perceives culture as constantly changing and variable. Being constructed through human interaction and communication, it requires learners to actively engage in culture learning, rather than only learn about factual information of the target culture in a passive way. Learners are encouraged to view cultural facts as a social construct situated in time and space and variable across time, regions, classes and generations. In this line of thought, a general rethinking of the teaching of language and culture as a social practice has taken place. (Kramsh, 2003). The dynamic view of culture also requires learners to have knowledge of their own culture and an awareness of their own culturally-shaped behaviours. For as Weaver (1993) argues, a large proportion of our own culturally-shaped knowledge is invisible and mostly subconsciously applied in our everyday interactions.

2. **Defining Intercultural competence:**

   It is to be stressed that in a rapidly globalized world, FL teachers are increasingly urged to incorporate intercultural competence in language classes. Being interdisciplinary in nature, research into intercultural communication (IC) is conducted in a wide variety of academic disciplines as education, communication studies, cultural anthropology, and behavioural psychology, to name just few relevant disciplines. This wide range perspective adds another complexity to the term making it difficult to define and to delimit. Thus, the subsequent part embark on an attempt to define what intercultural competence consists of and what are its goals? At the outset of this attempt, it is worth noting, that the views, concerning the understandings of intercultural competence and culture teaching that will be discussed here are strongly influenced by the writings of Byram (1988), Kramsch (1993) and Fantini (2000), all of whom have proposed models for integrating culture and language teaching. These works share a common conceptual framework regarding the teaching and learning of culture.

   By integrating culture into language study, the concept of “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1997) has brought culture to the fore of language education. Intercultural communicative competence is defined by Byram as “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and [the] ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (Byram, 2002). On Byram’s account, an interculturally competent learner displays a range of affective, behavioural and cognitive skills which involve the following five elements (Byram, ibid):

   **Attitudes (savoir être):** curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own. This means a willingness to avoid a self-righteous attitude,
i.e. not to assume that one’s beliefs and behaviours are the only correct ones and to be able to see from an outsider’s perspective; Byram (1997); Kramsch (1993) described this as ‘decentring’ from their own culture.

**Knowledge**: (savoirs) of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction. It follows that knowledge can be seen as having two major components: a sum of abstract knowledge of social processes and concrete knowledge of realisations of these processes in interactions.

**Skills of interpreting and relating**: (savoir comprendre): ability to interpret a document or an event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.

**Skills of discovery and interaction**: (savoir apprendre/FAIRE) ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

**Critical cultural awareness**: (savoir s'engager) an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

Defined as such, this competency reflects the view that requires the EFL learner to gain insight into both their own and the foreign culture (Kramsch, 1993), to see relationships between different cultures and to critically analyse and adapt one’s own behaviours, values and beliefs (Byram, ibid). To put it differently, this conception requires the EFL learner to act as a mediator who is aware of their own perspective and of the way in which their thinking is highly influenced by their own culture and thus does not look at others from the mirror of themselves, but rather from an external perspective.

Discussing the dimensions of ICC in educational settings, Fantini (2000) writes the following: “In this construct of ICC, there are also five dimensions. These are awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge (A+ASK), and proficiency in the host tongue...” This definition is graphically presented as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
A &= \text{attitudes (affect)} \\
S &= \text{skills (behaviour)} \\
K &= \text{knowledge (cognition)} \\
A+ &= \text{awareness (concientização)}
\end{align*}
\]

*Source: Fantini (2000)*

Here, awareness and affect are addressed along with knowledge and skills. Yet, the placement of awareness in the centre of this graph is highly significant. Awareness appears to be a pivotal dimension in ICC, a foundation on which effective intercultural communication hinges. Awareness relates to the other three components in the A+ASK quartet in two ways: it leads to deeper knowledge, skills, and attitudes and at the same time it is also enhanced by their development. By way of analogy, Stevens (1971), among others, consider awareness as the most powerful component of the A+ASK quartet. Likewise, Paulo Freire (1998) sees awareness as
central to any successful cross-cultural interaction and clarifies it with the following important observations:

- It is awareness of selfhood.
- It is a critical look at the self in a social situation.
- It can produce a transformation of the self and of one’s relation to others.
- It can lead to dealing critically and creatively with reality (and fantasy).
- It is the most important task of education.

2.1. Intercultural communicative competence and EFL teaching/learning

The following part attempts at describing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) as it relates to foreign language teaching. This will involve building up a view of ICC in relation to the existing FLT theory in order to elaborate a model of ICC capable of informing discussion of teaching in an EFL class. In any EFL class which places intercultural communicative competence at the core, any FL teacher would raise the following question: how to integrate the intercultural dimension in an EFL class and how to acquire ICC?

FL teaching which integrates an intercultural dimension combines between the two following objectives:

1. Helping learners to acquire the communicative competence needed to communicate in speaking or writing, to formulate what they want to say/write in correct and appropriate ways.
2. Developing the learners’ intercultural competence i.e. their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality.

As stated earlier, the teaching of culture will not be limited to the transmission of information about the people of the target culture and their general attitudes, as traditional thought in FL education suggests. Instead, drawing on Byram’s model and Fantini’s, already discussed; EFL teachers should be concerned with following goals:

1. To help learners see relationships between their own and other cultures
2. To help them acquire interest in and curiosity about 'otherness', and an awareness of themselves and their own cultures seen from other people's perspectives.
3. To help learners to understand how intercultural interaction takes place,
4. How social identities are part of all interaction,
5. How their perceptions of other people and others people's perceptions of them influence the success of communication,
6. How they can find out for themselves more about the people with whom they are communicating.
To achieve these goals effectively, FL teachers should try to design suitable activities that would prepare FL learners to communicate with open minds with other intercultural speakers and tolerate differences.

2.2. ICC as practice in an EFL Class

One question germane to the present paper is how can we incorporate culture into the foreign language class, with a view to fostering cultural awareness? There are many possibilities to follow to develop Intercultural communicative competences in our learners; relevant methods techniques are to be chosen. However, the subsequent practical part will not concentrate on this broad area, but present some specific techniques to be used in the classroom. Prior to considering some concrete techniques for teaching culture in the foreign language classroom, it is useful to provide some guidelines for culture teaching (the guidelines that ensue are mainly based on Lessard-Clouston, 1997).

- First, in tune with ICC and the dynamic view of culture, already discussed, receptive knowledge of cultural competence is not sufficient; learners will also need to acquire some skills in culturally appropriate communication.

- Second, to avoid what Lessard-Clouston (1997) calls ‘a laissez-faire approach’, when it comes to teaching methodology, and to deal with culture teaching in a systematic and structured way.

- Third, to include evaluation of culture learning as a necessary component of the foreign culture teaching, providing students with feedback and keeping teachers accountable in their teaching.

3. Teaching Methodological suggestions

3.1. Comparing cultures

Here, the FL learners are engaged in comparative analysis between their own culture and the target culture. In relation to different cultural topics, EFL Learners are encouraged to look for cultural similarities and differences with the target culture in comparison with their own culture. This comparison/contrast analysis will lay the ground for a dialogue that could enhance EFL learners’ cultural awareness. This method draws on learners’ own knowledge, beliefs and values and leads to increased cultural knowledge, understanding and acceptance, which provide a basis for successful intercultural communication. Byram and Planet (2000, p.189) argue that “comparison makes the strange, the other familiar, and makes the familiar, the self strange – and therefore easier to reconsider”. In this process, it is hoped that learners will develop a third place that would enable them to make both an outsider’s and an insider’s view on their culture and the target one.

**Practical Examples of comparing cultural values:**

- **Family relations:**

  The class is structured around a discussion, using the target language, about family relationships. Here, learners will be exposed to different family issues and develop an understanding of the family values in their own and the target culture. They are provided with reading narratives which communicate directly or indirectly family values in the target culture.
Reading Passage

Acculturation, which begins at birth, is the process of teaching new generations of children the customs and values of the parents' culture. How people treat newborns, for example, can be indicative of cultural values. In the United States it is not uncommon for parents to put a newborn in a separate room that belongs only to the child. This helps to preserve parents' privacy and allows the child to get used to having his or her own room, which is seen as a first step toward personal independence. Americans traditionally have held independence and a closely-related value, individualism, in high esteem. Parents try to instill these prevailing values in their children. American English expresses these value preferences: children should "cut the (umbilical) cord" and are encouraged not to be "tied to their mothers' apron strings." In the process of their socialization children learn to "look out for number one" and to "stand on their own two feet." Many children are taught at a very early age to make decisions and be responsible for their actions. Often children work for money outside the home as a first step to establishing autonomy. Nine- or ten-year-old children may deliver newspapers in their neighbourhoods and save or spend their earnings. Teenagers (13 to 18 years) may babysit at neighbours’ homes in order to earn a few dollars a week. Receiving a weekly allowance at an early age teaches children to budget their money, preparing them for future financial independence. Many parents believe that managing money helps children learn responsibility as well as appreciate the value of money. Upon reaching an appropriate age (usually between 18 and 21 years), children are encouraged, but not forced, to "leave the nest" and begin an independent life. After children leave home they often find social relationships and financial support outside the family.

Discussions:

First, the students are asked to read the passage, in pairs, and to deduce which family relationship is being tackled? As the linguistic competence is part and parcel of ICC, Students are provided with vocabularies used in the passage and they are also made to think about related vocabulary to help them sharpen their linguistic proficiency.

Vocabulary Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child raising</th>
<th>Phrases and Expressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy, generations</td>
<td>To cut the cord,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing</td>
<td>To be tied to mother's apron strings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prevailing</td>
<td>To look out for number one,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-reliance</td>
<td>To stand on your own two feet,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instill</td>
<td>To leave the nest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible vocabulary activities would be to ask students to first review the way the above mentioned words are used in the passage. Then to provide them with a text, of which some parts are left out and ask them to fill in blanks with the suitable word or expression from the above list.
Second, students are required to derive the family values communicated directly or indirectly in the passage and then to set these values of the target culture, in comparison/contrast with their own family values:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United states Child raising</th>
<th>Cultural value</th>
<th>Algeria Child raising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separate rooms for newborns</td>
<td>First step towards personal independence</td>
<td>Newborns are tied to their mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children work for money (E.G delivering newspapers)</td>
<td>Financial independence from a very early age</td>
<td>Children are entirely dependent on their parents for financial support (except for necessity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making decisions</td>
<td>One way of establishing autonomy</td>
<td>Little or no decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children are encouraged to leave the nest (usually between 18, 21)</td>
<td>To foster independence and a sense of individualism</td>
<td>Children do not leave their families before marriage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difficulties in intercultural communication arise when speakers show ethnocentric attitudes, assuming that what they believe is right. This can result in negative judgments of individuals from different cultures as the following students’ responses to American family values demonstrate: When asked to voice their opinions about the American family values, students commented that they find it negative that in American family values, children leave their parents when they are so young. They could not understand how come that parent encourages their children to leave the nest. Depending on their own social and cultural background, Algerian students considered dependence on parents positive and protective. They even jumped to the conclusion that parental authority is not highly valued and respected in American families, and that parent-children ties are not cherished. To help students develop a third place that would enable them to make both an outsider’s and an insider’s view on their culture and the target one, students were asked to consider possible counter opinions, responses from an American’s cultural perspective that would, for instance, consider self-reliance as positive and would take the Algerian family value negative as parents, who keep their children protected until the children get married, do not allow their children to become independent, grow responsible and discover about life.

3.2. Culture assimilators

Other insightful methods to culture teaching are proposed by Henrichsen (1998), namely, Culture assimilators which comprise short descriptions of various situations where one person from the target culture interacts with persons from the home culture. These exchanges are followed by possible interpretations of the meaning of the behaviour and speech of the
interlocutors. Students, then, are invited to think of the plausible interpretation of the situation. When every single student has made his guess, they discuss which options are valid. Culture assimilators are recommended for they ‘are good methods of giving students understanding about cultural information and…may even promote emotional empathy or affect if students have strong feelings about one or more of the options’ (ibid.). The following example would set the scene:

**Practical Examples**

**Situation:**

*Michael is a graduate student* in a foreign university. He is a good friend of Mr. Umm, who lives in the dormitory for graduate students. Since Michael is interested in architecture, Mr. Umm decides that it would be a good idea for Michael to meet his older friend Mr. Tahh, a professor of design at the university. First he tells Michael all about Mr. Tahh's architectural research. As it turns out, Mr. Tahh's research is exactly what Michael needs for his thesis. Michael is so excited that the next day he goes directly to Mr. Tahh's office, introduces himself, and briefly mentions Mr. Umm's name. The two men spend several hours discussing their research ideas. That evening Michael tells Mr. Umm how much he enjoyed meeting Mr. Tahh. Mr. Umm reacts coldly: "Yes, I heard you both met. I hope your research goes well." His serious tone tells Michael that something is wrong, but Michael has no idea what the problem might be.

**Activity** The Students are required to analyse, in groups, this situation and to try to fathom out what lies behind Mr. UMM’s reaction towards Michal’s behaviour.

### 3.3. Cultural problem solving

In this method learners are presented with problem-solving activities. This might include cultural dilemmas that can develop learners’ awareness to cultural differences. For example, students can discuss dilemmas about parent’s decision on career choice or dressing, say, through TV conversation or reading a narrative on marriage ceremonies, they are expected to assess manners and customs, or appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, and to employ various problem solving techniques. To illustrate the point, students are to be made aware that individuals in every culture have similar basic needs but express them differently. In daily life we all initiate conversation, use formal and informal speech, give praise, express disagreement, seek information, and extend invitations. Some of the verbal patterns we use are influenced by our culture. In this regard, students can be asked which verbal patterns are more common in their culture: directness or indirectness? Or how many times a host is expected to offer food or to extend invitations? Another frequently misunderstood area in American verbal interaction is that of extending, accepting, and refusing invitations. In English someone might say something that sounds like an invitation but that never results in an actual meeting. To gain insight into this area, students are required to observe the following two exchanges and to reflect on why the first invitation did not result in an appointment whereas the second did?

**Exchange 1:**

*KATIE. It was nice talking to you. I have to run to class. DARLENE. OK, maybe we can meet sometime soon. KATIE. Yeah, love to. Why don't you drop by my house sometime?  
DARLENE. Great. Gotta go. See ya soon.*

**Exchange 2**

*KATIE. Before you leave for your vacation can we get together and have lunch?  
DARLENE. Sure. I'd love to.*
KATIE. How about Friday? Say about 12:30 at my place?

DARLENE. That sounds good. See you then.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is worth stressing that FL teachers should be foreign culture teachers as well. For fundamentally, teaching a foreign language is incomplete without the study of the related culture. The topic of teaching and learning culture has been a matter of considerable interest to language educators and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language instruction. The clear and unique indissoluble relationship between a culture and its language is based on the work of educators from various disciplines.

In the light of the above mentioned dynamic view of culture, culture learning is taken to be the process of acquiring general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively, as observed with Byram’s model. Incorporating intercultural communication in EFL teaching is an attempt to develop learner’s cultural awareness and to help them transcend traditional ethnocentrism and explore new relationships across cultural boundaries.

Though many scholars have already presented a number of valuable models and definitions of ICC which lend themselves to the integration of language instruction and intercultural learning, there is often only a random exposure to culture in the EFL classroom. FL teachers cannot avoid culture teaching by rigidly holding to the traditional values of classroom behaviour, for culture is intimately bound to language. EFL teachers therefore need to shift from a traditional stance to an inter-cultural one to develop both linguistic and intercultural competences of learners. The approach the teacher engages in will depend greatly on his or her attitude towards the target culture and perspective on the teaching of culture in the language classroom. Yet one recommended approach is characterized by the treatment of cultural issues openly and directly in a comparative cross-cultural manner. Besides, FL teachers should avoid teaching culture as facts, but rather as cultural understanding, intercultural competence and an awareness of the importance of dialogue when trying to understand another culture. Central to the teaching methodology suggested here is to provide opportunities for interaction so that the students can impart their own way of seeing things. Meta-awareness and cross-cultural comparison lie at the heart of such culture pedagogy. This teaching methodology comprises fundamental learning processes as the learners’ exploration of their own culture and the target culture and the discovery of the relationship between language and culture.

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References
Incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence in EFL


Reframing Language Roles in Moroccan Higher Education: Context and Implications of the Advent of English

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Abstract
Morocco is a multilingual society where different languages are in use. Besides the national and official languages, Moroccans also use a number of foreign languages among which are French, Spanish, and English. Over the last few years, foreign languages have acquired more space and prestige, especially in the educational system. In this respect, the Ministry of Higher Education is promoting the position of the English language through ministerial notes imposing it as a requirement at the doctoral level and for the recruitment of new university professors. With the spread of English as the international language and the language of research and science, current debate concerns also the language of instruction in science streams. The aim of the present study is to address three main research questions, namely (i) what status does English have in Morocco in general and in Higher Education in particular; (ii) what is the language policy, if any, that organizes the growing of English in Morocco; (iii) what are the causes and implications of the growth of English as the language of science in Morocco. This research intends to (i) reveal the conditioning factors for the spread and promotion of English in the Moroccan higher education (ii) investigate the potential implications of the growth of English on the other foreign languages and particularly the languages of instruction languages, namely Arabic and French. The study adopts a mixed approach making use of a survey to collect Moroccan university students and education professionals’ opinions about the impact of the Moroccan English language policy. The study will also analyze the official documents and discourses and the academic literature.

Key words: Language policy, language roles, language system, science Medium of instruction
Introduction
As an integral part of the education system, Higher education in Morocco has gone through series of reform attempts with the aim to improve the system. The National Charter for Education and Training, the Emergency Plan, and subsequent documents and decrees all prescribe a series of reformist measures that aim at improving the quality of teaching and matching graduate competencies with the potential job-market. However, language is a main issue of the Moroccan system of education and university education in particular. After controversial subsequent policies, Moroccan higher education maintained French as the language of instruction in the faculties of sciences, economics, and schools of engineering and technology. However, cross-border factors such as globalised economy, job opportunities, science and technological breakthroughs have instigated growing demand for the learning of English and its mastery in the Moroccan university.

Calls advocating the updating of the university’s language policies so as to match the developing globalizing world, where English is the main tool, have again reshuffled the students’ language needs and generated an evolving multilingual education. Within this context, the Moroccan linguistic situation and language policy is undergoing significant development and change. Progressively, English is becoming the instruction language of varied courses and majors in both public and private institutions. The establishment of Al Akhawayn University in 1995 by Hassan II was the beginning of an official shift in the language of instruction. Other private institutions have followed and adopted English as the medium of instruction, but the public institutions have never considered this. The issue of introducing English as the medium of instruction is addressed two decades later after the evaluation of the Moroccan Higher education system with the aim to improve its quality and boost the students’ employability and professional success.

Moroccan Language Educational Policy
Different languages are used in Morocco depending on the domain or context, the subject matter, the interlocutors. While Darija, widely known as Moroccan Arabic, and Amazigh are in principle used in informal domains, Modern Standard Arabic, French, and English are the languages of the formal domains. Many researchers (Marley 2004; Sadiqi 2006; Elboubekri 2013, Zouhir 2014) claim that Morocco is a model of multilingualism and multiculturalism thanks to its rich language system. Morocco’s language diversity and cultural pluralism has resulted from Morocco’s rich history and geographical position as the gate to both Africa and Europe has enriched its linguistic landscape.

Language policy has been a controversial issue for the Moroccan education authorities since the independence of the country. Among the questions the authorities had to consider in the 2003 and 2007 reform plans as well as the 2009 emergency plan the mastery of foreign languages, namely French and English. A whole module was devoted to them. Yet, the lack of means and trained staff has not led to any results. The 2014 last reform has reconsidered the whole issue and decided otherwise. Recently, however, many public institutions have become
aware of the importance of English for research and professional success and for international mobility.

Though the authorities seem to encourage the initiative, no clear strategies have been announced concerning the introduction and promotion of English (Moustaoui (2006, p. 33). Moroccan language policy has been, for decades, marked by the absence of a clear vision. The Arabisation process implemented in Morocco after the independence concerned the public system has recently been implicitly held responsible for the failure of the system of education. Arabic gradually replaced French as the language of instruction since 1965. By the year 1988, all the scientific subjects were arabized and Modern Standard Arabic became the language of instruction and the Moroccan education system a completely Arabic-based system.

Today, Moroccan education has grown very complex and language roles seem to overlap in many areas; different languages are at students’ disposal to learn throughout their school careers. El Kirat (2010, p.33) claims that the Moroccan situation is an exemplary model where people learn a language according to the value they believe it adds to their educational and professional success. Language diversity grants students the advantage of choosing complementary languages to study according to their individual tendencies. However, though language diversity offers students a range of language choices, the issue of the main language of instruction is the subject of controversy due to the conflicting views and trends among the authorities.

The current puzzle indicates that the former policies were rather implemented at random and haphazard. Former studies, (Elboubekri, 2013, p.1931; Tomaštík’, 2010, p. 15), criticized the Moroccan former language policies, especially the Arabisation process, and argued that it had “come to a halt” and failed to meet its goals. This insensitive choice has completely disregarded the Moroccan linguistic and cultural diversity, which ought to be considered a legacy rather than a colonial hostile stain. The arabization of the education public system has deprived generations of the mastery of French and has progressively put Moroccan students, especially science and technology students, into difficulty. The integration and promotion of Modern Standard Arabic could have been done without the exclusion of French, for “choosing languages implies giving priority to some without, however, rejecting the others” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 251). In effect, the language issue remains the real challenge the Moroccan education system has to overcome.

Moroccan Language Policy and Medium of Science Instruction in Higher Education

Morocco has been trying to reform its system of education so as to empower the young generations. Moroccan Higher education has been subject to inclusive review and subsequent amendments in response to the local and international challenges and demands and the new global quality standards. In this vein, higher education authorities have made attempts to restore and upgrade education to be a real engine of social development and progress. Yet, an evident disparity between the official discourse and the practical applications manifests in the illusive language policy of higher education. The language of instruction remains one of the fuzziest areas characterized by the lack of information and inconsistent practices in the public system. French is still the means of instruction in most faculties of science and for most technical majors. Despite its non-official status, French is the vital engine in education despite the fact that the Moroccan constitution and official documents do not name them (El Kirat, 2010, p. 140).
Marley (2004) affirms that “French is never mentioned by name although at present this is the language of science and technology in much of higher education” (p.31). Tomaštík (2010) also maintains that “French is a dominant language in technical, law and economics departments of higher education institutions” (p.8). French is reportedly rejected by large factions of the Moroccan society (Maurais & Morris 2003; Sadiqi 1991) due to the poor quality of teaching, coupled with rejection and negative attitudes towards the language owing to lack of mastery and fluency. Interestingly, the arabization process has not enabled Modern Standard Arabic to maintain prolonged domination. Indeed, Moroccan education system has for long been an arena of language tensions, which seemingly brakes the wheel of reform (Marley, 2004, p. 28). For most specialists and experts the arabisation policy has failed to achieve the aspired educational objectives, and the educational system has experienced critical deterioration according to local and international reports. Recently, the decision of the “Conseil Supérieur pour l’Éducation, la Formation et la Recherche Scientifique” (Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research) to readopt French as the language of instruction for scientific subjects has revealed the prestigious position French still enjoys in Morocco.

**English in Moroccan Higher Education**

The spread of English as the international language and the language of science and research has induced the state to reflect on the status of English and its promotion through official documents including Ministerial notes and official speeches. This has given an apparent boost to English. Buckner, reported in Saidiqi’s (1991), also argues that “the rather negative attitude toward French indirectly increases the popularity of (and hence the positive attitude toward) English, a language without any colonial connotations” (p. 215). In fact, English has seized its international popularity to head towards the major roles in higher education.

The massive growth of English and the apparent change in the linguistic needs of Moroccan students for academic and professional opportunities is progressively leading to the spread of the English language. Sadiqi (2006) accounts for the spread of the learning and teaching of English in Morocco by referring to globalization, tourism and media, music (p. 3). Sadiqi argues that English has undergone a tremendous rise, which allowed its introduction in different areas of life such as economy and education becoming a veritable rival of French in the Moroccan schools and universities and putting French and Arabic at an evident disadvantage stake.

Moroccan complex language landscape and the dispersion of English in the education system has enticed abundant analyses and explanations. In her (date?) study, Buckner asserts that English experiences a vast and fast growth in Morocco (p.213). She refers to a variety of indicators which promote the position of English in Morocco such as people’s positive attitudes towards it in relation to comparatively foreign languages, notably French and Spanish, which are icons of colonial ordeal through public’s lens. Buckner’s research findings reveal that Moroccans commonly believe that English is the language of future opportunities. Since Morocco is seeking to reform its education system and empower the quality of training, its youth value the learning of English and consider it a highly useful tool to have access to the advanced world, where English is the exclusive means of communication.
Buckner quotes Sadiqi (1991) and Ennaji (2005) affirming that despite the evident time lapse between the two studies Moroccans welcome the use of English in diverse areas of public life because they believe it would have a positive impact on their educational and professional careers (p.217 & p. 218). English is thus viewed as a prestigious language in people’s perception due to its reportedly positive impact on graduates, who seek better educational and employment opportunities. Certainly, the spread of English has enriched Morocco’s complex linguistic landscape. Buckner’s (date?) survey reports that “eight out of ten Moroccans believe that all Moroccans should learn English” (p. 240). Her findings significantly account for the booming English learning and teaching and denote that English language would take the lead in few-years time.

In regards to higher education in particular, Buckner’s (date?) survey has proved that more and more students are majoring in English studies at the university across Morocco. This intriguing finding enticed the British researcher to seek the real factors underlying this paradigm shift in language education from the students’ perspectives. The data analysis revealed that students commonly think of “English as a key to social mobility that allows them to bypass the constrictive influence and the colonial legacy of French” (p. 241). Indeed, the author cites other factors, such as employment and immigration, which urge Moroccan students to opt for studying English in higher education. Yet, she significantly spotlights the utility of English in itself in comparison to French, which does apparently no longer sufficiently appeal to people’s interest anymore.

The progressive increase of English instruction in the Moroccan higher education reveals that a change is underway in the Moroccan educational policy. It also indicates that language tangle in Morocco is unceasing. Zouhir (2013) addresses Moroccan language policy and approached different aspects of the English boom in Morocco. The author reports that English is being increasingly used in business, which led to economic investment and globalised markets; a situation precipitated by the permeation of English into this Arab Muslim country; not to mention that employment opportunities are more and more requiring graduates’ mastery of the English language. Hence, more and more institutions are opening up on English and seeking to provide English-based instruction for students seeking outstanding careers (p. 44). Evidently, Zouhir’s study implies that the pragmatic instrumental motivation swells the promotion of English in higher education.

Methodology
The present study is exploratory and adopts primarily a quantitative approach for data collection. The hypothesis underlying the study predicts that the perceptible growth of English in the Moroccan education would reshuffle positions and functions of the main languages used for instruction. The study addresses the complexity and aftermaths of language diversification in the Moroccan education system in general and higher education in particular. Its objective is to assess people’s opinions about language diversity and how the advent of English would affect power balance and language policy in higher education.

University teachers of science, technology, and economics in addition to graduate and postgraduate students of the same majors constitute the target population for the present study. Their views will provide insightful findings about the issue under study. Research should
primarily yield informative data which account for the problem in question and inform future action plans (Badaoui, 2012, p: 33 & 29). Hence, surveying teachers and students’ opinions would help readers to take a closer look at the situation and understand the participants’ views on their academic and professional pathways. University is the essence of the study and, in effect, teachers and students are greatly concerned by the language policy issues.

To collect teachers and students’ views, the study uses the questionnaire for it is a versatile and relevant instrument to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. It also offers the possibility to reach a large sample through the use of the internet and the research software form for using questionnaires. This research has used Google Docs to form survey sheets which are shared through social media with both teachers and students from the faculties of Sciences in Fez and Kénitra mainly. Data is automatically collected through Google Drive and responses are presented through Excel and Word Office programmes. The ultimate aim is to check people’s opinions about the language issue and have their impression about its impact on language diversity and their academic and professional lives.

The questionnaire starts with eliciting participants’ background information such as gender, major, position, institute, etc. Then, it moves to core questions which constitute the major inquiries driving this research endeavour. Basic questions intend essentially to elicit the informants’ scale evaluations of the language policies in higher education their own perspectives. Multiple choice questions offer participants with a range of options which designate and assess the efficiency and success of higher educational language policies. Some questions elicit additional explanatory statements through which participants account for their particular choices. Worthy of note is that all questions and choices are bilingually phrased in English and French to attain larger participation in the survey as assumedly not all participants can understand and respond in English.

The study surveyed forty five Master students and fifteen university professors from the Faculty of Sciences - Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fez and the National School for Applied Sciences - Ibno Tofail University in Kénitra. Teachers and students have responded to the online questionnaire and expressed their views towards the issues raised. The table below illustrates the population sample. A discernible, but plausible imbalance between male and female and teachers and students participation can be attributed to a variety of factors such as willingness to participate, real numbers in these majors, presence and use of social media, etc. The table below sums up the figures.

**Results: Moroccan Language Policy**

The issue of language policy is raised in question six in the survey, which seeks to determine the participants’ evaluation of the state’s general language policy. The question intends to illicit the students and teachers’ opinions about languages the state enforces or inclines to favor over others in different sectors of public life including the administration, the media, business, education, and the like. Responses are overwhelmingly negative vis-à-vis this particular point as numbers starkly reveal the participants’ discontent and disagreement with the state’s language policy. Interestingly, only 10% maintain that these policies are “well planned” and 5% “had no idea” about how functional and useful official language policy is. However, 40% have reported that
these policies are “random”, while the largest majority ad opted a fairly negative stance and held that language policy is generally not well planned.

![Figure 1. Participants’ view of educational language policies](image1)

**Figure 1.** Participants’ view of educational language policies

As Moroccan education system constitutes the essence of this research, participants were asked to evaluate the educational language policy and language use in their universities and colleges in particular and in Moroccan higher education in general. More than two-thirds judged the language policy adopted as “unsuccessful” and one fifth reported that it is very “unsuccessful”. The hypothesis underlying the study which assumes that Moroccan students and teachers may not be totally satisfied with language planning in Moroccan education reveals to be true and disclose a deep gap between the official policies and the participants’ dispositions. A starkly insignificant number of the informants maintain that language in higher education is “successful”. The majority claims that it is “very unsuccessful”.

![Figure 2. Language Policy in Higher Education](image2)

**Figure 2.** Language Policy in Higher Education

Explanatory reasons the participants provided to account for their choice concerning this question substantiate their profound disaccord with the current language use in public universities. Many participants showed displeasure with working policy; in this respect, a respondent maintained that the present language policy “does not take into consideration the students’ needs” and that “it has not been able to respond to the job market demands yet”. This shows that the state’s linguistic vision constrains the students’ academic achievement. Other respondents criticized the language issue in education as being “pointless” and “imprecise” and maintained that language education in high schools is “mediocre”, “inadequate”, and “not
“appropriate” to higher education’s language policy. In this respect, a participant affirmed that the French language is a hurdle for most university students because of their low proficiency lack of fluency of the language.

The study investigated the participants’ opinions about their preferred language of instruction for science and technology major in higher education in order to identify their inclinations and mainstream thoughts about this very central point. The results prove that English is a highly attractive choice for both teachers and students. Only 13% opted for French as a medium of instruction in higher education; while the majority (i.e. 79%) claimed that English is the best language for teaching and learning science and technology. The chart demonstrates that English largely took over all languages and turned out to be a highly attractive choice among students and academicians.

![Figure 3. Participants’ preferred language of instruction](image-url)

This prevailing trend supporting the use of English as a means of instruction instead of French and/or Arabic is unshakable and significant in visioning language roles in higher education. Responses to the following question back up the former uniformity about the value of English as they approve of its promotion in higher education. More than 78% reported that the promotion of English at the university is “very necessary”, while only one respondent considers it was “unnecessary”. Unquestionably then, public opinion gives validation for the English boom in Morocco and reinforces its increasing popularity in academia. This general tendency has not resulted in a vacuum, but has rather emanated from a firm belief that English has become a vital prerequisite for educational and professional success.

In this respect, the investigation of the participants’ views about the presumed impact of mastering English on one’s educational and social life has revealed that 88% believe that English will have a great promising impact in their careers. The overwhelming majority show positive attitudes vis-à-vis a possible adoption of English as a means of instruction or, to say the least, as a major language taught for mastery rather than mere basic communication skills. On the contrary, only 8% believe that proficiency in English would not be of significant use. Students believe that English has become a crucial requirement for employment and research and is an
added value to their personal and academic background. These figures substantiate and support the former findings disclosing unanimous recommendation of the use of English as means of academic instruction.

Figure 4.
The positive impact of English on students

From quite a different front, this massive growth of the demand for the use of English in Morocco, and in Moroccan universities and higher education very specifically, would supposedly threaten the positions and roles of the conventional languages, namely Arabic and French. The survey also sought to reveal the participants’ stands about this particular aspect. A large majority asserted that French and Arabic are to some extent, at stake given the relentless development and spread of English. The study revealed balanced positive and negative stances about the impact of English on the other languages. Apparently, the increasing use of English in technical, scientific, and economics majors in higher education evidently threaten the other languages in use.

Figure 5. Perceived impact of English on other languages
Respondents tried to account for their views on the possible impact, which is negative overall, of promoting English in the Moroccan higher education. Hence, they maintained that the other languages “will not be used a lot and their roles will be undermined” one respondent reports. Another respondent claimed that English growth “would influence the position of French since it will take over its status as the first foreign language in the country instead of French. For Arabic it makes no difference in case English or French is prioritized”. Respondents unanimously stated that English will certainly have an adverse effect on the languages in use, which is deserves consideration and attention.

Nonetheless, the thorny question whether French or English ought to be the first foreign language in academic instruction seems to trace its way to end in the light of the unanimous agreement about the utility of English nowadays. In this respect, one respondent argued that “English is needed. There is nothing to argue for in this point, but ignoring French and Arabic could lead to some linguistic problems”. The results have clearly shown that language policy in the Moroccan higher education is somehow vague and volatile, for language roles seem to overlap or change according to time and context. Following question elucidates this negative outlook inasmuch as a large fraction of respondents holds that the future language policy is unclear. Significantly, a smaller portion equally disagreed with whether language diversity will persist longer.

![Figure 6. Participants’ view of the linguistic future](image)

These results show an elusive portrayal of the state of languages in the Moroccan higher education and show that the university population is unaware of the real tendencies of the higher educational policy of the kingdom. The mainstream tendency reveals an evident uncertainty about the future state of the art in the Moroccan higher education. The responses reflect an overall pessimism regarding a potential efficient policy that starts from the students’ short, medium, and long term objectives.

**Discussion**

The present study revealed that most of the university students and teachers involved in the study believe that language policy in higher education is unwise and generally irrational and random. In this respect, Lahlou (2009) maintained that the Moroccan education system and university lack a *clear identity* (p. 4). Subsequent unclear short-sighted educational language policies have put the future of the nation and its citizens at stake. The participants in the survey
have expressed their absolute dissatisfaction with the instable pointless language policy, which they consider as random and unsuccessful in regards to their individual needs and aspirations. Language diversity appears to have negative implications on language planning inasmuch as it complicates the choice of a certain language as an exclusive medium of instruction, which takes into consideration the evolution of the global education and linguistic needs to integrate the global labour market. The overwhelming views endorse the promotion of English as a teaching medium for science and technology streams in higher education. The advent of English has fueled language competition in higher education in a larger context where each language encloses within itself myriad considerations of identity, culture, politics, economics, and power. The data revealed that the increasing growth of English in the Moroccan universities will certainly truncate other languages’ roles and undermine their use not only in graduate instruction but also in undergraduate studies.

Obviously, English is expanding and gaining in popularity among university teachers and students. They do not only approve of adopting English but recommend making of it the language of teaching thanks to its perceived value in academic and professional life in today’s global world. These results corroborate Elboubekri’s (2013) opinion poll, which provide evidence to the claim that Moroccans tend to use different languages for different functions, but are inclined towards the acceptance of foreign languages in education particularly (p. 1933). Learners and educators consider English language a prime predicament for educational excellence. In this respect, one of the informants stated that « pour les scientifiques, ils doivent nous enseigner les matières scientifiques en une seule langue depuis le secondaire. En plus la langue de la science est l'anglais et non le français » meaning that science students should be taught via one language only from secondary school and that English, and not French, which is actually the language of science.

The inevitable power English has acquired seems to undermine the value of French and Arabic, which were the prime means of instruction in the Moroccan educational system for a decades. The novel changes generated in the outset of the new century indicate that English would enhance its status due to its increasing value in the forthcoming years, at the expense of French which has apparently become a less attractive choice according to the mainstream views in this study. Hence, rivalry over prime foreign language in Morocco seems to go tense in the light of the increasing use of English in instruction. Answering the intriguing question whether language diversity is a bliss or advantage seems to be beyond reach in the case of Moroccan higher education, where the field is open to competition and friction rather than to sensible strategic visions.

By and large, all the informants commonly foresee a confused and ambiguous future language policy in higher education. The survey has revealed that language is a big problematic issue in higher education. The participants’ responses allude to the state’s intervention for a better management of the situation and the maintenance of clear far-sighted policies in language education. Matters are further complicated with the advent of English and its prevalent endorsement by people and institutions. Participants believe, it is high time Moroccan educational authorities promoted English instruction in lieu of French in technical and scientific streams in order to improve access to job market and effectively pursue scientific research.
Conclusions
The study aimed at identifying the parameters underlying language use and the implications of the current and prospective language situation in the Moroccan higher education. The main objective was to find out about the university students and teachers’ opinions about the Moroccan language policy in the education sector in general and the university in particular. The study also addressed issues related to the language of instruction in science and technology institutions. The data analysis and interpretation revealed that the participants were overall not satisfied with the state’s policies and planning of language education. Most of the informants maintained that English has a far-reaching effect on the students’ careers, which are tightly associated with the evolving globalised education and job markets. The reported status interestingly corroborates El Kirat’s (2010) description of the implications of multilingualism in African countries, where she maintains that many of the nations “consider multilingualism as an important cause of underdevelopment” (p. 42). Apparently, the conflict of interests and objectives give way to linguistic dilemma for official decision making and further complicates the task of forging definitive policies.

The students and professionals’ opinions have validated the hypothesis underlying the present study, which assumes that (restate the hypothesis!). All the participants in the study took a stand against the current pointless language policies and called for a far-sighted language vision, which considers the students’ academic and professional success the top priority. They all showed positive stands towards the growth of English in the Moroccan education and supported its promotion as the medium of instruction in scientific and technological streams in particular. All the informants confirmed Tomáštík’s (2010) claims that English is nowadays the international language of business, information technologies and science and seemed to have a futurist vision for they argued that “interest in English is on the rise [in Morocco]” (p. 11). The participants’ views confirmed the literature review which supports the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in the Moroccan university.

The study revealed that the language issue in higher education is undergoing a remarkable upheaval for diverse reasons, the main one being the incessant expansion of English. In effect, the positions and roles of other languages, notably French, which is the major medium of instruction of science and technology majors in higher education, are threatened, for as Zouhir (2013) argues, the English language is imposing itself as a strong language which is invading the space and reducing the domains of use of the French language in the education sector. Reportedly, the growth of a particular language does adversely impact the other languages in multilingual communities. Worthy of note is that students’ evolving linguistic needs are at stake in the light of this language tangle, which brakes education reforms in the country. The survey gave compelling evidence for the claim that language is no more a negligible aspect in education; rather, it has turned out to be critically significant not only for individual students but for the entire society.

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Self-Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Writing Courses at the University Level: Reconsideration of the Critical Thinking Construct

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Abstract:
The Critical Thinking (CT) component has by now secured a key place within EFL curriculum aims and objectives. The integration of a CT dimension into the teaching of the writing skill in particular has received considerable attention in research. However, research has also pointed to the failure of assessment practices to evaluate CT development. It is within this context that the present work advocates a standard based approach to the assessment of CT in EFL writing that aligns assessment criteria to the critical abilities articulated in the learning outcomes (i.e., standards). This fosters a conception of CT measures that associates components of CT with higher order writing skills. Accordingly, the first objective of the study is to empirically test the relationship between CT dispositions and metacognitive strategy use in an attempt to establish a model of writing (self-)assessment that combines these two dimensions. As assessment is viewed as a formative evaluation process subservient of learning, the study also targets the students’ self-assessment strategies during the writing process. To this purpose, a questionnaire has been designed, and administered to 100 students at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Rabat to tap their perceptions and use of CT skills. The data analysis revealed that critical thinking development and assessment are metacognitive in nature; it follows that metacognitive skills such as planning, self-evaluating and reflecting are to be used as an essential vehicle in the development of Critical Thinking skills. This points to the paramount role of CT-informed formative (self-)assessment practices in benefiting ELT writing learners.

Key words: critical thinking skills, metacognitive skills, L2 writing, self-assessment
Introduction: Context and Purpose

Critical thinking has emerged at the forefront of higher education today (Beaumont 2010). Specifically, efforts to promote students’ critical thinking skills have been fostered within the context of writing (Dixon, Cassady, Cross, and Williams 2005; Facione 1998). Dixon, et al. (2005) rightly notes that writing is a vehicle through which students can express their critical thinking. It is commonly believed that writing tasks address higher-order skills in that students' responses involve the component of interdependent competencies. Conversely, writing enables the assessment of the extent to which learners have been successful in obtaining critical skills. However, questions regarding whether critical thinking skills in English L2 writing at the university level are being assessed have been raised. Research points out to the failure of (formative/summative) assessment practices to evaluate CT skills reliably, reflecting also a failure to use assessment as a learning tool. This gap between teaching and assessment practices of critical thinking is a focal point of new trends of assessment research (Bers, 2005; Erwin & Sebrell, 2003; Ku, 2009).

Recent approaches to CT call for adopting a set of assessment standards that are in alignment with learning outcomes for high-order thinking (Dower, 2003; Facione, 2000; Fung, 2014; GAO, 2013; Paul & Elder, 2005). That is, the standards ensure that assessment criteria meet substantively the concept of critical thinking, and provide evidence that students have successfully completed the writing assessment tasks. In this spirit, the purpose of the present work is to examine EFL university students’ perceived use of writing-specific critical thinking skills. The pedagogical implication is, of course, for students to be able to critically assess their writing skills using CT criteria. The need for studying EFL students’ critical thinking in writing assessment does not only emanate from the fact that these learners may lack the ability to engage in critical thinking; the concern is also with whether assessment practices focus explicitly on criteria of critical thinking skills. Another concern is the renewed interest in metacognitive strategies in L2 writing research. In fact, there have been several studies that aimed at examining the role of metacognitive strategies in critical thinking and their use by students (Ku and Ho 2010; Magno 2010). However, most of these studies stress teaching practices that develop such skills and pay little attention to assessment.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, to the knowledge of the researchers, there have been few previous studies in the field of EFL assessment that have attempted explicitly to connect the performance of Moroccan EFL learners with assessing writing for critical thinking skills. Hopefully, the implementation of the study would provide further insights into this issue. Second, the study provides test designers with a framework for creating critical thinking assessment instruments and learning outcome criteria. The suggested model combines critical-thinking skills and metacognitive strategies in writing and describes how these skills are operationalized in the development and assessment of writing tasks. This means being able to translate critical components into measurable behaviors that can be assessed reliably.

To address this aim, we first attempt to sketch out a construct of CT and show how it will be used in the study. Based on the theoretical review, the research questions, instrument, and design, which merge conceptions of CT skills and metacognitive strategies in a single model, are sketched out. Then, the study methodology and results are presented. Discussion will follow with
implications on formative assessment of writing. The paper makes suggestions for future research into CT assessment.

1. Review of the Literature

This section reviews the construct of CT and metacognitive strategies as components of higher order thinking skills and the implications for the teaching and assessment of L2 writing. This is meant to foreground the discussion of the proposed integrated model.

Although significant advances have been made in developing critical-thinking skills in students, not enough attention is devoted to performance assessment in post-secondary education. Writing assessment has lagged behind. The assessment of students’ learning outcomes at university in terms critical thinking presents many challenges such as the issues of test validity and reliability. The argument can be made that it is only recently that we have seriously considered the relationship of assessment criteria to the other elements. The study subscribes to the trend of performance-based assessment which sets writing performance indicators in terms of measurable behavior. The assessment standards feature an increased focus on students’ deeper learning, or their ability to analyze, synthesize, and explain their ideas among other higher order skills. Using outcome-based terminology, the described approach provides a set of criteria for high-order student assessments that are in alignment with learning outcomes. It follows that assessment tools should include the critical abilities articulated in the standards. Tasks should measure these abilities directly as they will be used in actual writing performance.

1.1. Critical Thinking in EFL Writing

A variety of definitions of critical thinking have been provided by theorists and educators (Facione, 1998; Kurfiss 1988; Siegel 1988) across disciplines putting a slightly different emphasis on its components. In fact, it is an umbrella term that comprises many complex processes. Four domains of critical thinking have been identified, namely elements of thought, abilities, affective dimensions, and intellectual standards (Benjamin, Klein, Steedle, Zahner, Scott & Patterson 2013). Due to the large number of definitions of critical thinking, a defensible conception of CT it is worth considering. The concern is what really counts as critical thinking in academic writing settings where undergraduate students have to produce written essays. Despite variation in definitions of critical thinking, there is significant agreement on its core cognitive process components. Facione (1998) identifies six skills essential to CT:

1) **Interpretation**: the ability to understand and express the meaning associated with information, experiences, and beliefs.

2) **Analysis**: the ability to identify relationships, intended and inferential, among representations of information, experiences, and beliefs.

3) **Evaluation**: the ability to assess the credibility of representations of a person's perceptions or beliefs, and to assess the strength of the relationships on which those representations are based.

4) **Inference**: the ability to identify and utilize relevant portions of representations in order to draw reasonable conclusions, or form hypotheses or conjectures.

5) **Explanation**: the ability to state and justify one's reasoning.

6) **Self-regulation**: the ability to evaluate one's own process of reasoning, utilizing analysis skills, and through questioning, correcting and validating one's results.
While these skills are not specifically linked to writing, and seem to draw from conceptions about critical thinking as a generic construct that cuts across various disciplines, they are useful representations of higher thinking processes and information processing. The way the processes are sequenced supports the student skills development by gradually increasing the challenge of what language and critical thinking skills these students use. However, in this study no hierarchy is intended. Moreover, this conception of CT seems to draw on elaborated versions of Bloom’s Taxonomy of levels of learning, while it implicitly alludes to other higher levels such as the ability to synthesize knowledge. Likewise, ‘knowing’ and ‘applying’ are excluded from the list assuming these learning processes lend themselves to cognitive rather than higher order thinking. However, the meaning of “knowing” has changed from being able to recall information to being able to find and use information including learning strategies needed to acquire the knowledge to think productively. Finally, while the Cognitive Process Dimension is outlined, the Knowledge Dimension of learning which identifies four types of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; as cited in Beaumont 2010) is not explicitly stressed in Facione’s definition (1998).

1.2. Metacognitive Skills and Writing

Critical thinking, like metacognition, is considered as higher order thinking (Halpern, 1993). The present study argues for the benefits of using metacognition as an essential tool in the acquisition and development of higher-order thinking skills. In an earlier study, Facione (1990, p. 3) defined critical thinking as: "purposeful, self-regulatory judgment that results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or contextual considerations upon which that judgment is based." Self-regulation, according to Zimmerman (1986), focuses on how students personally activate, alter, and sustain their learning skills in specific context. Lenski (1998) notes that self-regulation is shown in the evaluation and revision where the writer judges what he/she thought about and correcting the inadequacy in the work. A broader definition of regulatory skills has been described by Jacobs and Paris (1987) where three basic skills are considered as important: planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Therefore, in Facione’s statement (1998) ‘purposeful, self-regulatory judgment’, metacognition stands out as an important characteristic of critical thinking.

More interestingly, the definition establishes a relationship between critical thinking skills and metacognitive strategy use, and distinguishes these two levels of higher order thinking. This relationship is further specified by the term ‘results in’, which may be interpreted as causal, sequential, or process/product in nature. Whatever the relationship is, critical thinking undoubtedly requires that higher level of metacognitive skills as in processing information. Student writers need to do specific metacognitive skills such as monitoring thinking process and checking whether progress is being made toward an appropriate goal. Halpern (1998), reported in Sadeghi, Hassani and Rahmatkhah (2014), represented metacognition and critical thinking together in a model. She stated that metacognition is the ability to use knowledge to direct and improve thinking skills. A stronger view of the relationship between the two components is expressed by Magno (2010) who explains that critical thinking is a product of metacognition which provides a direction in the prediction of the two variables. It seems that metacognitive strategies enable control that is in charge of learners’ thinking processes.
According to Ku and Ho (2010), metacognitive strategies used in critical thinking fall under three categories: planning, monitoring, and evaluating. In this sense, they are comparable to regulatory skills described earlier by Jacobs and Paris (1987). To begin with, planning involves the selection of a strategy or plan of action to achieve a goal. Planning activities include those aiming at the determination of procedures that direct thinking, the selection of appropriate strategies, and the allocation of available resources (Sadeghi et al., 2014). Monitoring activities refer to an awareness of task information and checking this to validate comprehension and to devote attention to important ideas (Schraw, 1998). They also include assessing progress andjudging the likelihood of success. As for evaluating strategies, they refer to monitoring the progress made toward achieving a goal. They involve the examination and correction of one’s cognitive processes (Facione, 1990) including evaluating one’s reasoning and conclusions (Schraw, 1998).

It is worth stressing the role of reflection as an essential critical skill. Critical Thinking, according to Ruggiero (1989), refers to the reflective thinking. Indeed, in order for students to be able to monitor, assess, and improve their own performances and their own thinking, they need to self-reflect regularly. Metacognitive reflection allows students to manage and assess their own thinking strategies.

To conclude, for the purposes of this study, critical thinking is used to involve six skills essential to effective communication in writing, namely knowing, interpreting, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Besides, there is an apparent connection between metacognition and critical thinking in that critical thinking skills are facilitated through metacognition. In other words, critical thinking in writing occurs when students use their metacognitive skills (i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluating). Therefore, a main objective of the study is to measure the extent to which both aspects correlate in students’ writing performance.

2. The study
2.1. Context and Population
The study took place at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Rabat. The choice is a matter of convenience as one of the researchers is well acquainted with the faculty and can have access to the students. Convenience was also the criterion for choosing the groups of students. Data were collected in the Spring Semester of the 2015-2016 Academic Year. 113 semester four students majoring in English Studies and belonging to two groups participated in the study. The choice of semester 4 was motivated by the fact that students at this level have acquired enough language competence which would allow them to complete the questionnaire items without being distracted by comprehension problems. Further, since they had taken three writing courses, a reasonable amount of focused writing practice was guaranteed; this was meant to help them anchor their responses to the questionnaire statements on real-life writing experience, rather depend entirely on hypothetical assumptions about “what they would do if they wrote”. This would increase the validity of the study design.

2.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses
The study set out to investigate the relationship between critical thinking predispositions and metacognitive strategy use and the extent to which university students show awareness and make use of these in self-assessment of their writing performance. Hence, in line with the brief literature review spelled out above, three main research questions were formulated:

1) To what extent does students’ perceived use of critical thinking skills correlate with that of metacognitive strategies?
2) To what extent do students show evidence of higher order thinking skills in their writing process?
3) What areas of the learners’ higher order thinking skills predict weaknesses and strengths in CT skills?

Based on the raised questions the following hypotheses were suggested:

1) Based on the interpretation of previous research, it is expected that critical thinking would be associated positively with metacognition (see Elaldi and Semerci 2014 for example). There is a significant positive relationship between the participants’ use of critical thinking and metacognitive strategies.
2) The students are expected to exhibit low critical thinking awareness and regulation of self-assessment skills.
3) An assumption is made that EFL university students do not tend to plan and evaluate their writing performance in general. Therefore, it is expected that planning and self-evaluating skills are not candidate predictors of these students’ high performance in writing.

2.3. The Research Instrument
To collect the data, a questionnaire of 66 items divided into five subscales, and rated on a 5-point likert scale of agreement and frequency of use was designed. Items fall into one of three dimensions of student learning: knowledge and understanding; proficiencies and practices; and attitudes and dispositions. The items were developed based on an analysis of various well-established taxonomies of metacognitive strategies and critical thinking skills while narrowing their scope to the specific domain of writing. The items were meant to tap the learners’ perceptions of how they proceed during the writing process; thus, the statements reflect the different stages, brainstorming, drafting, and revising. In addition, two sets of statements target general experience of writing (person knowledge and affective dispositions). By the same token, the items were formulated using verbs that draw from Bloom’s taxonomy commonly used to assess CT skills and dispositions.

2.4. Research Design and Variables
To answer the research questions, the researchers opted for an ex-post facto design based on a questionnaire. This research used a simple and multiple correlational methods. The design of the study has resulted in a model that can be used for assessing higher order thinking competence in EFL writing at the university level. The questionnaire items show how we can combine CT and Metacognition Skills together to formulate assessment criteria.
The model consists of a (7*8) matrix of variables clustered under the two sets of variables Critical Thinking skills and dispositions (CTSD) and metacognitive strategies (METAS). Choice of the variables was based on synthesizing available literature related of the field. It is worth mentioning that the study results are not concerned with reporting a detailed analysis about each of the variables, as doing so may not yield reliable results given the limited number of items covered by each variable separately. Discerning the different CT components, it is believed, is not likely to yield further insights in practical terms (see the review of the literature). Accordingly, the model is reduced to (1*3) matrix: (CTSD)* (planning + self-regulating + self-evaluating)

2.5. Presentation of the Results

The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in their regular classes which took in about 40 minutes. In total, 113 questionnaires were filled out, but only 100 were used as 13 turned out to be half-filled and were disregarded. The data were processed in the SPSS program
and three main statistics were used, namely, descriptive, correlations, and regression, to answer the research questions. The following is a description of the results.

As a preliminary step in the analysis, a correlation was run between critical thinking dispositions and metacognitive skills. This was motivated by an interest in establishing statistically the link between the two as part of the validation of the proposed model, which is in turn based on the recent literature in the field as discussed above. The results of the correlation are displayed in the following table.

**Table 2: Correlations between the General Means of Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Metacognitive Strategy Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.958**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive Strategy Use</td>
<td>.958**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**r < 0.01**

The correlation coefficient between critical thinking skills and dispositions (CTSD) and metacognitive strategy (METAS) use is over 0.95. It proves to be significant, and indicates a high association of the correlated variables. This lends strong support to the proposed model and the literature on the topic. Specifically, the results of this research confirm that metacognitive skills have a big influence on the critical thinking skills.

Practically, efforts to promote either components of higher order thinking may be accessed through reinforcing the other. This particularly applies to CT which may be seen as an end process to metacognition. This means that the increase in students’ ability of self-assessing their critical thinking skills can be influenced by enhancing their metacognitive skills in writing.

Having established an association between CTSD and METAS use, it is worth investigating how these two variables combine to represent the bulk of learners’ high order thinking skills (HOT).

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Overall Achievement on CTSD and HOT Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTSD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOT</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of overall performance of the students in strategy awareness and frequency of use in L2 writing on a scale of 1 to 5, the results pinpointed a CTSD mean of 3.28 as is displayed in table 3 above; this is a relatively high mean if compared to HOT mean. The CTSD and HOT values are considered high in view of fact that critical thinking skills are not addressed directly in the L2 writing curriculum or any other language related subject, and they are usually left to their own in the acquisition process.
The relatively high mean may rather be attributed to the desirability effect of participants producing positive responses about their skills. Besides, the value of standard deviation (SD = .34) points to a significant variability within the sample, which makes any generalizations about the participants’ level of CTSD inconclusive. Therefore, advancing investigation further with more detailed analysis was compelling.

A more specific analysis focuses on the three types of metacognitive strategies, namely planning, regulating, and self-evaluating. The results are quite revealing as is clear in the table below.

Table 4: Descriptives of METAS Awareness and Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluating</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a mean of 3.67, students in the study scored the highest on self-regulating skills. Accordingly, the students seem to be more aware of the regulating strategies and they use them quite often; these include organizing, monitoring, and completing the communicative task. Planning strategies (including goal setting, orientation) came at a second place with a mean of 3.11. Evaluating strategies ranked third as the least used strategies with a mean of 2.85. This suggests that students are weaker at self-assessing than monitoring their writing process. This observation hints to the relatively difficult or less frequent access of self-evaluating or planning skills by students (see Discussion below).

In attempt to investigate the differential interaction between CTSD and metacognitive strategies, a regression analysis was conducted. The specific aim is to investigate which set of higher order strategies is a good predictor of performance in tasks requiring critical thinking skills. The table below summarizes the results.

Table 5: Regression analysis of metacognitive Strategies and CTSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Regression Coeff Beta (β)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Correlation Coeff (r)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.85**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluating</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.46**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p < 0.01)

The multiple correlation coefficient (R = .98), which indicates the linear correlation between the observed and model-predicted values of the dependent variable (CTSD) mean, indicates a strong association of this variable with metacognitive variables (planning, regulating, and self-evaluating). In the same way, the squared value of the multiple correlation coefficient R² = 0.96 indicates that this model explains the 96% of variance in CT. This shows that the variation in CT is almost entirely explained by the model (the value is approximating 1). Simply
put, the regression model chosen is viewed as suitable. This lends support to the claim made earlier about integrating the two sets of variables (CTSD and METAS) in the suggested model.

The regression coefficients (β) are computed to compare the contribution of each predictor variable (planning, regulating, and self-evaluating) to CTSD, and to assess the strength of the relationship between each predictor variable to the dependent (criterion) variable. In other words, the beta value is a measure of how strongly each predictor variable influences the criterion variable.

Overall, there is a positive contribution of metacognitive skills on the Critical thinking with a significant P value at the significance level of p < 0.01; the regression coefficients show varying degrees of correlations between CT skills (dependant) and the independent variables of metacognitive strategies (Planning, Regulating, and self-Evaluating). According to the standardized regression coefficients (β), the relative order of importance of interpreting variables was as follows: The lowest correlation coefficient is noted with self-evaluating strategies (β = 0.12). This means that the association between the overall CT mean (performance) as affected by awareness and use of evaluation strategies is the least remarkable and consequential for the CT level. In other words, low evaluation skills affect negatively the students’ thinking processes. Ultimately, evaluation strategies may be viewed as the least predictors of these students’ high performance compared to the others.

The opposite may be said about Regulating strategies which show the strongest relationship with overall thinking skills with a correlation coefficient value of β= .60. About 60% of students’ overall CT skills may be accounted for by frequent use of Regulating strategies. Therefore, appropriate use of these metacognitive strategies is a good indicator of high performance in higher order thinking skills in writing. To a lesser degree, the same observations can be made about Planning strategies (β= .35).

3. Discussion and Implications:
3.1. Relationship between CT and Metacognitive Writing Processes/Strategies

The starting point for this piece of research was the postulation of a new model of higher order thinking strategies adapted for the assessment of EFL writing. Previous studies of the relationship between CT and metacognition used separate questionnaires (instruments). The present study framework, however, made use of two dimensions of higher order thinking, namely, critical thinking skills and dispositions and metacognitive strategies; the two dimensions were built into a unified model forming the basis of descriptors of performance in EFL writing. The model was tested to see the extent of its validity with students who have studied L2 writing for some time through the questionnaire.

The results point to a significant and strong positive relationship between the attributes of critical thinking and metacognition. The two variables are both associated with higher order thinking. More than that, findings reveal a positive correlation of critical thinking skills in terms of metacognition. Elaldi and Semerci (2014) studied the connection between critical thinking and metacognitive beliefs and found similar tendencies in learners’ responses. The findings also accord with Mall-Amiri, and Ahmadi’s study (2014) which revealed a close connection between
metacognition and critical thinking. They concluded that critical thinking requires higher level of cognitive skills in processing information such as metacognition.

It may be advanced that critical thinking occurs when students use their metacognitive skills. The immediate implication is that metacognitive skills empower students’ critical thinking skills in the self-assessment of their writing process. The question that remains is what metacognitive skills need to be stressed in developing and assessing students’ CT skills in writing. One aspect of metacognition that is neglected in assessment practices is self-reflection. Halpern (1993) maintains that metacognition is related to critical thinking through its self-reflecting aspect. It is worth reminding that higher order thinking processes, including but not limited to reflection, enable the evaluation of the outcomes of the thinking (writing) process. However, as it will be shown in the next section, the study findings do not seem to show that students use self-reflecting skills.

3.2. Students Exhibited Low Levels of Critical Thinking Awareness and Evaluation

An observation has been made with regard to the relatively less frequent (automated) access of self-evaluating and planning skills by students. One explanation is that self-evaluation may be considered to be related to subject-specific skills. This interpretation draws on the question of whether critical thinking skills pertain to general domains of learning, i.e., broadly applicable skills which can be transferred to other contexts, or they are subject specific (McCormick, Dimmit, & Sullivan, 2010). It is generally accepted, however, that these abilities are dependent on a particular subject, and are not possible to be transferred from/to other subjects. For example, the ability of students to critically evaluate arguments and evidence appropriate to their writing purpose, and revise these accordingly are skills exclusive to writing (Crebert, Patrick, Cragnolini, Smith, Worsfold, & Webb, 2011). In this light, the participants may be facing a novel task; they may not be familiar with the context specific to writing in order for them to implement the strategies, and thus they have difficulty retrieving the self-evaluative and planning skills from general domains of learning experiences. Higher-Order Cognitive Skills allow students to transfer their learning to new situations and problems. (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2013).

Besides, these skills involve students in thinking reflectively, such as being able to evaluate the outcomes of the thinking process, or the ability to reflect on their own learning process. Such skills stand at the highest stratum in Bloom’s taxonomy of levels of learning; thus they are delayed stages in the development of CT propensities. According to Lynch, Wolcott, and Huber (2002), the last stage of critical thinking acquisition is labeled the “strategic revisioner.” In the same vein, Lipman (1991) claims that one’s metacognition must be “self-correcting’ in order to qualify it as critical thinking.

The study findings are concomitant with the idea that better critical thinkers use metacognitive learning strategies more frequently. Fahim and Dorrimanesh (2015) found that the level of critical thinking and the frequency of using metacognitive learning strategies are significantly related. The researcher interpreted the results by stating that the higher the level of critical thinking one possesses, the more often that person uses metacognitive learning strategies and therefore enjoys a higher level of autonomy in learning. Students’ level of Critical Thinking and their use of Metacognitive Learning Strategies may be used as an indicator of students’ level of autonomy in assessing writing skills, i.e. self-assessment. Then students need to be able to
assess their planning, monitoring and evaluating writing skills to be proficient critical thinkers and strategy users.

One important dimension of learner autonomy that has a bearing on self-evaluation is self-reflection. Desautel (2009) identified a number of self-reflective processes such as goal setting and tracking, planning to meet goals, and recognizing and evaluating achievement. He adds that just as self-reflection may serve the goal of metacognitive knowledge, self-assessment may facilitate the project of self-reflection. Desautel also quoted Carr (2002) who wrote: “when students self-evaluate, they step back and reflect on what and how they learn” (2002, p. 195). Linking Desautel’s ideas (2009) to the present study results, it may be suggested that the students scored low in self-evaluation and planning (self-reflection) due to insufficient involvement in self-assessment of writing. Such practices would encourage students to attend to these processes within their tasks (formative assessment).

If our concern is to be able to assess the extent to which Moroccan EFL learners have been successful in developing critical skills, we need to introduce adequate practices such as self-assessment that embody the components of self-reflection and goal planning among other writing regulatory skills.

### 3.3. Regulation Skills Positively Affects the Students’ Thinking Skills

So far, the role of metacognitive strategies (self-reflection skills) in critical thinking and their use by students in assessment has been emphasized. This section is devoted to examining the predictors of critical thinking in writing assessment.

A linear regression was conducted to investigate which independent variable(s) (planning, regulating, or self-evaluating) predict(s) most and/or least the dependent variable (reflected as the CTSD mean). The results showed a highly significant correlation between all the variables. The highest positive correlation was found between CTSD and regulating strategies which came out as the strongest predictor of CT achievement. These results echo earlier studies. Ingle (2007), for example, report that metacognitive self-regulatory strategies, which were defined as the “awareness, knowledge and control of cognition” by the researchers, were significantly positive predictors of the critical thinking abilities.

The implications are at least three-fold. To begin with, the finding sheds more light on the type of metacognitive strategies that enhance critical thinking. Indeed, ‘good’ critical thinkers are engaged more in metacognitive regulating activities, while low achievers fail to think over their own learning behaviors in order to monitor and regulate their cognitive learning. The latter point, in particular, is further supported by some researchers who claim that ‘good’ critical thinkers are also engaged in high-level planning and high-level evaluating strategies (Ku & Ho, 2010; Magno, 2010).

A related point is the contribution of metacognitive strategies to critical thinking. Regression analysis coefficients suggest that the dependent variable will increase or decrease by the number of standardized beta coefficients for every one unit increase in the predictor. For the present study, if students’ performance on regulation strategies increases by one unit, overall performance on CTSD will develop by 0.6 point. In practical terms, regression coefficients...
represent the change in the criterion variable associated with a change of one in the predictor variable when all other predictor variables are held constant. This suggests that attempts to improve critical thinking are predicted on the basis of operating on metacognitive skills.

Accordingly, we can predict improvement in students’ performance on assessment tasks following formative feedback in one of the metacognitive strategies.

Finally, specifying areas of intervention to foster critical thinking via metacognitive skills draws our attention towards student-centered approaches to assessment that calls for diagnostic feedback to the student about how they can improve their performance. Giving constructive feedback entails translating the critical components (predictors of high performance) into measurable behaviors that can be assessed reliably. Assessment criteria, in turn, need to be aligned to the critical abilities articulated in the feedback standards.

Conclusion
In the light of the incrementing evidence in favor of self-assessment as major learning practice L2 student-writers can make use of towards the development of their critical thinking, the present study came to provide further support in this direction. The major thrust is that specific strategies that promote critical thinking development and assessment are metacognitive in nature. Therefore, metacognitive skills such as planning, self-evaluating and reflecting are to be used as an essential vehicle in the development of Critical Thinking skills. While the present study results turned to be very revealing, the research area is still fertile. The results in fact point to various directions derived mainly from the limitations of the study. First, future studies might seek to evaluate the predictive power of the aforementioned components longitudinally in order to determine assessment criteria and standards appropriate for different academic levels. Second, the present study was limited in scope in that it focused on students’ perspectives. In this regard, teacher-centered studies are needed to understand how CT skills are assessed, and whether such practices are informed by recent development in performance assessment.

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Self-Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills in EFL Writing

Nadri & Azhar

References


Towards an ESP Course for Engineering Students in Vocational Schools in Morocco: the Case of the National School of Applied Sciences

Manar Dahbi
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Morocco

Abstract
In engineering studies, students need specific English language practices to communicate effectively in professional settings. This research project was carried out for two main purposes. First, the aim was to evaluate to what extent the English for general purposes courses offered to engineering students at the National School of Applied Sciences of Fes were successful in fulfilling the job requirements of the prospective engineers. And the second purpose was to devise an ESP (English for specific purposes) course that is rather linked to the field of specialization of the respondents and can attend to their vocational needs. To this end, a “needs analysis questionnaire” was devised to identify these students’ needs in relation to the English language course. The results stressed the significance of English for engineering students. They also identified the students’ lacks, needs and interests regarding English language. The study concluded with some pedagogical implications.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, vocational English, needs analysis, syllabus design
Towards an ESP Course for Engineering Students Dahbi

1. Introduction
As a matter of fact, globalization has increased the importance of communicating in English at workplaces. In this respect, Pritchard & Nasr (2004) emphasise that “English is of particular importance for engineering and science students because it is the principal international language of science and is looked upon as an effective means for enabling those students to become familiar with professional texts written in English”. (p.426)

In relation to the present study, the respondents were network and telecommunications engineering students who are required to have a good knowledge of the English language while they are students, since books, papers, handbooks, and journals written in English are included in their reading lists. After graduation one of the most valuable resources of these students will be English in the workplace. However, preliminary discussions with these revealed that they perceive the English courses offered to them up to then in their field of study as deficient to account for their future job requirements. This study, therefore, attempted to investigate the language needs of these respondents at the workplace. And accordingly, it attempted to propose a more efficient model of “syllabus design” based on the respondents’ vocational needs.

2. Review of the literature
2.1 Needs analysis in ESP
From the 1960s, the demand for specialised language programs grew through the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) movement and applied linguists increasingly began to employ needs analysis procedures, particularly in relation to English for specific purposes and vocationally oriented program design (Richards, 2001:51) Richterich (1983:228) defines the concept of needs analysis as a procedure which “consists primarily of compiling information both on the individuals or groups of individuals who are to learn a language and on the use which they are expected to make of it”. In another definition of needs analysis, Nunan (2006:13) focuses on the information-gathering process: “techniques and procedures for collecting information to be used in syllabus design are referred to as needs analysis”.

Brindley (1989:70) differentiates between objective and subjective needs. Objective needs are those “which are derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners, their use of language in real life communicative situations as well as their current language proficiency and language difficulties”. To assess objective needs, a need analyst may include information about students’ background (e.g. country, culture, education, family, profession, age), their proficiency in different language practices, and their needs as far as the language use outside the class is concerned.

Subjective needs, on the other hand, are obtained from the learners themselves. They include “the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes, learners’ wants and expectations with regard to the learning of English and their individual cognitive style and learning strategies” (Brindley, op.cit:70).

2.2 The importance of needs assessment in ESP
Pons (2001:18) emphasizes that an instructor who is aware of the educational needs of his/her learners is in a better position to devise effective instructional material. Needs analysis may serve three basic purposes: it can be used as a means of getting wider input into the content,
design, and implementation of a language programme; it can be implemented in defining goals, objectives, and content; and its data can be used to review and evaluate a current programme.

Long (2005: 2-18) refers to growing demands for accountability and relevance in public life to justify the need for performing needs analyses to create syllabi which can meet the needs of the learners as fully as possible. Accordingly, every language course should be viewed as a course for specific purposes which just varies in the precision with which learner needs can be specified. Valdez (1999:8) also suggests that the results of needs analyses can be used to modify and improve existing programs.

Researchers have also realized that focusing on the reasons why learners need to learn a foreign language will enable language teaching professionals to meet their learners’ specific needs and save a lot of time and energy. This is mainly because trying to teach the whole of a foreign language requires more time and effort.

3. Research questions
This action research project aimed at answering the following research questions:
1) Are the English courses in line with target needs of prospective engineers?
2) What are the language practices that engineer trainees perceive as their needs for success in the workplace?
3) How can the English course be improved to serve engineering students’ needs?

4. Methodology
4.1 Participants
A total of thirty six fourth year students majoring network and telecommunications engineering were involved in this study. This was the number of all the students who were enrolled in the fourth year networking and telecommunications engineering. They were taking English as a compulsory course at the National School of Applied Sciences of Fes in Morocco.

Concerning the profile of the participants, 69.44% of them were the female students majoring in networking and telecommunication engineering at the National School of Applied Sciences of Fes and 30.55% of them were males. 100% of the participants were aged between 21 and 23 years old. Regarding their previous experiences in learning English, all of them had studied English just as a part of their school requirements, and no one had the opportunity to live in an English-speaking country.

4.2 Instrumentation
To achieve the purposes of this research project, a needs analysis questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the study (see appendix I). It is made up of three sections. The first section drew some demographic data about the respondents. Then, the second section aimed at collecting data on the respondents’ evaluation of the English courses that they had taken during the previous three years. And the last section addressed the respondents’ English learning needs. Some of the questions were open-ended and some others just needed the respondents to checkmark (√) their choices. Based on the results of this needs analysis questionnaire a plan of action was implemented. It consisted of designing an ESP course that targeted both the communicative and professional needs of the respondents.

At the end of the study an ESP course evaluation questionnaire was administered to investigate the results of the plan of action (see appendix II). This questionnaire, which consisted
of three open-ended questions, was devised to assess the success of the ESP course and to what extent it could meet the respondents’ needs.

5. Results

One of the aims of this research project was to find out whether the English courses that networking and telecommunications engineering students had taken before this study could meet their future job requirements. To this end a needs analysis questionnaire was administered to the respondents at the beginning of the study (see appendix I).

The first section elicited some demographic information. It was designed in order to ensure the homogeneity of the subjects as far as their previous experiences and backgrounds in English learning were concerned. It consisted of five items.

In order to answer the first research question (are the English courses in line with the target needs of prospective engineers?) the participants’ responses to item six of the questionnaire were analysed.

Regarding the question of whether the previous English courses had been helpful in fulfilling the subjects’ future job requirements or not, the majority of the participants responded negatively to this question as the results in table 1 demonstrate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How useful is the English language course with regard to your English language needs?</td>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of some use</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of little use</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in table 1 reveal that the English language courses offered to engineering students are removed from their language needs. In other words, the highest percentages of the respondents voiced negative views to the usefulness of these English courses: 58.33% and 19.44% of them believed that the courses are “of little use” and “of some use” respectively. Some of those who believed these courses had not been helpful mentioned that those courses only focused on general contents; not exactly related to their field of study. Others believed that those courses mostly focused on general reading comprehension, and some essay writings not related to their career needs. And still others believed those courses had been helpful to some extent but they need English courses specifically tailored to their occupational needs.

5.1. What are the language practices that engineer trainees perceive as their needs for success in the workplace?

In relation to language practices, the results of a comparison between the language components that made up the English courses for engineering students and the vocational needs mentioned by the respondents revealed that these courses did not serve those needs. The findings
revealed that there were many English language sub-practices that the students had to know in order to function effectively in the workplace. This was evident from the results derived from items seven and eight in the needs analysis (see Appendix I). Hence, the English sub-practices that the students had acquired from the previous English courses attended to their needs for general English. These mainly include: writing assignments, reading course handouts, following lectures, reading study notes, listening to instructions for assignments, and writing test/exam answers. Interestingly enough, all these language sub-practices have been perceived by the respondents as useless in the workplace because their future occupation requires such skills like: reading technical catalogues, writing professional emails, giving spoken presentations, watching and listening to video conferences.

5. 2 How can the English course be improved to serve engineering students’ needs?

This research also identified the engineering students’ English language needs and their perceptions of the English language course they preferred to take. Therefore, based on the results of the “needs analysis” undertaken in this study, an ESP (English for specific purposes) syllabus was devised for the target group. This vocational, discipline specific English course constituted the plan of action in this research project. A detailed description of the ESP course is presented in table 2.

**Table 2: An ESP course description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language practices</th>
<th>Sub-practices</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>Participating in conferences</td>
<td>Presentation strategies (presenting on a business project, presenting on a product information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making phone calls</td>
<td>Getting through, taking and leaving messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talking with foreign visitors</td>
<td>Using functional language effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job meetings</td>
<td>Asking/answering questions in a meeting and using negotiation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making a successful job interview</td>
<td>Answering common job interview questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Reading texts/books about computer engineering</td>
<td>Skimming, scanning, and summarising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading computer catalogues/instructions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading technical documents (e.g. company documents, business documents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing standard letters</td>
<td>Learning about writing conventions,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Towards an ESP Course for Engineering Students

Dahbi

Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing professional e-mails</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing professional reports (e.g. project reports, reports of meetings/seminars)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a CV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing a cover letter/email.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to spoken, computer science-related presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to lectures of native speakers on computer engineering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching and listening to video conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening for gist, listening for details, and listening to take notes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To elicit information regarding the students’ evaluation of the ESP course, a questionnaire was administered to the respondents at the end of the study; that is to say after the students had taken the devised ESP course. The questions targeted the subjects’ perceptions of the usefulness of the course in meeting their occupational needs, and the time allocated to the English classes (see appendix II).

Regarding the question on how useful the ESP course in serving the respondents’ future vocational needs, the results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Students’ results regarding the usefulness of the ESP course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How useful is the ESP course with regard to your English language needs?</td>
<td>Very useful</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of some use</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>08.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Of little use</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison with the results in table 1 on the students’ evaluation of the usefulness of the English courses they had had in the previous years, the results in table 3 above reveal that the majority of the students responded rather positively this time to the usefulness of the English course in terms of meeting their English language needs as future engineers. 58.33% and 33.33% of them judged the course as “very useful” and “useful” respectively.
The reasons the respondent gave to account for their choices were related to the benefits of simulating real to professional life situations, and developing specific professional language skills.

In the second question the respondents’ were required to choose between a general purpose English (GE) or English for specific purposes (ESP) as the core of the most relevant English course they prefer to take. The results are presented in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Item</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which type of English language course would you like to attend?</td>
<td>General purpose English (GE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English for specific purposes (ESP)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>91.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the above table, the majority (91.66%) of the respondents preferred to take an English for specific purposes (ESP) course.

Brindley (op.cit:70) points out that “theories of adult learning indicated that adults learn better when programme content is geared to their immediate concerns, language teaching tended to concentrate on the end-product: the actual language which learners had to use”. This seems the reason why some of the respondents noted that they felt much more motivated to study ESP because it helps them acquire the necessary technical linguistic input, and communicative skills they need in their future job. The literature also stresses the relationship between exposing learners to real to life tasks and higher motivation and better performance. Real to life tasks as defined by Nunan (op.cit:40) are those which “require learners to approximate, in class, the sorts of behaviours required of them in the world beyond the classroom”. With respect to the present ESP course, real to life tasks are those speaking activities that simulate real professional situations such as making phone calls, giving a presentation, simulating a professional meeting.

The last question in the questionnaire on students’ evaluation of the ESP course was about the time allocated to the English course. The students’ feedback is summarised in table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire item</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that the time allocated to the English course is enough?</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be obviously deduced from the results above that the vast majority of the respondents (83.33%) believed that the time allocated to the English language course was not enough. They felt that with two hours per week it was difficult to cover all the components of the course.
extensively. Moreover, most of the speaking activities are in the form of role playing and usually such type of tasks need much time.

6. Implications

It can be inferred from the abovementioned results that there is a correlation between attending to learner’s needs and their motivation. This entails that vocational schools like the National School of Applied Sciences may need to reconsider the degree to which their students’ occupational needs are being met by the existing language programs. In this respect, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) stress the need for an ESP teacher as a researcher to be in constant touch with the students. The ESP teacher should try to diagnose the needs of the learners and evaluate the effectiveness of the language program accordingly. In other words, implementing a needs analysis can suggest a reconsideration and redesign of the curricula to enhance effective instruction.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, this study was conducted to examine the ESP needs of the fourth year network and telecommunications engineering students at the National School of Applied Sciences of Fes in Morocco. The results revealed that these English courses were not discipline specific, and hence, they did not prepare students for English communication at the workplace. The ESP course that was devised as the plan of action in this action research project rather attended to the respondents’ vocational needs. The results of the ESP course evaluation questionnaire administered at the end of this study are indicative of the fact that the ESP course designed based on the students’ needs and interests was positively perceived by the majority of the respondents.

This study has pedagogical implications for re-assessing the present English courses for engineering students

About the Author

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References

Towards an ESP Course for Engineering Students


Appendix I

Needs Analysis Questionnaire

Part one: Personal background
1. Name:
3. Age:     a. between 20 & 23   b. between 24 & 28   c. over 28


5. Have you ever been to an English-speaking country?   a. Yes   b. No

Part two: Evaluation of the English course
6. How useful are the English courses with regard to your English language future professional needs?
   a. Very useful   b. Useful   c. Of some use   d. Of little use   e. Not useful

Part three: assessing students’ needs
7. What are the English sub-practices that you have acquired from the previous English courses?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. What are the English sub-practices that you need in the workplace?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix II

Students’ Evaluation of the ESP Course

1. How useful is the ESP course with regard to your English language future professional needs?
   a. Very useful   b. Useful   c. Of some use   d. Of little use   e. Not useful
Clarify, please
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................

2. Which type of English language course would you like to attend?
   a. General purpose English (GE)
   b. English for Specific (occupational) purposes (ESP)
Justify your choice, please
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................

3. Is the time allocated to the English course enough to use the language effectively?
   a. Yes
   b. No
Justify your choice, please
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................
The Impact of Interest on EFL Learners’ Performance

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ENCG Settat, University Hassan I
Settat, Morocco

Abstract
This study sought to investigate Moroccan EFL students’ perceptions of the factors behind their interest and disinterest in university courses. Besides, it tried to explain how and why their interest in English as a major has increased or declined. Finally, the researcher tried to investigate whether or not there is a relationship between students’ interest and their achievement outcomes. 132 EFL university students took part in this study. Data was collected using group interviews and a students’ interest scale (SIS). The results indicated that students attributed their interest to content that provides them with novelty, competence and challenge and courses that engage them and develop their critical thinking and analytical skills. On the other hand, students blamed teachers, teaching methods and difficulty for their lack of interest in a course. Most students reported that their interest has increased and explained that by factors like mastery, goal-direction and language status. The results also indicated a positive relationship between students’ level of interest and their achievement outcomes.

Key words: EFL, Higher education, Interest, interest development, learners’ performance, learning motivation

Introduction:
It is almost axiomatic that motivation plays a central role in every human endeavor and there is substantial empirical evidence that it is a precursor to acquisition and learning (Schlechty, 2001; Woolfolk & Margetts, 2007). However, Teachers are daily confronted with the perennial task of kindling and maintaining motivation in their students. Every day, educators express concerns over dwindling levels of motivation for learning in today’s generation of learners and fall short of finding ways to foster their engagement despite abounding studies and theories that have scrutinized motivation. Nevertheless, the difficulty to promote motivation in learners is not an abnormal thing given the fact that it is not a simple issue and hardly is a ‘unitary phenomenon’ (Rueda & Moll, 1994;). Thus trying to construct a definition of what motivation is and how it can be instigated and maintained is a challenging task. In the light of this, Dornyei (1998) states that “there is little agreement in the literature”(p.? about the concept of motivation. However, some attempts at defining motivation can be traced in the literature. For instance, Graham and Weiner (1996) define motivation as the study of “why people think and behave as they do”(p.) According to Pintrich (2003), the term motivation is derived from the latin verb ‘movere’ meaning ‘to move’. Therefore, studies of motivation are concerned with what pushes or pulls people to take action towards an objective.

Earlier theories of motivation, such as Maslow’s theory of need and Hull’s (1943, 1951) drive theory of motivation drew on the behaviorist paradigm and built their models on the individuals inner factors without consideration of the social context. The focus of such theories was to find the motors of behavior and to understand what moved a static organism. Hence, motivational psychologists during that era emphasized individual factors like drive, instinct, arousal, and needs (Dornyei, 1998; Pintrich, 2003). Besides, classic theories of motivation sought to provide a general, simplistic account of human behavior and to draw broad models of motivated behaviors (Graham & Weiner, 1996). Obviously, the question why humans act in a given way or decide to finish or not finish a given task is no simple phenomenon. Therefore, providing a simple, straightforward answer would seem impossible. This is why current theories of motivation no longer consider it a static construct and or a mere reflection of internal factors such as instincts and physical energy. Rather, focus has shifted to how the individual’s thoughts, emotions and beliefs interact with the social environment to yield a given behavior. Thus, motivation is viewed as a set of mental processes that trigger and maintain action. Within this new perspective, social psychologists have tried to shed light on the mental processes involved in motivation, how these function and affect learning and achievement and how they can be triggered, reinforced and maintained at high levels.

Based on this post-modern paradigm, a number of theories and models have been construed. The most influential of these theories are expectancy-value theories initiated by Atkinson and Raynor (1974) who explained human achievement on the basis of two constructs: expectancy and value. In the light of this theory, motivation to carry out a task is determined by the individual’s expectancy of success and the value she/he attaches to that task. This perspective has been extended and elaborated by other researchers who elaborated other cognitive processes and constructed various theories and models such as causal attribution theory (Weiner, 1979, 1986), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1993) and self-worth theory (Covington, 19992). Other theories such as goal theories have provided an alternative perspective to need theories through replacing needs by goals which are seen as ‘the engine’ that triggers the action and guides it in the right direction. Deci and Ryan (1985) introduce the self-determination theory which
elaborated the traditional intrinsic/ extrinsic paradigm. Under self-determination theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motives are no more viewed as dichotomous and mutually exclusive constructs but are seen within a continuum where external factors can shape, sustain and interact with intrinsic motivation (See Dornyei, 1998).

As stated above, this new paradigm of studying human behavior, in general, and academic achievement, in particular, came to view motivation as a complex mental endeavor that involves a number of cognitive and affective process that manifest themselves in a given behavior or lack of it. Behavior, therefore, has been viewed as the result of a number of motivational forces that combine together to push people to action. One of the most important forces among these is ‘interest in the task or the activity’. This facet of motivation is considered by early education psychologists such as Herbart (1776-1841) and Dewey (1913) as a catalyst to learning. This paper seeks to shed some focus on this construct by reporting the findings of an investigation of how Moroccan EFL students express their interest or disinterest in a subject and whether or not there is a relationship between their interest and their performance in those courses. The rationale behind studying interest in Moroccan EFL students emanates first from the findings of a study of Moroccan EFL learners’ causal attributions of success and failure by Zohri (2011) which indicates that most Moroccan EFL learners and teachers impute students’ failure and success to interest. Furthermore, researchers have shown that studying how students account for their interest or lack of it can provide educators and researchers with insight on how this interest or disinterest develops and can therefore help them devise strategies to develop, maintain and grow interest. The following section provides a review of the literature on interest (Deci, 1992; Deci, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 1992; Flowerday & Lehman, 2001)

1. Review of literature:

As mentioned earlier, Herbart (1776-1841) was the first to develop a doctrine of interest. He considered interest as a ‘self-activity’ that determines attention and thus results in readiness to form new ideas. Therefore, for Herbart, effective teaching means triggering interest in pupils and guiding them towards creating knowledge (Kirkpatrick, 2008). Building on Herbatian philosophy, Dewey (1913) stresses the major importance of interest in learning. For Dewey, “to be interested in any matter is to be concerned with it” (p. 16). He defined interest as the state of being “engaged, engrossed, or entirely taken up with some activity because of its recognized worth” (ibid). Ibid: Never used in APA Style; instead give each citation using author names as usual

The ideas of Herbart and Dewey, albeit very interesting, were drowned by research in behaviorism which dominated all fields of inquiry up to the 1960’s and 1970’s when psychologists from various areas of expertise turned their attention to interest. Researchers in social psychology and achievement motivation renewed focus on interest as a key factor in learning and a catalyst of strong motivation and successful performance. Current definitions of interest identify it as a mental process and a psychological state that supports learning and facilitates performance and achievement (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2010; Hidi, 1990, 2000; Krapp, Hidi & Renninger 1992).

One of the leading current conceptualizations of interest has been developed by Hidi & Baird (1988) and Renninger (2000) who divide interest into two main categories: individual interest
and situational interest. Individual interest is stable and is specific to the individual. It can be perceived as a psychological disposition or readiness to act or do a task and it has been associated with increased knowledge, positive emotions, and increased reference value (Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp 1992). Situational interest is triggered by certain conditions and objects in the environment. However, these two forms of interest should not be thought of as dichotomous but as complementary as each type interacts with and affects the other. Besides, both of them can be described from the perspective of either the external factor that stimulates interest or the internal disposition of the individual who displays interest in a given subject or activity (Renninger, 1989, 1990; Renninger et al., 1992). Hence, it can be deduced that interest is manifest in various forms and always results from an interaction between the individual and the environment. This model of interest has recently been elaborated by Hidi and Renninger (2006) who underlined the central role of the interaction between the person and the object in the development of enduring forms of interest (from triggered situational interest to maintained situational interest, and from emerged individual interest to well-developed individual interest). They claim that personal characteristics and social contexts both contribute to the generation of interest and increase the level of engagement that individuals bring to any activity.

Research also describes interest as a construct that includes both affective and cognitive components that interact with a particular content to boost engagement. The affective component is composed of positive emotions such as pleasure and joy felt through engaging with the content and the environment while the cognitive components relate to perceptual and representational activities related to engagement (Hidi, 2003; Hidi et al., 2004). According to Schiefele (1992), interest is always content specific and acts as a directive force and an explanatory factor that can help us understand students’ choices and motivation as well as teachers’ subjective theories of instruction. In his model of domain learning, Alexander (1997, 2004) claims that the amount of knowledge a person has does not necessarily mean that she/he will show a well-developed interest in this content. Rather, interest develops as a result of the interaction between knowledge of content and positive feelings. More importantly, an individual may have substantial knowledge and little interest of content (Renninger et al., 2002). As Dewey (1913) points out, interest is dynamic, objective and personal. It is dynamic because it entails engagement with the activity. As process-oriented theories and studies indicate, interest “shows itself in particular psychological states, such as focused, prolonged, relatively effortless attention” (Renninger et al. 1992).

The models and theories outlined above have stressed the important role of interest in learning and the great impact it has on processes such as attention, effort and perseverance. In the light of this, a number of recent empirical studies have demonstrated that interest facilitates learning and boosts performance by enhancing attention, recall, task persistence, and effort (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler (1992) reported a positive correlation between individual interest and academic performance in over 150 studies that investigated the relationship between interest and achievement. Other studies have shown that different levels of interest affect goal setting, and learning strategies. Harackiewicz et al. (2002) for instance, reported that interest mediates college students’ choice of major and contributes to academic outcomes. Renninger 2002 also found that 11-to 13-year-old students with low ability and a well-developed individual interest for reading or mathematics were more likely to engage meaning of the text than were high ability students with less developed
individual interest. A recent study from Long and Murphy (2005) showed how teachers can support students’ interest if they themselves have interest for the subject matter and the students they are teaching. Helping students feel more positive about the content they are learning can trigger early phases of interest and enhance students’ attention (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

Harckiewicz, Durik, Barron, Linnenbrink and Tauer (2008) carried out two longitudinal studies with college students from their first semester as freshmen through graduation and found that both situational and individual interest can play a powerful role in predicting future choices and career paths. Similar results have been reached with middle- and high- school students (Meece, Wigfield and Eccles, 1990; Xiang, Chen and Bruene, 2005). Xiang et al. (2005) found that fourth graders were more willing to spend their free time engaged in running when they showed interest in a school based program than when they didn’t which indicates that interest can affect subsequent similar activities and predict students’ performance in various tasks.

Allowing students to choose tasks, promoting autonomy as well as providing support for developing knowledge required for task completion are some ways educators can adopt to trigger positive feelings about new content. (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

2. Methodology

2.1 Objectives and research questions:

This study set off with the attempt to investigate the reasons behind Moroccan EFL learners ‘interest or disinterest in the courses they study at university, the development of their interest in English as a university major, and the relationships between their interest levels and their achievement outcomes. Therefore, it purported to answer the following questions:

Q1: How do EFL students explain their interest or disinterest in the courses they are studying at university?
Q2: How and why does students interest in English as a major change overtime?
Q3: Is there a relationship between students’ levels of interest and their academic performance?

2.2 Method and data collection

This study used a mixed research method with a survey design. Group interviewing together with a seven likert-item students interest scale “SIS” were used for data collection. The SIS was built on the basis of the definitions and models of academic interest reviewed above. This questionnaire contained questions about the development of students’ interest and why it has increased or declined, the courses they were interested and disinterested in as well as a rating of the reasons behind their interest or disinterest. The participants were also asked to provide grades for these courses and further explanations about their interest. The interviews were used as a springboard to the questionnaire and a complementary tool to gather more information on students’ perceptions of their interest. It aimed at having access to some perceptions that may not be elicited through the structured questions of the questionnaire so as to provide a valuable insight to the interpretation of the quantitative results. Besides, qualitative data gathered through this whole group interview was meant to validate the results of the questionnaire and provide further explanation to some of the constructs included in the SIS.

Data was collected from three Moroccan Universities (University Chouaib Doukali in Al-Jadida, University Hassan II, Mohameda, and University Mohammed V, Souissi, Rabat) using
convenience sampling. 132 students majoring in English and studying in their S4 (second semester of the freshman year) took part in this research. The researcher gathered data during class sessions. First, the students were given a brief definition of ‘interest’ on the basis of four items: a-classroom engagement and attention, b- Effort invested in studying for a given subject, c- the amount of time spent studying, d- the positive feelings experienced when studying a specific course. Then they were asked to think of courses they were interested in and those they were not interested in and asked to contemplate the reasons behind their interest. After that, they were given sticky notes in two different colors and were asked to write the reasons down on them and stick them on the board under two columns with the titles ‘interest’/ ‘disinterest’. In the second phase, the students were given the SIS and were asked to fill in the questions. They were encouraged to ask for help if they did not understand the written instructions.

The data gathered from the SIS was coded, transcribed and analyzed using the SPSS software. First, descriptive statistics were run to summarize frequency data for interest/disinterest factors. Second, students’ ratings of their interest in major at entry and the present time were compared using means analysis. Finally the means for the students’ grades on interest/disinterest courses were counted and a paired-sample t-test was conducted to measure for significance between the two variables.

3. Results:
The first question of this study concerns how EFL students explain their interest or disinterest in the courses they study at university. The findings of this study indicate that the students believed that courses that trigger their interest are those that allow them to learn new material and have interesting content. Besides, the results show that the participants also rated attractive teaching methods and challenging tasks as important factors in stimulating their interest. On the other hand, fewer students attributed their interest to the fact that the material was easy to understand (see table 1 for a summary of these results).

Table1: Factors affecting students’ interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors for Interest</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New material</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting content</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive teaching method</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging tasks</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy material</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The group interviews elicited about 39 factors that students think stimulate their interest (Check table3 for a summary of these factors). These factors can be grouped under four categories: a- Levels of involvement, b- The content and skills taught, c- The teacher and teaching methods, and d- personal/intrinsic factors. First, students explain their interest mainly by factors linked to the levels of engagement and autonomy they have in class. For instance, a lot of students reported that the level of participation and the degree of freedom of expression they are allowed during classes helped them develop high interest in a specific course. A big number of students stated that the courses they were interested in were those which gave them enough room to debate their ideas and think critically about life issues. Furthermore, data elicited from the participants shows that interesting courses teach interesting content that broadens students’
knowledge of various disciplines, exposes them to different cultures and teaches them interpersonal and communicative skills. Interesting content has also been described in terms of novelty of information and relatedness to the learners’ expectations and goals. In this vein, numerous participants stated that they felt more likely to make effort and engage attention in courses like linguistic studies and cultural studies and considered the topics discussed in these classes to be practical and enriching because they help them improve their linguistic skills and learn how to deal with people from different backgrounds. More importantly, students thought that these courses were interesting because they trigger their creativity, analytical skills and critical thinking.

A third important factor that students used to explain their interest relates to teachers and teaching methods. The participants reported that some teachers are skillful enough to turn the least interesting content into an exciting experience and are able to engage students in active learning and thinking. They also believed that some teachers make the course interesting by encouraging students to participate and providing them with a relaxed classroom environment. Another group of participants thought that the courses were interesting because the teachers were funny and friendly.

Finally some of the least cited factors can be considered personal or intrinsic motives like being a fan of British culture or English music bands. One participant stated that she is highly interested in translation because she has an excellent hand writing in Arabic and she loves writing it. Others said that English is a passion for them and that they like learning it for the sake of knowing more about it. One of the most important answers comes from a student who stated “I’m here (at university) to learn and not to choose what I want, thus I have to admire and ‘accept’ everything I’m studying.

The second part of the question concerns the reasons why students do not feel interested in some courses. Data from the questionnaire shows that most participants attribute their disinterest to the teacher and the teaching as well as the content of the course. The ‘difficulty’ factor and ‘lack of novel material’ were not considered as important. The results from the groups’ interviews indicate that the participants cited ‘the teacher factor’, ‘the level of difficulty’ and ‘lack of involvement’ as the main factors behind their disinterest in a course. The students stated that some teachers use ‘old’ teaching methods, do not prepare for courses and are talkative. Others complained about the teachers not being friendly and using Arabic in class or not checking attendance. Another group of subjects explained that their interest was deeply affected by the level of difficulty of the course. They said that they failed to understand the content and therefore could not achieve positive outcomes. Thus, their interest waned in those courses. Another important reason that was elicited from the interviews is linked to the level of engagement students feel in a course. The learners believed that courses that do not allow them to express their thoughts and do not call for their critical thinking are not interesting. Actually, one of the words that was frequently cited by the interviewees was the word “repression”. The students said that in some classes they are not allowed to express their opinion or disagree with the ideas voiced by the teacher. Therefore, for them those classes were boring and the content was dull.

Table 2: Factors influencing students’ disinterest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors for disinterest</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At a second level, the subjects cited factors that are linked to the lack of practicality of some courses like poetry or drama. A few participants believed that these courses do not teach anything interesting and do not help them improve their English. They thought that such courses make them feel “stupid”. A fewer number of subjects attributed their disinterest to factors that can be labelled ‘personal’ or ‘intrinsic’ by stating that they simply hate the course without knowing the reason. One more student claimed that he always feels hungry in class that is why he is not interested in learning, whereas another one claimed that he hates transportation (i.e. the means of transportation that he takes from home to university and back forth) and therefore he is not interested in studies.

Table 3: A summary of the factors elicited through the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors for interest</th>
<th>Factors for lack of interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content:</strong></td>
<td>The teacher/ teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty + Mastery skills + critical thinking + Analytical skills</td>
<td>Boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific + Informative + challenging (Linguistics + cultural studies + writing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement:</strong></td>
<td>The level of difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation + Freedom of expression + stress free</td>
<td>Too difficult,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher/ teaching:</strong></td>
<td>Lack of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern + Fun &amp; Funny + Friendly + exciting/ energizing + masters the topic (The teacher can turn an uninteresting content into fun)</td>
<td>No participation + pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal/ Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Content:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m a fan of British culture/ I like English, It’s my passion etc.</td>
<td>Boring, not practical, not what I expected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the second research question about how and why students’ interest in English as a major develops, the results indicate that the participants’ level of interest in English as a major
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has generally increased since they started university. The students were asked to give explanations why their interest has increased or has declined. The results show that those who stated that their interest has risen explained it mainly by the mastery of the language that they have gained through studying at university, the knowledge, the skills and the competences they have learnt from the subject, and finally the goals they have set for themselves and which they think will be achieved through studying English. However, an important number of students claimed that their interest in studying English as a major declined mainly due to increasing difficulty, lack of help and support and the mismatch between what they expected and what the courses offer. (See a list of all the factors in table 4)

**Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics for interest development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest level 1</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1.625</td>
<td>.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest level 2</td>
<td>8.37</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>2.533</td>
<td>.221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer the last question, the students were asked to provide the grades of both the courses they were interested in and those they were not interested in. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between students’ interest in a course and their achievement outcomes in that course. A paired samples t-test was conducted to measure the difference between the means for ‘interesting courses’ and the means for ‘non-interesting courses’. The results indicate significant difference between the means of the courses the subjects were interested in (M=34.31, SD= 12.86) and those they were not interested in (M=24.25, SD= 11.84) conditions; t(131)= 16.34, p< .005 (See tables 5 & 6).

**Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics for the relationship between interest levels and achievement outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low interest-grades</td>
<td>24.25</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>11.84932</td>
<td>1.03135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High interest-grades</td>
<td>34.31</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>12.86980</td>
<td>1.12017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6: Paired Samples Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest/achievement</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion:
This study attempted to explain why students show interest or disinterest in university courses and to investigate the development of their level of interest in English as a university major. Besides, the researcher tried to measure the relationship between students’ interest in courses and their performance. The results reported above show that situational factors like the characteristics of the content taught can play a major role in stimulating or inhibiting students’ interest in a course. One of the most important features of interesting content reported by the participants was novelty and fostering competence. This corroborates findings from research carried out by Azevedo (2006) who found that the combination of novelty and competence triggered students’ interest. Similarly, Turner & Silvia (2006) stated that novelty is a major feature of texts and tasks that generate interest within learners. The subjects of this study emphasized the importance of promoting creativity and critical thinking as central stimulants for interest in a course. In parallel with this, Chen & Darst (1999, 2001) found that situational interest can be increased by engaging students in content that challenges their thinking and enhances their learning. Harckiewicz et al. (2008) also suggested that mastery goals can trigger and develop interest. Besides, in their research on students’ perceptions of the importance, utility, and interest of the course material, Pintrich et al. found that there is a positive correlation between students’ perception of task value and the cognitive engagement the course offers. Thus, it was found that students who engaged in critical thinking and cognitive strategy use reported higher levels of interest.

The findings for the first research question also confirm the premises of the self-determination theory laid down by Deci & Ryan (1985, 2000). Deci and Ryan (2002) suggested that human-beings have three psychological needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. Activities that meet these needs are expected to stimulate high levels of engagement and interest. The participants stated that teachers who put less pressure on them and courses that develop their skills and knowledge are more interesting. In this vein, research in autonomy-supportive teaching behavior indicates that supportive teachers tend to listen more, exercise less pressure and support intrinsic motivation (Reeve, 2002).

Research carried by Eccles & Midgley (1989) on the quality of students’ motivation showed that teachers who support learners’ autonomy rather than control their behavior contribute enormously to students’ achievement, conceptual learning and perseverance. Empirical research provides substantial evidence about how teachers’ instruction affect students feeling of control and self-determination which in turn boosts their motivation to learn and perform better (Hamm & Reeve, 2002). Reeve (2002) stated that students feel increasingly competent when teachers provide them with opportunities to talk and work on problem-solving by themselves. This explains why the participants of this study attributed their disinterest to the fact that some teachers are talkative and do not give them opportunities to express their thoughts. Another interesting finding in this study suggests that students did not consider easy tasks to be interesting and they attributed their disinterest to the difficulty of the course. This result is in line with research on the level of difficulty and challenge that is appropriate to maintain students’ attention and effort. Researchers suggest that optimal levels of difficulty should strike a balance between what students already know and what they need to acquire (Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, 1978). Deci and Ryan (1985) also explained that in their pursuit of challenges, learners usually seek tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.

The results for the second question shows that students’ interest has increased since they chose English as a major. The reasons mentioned relate to students’ mastery levels and acquired
skills. This supports some researchers’ findings and thoughts about interest development. For instance, Alexander (1997, 2004) linked interest development to developing expertise. Besides, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1994) suggests that one’s belief in one’s own ability to achieve a task successfully boosts confidence and triggers motivation to carry out that task. More importantly, Bandura believes that efficacious people love to set challenging goals and show strong commitment to these goals. However, researchers have also found that high levels of self-efficacy may have a counter-effect on students’ interest. As Bandura (1997) suggests, “at least moderate perceived efficacy may be required to generate and sustain interest in an activity, but increases in perceived efficacy above the threshold level do not produce further gains in interest” (p. 220).

Students also ascribed their increasing levels of interest in learning English to the dynamic of the learning group, the status of English and the relevance of the major to their goals. Actually social factors such as peer influence are one of the most important factors that can provide a person with support and influence her/his choice to pursue or give up interest in a task, major or vocation (Holland, 1997). Research has also shown that at early stages of interest, students need support that they can get both through self-regulated learning skills and from their social environment to sustain that interest (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). This explains the statements made by some participants who claimed that their interest has risen because “I met some classmates who made me enjoyed the studies”. As it might be assumed that most students who choose English as major do that out of some interest in the English language that can be triggered by a myriad factors, this triggered interest need to be maintained by characteristics of the content of the courses and the environment (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

The findings for the third research question indicated that there is a positive relationship between students’ interest in courses and their achievement outcomes. This is in line with research on the impact of interest on performance. There is substantial evidence that interest positively influences academic performance (Alexander, 1997; Krapp, Renninger & Hidi, 1992; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Hoffmann, Krapp, Renninger, & Baumert, 1998). However, an important number of students reported having some very good grades in courses that they were not interested in. This may mean that these learners have developed some self-regulated learning skills that make them expend effort in subjects that are boring for them because they are aware that to achieve their goals they have to work hard in all courses. This was made clear in a statement of one of the participants who said “I’m here to learn not to have what I want, therefore, I have to work hard and like all the subjects”. In this context, some researchers have suggested that some learners tend to use self-regulation skills to attain their goals (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). More interestingly, interest researchers have emphasized self-regulation as an indispensable factor for the development of individual interest.

The students who reported that their interest has waned imputed this decline to the boring courses and the uninteresting content. Others claimed that they felt that they had to do everything by themselves and that some of their professors were not supportive. While these factors can be interpreted by the underlying principles of the interest model developed by Renninger and Hidi (2006), other theories of motivation may provide some explanation. Students’ interest has also been linked to factors described in causal attribution theories, especially Weiner’s (1986) model of causal attributions. Weiner’s locus of causality suggests that people who make external
attributions of failure are less likely to persist in a task or to expect success in future similar activities. This kind of perception is likely to turn off interest in the content or activities that made students experience failure.

**Implications and Conclusion**

The present research aimed at investigating how Moroccan EFL learners explain their interest in English as a major and the courses they are studying at university. Besides, it tried to measure the influence of this interest on their performance and to study how and why interest in English as a major develops. The mixed method design has revealed some interesting findings that will contribute to understanding the issue of academic interest in higher education in Morocco. Building on the results of this study, it can be concluded that research in academic interest has strong implications for both researchers and educators. The results indicate that interest is an important factor that needs to be explored. Furthermore, a number of variables and factors emerge from the elicited data and call for further investigations. For instance, there is need to investigate how interest in English as a major is triggered at first hand. This may provide us with insight about how it develops or declines subsequently. Besides, researchers may address the questions how variables like self-efficacy or self-regulation are associated with interest and why some students fail to develop maintained interest in advanced university levels.

Educators too can draw numerous implications from research in interest, In general, and this study, in particular. First, the findings give practitioners evidence that interest is not static. Rather, it can be developed and maintained through support, interesting content and competence building courses. The participants’ accounts on topics that stimulate their interest can also give teachers a clear idea about the type of activities that can maintain learners’ interest. Providing EFL students with opportunities to express themselves, to learn critical thinking skills and to feel that they are developing competence are central practices that can help them maintain interest in English studies. Furthermore, helping learners gain awareness about their interests and showing them how to connect their goals and learning to content teaching objectives can also sustain their interest in the major they have chosen and encourage them to persist. It is common that educators believe that students either have or do not have interest and that interest cannot be developed. The present study comes to provide more evidence that interest can be triggered and developed. Teachers and other social factors can play a central role in stimulating and sustaining students’ interest by providing conducive factors and helping learners build connections to instructional objectives. At the end, it should be noted that the results of this study need to be interpreted with caution and within its methodological limits.

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Demystifying the Disparity between ESP and EGP Methodology

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Abstract  
Methodology in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and EGP (English for General Purposes) has been the main concern for many practitioners over the last few years. Many scholars and researchers would argue that methodology in ESP bear a lot of similarities with methodology in EGP. Conversely, other researchers would describe ELT methodology used in ESP as considerably different from the one adopted and adapted in EGP by virtue of the two contrasting contexts they represent. The present paper, therefore, aims at demystifying the disparity between the specificity of ESP textbooks and the conventional language teaching materials highlighting areas of similarities and differences between ESP and EGP methodologies. The paper also purports to argue the extent to which methodologies used in an ESP context can be used in the learning of any kind of English.

Keywords: EGP, ESP, ELT methodology, materials development, needs analysis,
Introduction

Literature on ELT reveals that ESP has emerged not from a structural theory of language but from a functional account of learner needs. It is a sub-division of the general activity of teaching of English. Some researchers have gone further to describe it as ‘a communicative EGP’. Indeed, methodology has been generally neglected in ESP: the emphasis has been on ‘what’ ought to be taught (the content) rather than on ‘how’ it should be taught (Widdowson, 1983, p. 87). According to this scholar, there is a disparity between the specificity of content in ESP textbook and the conventional language teaching methodology which takes no account of the specific kinds of activity which learners are engaged in within their academic and occupational fields.

Since ESP embodies a wide range of other more specific purposes such as EOP and EST, it is interesting to note that different purposes require different materials and perhaps different teaching procedures. Put differently, as the waiter wants to speak and the medical student wants only to read in English, it is necessary to reconsider the materials and methodology to be used in a language classroom situation.

1. Clearing the ground: Methodology defined

Before delving into arguing the extent to what methodologies used in ESP can be used in the learning of any kind of English, we need first to clarify the meaning of the term ‘methodology’ and secondly to highlight points of contrast and similarities between ESP and EGP contexts. One of the well-known definitions of ‘method’ in the literature on language teaching is the one provided by Anthony (1963) who defines this concept as “an overall plan for orderly presentation of language material [, and it] is procedural” (p. 63). However, this definition, Richards & Rogers (1986) dispute, fails to provide sufficient attention to the nature of a method itself. It also fails to account for the roles of teachers and learners or how the material should be presented. Accordingly and alternatively, they defined methodology in terms of approach which provides theories on the nature of language and learning, design (specifying objectives, learning teaching activities, learner and teacher roles, and the roles of instructional materials) and procedures (dealing with classroom techniques and procedures). Sometimes, however, neither a method nor an approach is made clear; but only assumptions are made and a language teacher in a given situation is required to associate his teaching methods and techniques to some approaches which are themselves based on some assumptions, goals and objectives to be achieved (McDonough 1984; Smoak, 2003).

The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching defines methodology (or method) as “the study of the practices and procedures used in teaching, and the principles and beliefs that underlie them” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 363). Methodology is also said to include the following:

a) a study of the nature of language skills (e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening) and procedures for teaching them
b) study of the preparation of lesson plans, materials, and textbooks for teaching language skills and
c) the evaluation and comparison of language teaching method(s) (e.g. the audiolingual method) (Richards & Schmidt, op cit).
Demystifying the Disparity between ESP and EGP Methodology

Robinson (1991), on the other hand, refers to methodology as “what goes on in the classroom, to what the students have to do” (p. 46). It is the process of implementation and it must be sensitive to circumstances and be derived from the practicalities of the situation rather than be imposed from the outside (Crocker 1981).

For Johnson and Morrow (1981), method is defined as “some overall means of achieving the general objectives of a course” (p. 59). It is realized as a set of procedures which themselves involve the use of specific techniques.

Finally, methodology can be understood, according to Widdowson (1983), as “a set of activities designed to develop the procedural problem solving capacity of learners” (p. 107). He notes that it does not matter very much what language learners are presented with, but what does matter is how they can put it into effective use.

2. Differences and similarities between ESP and EGP.

2.1. Points of contrast

The difference between ESP and EGP in language teaching and learning is best described by Widdowson (1983) who argues that:

ESP is essentially a training operation which seeks to provide learners with a restricted competence to enable them to cope with certain clearly-defined tasks. These tasks constitute the specific purposes which the ESP course is designed to meet. The course therefore, makes direct reference to eventual aims. GPE, on the other hand, is essentially an educational operation which seeks to provide learners with a general capacity to enable them to cope with undefined eventualities in the future. Here, since there are no definite aims which can determine course-design, there has to be resources to intervening objectives formulated by pedagogic theory. These objectives represent the potential for later realization and are, so to speak, the abstract projection of aims (p. 6).

To this end, we can deduce that what distinguishes ESP from EGP is the way in which purpose is defined and the manner of its implementation. In ESP, the purpose refers to the eventual practical use to which the language will be put in, while in EGP, it has to be conceived in educational terms as a formulation of objectives which will achieve a potential for later practical use. In other words, the purpose in ESP is a training concept (Widdowson op.cit). Having established as precisely as possible what learners need the language for, one can design a course which converges on that need. Similarly, while the purpose in EGP is meant to develop a general capacity of language use, in ESP it is referred to as ‘descriptive’ in sense that students need only a restricted competence.

Unlike EGP, the starting point for curriculum development in an ESP context is an analysis of learners’ needs rather than a linguistic analysis. Needs analysis may allow teachers to get insights into students’ interests and objectives. It may also provide them with data for evaluation and accountability (Richards 1984, cited in Nunan, 1988, p. 18). Interestingly, students are involved in materials production which is not necessarily the case in EGP.
Similarly, some ESP courses or syllabi, unlike other ELT or EGP syllabi, are usually determined in advance of teaching and ad hoc analysis, referred to as “priori syllabi” (Richards and Rogers, op.cit.).

Another difference between ESP and EGP lies in the nature of the approach adopted. McDonough (1984) maintains that research in EGP can be carried out without any direct or immediate reference to specific context of teaching and learning, while research in ESP takes its impetus from particular issues and situations. Also in an ESP context, the teacher has to consider his students needs, unlike the EGP teacher who may have a set of ’cooked material’ made available for him/her not only to implement in a language classroom but also to cover in a limited time-span. In this respect, one may claim that EGP may be considered as a top-down approach whereas ESP may be described as a bottom-up approach in which the teacher starts from students’ needs before considering other issues such as course design, methodology or evaluation; all of which may not necessarily be considered by the EGP teacher (Popescu, 2010; Boson, 2016).

In ESP, for both theoretical and practical reasons, learner training should begin at the same time as the language learning itself. Assuming that methodology is the same in both contexts (ESP and EGP), as Mackay and Mounford (1978) argue, we may suggest that the English used in the Anglophone West Africa, for example, is the same as the one used in the Arab-speaking Middle-East. In the former, English is used as a medium of instruction, communication in business, government and education, whereas in the latter, it plays a more restricted role as a subject in the school curriculum and as a medium providing access to technology and science. Therefore, such differences in orientation may have considerable effects on ESP teaching methodology (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984; Gloria-Lo, Yi-Hsuan, 2012).

In the same vein, Rogers (1986) views that stating that methodologies in both contexts are the same is like claiming that the teacher-centered approach is similar to the learner-centered approach. In the former, the teacher is the expositor and the student is the listener, while in the latter, the teacher and the students are in a more co-operative position. The student is no longer that passive learner but an active one who takes a principal part in the learning and teaching process (Popescu, 2010).

Following Huckin (1988), the difference between ESP and EGP may reside in what he refers to as ‘academic’ and ‘real world-problems’, and as he asserts:

The former are usually neatly laid down for the students by the professor, they are usually well-defined, and usually have one correct answer. Real world problems, by contrast, are often disordered, ill-defined, and open to many possible solutions, none of which may be totally correct (p. 66).

This researcher views that the hall mark of ESP instruction is its attempts to appeal more directly to the students’ interests outside the English classes than is normally the case in traditional ESL/EFL instruction.
A further difference between ESP and EGP can be seen in the use of ‘team teaching’. While ESP is widely open to team teaching, EGP hardly, if ever, makes any use of it. To make this clear, if an ESP teacher lacks the technical knowledge that would be appropriate to a particular simulation, engineering students for instance, he would presumably turn for assistance to a faculty colleague or an industry colleague who can provide him with the technical information necessary to set up his simulation. The English teacher, then, can make sure that each student is required to take part in the communicative task, can monitor each student’s performance and can provide corrective feedback after the game is over (Morena, 2014).

As far as content is concerned, ESP focuses on instructional processes and not on any specification of language content. Process-oriented alternatives include task-based and process-based syllabuses. However, the content in EGP is, most of the time, a content-oriented approach which has dominated language syllabus design for many years first in the guise of a structural syllabus and later in the guise of a functional-notional syllabus (Nunan 1988).

Some scholars argue that ESP fits best with the communicative approach but not with more traditional methods, namely the audio-lingual method or the grammar translation method or situational language teaching which are structurally based methods. In fact, over the last few decades, there was a shift in the objectives of ELT from mere mastery of the structural elements of the language to communicating effectively and appropriately in that language. This has been the case whether one belongs to the EGP community or to the ESP one: the major objective has been to develop learners’ communicative competence. To this end, some similarities could be traced between the two disciplines, especially as far as approach to teaching and learning is concerned.

### 2.1. Similarities between ESP and EGP

Regardless of what has been said about the differences between ESP and EGP, the methodology that has been applied in ESP contexts can also be used in EGP contexts. They both use the same concepts and approaches. One such concept is authenticity. It has usually been stressed that the use of authentic materials in language classes would serve learners needs and help them engage in the learning process. Morrow (1980) states that learners, within an ESP context, are required to use the same skills and strategies as would be required in the target situation. We can argue that the same holds true for an EGP context; as Richards (2006) points out:

> Since the advent of CLT, textbooks and other teaching materials have taken on a much more “authentic” look; reading passages are designed to look like magazine articles (if they are not in fact adapted from magazine articles) and textbooks are designed to a similar standard of production as real sources such as popular magazines (p. 21).

Another approach which seems to be the concern of ESP materials is the learning-centered approach, and according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 14), “we cannot simply assume that describing and exemplifying what people do with language would enable someone to learn it. A truly valid approach to ESP would be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning.” This is, in fact, in line with the principles of CLT which focuses on how learners learn a language, which is a characteristic of both ESP and EGP.
Process-based approaches, including content-based and task-based as well as product-based approaches be it text-based or competency-based are all attributes which are associated with CLT. English language teaching in general and ESP in particular adopt these approaches in an attempt to help learners develop the skills related to language learning and also those related to their own discipline of study.

Given this state of affairs, following Robinson (1991), one can argue that, considering methodological options available in ESP, they can also be available in EGP, and as he states: “Developments within the communicative approach, in particular, have been realized by both EGP and ESP and it is impossible to say who has borrowed from or influenced whom, or whether there have simply been separate but similar developments” (p. 47). Indeed, most activities developed within the CLT tradition can be adopted for any language teaching and learning context, be it general or specific. Simulations, role plays, jigsaw, information-gap, information-gathering, and other activities can all be used in classed adopting the communicative approach.

In this regard, Huckin (1988: 44) asserts that “methodologies of ESP conform to the same model of language learning and teaching process as does any other form of language teaching. That is to say, the basic teaching activities are the following:

- shaping the input
- encouraging the learners’ intentions to learn
- managing the learning strategies
- promoting practice and use”.

Also, when trying to define the ESP teacher, Strevens (1988) has not made any distinction between the ESP and the EGP teacher. For him, an ESP teacher is almost always a teacher of general English who has unexpectedly found himself required to teach students with special needs. This may imply that any teacher of EGP may become a teacher of ESP and the opposite is true (Gálová, 2007; Popescu, 2010).

3. Overall remarks

One may assert that ESP and EGP show more similarities in methodology rather than differences. Indeed, ESP, as Jo McDonough (1984) argues, is not totally different from other areas of language teaching. Any methodology is dominated and determined by the content. The selection of methodological techniques can be related to three areas: a) context: those features of general background likely to influence learning and teaching styles, b) learning environment: the psychological factors of the learning group and its members and c) content: those characteristics of the language system and its purposes relevant to the learning system and its implementation to achieve identified outcomes with a stated environment and context.

However, since ESP materials are most of the time related to adult learners, it is unlikely for the teacher to use methodologies that can be used with only young learners. In other words, the teacher cannot assign some roles which may seem childish for adult learners. For instance, it would be inappropriate or rather inconvenient to introduce some aspects of the audiolingual method as, for example, drilling or mechanical repetition in an ESP context that
demands and requires the use of some specific activities appropriate to that context. Therefore, using, for instance, choral repetition in the ESP language classroom with some adult students reading for an MA or PhD in business or medical English, may result in what we may call “Learning shock”. Hence, teaching methodology should match students’ interests and needs as well as their level of maturity, which are all more clearly defined. The teacher’s task in ESP programs is to teach language, and the text content must be significant to the students. Moreover, the adult learner needs the linguistic skills by which he/she can read, speak, and understand the target language. He/she is not, unlike the ELT learner, interested in values, beliefs which can be incorporated in the term culture (Larouz, 1996).

The interest of an ESP course is in its outcomes. That is the reason why it places absolutely no constraints upon a method of implementation. In other words, there is no necessary content or methodology for an ESP course since the only criterion for course evaluation should be whether what is used works (Crockor, 1981, p. 9). In the course of teaching, teachers need to be eclectic. Sometimes, they must be teacher-centred, other times student-centred, sometimes concerned with the subject matter and still other times concerned with the process.

In methodology, Richards & Rogers (op. cit.) suggest that regardless of orientation, there are three underlying components:

a) A linguistic dimension which justifies which aspects of language will be taught,

b) A psycholinguistic dimension which includes an account of the processes underlying learning, and

c) A teaching dimension which relates to learning experience and tasks and to the role of teachers, learners and materials in the learning system.

McDonough and Shaw (1993) also acknowledge that although simulation is often seen as being central to ESP situations, the task can be related to the learner’s actual or intended occupation. It clearly has its place in the language learning classroom, be it for general or specific purposes. On the other hand, Sturtridge (1977) claims that simulations which are first developed from mainly an EGP perspective can be applied considerably in ESP contexts where simulations are meant to enhance language skills rather than the outcome. Problem-solving, task-based learning, role play and stimulation, case studies, and oral presentations which are particularly associated with powerful ESP situations could equally be used in a general language course and it is difficult to assert that these tasks are ESP-specific and, therefore, have no place in EGP contexts (Popescu, 2010). Any of these tasks will not affect the teaching and the learning process in a general context. Put it differently, using group problem solving, information exchange activities and/or improvisation in any methodology of language teaching would not affect the total teaching and learning operation as long as aims and objectives are set in advance.

Conclusion

Indeed, one may assert that what distinguishes EGP from ESP is the way purpose is defined and the manner of its implementation. Goals, aims and objectives may be different but methodologies used to achieve those goals may not. Equally important, it is the context of
Demystifying the Disparity between ESP and EGP Methodology

Larouz & Kerouad

learning that determines the teaching methodology to be adopted in that situation. An ESP teacher may find it easy to teach in an EGP context but the reciprocal relation is not always necessary true.

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Critical Thinking Development: The Case of the English Course in the CPGE Classes in Meknes, Fes and Kenitra

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Abstract
Critical thinking is generally claimed to be an essential requirement to effective learning and productive living. In a world of rapid change and globalization, skills such as problem solving, decision making and critical thinking are believed to be particularly acute for engineering graduates. While the Moroccan public university has just started to gain interest in critical thinking development (Belghiti, 2012; El Kirat & Belghiti, 2014), the Moroccan engineering education has been fostering such skills for many years now; this has led the English Language Teaching (ELT) guidelines of the Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles (CPGE) in Morocco to clearly emphasize the explicit use of critical thinking instruction in the English courses to develop the students' critical thinking and prepare them for the social and professional life. Accordingly, this study has attempted to investigate the extent to which critical thinking skills are important in the English course in engineering preparatory classes. It has also aimed to investigate the teaching and assessment practices used in the English classes to develop the students' critical thinking skills. Adopting the mixed methods approach, the study focused on the CPGE centers in Meknes, Fes, and Kenitra. The findings of the study revealed that both CPGE students and teachers are aware of the importance of critical thinking at the professional, academic, social and personal levels. The findings also revealed that the teaching and assessment of critical thinking is done in an explicit way in the CPGE English classes.

Keywords: CPGE, critical thinking instruction, critical thinking skills, engineering education
Introduction

Critical thinking has become a crucial skill in the modern era, especially with the spread of global economy and the advancement in knowledge and technology. Elder (2004) reviewed different studies conducted at the level of higher education and which unanimously agree on the importance of developing students’ critical thinking and on making it a priority among faculty members. Experts in the field also argue that the mastery of such skills should not be confined to the school context since the present day situation “has stirred a high demand on effective critical thinking skills at the workplace” as well (Radzi, et al., 2009, p. 213). The mastery of knowledge and know-how are no longer the only requirements to access and success in the workplace. Critical thinking skills like analyzing, synthesizing,…etc have become a necessity for all professions. Such skills are also deemed to be crucial to cope with potential problems at the workplace. In the field of engineering, in particular, these skills are highly required since the profession of engineers relies a lot on the use very precise, logic and reasoned processes of thinking and judgment. Such skills are also particularly acute for engineering graduates since their decisions and managerial skills influence every aspect of human life such as: means of transportation, communication, infrastructure…etc. Being and thinking like an engineers, as Niewoehner (2006) puts it “entails having command” of the following standards: “clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logical validity and fairness”. Radzi et al. (2009) also stress the point that engineers need to be more critical and decisive in making judgments when facing unexpected uncertainties and novel problems.

Accordingly, employers in the field of engineering have grown convinced that excellence and success require more than the mastery of knowledge or the possession of “technical capabilities”. They claim to have no problem in finding candidates with academic and technical qualifications, but they find it hard to find candidates with the disposition of what Idrus et al. (2010) call “soft skills”. With the information technology expansion and office based economy, “Employers want new employees to have strong soft skills, as well as hard skills” (Robles, 2012, p. 453). Companies aspire to hire employees with skills “in communication, the ability to lead and work effectively as a team member, and an understanding of the non-technical forces that affected engineering decisions” (Idrus et al., 2010, p. 258). Thus, employers, nowadays, insist that their employees should “be able to work comfortably with people from other cultures, solve problems creatively, write and speak well, think in a multidisciplinary way, and evaluate information critically” (Idrus et al., 2010, p. 258).

Background

Moroccan engineering schools have been fostering critical thinking skills for many years now. To meet the urgent requirements of the job market, the advancement in knowledge and technology, Preparatory or Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles (CPGE) classes, have as a mission to train and prepare future engineers and managers since their creation in 2004. In addition to mastering the knowledge of the domain, Moroccan engineering schools train students and equip them with certain thinking skills such as problem solving, decision making, and critical thinking. They are considered to be one of the rare educational institutions that prepare Moroccan students to integrate engineering and business schools be it in Morocco or abroad.

The idea of having well-trained and prepared students with the necessary knowledge and skills is reflected in the English Language Teaching (ELT) guidelines of engineering preparatory
classes. The National Charter of Education and Training (October, 1999) is the basic theoretical reference in the Moroccan educational system. The National Charter, in section three of article 9 on “Improving the Quality of Education and Training,” calls for the integration, the mastery and teaching of foreign languages. The ELT Guidelines for CPGE (2007) state that as a document it:

has been drafted in line with the general principles set forth in the National Charter of Education and Training (NCET) which aims to improve the quality of the Moroccan educational system in general and the teaching and learning of English in CPGE schools in particular (p.1).


The assumption underlying the present study is that a successful development of critical thinking in CPGE English classes relies to a large extent on the teachers and students’ awareness of the importance and utility of critical thinking skills as well as the teachers’ effective teaching and assessment practices. The study aims to investigate:

1. The teachers and students’ awareness of critical thinking.
2. The extent to which critical thinking skills are important in CPGE classes.
3. The approach (es) and techniques used in development and assessment of the students’ critical thinking skills in CPGE English classes.
4. The challenges faced in developing critical thinking skills in CPGE English classes.

The study addresses four research questions:

1. To what extent are critical thinking skills important in CPGE English classes?
2. How are critical thinking skills developed and assessed in CPGE English classes?
3. What impact does the promotion of critical thinking skills have on students?
4. What are the challenges faced in developing critical thinking skills in CPGE English classes?

Research Design

The present research is an exploratory study that is based on exhaustive fieldwork making use of different but complementary research instruments. It adopts a mixed method approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures are used so as to complement and crosscheck the findings and ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings.

First, a semi-structured questionnaire is administered to both teachers and students. The teachers’ questionnaire includes thirteen items that aim to elicit data related to the importance and utility of critical thinking, the CPGE teachers’ training in critical thinking, and the teaching and assessment of critical thinking. The students’ questionnaire, on the other hand, is composed of ten items that aim to investigate the importance of learning critical thinking and its utility. Before the administration of the questionnaires to the teachers and students, they were piloted to ensure stability, reliability and consistency. Table 1 provides details about the sample:
Table 1: Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Population</th>
<th>Number of informants</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>CPGE Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd year</td>
<td>Science, Science of Engineering &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Males &amp; females</td>
<td>Meknes: (Moulay Ismail &amp; Omar Ibn El Khattab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd year</td>
<td>Science, Science of Engineering &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Males &amp; females</td>
<td>Meknes, Fes, Kenetra, Rabat, Sale, Settat, Marrakech, Safi, Casablanca, Beni Mellal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study also uses classroom observation as a tool for data collection. Both participant and non-participant observations were relied upon. Observation as an instrument provides direct access to the respondents. In this context, classroom observation offers the opportunity to check the learning and teaching practices used by the teacher in order to develop the students’ critical thinking skills and the interactions in the classroom. Table 2 sums up the details about classroom observation:

Table 2: Classroom observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeted Population</th>
<th>Frequency of Classroom Observation</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>CPGE Centers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>Science, Science of Engineering &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Males &amp; females</td>
<td>Meknes: (Moulay Ismail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Science, Science of Engineering &amp; Economics</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth mentioning that the courses observed involve basically listening, speaking and writing.

A semi structured interview is also conducted as a complementary qualitative instrument to the questionnaire. Teachers and students from different CPGE centers and streams are interviewed to get more clarifications and elaborations on some of the items in the questionnaires. The interview is used either to confirm or refute the data collected through the questionnaire and classroom observation. The issues raised in the interview are related to the importance and utility of critical thinking, teaching and assessment of critical thinking and the challenges that CPGE teachers face, and some recommendations for making critical thinking more successful and effective. Table 2 presents the people interviewed:
The choice for interviewing second year students is motivated by the fact that they have studied English for over a year and have been more exposed to critical thinking.

The data collected is analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The quantitative data are coded and processed through the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS 20) to get the general percentages and frequencies of the respondents’ choices. The qualitative data, on the other hand, are analyzed qualitatively; the interviewees’ opinions are used as testimonies and quotes to support the trends revealed from quantitative data. Finally, the data collected through classroom observation is used as evidence for the qualitative and quantitative findings.

Analysis and Interpretation
The data analysis is undertaken in the light of the four research questions addressed. The results are presented in this section.

1. Definition of Critical Thinking
The classification of the concept of critical thinking is crucial in the teaching and learning processes. CPGE teachers’ and students’ understanding of critical thinking has a direct and indirect impact on the efficiency of the teaching and learning process. The teacher’s view of critical thinking would certainly shape his/her class teaching practices which in turn would shape the students’ learning and understanding of critical thinking. In other words, the students’ view of critical thinking reflects the teachers’ vision of critical thinking.

1.1. Teachers’ Definitions of Critical Thinking
The teachers’ conceptions of critical thinking are reflected in their definitions. The data analysis revealed that CPGE teachers’ understanding of critical thinking can be classified into three categories. The first category of the interviewed teachers defines critical thinking as the ability to question and not to take things for granted. As Souhail R. A male teacher of four years of experience at Omar Ibn El Khattab CPGE Meknes Center states that: “critical thinking is mainly to push students to not to take information for granted”.

The second category of teachers perceives critical thinking as the ability to acquire a set of thinking skills like understanding, analyzing and evaluating information. This is very apparent in the statement of Assim M. A male teacher of two years of experience at Moulay Idriss CPGE,
Fes Center who mentions that: “teaching students how first to understand the information, analyze it and evaluate the information”.

Finally, the last category of the interviewed teachers asserts that critical thinking is the use of a set of criteria to evaluate information. It is a set of criteria used by students to evaluate the reliability of information. The testimony of Youssef El. A male teacher of two years of experience at Mohamed VI CPGE Kenitra Center asserts that:

Critical thinking is the ability to have selective criteria for the information you relay on in different fields concerning your daily life such as how reliable is the information what is its source what criticism you can give to it.

An analysis of the teachers’ questionnaires has confirmed the results of the interviews. Most of the teachers provided definitions of critical thinking that fall within one of the three categories of the definitions of critical thinking presented above.

It should be noted that the interviewed teachers in the first and third category made no reference to Bloom(1964)’s definition which is adopted in the CPGE ELT guidelines. The definitions provided echoed just the teachers’ own understanding of critical thinking only. The second group of the interviewed teachers provided a definition which is close to Bloom’s taxonomy and which refers to the acquisition of a set of skills.

1.2. Students’ Definitions of Critical Thinking

The CPGE students provided also different definitions of critical thinking. The analysis of the data collected from the interviews reveals three different definitions. The first group of students defines critical thinking as the active reaction to received information and to people’s opinions. Interviewee one, Hamza E. an Economics major male student from Moulay Ismail centre, Meknes, states: “so, for me critical thinking is when you receive an information, how you treat it, what will be the reaction: is it passive or active? mean will you be proactive?”.

The second group of the interviewed students perceives critical thinking as the ability to understand and react to received information. For this group of students, critical thinking is a combination of lower order thinking and higher order thinking where the student first understands and then judges so as to have a personal opinion. This can be clearly seen in the following testimony by Abd El Mounaim H. a science major male student from Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes: “[…] critical thinking is the ability to first of all to have the meaning of what you hear and secondly the ability to comment and to give your opinion about what you hear”.

The third group of students considers critical thinking as the ability to analyze information. They reduce the concept of critical thinking to one single skill: analysis. Majd. C., a Science Engineering male student from Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes illustrates this saying that critical thinking is the ability “to analyze different subjects in our life”.

The students’ personal understanding of the concept of critical thinking is a reflection of two years of exposure to critical thinking. Moreover, the students’ conception of critical thinking is related to and influenced by their majors: Science or Economics. Science students tend to be more specific in their definitions of critical thinking; they reduce critical thinking to a set of
skills like understanding, judging, and analyzing; Abd El Mounaim H. a science major male student from Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes claims:

Critical thinking is the ability to first of all to have the meaning of what you hear, and secondly the ability to comment and to give your opinion about what you hear if it is an idea or a sentence.

The Economics option students, however, seem to have a general view about critical thinking. Iman E. an Economics female student from Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes, states: “critical thinking maybe judging people, critical thinking maybe having ideas about people about something before really knowing about the subject”.

The analysis of the first year students’ views of critical thinking can be divided into two trends. The majority of students relate critical thinking to either logical analysis of ideas and information. For example a respondent states that critical thinking involves “being able to think rationally, logically and to criticize writings, idea, concepts...”. It is also viewed as the evaluation and judgment of issues. Once of the respondents argues that in critical thinking “the objective is analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment”.

The fact that both first and second year students share more or less the same view about the concept of critical thinking shows the great influence of their teachers because they deduce the meaning of critical thinking from their teachers’ ways of teaching.

2. Importance of Critical Thinking

The introduction of critical thinking in CPGE English classes is of paramount importance. Its relevance clearly shows in the objectives of the ELT guidelines that prioritize the developing of CPGE students’ critical thinking capacities. The teachers and students conviction of the importance of critical thinking can contribute to their engagement in it. The following subsections investigate the teachers and students’ awareness of critical thinking.

2.1. The Importance of Critical Thinking for Teachers

When asked about the importance of teaching critical thinking to CPGE students, all teachers with no exception, agreed that the introduction of critical thinking to CPGE students is of great relevance. Mohamed Reda G. a CPGE male teacher for four years in Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes, says: “well, of course teaching or introducing students to critical thinking is very important in our era”. This shows that CPGE teachers are fully aware of the importance of critical thinking in the modern era.

The quantitative data also provides further evidence that illustrates the teachers’ support. That is, they either strongly agree (15 teachers) or simply agree (3 teachers) for the introduction of critical thinking in English classes in CPGE. Figure 1 shows the teachers’ deep awareness of the importance of introducing critical thinking in CPGE English courses.
Figure 1: Importance of critical thinking for teachers

The fact of considering the introduction of critical thinking in CPGE classes important would normally be reflected in the teachers’ teaching practices in class. Figure 2 reflects the degree of involvement in critical thinking in CPGE English classes.

Figure 2: Degree of use of critical thinking in CPGE English classes

In Figure 2 nine teachers reported that they always introduce critical thinking in their classes, and that it is part of their lessons, while about eight teachers reported that they often incorporate critical thinking in their lesson. However, one teacher stated that s/he sometimes considers including critical thinking in his/ her lessons.

2.2. The Importance of Critical Thinking for Students

As for the results related to students’ views about the importance of critical thinking, most of them strongly support the statement that critical thinking is very important as the Figure 3 demonstrates:
Indeed Figure 3 shows that 47.6% of the students strongly agree to have a course on critical thinking. This is so significant because it shows the extent to which students are aware of the relevance of critical thinking and their readiness and predisposition to improve their critical thinking skills.

Figure 3 also provides further evidence of the students’ deep conviction of the importance of critical thinking as it illustrates the frequency of the students exposure to critical thinking skills in class.

A close look at Figure 4 reveals that 33.5% of the students said that they have often studied critical thinking; 30.6% report that they have sometimes been introduced to critical thinking. The frequency of studying critical thinking more often helps students increase their critical thinking abilities. Majd. C., an Science Engineering male student from Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes declares: “I think it's really important this term critical thinking; it improve our skill, our way to find solutions to things and to problems in our life”.

### 2.3. Utility of Critical Thinking

The study addressed the utility of critical thinking. Teachers and students were asked about whether they think critical thinking is useful. The points of views of each group are presented in turn.
2.3.1. Teachers’ Point of View

Teachers’ conviction of the necessity and benefits of what they teach motivates them to invest and make efforts to make their teaching more interesting and motivating. This is very apparent in the teachers’ testimonies; Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center declares that: “critical thinking will help them [students] in their daily life not only the classroom”.

All the teachers involve in the study agree that introducing critical thinking in CPGE classes is of a great importance because of its benefits at various levels. According to some CPGE teachers, critical thinking helps students at the academic level; it assists students in their studies in CPGE and later when they join high schools of engineering and business. Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center states that: “without critical thinking they do not do much in their […]studies”. Some other teachers, argue that critical thinking helps students in their future professional life and their careers as one of the teachers puts it: “it helps students to have qualities and abilities that will serve them even in their professional life”. Critical thinking empowers students also at the social level. Teachers argue that critical thinking prepares students to integrate the social life and to be active and responsible citizens. Souhail R. A male teacher of four years of experience at Omar Ibn El Khattab CPGE Meknes Center argues that critical thinking “pushes students to practice and to show themselves as citizens, individuals”. In sum, critical thinking teaching helps students in their daily life. Training in critical thinking allows students to deal with the flux of information they get from the media and social networks. This is clearly advocated by Mohamed Reda G. A male teacher of four years of experience at Moulay Idriss CPGE Fes Center:

The students when they read or use, when they read an article or just watch a video, they need sometimes, there are some ideas we said they are always biased; so teaching them critical thinking will help them in their daily life not only the classroom.

In sum, all teachers agree that teaching critical thinking to CPGE students has many benefits. The utility of introducing critical thinking to CPGE students is not only limited to their academic training but it also helps make them good citizens capable of thinking for themselves and for others and professional future managers or engineers capable of using clear, concise, structured and rational thinking.

The quantitative data confirm the qualitative findings. Teachers were asked to choose the aspects where critical thinking would be more useful for students: personal, professional, social, academic or all the levels. Figure 5 reveals that almost all CPGE teachers think that critical thinking is beneficial to students at all levels.
CPGE teachers strongly believe that the introduction of critical thinking in CPGE classes empowers students for both inside and outside the classroom context and for their future professional life.

**2.3.2. Students’ Point of View**

The data collected from the students provided more details about the benefits of critical thinking. Like their teachers, they all agreed that critical thinking is of great importance and utility to them.

The students consider the professional utility of critical thinking to be the most essential benefit. One of the professional benefits of critical thinking lies in the decision making skill. Hamza E. an Economics major male student from Moulay Ismail centre, Meknes, for example, explains that: “someone who is working and who will be asked to make a decision surely this decision will be based on some information if those information are not credible he will make a wrong decision”. The job market requires active and productive employees, and exposure to critical thinking in CPGE will help students learn to express their opinions and views. Imane Gh. an Economics female student from Moulay Ismail Centre, Meknes declares that: “if you are in the firm you are working in and you always give your opinion the director will be more motivated to ask you about your opinion”.

Indeed, as future engineers and managers, CPGE students may be given the responsibility of directing and managing a “task or a project”. Critical thinking in this case, instills in them basic managerial skills. Critical thinking also develops in the student a sense of team work and collaboration as Badr Eddin R. A Science major male student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes puts it: “to understand his teammate and to collaborate a good relation between members”.

In addition to the professional benefits of critical thinking, second year CPGE students consider that it has personal benefits as well. Firstly, acquiring the skill of expressing one’s opinions is one of the personal benefits of critical thinking; Abd El Mouaim H. A Science major male student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes declares: “of course, the ability to give an opinion about what happens here in the world”. Secondly, critical thinking makes students aware
of their rights and helps them become critical towards wrong acts and behaviors; they become responsible and mature citizens, etc. Imane E. An Economics female student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes mentions that: “now I try to talk about my rights and I criticize what I see it's not right”. Moreover, with the massive flux of information, critical thinking has become a prerequisite tool because as Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center states: “critical thinking will help me to look for the truth in every information”. Accordingly, critical thinking provides them with the ability to evaluate information and not take it for granted. Finally, introducing critical thinking in CPGE instills in the students certain qualities and traits of character like open-mindedness as Badr Eddin R. A Science major male student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes states: “thinking critically make you open minded”.

The results also revealed that the introduction of critical thinking helps them a lot with other subjects. Students report that critical thinking assists them a lot in other subjects like French and economics. Critical thinking helps students get equipped with basic critical thinking skills and the abilities that can be used in other subjects. Amina K. An Economics female student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes claims that: “in economy it's requires a lot of analytic thinking and critical thinking”

A close look at Figure 6 reveals that more than 45% of the students believe that critical thinking helps to some extent in other subjects, and almost 35% of them think that critical thinking helps a lot.

Figure 6: Utility of critical thinking in other subjects

Figure 7 illustrates the findings related to the students’ opinion about the benefits of critical thinking. These findings support the qualitative data. For instance, more than 45% of the students believe that critical thinking helps them a lot in their future professional life. The personal level comes next with almost 27% of the students claiming that critical thinking helps them in their daily life.
3. Teaching and Assessment of Critical Thinking

This section investigates the teaching and assessment of critical thinking. The main objective is to find out about the teachers’ practices in the teaching and assessment of critical thinking. The different subsections will look at the teaching methods, the teachers’ training, the activities used in the teaching of critical thinking, the critical thinking skills developed, the impact of critical thinking teaching, and the challenges faced in critical thinking teaching.

3.1. Traditional Way of Teaching and Critical Thinking Based Instruction

Students were asked to choose which way of teaching they prefer: the traditional way of teaching or the critical thinking based way of teaching. All the interviewed students reported that they prefer critical thinking based teaching. According to them, they learn better in classes that adopt critical thinking based teaching; for example Amina K. An Economics female student from Moulay Idriss CPGE Centre, Fes considers the traditional way of teaching as: “kind of boring for the students and we are just passive persons; we cannot tell our opinions or develop our skills”. Unlike the traditional way of teaching, critical thinking based teaching as Amal E. A Science of Engineering female student from Omar Ibn El Kattab CPGE Centre, Meknes states “encourages the students to express what he or she has in mind and it help all the students to develop all their skills for future life”.

The findings related to the students’ preferences of the teaching method reveal that almost 60% of the students disagree with the statement that traditional way of teaching is better than the critical thinking based teaching as Figure 8 illustrates:
Figure 8: Students’ attitudes about the traditional way of teaching and critical thinking based instruction

The students’ testimonies and the Figure 8 show that the CPGE students prefer classes where critical thinking skills are encouraged and developed.

3.2. Teachers’ Training

Pre-service and in-service trainings plus the exposure to critical thinking at the university are pre-requisites for professional development and effective teaching practices. All the interviewed teachers mentioned that they had never benefited from any training in critical thinking based instruction. As Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center states: “we never receive any training related to this [critical thinking]...all what we do remains personal initiatives”. The statement also reveals that critical thinking based teaching in CPGE classes is based on the teachers’ own understanding of critical thinking.

Figure 9 shows that the majority of CPGE teachers have never been exposed to or benefited from any training, whether pre-service or in-service, in critical thinking based instruction. However, one teacher reported that he has participated in some online courses on critical thinking, but he has never had any formal training at the university for instance.
It is quite clear that the absence of any sort of exposure or training in critical thinking surely affects the quality of teaching.

3.3. Teaching Approach

The ELT guidelines for CPGE classes state clearly that the teaching approach in English classes is the standards based approach and critical thinking. However, the study revealed controversial views as far as the best teaching approach in CPGE English classes.

Some of the teachers stated that they are not aware of any existing approach to teach critical thinking in CPGE; Youssef El. A male teacher of two years of experience at Mohamed VI CPGE Kenitra Center for example stated: “I am not aware of any approach to teaching critical thinking”. Moreover, some of the teachers consider the Communicative Approach as the best teaching approach to develop students’ centeredness and autonomy. Assim M. A male teacher of two years of experience at Moulay Idriss CPGE, Fes Center argues that “[…] communicative approach you know you ask students, it is mainly you leave the students do the job, and you intervene only when it is like students don't find the way to the task”. However, only one teacher said that the best approach to foster critical thinking skills in students is the standard based approach. Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center declares that: “standard based approach is more likely to serve in situation like this because they set standards for students to achieve”.

The existence of a suitable teaching approach helps in the teaching and learning processes. However, the lack of awareness of the existence of a critical thinking teaching approach impacts negatively the teaching and learning processes.

3.4. Activities Used to Teach Critical Thinking

The teaching of critical thinking requires a specific method and approach. The absence of any training in critical thinking based instruction and the teachers’ reliance on personal efforts to teach critical thinking affect their teaching practices in class and has a negative impact on the students’ learning.

The interviewed teachers stated that they tried to use various activities in class to teach critical thinking. Some of them declared that they integrate critical thinking in the teaching of the macro skills, namely reading, writing, speaking and listening. They do not dissociate critical thinking from the other skills; critical thinking is part of every skill taught to students as a teacher claimed: “we cover the four skills reading, listening, and speaking and writing and critical thinking should appear in all these skills”.

A close analysis of Figure 10 reveals that all teachers mentioned that reading is the best way to introduce critical thinking skills to students; Almost 17 teachers revealed that they prefer writing. Only 2 teachers stated that they use translation to teach critical thinking skills.
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Moreover, two teachers stated that they use various activities that require logic and reasoning in speaking. For instance, Mohamed Reda G., a CPGE male teacher for four years in Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes, said that he used in class: “discussion, debates, organized debates […] also try to analyze images […] also work on videos” Students confirmed this since 45% of them reported that speaking is one of the language skills through which their teachers help them develop critical thinking skills.

Classroom observation data reveal that teachers use many activities to foster critical thinking in students. In speaking, questioning was one of the activities that the teacher used to trigger critical thinking in students. The teacher observed, for instance, encouraged students to reflect on each other’s answers and opinions and to express their point of view about their friends’ presentation. He also encouraged students to answer open-ended questions, and to try to investigate and explore other possibilities by asking questions like how about…?

In writing, the teacher made use of team work, peer review and evaluation to encourage students to think critically. Pair and group work is a way to make students interact and work together. In addition to the mode of work, the teacher asked the students to evaluate their peers’ work and ideas.

The teachers’ ways of teaching and using critical thinking in class reflect their personal efforts to introduce critical thinking in CPGE English course and develop it in students.

3.5. Critical Thinking Skills in CPGE Classes

According to the ELT CPGE guidelines, the CPGE teachers are required to introduce students to certain specific critical thinking skills. The guidelines state clearly that CPGE students need to be exposed to Bloom’s cognitive skills; besides, the guidelines add other skills like memorizing, paraphrasing and interpreting.

To ensure a successful development of critical thinking, the teacher needs first to determine the targeted skills. The results of the interviews yielded that some of the interviewed teachers use different critical thinking skills along with the four macro skills like reading and writing. When asked about the skills he wanted to instill in his students, Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center replied: “expressing opinions, being original, solving problems, logic reasoning, analyzing information from different perspectives, listening to and reflecting on their peers’ opinions, and questioning”.

Figure 10: Language skills through which critical thinking is integrated
Teachers were given a number of critical thinking skills and were asked to choose the skills they focus on more in their classes. The majority of them mentioned that they use all the suggested critical thinking skills: analyzing, summarizing, argumentation, synthesizing and evaluating as Figure 11 demonstrates:

![Critical thinking skills taught in class](image)

**Figure 11: Critical thinking skills taught in class**

The use of various critical thinking skills in class is confirmed by the classroom observation. Throughout the lessons of speaking and writing the teacher made use of specific skills, namely defining, comparison and contrast, evaluation and argumentation.

As far as the students are concerned, 50% of the respondents declare that they study analysis more than other skills. Argumentation comes in the second position with about 43% and summarizing in the third place with 34%.

Apparently, teachers and students seem to have different perceptions about the critical thinking skills taught in class. The teachers’ targeted critical thinking skills can be perceived differently by the students. The absence of the use of meta-language in class, when giving instructions can be interpreted differently by the students. This is indeed, what Mohamed Reda G. a CPGE male teacher for four years in Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes, states in his testimony: “we have a text we had to read it and discuss it and after giving the idea of the text we go to the commentary”. Obviously the students are not informed and made aware of the skills they are supposed to use.

### 3.6. Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills

Both continuous and summative assessments are part of the teaching process. Assessment helps to check the students’ learning progress and detects any potential difficulties. The CPGE ELT guidelines stipulate two types of summative assessment, written and oral. According to the CPGE ELT Guidelines (2007), the written exam “should mirror the actual classroom teachings and should also comply with the general format of the Common National Examination” (p. 13). The oral tests, Colles, on the other hand should test the students’ communication skills and higher order skills namely “paraphrasing, commenting, arguing and debating” (p. 14). In addition to the summative assessment, the guidelines insist on continuous assessment; the guidelines state that “the teacher should make room for other components such as the student’s classroom participation, attendance, assignments, and quizzes”. (Op.cit)
The teachers involved in the study reported that they use a mixture of continuous assessment and summative assessment. Mohamed Kh. A male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center argued that presentations allow teachers to assess students’ critical thinking skills namely: defining, analysis, synthesis, explanation, and argumentation. Arguementative writing, according to Souhail R. A male teacher of four years of experience at Omar Ibn El Khattab CPGE Meknes Center, is a way to assess the students’ ability to analyze and argue. The following topic is an example of the types of argumentative writings where students have to show their ability to analyze and argue: “In a paragraph say why you would or wouldn’t prefer to work for the common good of your community”. Commentary writing is another type of writing way where students have to analyze, evaluate and argue for or against experts’ opinions, quotations from texts, proverbs…etc. For instance, the proverb “A bad beginning makes a bad ending” is the type of sayings students have to comment on by using certain critical thinking skills like evaluation and argumentation. The last way to assess the students’ critical thinking is the oral test based on the readings. Students are required, to summarize, analyze, argue, and evaluate texts orally; Youssef El . A male teacher of two years of experience at Mohamed VI CPGE Kenitra Center mentioned that the teacher can test the students via “argumentative questions, debates and Colles sessions”.

As far as the quantitative data are concerned, the teachers were asked to choose the activities they rely on most in their assessment of critical thinking skills. Almost 14 teachers reported that they rely both on reading and writing as the basic activities to assess critical thinking skills. While 12 teachers said they resort to speaking for assessment, 6 teachers prefer listening as the Figure 12 reveals:

![Figure 12: Methods for critical thinking assessment](image)

The choice of the methods for assessment of critical thinking skills goes in perfect alignment with the teachers activities used in classes. The teachers said that they use reading and writing more often as a way to develop critical thinking skills in their classes, and they use the same language skills when assessing their students’ critical thinking skills. The teachers interviewed mentioned that they rely more on writing and presentations and commentary. This latter is the activity that assesses students’ critical thinking in reading.

4. Impact of Critical Thinking Based Instruction

The investigation of the teachers’ opinion about the impact of critical thinking based instruction on the students revealed that they all admitted that the approach has very positive
results. The students who are exposed to critical thinking start to show the ability to express and defend their opinions as Mohamed Reda G., a CPGE male teacher for four years in Moulay Idriss Centre, Fes, states: “I can see their ability to express that opinion and be able to defend that opinion by using plausible arguments”.

Figure 13 clearly shows that the majority of teachers strongly believe in the impact of critical thinking on their students.

Moreover, the interviewed students themselves agreed that they have learned and benefited a great deal from the critical thinking based instruction. They have improved their critical thinking abilities during the two years of exposure to critical thinking. Mohamed Kh., a male teacher of six years of experience at Moulay Ismail CPGE Meknes Center, for instance, claims: “I’ve changed the way I used to think […] critical thinking improves our way of thinking”.

The students’ belief in the positive impact of critical thinking has pushed them to ask for a course on critical thinking. Figure 14 demonstrates that more than 50% of the students are for a course on critical thinking.

5. Challenges Facing Teaching Critical Thinking in CPGE

Effective teaching is based on identifying the challenges that affect the process of learning and teaching. The interviewed teachers listed a number of challenges that affect the introduction and development of critical thinking in CPGE classes. The lack of in-service training and the
number of hours devoted to the English course for science students are some of the main challenges teachers expressed. Youssef El. A male teacher of two years of experience at Mohamed VI CPGE Kenitra Center sums up these challenges in the following statement:

The first obstacle I think is teachers are not trained in teaching critical thinking, or they haven’t been exposed to any modules to enables them to have a close and detailed information about this approach […] students are not having sufficient time of English teaching like you meet students once a week I think it's not sufficient at all to develop critical thinking.

Moreover, lack of technology equipments makes it hard for teachers to teach some skills like listening. Assim M. A male teacher of two years of experience at Moulay Idriss CPGE Fes Center states: “you tend to find problems in terms of finding the equipment [like] the data show [video projector] and the loud speakers”. Finally, class size is another issue that CPGE teachers complained about. It highly affects the teaching process.

Conclusions & Implications

A successful implementation and development of CPGE students’ critical thinking skills is, as it was reported in the teachers’ and students’ data, highly influenced by the teachers and students’ awareness of the importance and utility of critical thinking, their perception of the concept of critical thinking, the teachers training, and the teaching and assessment practices used in class. This awareness boosts the teachers’ and students’ productivity and their motivation to teach and learn.

However, the absence of training in critical thinking teaching affects the teachers’ perception of critical thinking and their in-class practices, This has a direct impact on the students’ understanding of the concept of critical thinking. One of the consequences of the lack of training is the teachers’ ignorance of the efficient teaching approach in CPGE classes. In addition, the teachers’ obsession with the final exam leads to inconsistencies in the teaching and assessment practices in class among teachers. This clearly appears in the focus on all the macro skills except listening. Likewise, the teachers’ assessment of the students’ critical thinking skills is done primarily through reading, writing and speaking, but listening. A far as the critical thinking skills are concerned, CPGE teachers focus on certain critical thinking skills namely analyzing, summarizing and argumentation. Therefore, the teaching and assessment in CPGE is a preparation for the national exam rather than the social, academic, personal and professional life. This reflects the teachers’ obsession with the final exam where listening is absent.

A successful implementation of critical thinking skills teaching that would help students acquire and develop critical thinking skills requires pre-service and in-service training. This training will help teachers have a clear idea about the concept of critical thinking and the different skills that it entails. The training will also introduce teachers to the most efficient teaching approach and methods that would facilitate the students learning and finally improve the assessment of the students’ critical thinking skills.

A unified syllabus prepared by the CPGE teachers’ coordination can help develop the quality of critical thinking teaching and assessment. This syllabus, which is based on the critical
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thinking and standards based approach, can help CPGE teachers design authentic teaching materials. Additionally, the syllabus would not only ensure that all CPGE teachers adopt the same approach and teach using the same materials, but it would also specify the critical thinking skills that CPGE students need to develop and use at the personal, social, professional and academic levels. In short, the syllabus would be designed according to and in respect of the CPGE ELT guidelines.

It is worth mentioning that although the findings of this study confirm the extent to which both CPGE students and teachers are aware of what critical thinking is and the extent to which they think it is important and useful, and although the teaching and assessment of critical thinking is done in an explicit way in the CPGE English classes, more data need to be collected in order to assess the students’ critical thinking skills in the CPGE English classes and to investigate the extent to which students are actually capable of manifesting different critical thinking skills.

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References:


Abstract
Buried beneath the conversation or, if preferred, the simmering debate about if and how we should be teaching English - in some form, to some end – around the world, is the fact that many of our students are not the least bit interested in what we have to teach them. Should we care? At the heart of the problem, and of this paper, is motivation. Should we not look at our students first, rather than continue to hand down and implement policy from on high, from elsewhere? Should we try to imagine what our students’ future professional and personal lives will be like and how one of the current ‘World Englishes’ might be of use to them, one day? A great motivator is culture, in its broadest sense. This paper nods in passing to the theme of ‘interdisciplinarity,’ considered vital, as well as to that of ‘teaching and learning in the digital age,’ the latter seen as a boon not a bane. The author, nonetheless, feels piques of conscience about the stealth role of English in what is, gaily and glibly, called ‘globalized contexts’. What if our pedagogic success comes back and bites us? What if, when we succeed in motivating our students, we are actually playing a dangerous game of acculturation? Inside the lining of success in English, have we sewn cultural hegemony? This paper suggests possible equipoises and pragmatic safeguards.

Keywords: acculturation, cultural hegemony, globalized English, motivation, World Englishes
Motivation by Stealth?

The writer feels sure that the insights gained in her English-teaching experience in diverse countries can be usefully shared. Having worked in schools without electricity, in universities with electricity but a ban on photocopying, and in various other challenging locations, some of which were in Western Europe; her current post is in a private women’s university in Saudi Arabia. Here, she has not only a fair degree of academic freedom but also cutting-edge technology and small classes. There’s also student boredom. And poorly written English is more and more common. The writer thought she saw a connection.

Teaching Millennial Students

Those of us in the professorial generation, who speak several languages, have difficulty understanding why our millennial students lack motivation in their language studies. Wouldn’t we have loved to be studying at this time, with all the digital resources, the cheap travel, the ‘apps’ for when you arrive somewhere exotic – how motivated we would have been! And yet, many of our undergraduates don’t even seem very keen on reading.

There is an ongoing conversation or simmering debate – depending on one’s standpoint – about whether we should keep force-feeding English as a foreign language to our pupils and students or whether we should just give up. Perhaps not everyone needs to know foreign languages, perhaps not everyone needs to have excellent English. It might be a waste of resources and, worse, of a student’s time to insist on them learning English well. This subtle handwashing away of the issue can be described as elitism. It can also be countered by saying that school pupils and undergraduates are probably not in a position to know ‘what’s good for them’; they may need English later on in their future careers or further studies. They are likely to change careers (if they find one in the first place) more than once in their lives. It’s our duty therefore to teach English to them now, just as we might teach them about correct nutrition or first aid.

We can’t force them to learn English; it’s hard to force a means of communication on people who don’t actually need it to communicate right now. If we have to persuade these young people that they ought to learn English, then we come up against the notion of motivation. This brings us full circle, back to what our students actually want or, at least, to what they are interested in.

In the writer’s own teaching experience in the Middle East, culture in its broadest sense does interest our undergraduates. If we cast our net wide enough, we can find something that interests them, something that will hook them into the English language net. When this writer says, “culture in its broadest sense” – and here she posts a warning here to easily shocked academic colleagues – ‘cultural’ topics in her materials may well include football, cooking and fashion. What matters is the quality of the sources used (The New York Times, The Economist, National Geographic, to name a few) and hence the quality of the writing.

For instance, this Instructor manages to teach a course called the Structure and Function of the English Language, without putting students to sleep, while actually getting them interested in reading quality English - for the first time in their lives, in most cases. Page layouts are faithfully reproduced, including all images – which are very important - as the visual memory
helps with other associations (memories, understanding) in the brain. This is explained for my Phonetics course (p 7-8), where I also use images: faces. However, we may well begin our Structure and Function course with a recipe (Mark Bittman, *New York Times*) for simple homemade tomato soup or Spanish omelette, accompanied by a how-to video. The writer has discovered that, with this generation, we need to return to why we humans ever began to read and write in the first place. We cannot assume that our students will see any purpose in reading-to-learn unless we demonstrate one to them. Perhaps this is because they have such easy access to all sorts of tidbits of information, constantly – 24/7 as we say. There would be too much to read anything in depth – or even at all - so why bother beginning? They’re saturated. We can help them choose what to read, or at least skimread; we can influence their browsing habits. (We don’t need to mention that to browse dates from old German and that their word browser was first used in 1982.)

As mentioned above, our university is well-equipped, technologically speaking. However, the greatest disservice we could do this generation of undergraduates would be to use this technology to teach them online, subtracting the teacher’s physical presence and guidance from the equation. We would then hold these young people at a distance; in fact, you and I, dear colleague, would become just another two faces that appear on our students’ phone-screens, to have their thumbs pass over us before finding something better to Bluetooth their friends. In all the materials carefully selected by the author (and, mostly, renewed each semester), there is something interesting or vital to learn about the world, their future world, with which they’ll have to cope but also where they will enjoy themselves, travel, cook for friends and much more. Humans began to read and write, in the first place, to pass on useful information, such as survival skills (cooking, not just fighting), as well as record triumphs and disappointments.

In the above-mentioned Structure and Function course, this Instructor also unashamedly simplifies as much as possible. Or perhaps the verb ‘streamline’ is preferable here because ‘simplify’ may have gathered some pejorative senses along the road; on the other hand, people are always streamlining businesses and processes and these tend to be seen as positive actions. The author should point out that each of her courses is run like a very tight ship, so as to avoid opening a breach that might let the learning-by-heart bogeyman slip in. She designs and teaches applied courses, where the essentials are well-covered and can be understood and applied (her watchwords) by the average student who has near-perfect attendance. The aim is that these students should not only pass the course but get enough out of it to improve their written English, their English-Arabic translation and their reading (from the point of view of understanding as well as speed).

The students’ reading in English improves because they are obliged by the design of the course itself to read at a quality level (as mentioned: *The New York Times, The Economist, National Geographic*…) even if they’re looking for an easy approach, which they usually are. This Instructor guarantees them that all evaluations (two quizzes, the Midterm and the Final Exam) will use material from the articles that are uploaded to Black Board – and nothing else. This promise is written into the syllabus (also posted), repeated in class several times in the first weeks of the course, then reiterated at opportune moments, which the reader is free to imagine. Even those who would try to memorize the course materials – fifteen or so interesting articles,
some lengthy, from the international quality press – will do themselves an immense amount of good.

When the author first sat down to write this streamlined Structure and Function course, which by the way is a core course that all our English & Translation programme students must take, she looked back on all her international experiences of what EFL students from various language backgrounds find hard in the language. She has taught people whose mother-tongue background was either: Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, Danish, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish or Turkish. As she tells her students (it reassures them), English is a deceptively difficult language to master. Not only has it borrowed, or even made up, Franco-Latin words and inserted them into a Germanic base; it often doesn’t obey what might reasonably be considered its own rules. (Compare this behaviour to Arabic or German, to name but two.) Even the homey Germanic-sounding words have bits that fell off in transit: what happened to the rest – the other persons and tenses - of the verbs kann and müssen?

The writer came up with a minimal list of universal difficulties to be tackled in English, including for Arabic-speaking students. These little challenges in English included of course the usual suspects, such as delexical verbs, the modals and phrasals. The others can be seen in the sample syllabus in Appendix 1. (It’s interesting to mention in passing that even the writer’s German Erasmus students in Paris found English phrasals tricky – although part of the German fabric of English, it seems they don’t exactly match the German morphemes.) A minimal list of ‘things that are special to English’ was strictly kept to, as otherwise the students feel once again overwhelmed, whatever their background. It can be tempting for teachers to stuff so much into a syllabus (like a fancy cushion), which has to be signed off on by their Chair, Dean, Provost and, ultimately, might be seen by the national accrediting body; however, it’s self-defeating to overstuff a syllabus because students are discouraged once more by the sheer volume of ‘things to remember’ and actually learn very little, if anything. Many of our students in Jeddah have spent years rote-learning in schools and to this psychological prop they will return, if we don’t structure their learning via depth yet absorbable modules. This has to be the baseline of student-centred teaching and learning: write syllabi for them, not for the management or accreditors. Syllabi are supposed to be guides for teachers and their students, adaptable each semester, not jam-packed showcases.

To avoid exposing her students to the temptation of memorizing theory, this Instructor has specially designed the department’s Phonetics course as an applied one (another core course to be taken by all students in the programme). Using recent discoveries in psycholinguistics, which are briefly explained to the class, students are led to associate a particular accent with the speaker’s face. This is an easy yet solid approach since it is how we learn our mother tongue as babies and also how we differentiate the various speakers in our lives: through recognizing their faces, beginning with our mother’s. By the end of the semester, students can identify at least 12 different native English-speaker accents, through associating them with the photo of the Language Consultant used for each one. Outside of the class workshop sessions, when they see a screenshot of the speaker’s face, the students can hear his or her voice in their head. What happens in the students’ brains when they see the screenshot of a speaker, put in more scientific language is this: “crossmodal neural circuits that have been shaped by previous associative learning become activated” (von Kriegstein & Giraud, 2006)
The short films of native English-speakers for use in the Phonetics course are carefully selected by the Instructor on YouTube. During the semester, students manage to learn most of the signs in the IPA, International Phonetic Alphabet, through frequent practice in class workshops. All evaluations test their knowledge of these accents through sets of four multiple choice questions (MCQ) written only in IPA sound symbols. The Midterm and Final Exams are structured in such a way that it’s possible to pass, through doing well in the MCQ section alone, which tests applied knowledge of the various accents studied to date. (See Appendix 2 for a sample question layout.) And, of course, in order to do well in the MCQ section, you have to attend every single class. (Incidentally, some students become totally obsessed with the IPA and phonetics and phonology. These ones get A grades seemingly without effort and have, in fact, been successfully poached to the Linguistics stream.)

Although this writer regularly sees heavily-laden colleagues, in her department and others, navigating the corridors with armfuls of photocopies for their students, she has to say that she has been digital for over a decade. It’s important that students are able to read over their materials on their phones and even - if they get into the habit (the Instructor’s intention) – that they also do their thinking and prescribed homework using their phones. The professorial generation perhaps sees these millennials as only clicking in and out of games or YouTube on their devices. They may even ban phones and tablets in their classroom. In this Instructor’s class, it’s obligatory to have an i-phone, a smart phone or a tablet that is charged and ready for use. Students may be asked to quickly check the meaning in English (synonyms) of a specialized term used in passing or for the Arabic equivalent. The writer has found (she teaches standing up, wandering round the classroom from time to time) that her students mostly use their phones to open the page in Black Board that they’re working on together. In fact, if her students are seen concentrating on YouTube videos somewhere on campus, imitating ‘funny’ accents, they’re probably preparing for their Phonetics class. However, if you recall, the author did mention earlier that we’re blessed with small classes at our university. Thus, working on this Instructor’s courses is something else that the students get into the habit of doing on their devices, sometimes in small cooperative groups, outside of class.

Similarly to the webmaster of a site where you want visitors to keep coming back regularly, the author makes sure that there’s a link posted to something new in the Black Board materials, for each course, several times a week. Students do click into these posted links, on their phones, as it has become part of their daily routine. Students have also confided that, between classes or in the car (women have to be driven in Saudi Arabia and can easily spend an hour in transportation, each way), they occasionally click into the original hyperlinks, which are left as-is in all the articles used in class, and read more about the topic and related stories.

**Interdisciplinarity**

This detail brings us to the idea of interdisciplinarity. Although the writer is teaching only Linguistics courses (and, at times, stealthily trying to poach students into her stream from the other two in the department), she sincerely believes that each course should be part of a holistic education. For instance, the *National Geographic* articles used are beautifully written and illustrated. (See a question from a Structure and Function Final Exam, in Appendix 3.) They encourage students to want to travel later, to find out more about the rest of the world and its peoples, its ecology – and also its problems. Many professors would be surprised, if they
scratched the surface, at how many gaps in their knowledge millennials have; and the writer suspects this is not limited to our region. Some speakers (“Language Consultants”) used in the Phonetics course were chosen because they had, for instance, a particular American accent for students to study; however, in addition, the subject matter of the interview was *Facebook and Eating Disorders*, by a Psychology Professor named Pamela Keel (see References and also Appendix 4.)The interview transcript was also uploaded onto Black Board, with the original hyperlinks still in place, as well as the “Further reading” and “You might also like” links so that students could pursue these topics further if they wished. They are not tested on these items, of course, only on the woman’s voice; but the Instructor finds – in a counter-intuitive way – that allowing them to ponder other (outlying) topics actually gets their attention onto what we’re doing in class. This may be due to the multi-tasking attention span of a generation growing up online or it may simply be the most recent iteration of humanity’s eternal adaptability.

**Tiptoeing out of the Inner Circle**

Near the beginning of this paper, it was stated which quality publications are deliberately used in all the writer’s classes; this is so that the English model students see most is the very best. The writer often tells her students that, if some days all they do is read (because they have course overload, they’re tired) from these sources, it will still do them some good. The model then is either the American Standard or the British Standard.

However, there has been a quiet revolution in the Phonetics course. It may not seem immediately relevant but it should be mentioned that 25% of the students in our university are non-Saudi and a significant proportion of this 25% are not Arabic-speakers. Many of this last group are from – or their parents are from – India or Pakistan. In fact, a good number of these students were born expats: they’re Third Culture Kids (*TCKs*: see References, under Useem), who need some sense of belonging. Two years ago, the author took the decision to feature a Standard Indian English accent in her Phonetics course as there was an Indian student enrolled; the following semester it was the turn of the Standard Pakistani English accent. It had seemed somehow awkward (readers will recall that we have small classes at our university) to spotlight only the ‘usual’ native English-speaker accents: the Standard American, RP, contemporary London, Ulster, Éire, Australia, South Africa, educated Scots (this writer)… and to ignore the unique voice of this Indian student or that Pakistani student, especially as they always had their hands up fast to answer all the questions. It seemed this Instructor was still standing firmly inside Kachru’s Inner Circle (Kachru 1985). Reflecting on her experience of conferences at her university and elsewhere, it seemed that non-traditional (non-standard?) accents were going to be part of international conferences from now on and, since many of our students go on to become translators, interpreters or journalists, it would be useful for them to be exposed to a wider variety of accents that they would definitely hear later.

One evaluation element in the Phonetics course being described is a Personal Project, or PPP, (students choose their topic, which the Instructor must approve). In their PPPs, students started choosing topics such as the Egyptian accent in English, the French accent in English, the Latino accent in English, the Russian accent… In class, we also learn to distinguish the typical sounds of French, Spanish, Italian, Arabic and any other language the students are interested in that semester. The key word, of course, is *interested*. This is what motivates them to work. One semester, we touched briefly on Korean and, in another, we listened to Mandarin Chinese tones.
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because one student each time was self-studying the language or was very interested in it (or the culture). Thus, in addition to the new synapses created for the various English accents we do, others are created in their brains (we used to say their ears were fine-tuned) for hearing and analyzing the sounds of languages other than English. Why not just stick to English and drill them on that? Well, once again, it’s a counter-intuitive ruse: sparking their curiosity in other, more ‘exotic’ languages brings them back to the fold to perform phonetic tasks on English. As a bonus, some students get the chance to shine in class because they know something (anything, really) about a different language, which they can share with the others.

So, with all this diversity in her Phonetics course, why was this Instructor still using, in her other courses, press articles and documentaries produced for the most part in the American Standard or the British Standard, with occasional selections from Australia? Well, the writer is still using them and she is not yet certain of the answer. There may be a difference, which we need to tolerate, between someone’s oral English and that person’s written English. Would it be better for these students, and perhaps all those across the Middle East and North Africa, to write in one of the forms of World English available? After all, these ‘World Englishes’ have been under study by linguists for decades already according to Jenkins (2009).

World Englishes: Which Boundaries?

However, for Jenkins the scope of World Englishes (WE) includes all local English varieties, wherever they come from in Kachru’s three circles. One example of a WE could be Japanese English, another could be Egyptian English. Would it be more appropriate to teach these, in their respective contexts, rather than one of the Inner Circle varieties? Language professors might respond that “boundaries have to be set somewhere.” Indeed they do: the question is where. Perhaps by imagining the boundaries pushed too far, we can decide to which point we want to bring them back. Let’s step further outside of the Inner Circle, shall we, towards the ‘wild side.’ How about letting our students avoid the pains of learning EFL, English as a foreign language, altogether and instead freely use ELF, English as a lingua franca instead? ELF is used either solely among non-native speakers of English (often with different mother-tongues) or in situations where the English native-speakers (ENLs) are in the minority. For example, on the fringes of an international conference, we might well find people conversing in English as a lingua franca though we might be surprised to hear it spoken from the podium. ELF is said to be creative and to behave like other variants in language-contact situations (think of rule-borrowings, adjustments for comprehension). According to Jenkins (201), there are “regularization processes” that (nervous professors may want to look away, two lines below) could involve the widening use of uncountables as countables and the non-marking of the third person singular. In short, ELF-speakers would have no qualms saying: informations, advices, as well as she go and he hope among other things such as (we imagine) dranked and thinked.

We suspect that these creative ELF neologisms might be a bridge too far for most teachers of English in the Middle East and North Africa. Yet, the Americans already pluralize accommodations and the author harbours a secret liking for dranked and thinked. (Wouldn’t it be good if English could evolve more quickly and simplify itself faster?)

Smooth Acculturation?

The simplest answer to where we should set the boundaries for which World English to teach is surely to stay within the sanctity of the Inner Circle, the one that expands only slowly if
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at all. It’s guarded by its gatekeepers, who include the Inner Circle publishers. But, shouldn’t we ask ourselves (even if don’t teach Sociolinguistics per se), how come English is the global language? We, the professorial class may know why (we ought to), but our students probably take it for granted. English has no particular merit as compared to other languages; its supremacy, further strengthened by the Anglo-dominated internet, stems from politico-economic power. The rest just flowed naturally. As one TED-speaker, Jay Walker, put it:

“The world has a new mania, a mania for learning English. ... Your native language is your life. But, with English, you can become part of a wider conversation, a global conversation about global problems. [...] English is becoming the language of problem-solving.”

[He then compares the magnitude of this turning point for English to the harnessing of electricity and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and continues:]

“English represents hope for a better future, a future where the world has a common language to solve its common problems”

This video is shown in the writer’s Sociolinguistics course, when discussing one of our topics: ‘Globalization and Varieties of English.’ Walker’s speech is counter-balanced with another TED clip, by a different English-speaker (Patricia Ryan, based in the Middle East), who wonders whatever happened to translation. The main TEDsite still carries her speech and provides this introduction:

“Patricia Ryan is a longtime English teacher who asks a provocative question: Is the world’s focus on English preventing the spread of great ideas in other languages? In other words: What if Einstein had to pass the TOEFL? It’s a passionate defense of translating and sharing ideas.”

That is, we should be able to think in whatever language we like and have our thoughts competently interpreted or translated, if and when we wish. By compelling our students to learn English, trying to get them to think in English (for example, through total immersion methods) and praising them when they do: are we influencing their thinking? Are we trying to change their mindset to an Anglophone one? Ricoeur (1991), writing on science and ideology said:

“The interpretative code of an ideology is something in which men live and think, rather than a conception that they pose. In other words, an ideology is operative and not thematic. It operates behind our backs, rather than appearing as a theme before our eyes. We think from it rather than about it.”

Back in 1998, Swales wrote in favour of what he called vernacular publishing. He said that for particular fields, it wasn’t a “sensible policy” for non-English speaking scholars to concentrate on competitively publishing in refereed English journals. He insisted (Swales p 1) that:
"developing local research and publication traditions is clearly of benefit to many parties, from government ministers, to those concerned with environmental issues, to agricultural extension officers, and social workers."

His case study was Malaysia, where society works differently – even the universities operate differently, each being specialized in a field or fields – without, it seems, the cut-throat competition rife in what we call the Anglo-American world with its ranked, specialized journals. As Swales explains (p 1):

“Instead, there is concern to maintain contact with a more multi-disciplinary readership, and to justify the research project per se, rather than to argue a particular viewpoint or to test a particular hypothesis.”

He adds that Malaysian researchers usually avoid negativism in their articles due to the structure of Malaysian higher education (individually specialized universities).

Moving to a different continent, in Finland, Anna Mauranen (1993) wrote:

“Insofar as rhetorical practices embody cultural thought patterns, we should encourage the maintenance of variety and diversity in academic rhetorical practices -- excessive standardization may counteract innovation and creative thought by forcing them into standard forms” (Mauranen p 172)

She was particularly interested in the reflexivity of Anglo-American academic writing, by which she means how the author presents his/her text to the reader - even leads them through it. She also calls this the “self-awareness of the text.” In Anglo-American academic discourse, seemingly innocent connectors such as however, rather, in other words are added to the mix. When this author read through her examples (which she presented to different readers in her study), she did find herself reading faster. Apparently, the texts also seemed more “authoritative” to Mauranen’s readers, as indeed they did to this author. However, it turns out that, to Finns, “authoritative” may not be a positive concept: they see authority as “patronizing and constraining.” (Mauranen p 166)

Furthermore, what she terms high level reflexive text (ie, with many ‘helpful’ discourse links) is likely to be seen by Finns as “didactic, interfering, and patronizing.” Even the structure of the paper is quite different when written by a Finnish academic. Finns begin an article or report with a good deal of background information and leave the reader to make up his/her mind; whereas the Anglo-American style is to use reflexive discourse, as Mauranen says: “to establish the common ground between writer and reader.”

From just these two examples, one in Europe and one in Asia, we might hypothesize that, elsewhere in the world, other academics/researchers who have non-native English are forced to fit into an Anglo-American mould, even if they must do so solely to succeed in a career at home. We might ask ourselves how many creative, divergent ideas and concepts the world has missed due to this pressure to publish in English, and write in a certain way.

Even Linguistic theories, particularly those concerning language acquisition and language learning, have been dominated by North American universal theorists and structuralists for at least two generations. There have always been alternative theories, however; those of Whorf, Bakhtin and Merleau-Ponty, for instance, which remain ‘non-mainstream’ (Dufvu 2004). The
latter three didn’t collaborate but, separately, came to similar conclusions. These involved according to Dufvu:

“thesituatedness of cognitive and linguistic experiences, which thus implies also their focus on particularity. The perspective that is afforded us by our individual life history and by our cultural and linguistic environment shapes the way we are.”

This view, as Dufvu explains, “stresses the importance of variation and diversity in human cognizing.” (Dufvu, p. 135). The three theorists above and others did not follow the dominant, structuralist views of the 20th century but were closer to those found in anthropological linguistics. They did not see language and thought as being separate from each other (Dufvu, p. 136). Thus, it would follow that we are altering our students’ minds by having them use a different language to do at least some of their thinking.

What if our pedagogic success comes back and bites us?

As the author has said throughout, she works constantly to motivate her students. She has her own brand of immersive English-learning for her Linguistics courses, which weaves in all kinds of interesting topics – in order to be attractive and motivating. Could your author be guilty of Anglo-American acculturation? She feels obliged to answer: inadvertently, yes. It is a risk. Her written sources are all Inner Circle. However, she makes sure that the majority of the topics covered are not. Either they are of wide interest (‘universal’ has worn thin) or particular interest - that is, set in a part of the planet students don’t know very well. For instance, the original text for the ‘Mammoth’ article we used in the Structure and Function class (one sentence appears in a parsing question in Appendix 5 – the last sentence), was about Russian scientists discovering a well-preserved mammoth in Siberia. (There was a Russian student in the class.) When possible, pieces about the Arab world are used, provided they’re interesting and well-written; for this, they would have to come from the quality media in the Anglophone countries. This, then, is the equipoise: best quality written English must be used, but should be balanced with wide-interest content and Arab-world content (when available). To avoid sewing cultural hegemony into the lining of our fine coat along with the ‘success in English’ label, we may need to consciously avoid handling too many Anglo-American topics just for the sake of it. (Unless we’re teaching a civilization course.) After all, a global citizen – something to which our students might aspire – isn’t automatically an Anglo-American. The safeguards, then, against inadvertent cultural hegemony are pragmatic and also require more effort and time spent by the professor. But it’s so much more interesting to teach!

Conclusion:

Millennial students need to be ‘hooked’ into learning English by stealth motivation that contains a risk of acculturation, which may be undesirable. They are attracted to work in the writer’s applied Phonetics course using techniques based on neuroscience. While the latter course steps lightly out of Inner Circle Englishes, the other Linguistics courses remain firmly rooted within that Circle because students’ written English must meet an Inner Circle standard. The siren song of rote-learning has to be resisted and can be, through teaching absorbable, in-depth modules that are interesting in themselves. Syllabi should thus be written solely for the students’ benefit. The physical presence in class of Instructors as guides is vital, though course materials should be digitally available to students for browsing and practice 24/7 and hence part...
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of their online habits. The equipoise, to motivate and educate students but not acculturate them, is to use best-quality written English that is pragmatically balanced with wide-interest content and also Arab-world content, when available.

About the author:
Dr. Guillaume, who has degrees in French, International Relations, Language Teaching, EU Law & Applied Linguistics, has served in higher education for 25 years, parallel to a career in translation & interpreting. Her main interests are Neurolinguistics and human learning processes.

References
Ricoeur, P. (1991) From Text to Action, Essays in Hermeneutics II. Northwestern University Press. (My quote is from this English translation, not the original.)
# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1 sample Structure & Function syllabus: 3 hours per week**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductory. Gerunds &amp; Participles with -ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gerunds &amp; Participles with –ing&lt;sup&gt;②&lt;/sup&gt;. Aspects&lt;sup&gt;③&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Aspects&lt;sup&gt;④&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Articles &amp; other determiners – with or without? Count/ non-count nouns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Passives can't be that hard, can they? Review sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Review sessions Midterm Exam: Tuesday 28Oct classtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Phrasalverbs vs Franco-Latin: a balance or a battle? Neologisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Modals – verbs with bits missing? Delexical verbs: so useful - but why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Noun clauses&lt;sup&gt;①&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Noun clauses&lt;sup&gt;②&lt;/sup&gt; Adverb clauses. Adjective clauses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Detecting Adverb clauses, Adjective clauses and Noun Clauses.&lt;sup&gt;①&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Detecting Adverb clauses, Adjective clauses and Noun Clauses.&lt;sup&gt;②&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Special topics&lt;sup&gt;①&lt;/sup&gt;: new topics and/or review of areas requested by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Special topics&lt;sup&gt;②&lt;/sup&gt;: as week 14. Also Review Tutorials (group or individual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 &amp; 25 Dec</td>
<td>Study Days: No class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/28 Dec</td>
<td>Final Exams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix 2: Sample testing material from the Phonetics course**

The same image associated with this accent appears in all tests and exams.

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**Highlight the single correct transcription for a Northern Irish (Ulster) speaker of English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>(a) /peidʒ/</th>
<th>(b) /padʒ/</th>
<th>(c) /pi:dʒ/</th>
<th>(d) /paizʃ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paige</td>
<td>(a) /paizʃ/</td>
<td>(b) /θaizʃ/</td>
<td>(c) /θaiŋz/</td>
<td>(d) /θaŋz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>(a) /θaiŋz/</td>
<td>(b) /θaizʃ/</td>
<td>(c) /θaiŋz/</td>
<td>(d) /θaŋz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>(a) /du/</td>
<td>(b) /dʊə/</td>
<td>(c) /da/</td>
<td>(d) /doʊs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>(a) /vɔɾər/</td>
<td>(b) /wɔtə/</td>
<td>(c) /wɔɾər/</td>
<td>(d) /wɔɾər/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Sample materials with images for the Structure & Function course
This is an extract from a Final Exam KEY in Structure & Function of the English Language. The image was present in the text every time we analyzed parts of this text for various purposes, during the semester. Similarly to other examples, the visual memory brings to the students’ consciousness other associations (from class analysis), without rote-learning and memorization.

**QUESTION EIGHT Noun Clauses**
Carefully highlight ONLY the complete Noun Clauses in the following extracts (do not highlight anything else). Also mark whether each Noun Clause is a Subject, Object or Complement: “S” “O” or “C.” Use any colour of highlighter.

Here, he talks about the “master switch of life” and *why* we’re all born to dive, *what* it feels like to plunge 3,000 feet in a homemade submarine, and *how* a group of amateur researchers on the island of Reunion may one day be able to talk with whales.

*NatGeo*

Appendix 4: Sample teaching material from the Phonetics course
From the Academic Minute (see References)

This is a screenshot from the interview with Professor Keel, the link to the film always being placed in a footnote. Students listen to her speak and note the particularities of her accent, skimreading the transcript if they wish. Voices
and personalities are chosen to attract the students; other information (eg. recent research on eating disorders) is
noticed by them while they listen several times.


Appendix 5: Sample colour-coded parsing tests

The same colours are used throughout the semester – highlighters in class or on phones for speed and thus lots of
practice. The brain starts to see and to remember patterns. In 9.1, the items are already boxed. In 9.2, students must
do the complete analysis.

9.1 Use our statutory colours to carefully highlight the boxed text below, into Subject, Verb and also Object -
Complement – Adverb, if there are any.

Harvard University researcher George Church is hoping to combine DNA from Buttercup the mammoth with modern-
day elephants. Carbon dating was used to determine her age.
Past mammoth carcasses have looked exceptionally well-preserved. So far, the team hasn't found a complete copy of the mammoth's genome. But Buttercup's tissue has revealed some very long fragments. Potentially, these could be pieced together to recreate the genome. Still, researchers are continuing to hunt for a complete copy.

9.2 Use our statutory colours to carefully highlight the Subject, Verb and also Object - Complement –
Adverb, if there are any.

Eurostar was once the marvel of international train transport. Now, it sometimes feels rather antiquated. With its rival Thalys, in 1st class to Amsterdam, you get a couple of drinks, a full meal, and free wifi.
Paris’s all-electric car-sharing scheme is pretty interesting. You can use Autolib with any driver’s license. Registration takes less than 15 minutes at one of the numerous Autolib booths.
The female mammoth, nicknamed Buttercup lived about 40,000 years ago.
A Developmental Approach to the Use of Critical Thinking Skills in Writing: The Case of Moroccan EFL University Students

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Abstract
Training students to think critically is one of the most serious challenges that face Moroccan higher education, with experts being in unanimous agreement that critical thinking should be part of any instructional practice. In actual fact, a number of studies have come to the conclusion that students who have the ability to provide a critical assessment of the knowledge and information they receive—be they inside or outside of the classroom—can become critical thinking individuals, successful professionals, and, in the long run, active citizens. Given the importance of critical thinking in EFL teaching, the present paper purports to investigate the extent to which academic level affects the development of critical thinking skills among Moroccan EFL learners. In order to come up with a developmental account of critical thinking among these learners, two tests were administered to 60 students that were divided into three groups of 20 students. The first test, the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test, targeted argument evaluation skills, while the second test, argumentative essay writing, targeted argument construction skills. The results have been quantitatively analyzed so as to (i) provide tentative understanding of the current state of critical thinking in Moroccan higher education in general and among Moroccan EFL students in particular, and (ii) examine the influence that academic level and language proficiency have on the progress of critical thinking. The analysis will help us draw implications for EFL teaching methods and curriculum development in Moroccan higher education. Suggestions are made with regard to the integration of critical thinking in EFL instruction.

Key words: argument evaluation, argument construction, Critical thinking, EFL students. Language proficiency
I. Introduction

Memorization and passive learning are no longer cited among the learning objectives of higher education as there is an increasing awareness that education should set critical thinking at its top priority. More educators consider that critical thinking is an “educational ideal” (Siegel, 1985) whose integration in higher education entitles students to “question, challenge, and to demand reasons and justifications for what is being taught” (Siegel, 1985, p. 71). Higher education is supposed to produce graduates who are able to think critically about the knowledge they have obtained along with the topics and issues they face in their everyday life (Schaefersman, 1991). University graduates are expected to identify problems, suggest alternatives and solutions, and predict consequentiality of solutions with respect to personal, economic, and political issues (Lipman, 1985; Beyer, 1995; Andrews, 2010). Unfortunately, universities exhibit deficiency when it comes to instilling critical thinking into students. Pithers and Soden (1991, cited in Ozmen, 2008, p. 121) conducted a study to look into the difference between the critical thinking skills of graduate and non-graduate students; surprisingly, no significance difference between the two groups was observed.

Given the paramount significance of critical thinking in higher education, the present study aims to draw the attention of educators in general and Moroccan educators in particular to the current state of critical thinking and how academic levels affects its development.

II. Review of the Literature

A succinct review of the concept of critical thinking and its component is presented before introducing the methodology adopted in the present study and the results it yielded. It should be pointed out that there are a number of issues that are related to critical thinking; however, the scope of the article does not allow reviewing all these issues (e.g. critical thinking taxonomies, teachability of critical thinking etc.).

a. Definition of Critical Thinking:

John Dewey, who was among the leading theorists who paved the grounds for critical thinking in education, defined critical thinking as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1910, p. 2). Accordingly, a critical thinker is expected to make use of all the available evidence to test the credibility of a “belief” before accepting it as knowledge. After three decades, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues (1956) elaborated on the concept of critical thinking by developing a taxonomy of six categories (i.e. knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) that acquaint educators with learning objectives they should foster in their classrooms. Bloom’s taxonomy is unanimously a major breakthrough in education as it contributed to pinpointing the importance of higher order thinking skills (i.e., analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in education (Paul, 1985).

More contemporary scholars associate critical thinking with vital activities such as making reasoned judgments and decisions. On the one hand, critical thinking is considered to be the use of reasoning skills that yield reasoned judgments (Lipman, 1988; Beyer, 1995). On the other hand, Ennis’ oft-cited definition refers to reflective and focused thinking which allows thinkers to make decisions with respect to beliefs and actions (Ennis, 1996). In an attempt to embrace more conceptions of critical thinking, Halpern (2014) describes it as “the kind of thinking
involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions” (Halpern, 2014, p. 8).

Though there are dozens of definitions that have attempted to resolve the disagreement over the issue of defining such a pivotal concept, only few have been cited here as they summarize the fundamental aspects of the concept in question. It is worthwhile to conclude our attempt to define critical thinking with a working definition that the authors of this paper have put forth: being an intellectual activity of reasoning, critical thinking is the use of the cognitive skills of analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information in order to get clear, precise, and consistent thinking. For critical thinking to operate, it relies on cognitive skills as well as dispositions. Finally, it is the type of thinking used in decision-making and problem-solving.

b. Components of Critical Thinking

The need to integrate critical thinking across curricula led educators to operationalize the concept in terms of two components: cognitive skills and affective dispositions (Norris, 1989; Facione, 1990; Siegel, 2010; Ennis, 2011).

Being a common tradition among the experts of critical thinking, the development of CT skills has witnessed myriad inventories suggested by leading experts. Ennis (1996, 2011) identified (1) basic clarification, (2) bases for decision, (3) inference, (4) advanced clarification, and (5) supposition and integration as the component skills of reasoned thinking. Likewise, the Delphi report experts (Facione, 1990) developed a consensus on six cognitive skills that critical thinking involves: (1) interpretation, (2) analysis, (3) evaluation, (4) inference, (5) explanation, and (6) self-regulation. Each of these skills subsumes sub-skills. There are other inventories which the scope the present article does not allow (e.g., Brookfield, 1987; Paul, 1990; Wade, 1995). Though the inventories differ in labeling the skills composing critical thinking, analysis, evaluation and inference are the skills that are common to the inventories presented by critical thinking theorists. Finally, breaking down the abstract concept of critical thinking into identifiable skills helps theorists, educators and practitioners to teach these skills and assess students’ progress.

Though CT skills and dispositions stand in a strongly complementary relationship, the affective side of critical thinking has received meager attention in comparison to the cognitive side. One of the recent attempts to identify CT dispositions is achieved by Carroll (2007) who reported (1) intellectual humility, (2) confidence in reason, (3) intellectual curiosity, and (4) intellectual independence as the components that affect thinkers’ inclination to behave and think reasonably. Finally, research on methods for teaching and assessing CT dispositions is recommended since the teaching of the latter will guarantee a continuation of the use of reasonable thinking in non-instructional settings (Siegel, 1985, 2011; Facione, 1990).

Despite the importance of all the skills and dispositions that have been listed above, the present study is concerned with two major skills which are argument construction and argument evaluation which subsume sub-skills that will be presented in a section below (i.e. Section 3.6.).
III) Methodology

After succinctly stating the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, the present section will provide a concise account of the research design adopted, the participants involved, the research instruments used, and the procedure followed.

3.1. Research Objectives:
This piece of research aims to:
1. To check whether students’ academic level has any impact on the use of critical thinking skills in their argumentative writing;
2. To identify the extent to which Moroccan EFL learners use critical thinking skills in their argumentative writing.

3.2. Research Questions:
The present study aims to answer the following two research questions:
1. What, if any, is the impact of academic level on the development of critical thinking among Moroccan EFL learners?
2. What critical thinking skills do Moroccan EFL university students make use of in their argumentative writing?

3.3. Research Hypotheses:
Given the research questions that have been raised above, two pertinent hypotheses have been postulated:

1. Moroccan EFL learners with higher academic level use more critical thinking skills in argumentative writing than do EFL learners with a lower academic level.
2. Moroccan EFL learners perform better with respect to argument construction than they do with regard to argument evaluation.

3.4. Research Design:
To ensure that the research objectives and questions are soundly examined, the researchers have resorted to ex-post facto and cross-sectional design. To start with, since the aim of the study is to examine the cause-and-effect relationship between academic level (i.e., independent variable) and the use of critical thinking skills (i.e., dependent variable), the researchers have opted for ex-post facto design. This latter will entitle the researchers to ascribe the development of critical thinking skills to the development of students across different levels. In addition, a cross-sectional design has been adopted to provide an account of how critical thinking skills develop in the argumentative writing of EFL learners across three different academic levels.

3.5. Participants:
The total number of participants involved in this research is 60 students from the Department of English in Mohamed V University. The number of participants is evenly divided into three groups. The first group is composed of 20 students in Semester Two; the second group also consists of 20 students in Semester Six. Finally, the third group is made up of 20 students of a Master’s program in Language and Linguistics. Hence, the highest academic level investigated in this piece of research is that of Master’s students, while the lowest level is that of Semester-Two students.
3.6. Instruments:
The Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test (Ennis & Weir, 1985) and an argumentative essay are the two tests that the researchers relied on to elicit data with regard to two different critical thinking skills. The first tests how students evaluate an argument and spot errors in reasoning. That is, it measures the critical thinking skills of test-takers since they have to apply critical thinking skills in order to critically appraise the quality of an argument. The main skills targeted in this test are:

- Getting a point and stating it clearly;
- Seeing the reasons and assumptions;
- Offering good reasons;
- Examining other possibilities and alternative explanations;
- Recognizing equivocation, irrelevance, circularity, the straw person fallacy, reversal of an if-then relationship, overgeneralization, credibility problems, use of emotive language to persuade, and excessive skepticism.

Conversely, the second task tests how learners construct an argument and avoid fallacious reasoning. In this task, participants were asked to write a short argumentative essay about their position regarding the legalization of abortion in Morocco. The test assesses the following skills:

- Succinct presentation of the writer’s position and ideas;
- Credibility of evidence;
- Recognition of alternative points of view;
- Plausibility of generalizations and explanations;
- Avoiding fallacies.

3.7. Procedure:
Before handing out the tasks, the researchers explained to participants that their participation involves two tasks divided on two meetings. The researchers announced the amount of time assigned to each task so that participants know the amount of time required of them. Fortunately, students consented to take the tests. Afterwards, the researchers distributed the first task, the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test. To make sure that the instructions are clear to everyone, they read them aloud with further explanations, without disclosing the topic under study. Every now and then, the researchers would welcomingly answer students’ questions. When time was over, the papers were collected. The following week, the second task, the argumentative essay writing, was administered to the same students with the same procedure. The only difference was that the researchers started the meeting with a brief discussion of the recent debate over the legalization of abortion in Morocco so that it provides students with a stimulus for the argumentation.

IV) Results
In order to make the examination of the two hypotheses feasible, the researchers have run the one-way ANOVA test and the Paired-Samples t-test. Hence, the following subsections will report and interpret the descriptive statistics as well as the inferential statistics.
4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table (1) presents the distribution of the means and standard deviations among the three groups.

Table 1: The distribution of scores among EFL learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Argument Construction</th>
<th>Argument Evaluation</th>
<th>CT in general</th>
<th>Arg Const</th>
<th>Arg Eval</th>
<th>CT in general</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S2 Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32.77</td>
<td>26.71</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.60</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>40.24</td>
<td>16.18</td>
<td>16.81</td>
<td>15.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59.02</td>
<td>39.47</td>
<td>48.56</td>
<td>13.48</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>13.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive statistics displayed in the table above reveals how the performance of the three groups differs with regard to argument construction, argument evaluation, and critical thinking in general. With regard to argument construction which is tested via argumentative essay writing, Semester-Two students obtained a mean score of (32.77), while Semester-Six and MA students obtained mean scores of (48.60) and (59.02), respectively. Likewise, Semester-Two students scored a mean of (26.71) in argument evaluation which is tested via the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay test. As expected, the two other groups scored higher since Semester-Six students scored a mean of (31.89) while MA students obtained a mean of (39.47). Finally, the same tendency of scoring higher as academic level goes high is noticed in students’ performance in critical thinking in general; while MA students scored a mean of (48.56), Semester-Six students obtained a mean of (40.24). Finally, Semester-Two students scored a mean of (29.74).

Though the descriptive statistics indicates that the scores of the three groups do differ, testing the hypotheses postulated earlier requires the examination of the inferential statistics obtained via the operation of one-way ANOVA test and paired-samples t-test.

4.2. The Development of Critical Thinking in General

The one-way ANOVA test has been run in order to investigate whether academic level affects the development of critical thinking. It is noteworthy that the homogeneity of variance assumption has been warranted by the Welch and the Brown-Forsythe procedures.

Table 2: Results of critical thinking level among EFL learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of CT</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11.144</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05

The results in table (2) indicate that the difference among the three groups is extremely significant. Hence, hypothesis (I) which claims that academic level affects the development of critical thinking is retained.
4.3. The Development of Argument Construction:
With regard to the development of the skill argument construction, the ANOVA test yielded the following results:

Table 3: Results of argument construction level among EFL learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Arg. Const</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18.814</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05

The table above indicates that the difference among the three groups is extremely significant at (.00). Accordingly, the performance of EFL learners in argument construction is determined by academic level since the difference is far great.

Unlike the development of argument construction, argument evaluation takes a different developmental pattern as documented in table (4):

Table 4: Argument Evaluation among EFL learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) EFL Learners</th>
<th>(J) EFL Learners</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S2 Students</td>
<td>S6 Students</td>
<td>-5.173</td>
<td>.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 Students</td>
<td>S2 Students</td>
<td>5.173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2 Students</td>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>-12.760</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>S2 Students</td>
<td>12.760</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6 Students</td>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>-7.587</td>
<td>.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Students</td>
<td>S6 Students</td>
<td>7.587</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05

The results of the table above reveal that there is a lack of noticeable development among the three groups. The difference between Semester-Six students and Semester-Two students is utterly insignificant at (.42). Similarly, the difference between Semester-Six students and MA students indicates an insignificant p-value at (.39). Exceptionally, the difference between MA students and Semester-Two students points to a moderately significant p-value at (.03).

4.6. Argument Construction and Argument Evaluation within Groups:
The paired-samples t-test was run in order to test the extent to which Hypothesis II holds. Within each group, the mean scored in argument construction will be compared to that scored in argument evaluation in order to determine whether argument construction is more developed and used than argument evaluation.

Table 5: The results of paired-samples test of Semester-Two students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 ArgConst-ArgEval</td>
<td>2.168</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05

The results of table (5) indicate to a t-value that is moderately significant at (.04). Therefore, it is suggested that Semester-Two students’ argument construction skill is more developed than their argument evaluation.
Concerning Semester-Six students, the results of table (6) points to a t-value (6.777) that is extremely significant at (.00). Akin to the previous pair, Semester-Six students improve their argument construction skills to the detriment of argument evaluation skills.

Table 6: The results of paired-samples test of Semester-Six students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair 2</th>
<th>ArgConst-ArgEval</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ArgConst</td>
<td>ArgEval</td>
<td>6.777</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p< .05

Finally, table (7) presents the results of the third pair, MA students:

Table 7: The results of paired-samples test of MA students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair 3</th>
<th>ArgConst-ArgEval</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ArgConst</td>
<td>ArgEval</td>
<td>4.766</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p< .05

A comparison of the results of the three groups shows that Hypothesis II is retained since EFL learners in the three academic levels develop their argument construction more than they do with argument evaluation.

The means of the three groups have been reported in order to account for the general trends that govern the development of critical thinking, argument construction and argument evaluation among Moroccan EFL university students. Reporting the descriptive statistics has shown that the level of critical thinking is extremely low. In addition, the first research hypothesis has been confirmed as critical thinking has been found to progress across the three academic levels. In other words, the results of the one-way ANOVA test have revealed that academic level does affect the progress of critical thinking among Moroccan EFL learners. Finally, the results of the paired-samples t-test have confirmed Hypothesis II. That is, students of the three groups have been found to do better in argument construction than they do in argument evaluation.

V) Discussion

The results reported in the previous section have proved that the two hypotheses are retained. Therefore, the following subsections will discuss (i) the level of critical thinking among university students, (ii) how academic level affects the development of critical thinking, and (iii) why there is a discrepancy between argument construction and argument evaluation.

5.1. The Current State of Critical Thinking in Moroccan Higher Education

The descriptive results reported in the previous section give insights into the level of critical thinking among EFL learners.

The means of the three groups in critical thinking in general, argument construction, and argument evaluation reveal a relatively low level of critical thinking abilities among EFL learners. The three groups have not been able to reach the average in critical thinking in general. With regard to argument construction, Semester-Two and Semester-Six students have not managed to score the average. In the same fashion, the three groups have scored less than the
average in argument evaluation. Accordingly, these results paint a gloomy picture of the current state of critical thinking among EFL learners in particular and Moroccan higher education in general.

A closer look at the findings can help educators to discern the critical thinking portrait of typical Moroccan university graduates. Semester-Six students who are only one month away from graduation do not live up to an average critical thinker; they can barely argue for a point adequately, but they are not capable of detecting problems contained in a line of reasoning. As a result, it can be suggested that Moroccan higher education fails to teach EFL learners to become critical thinkers as they are not able to detect fallacies, irrelevancy, and circularity in arguments.

However, a turning point in EFL learners’ critical thinking level takes place when they move to the MA program. EFL learners’ critical thinking improves by the time they finish their postgraduate studies since the findings indicate that they performed averagely in critical thinking in general and argument construction. Nevertheless, their argument evaluation skills are still poor. Given this, higher education can produce average critical thinkers only after five years of training. In other words, typical EFL postgraduates are able to construct arguments fairly adequately but they are not able to detect problems in argumentation.

The findings of the current state of critical thinking in higher education will be entirely understood if it is compared to the findings of other relevant studies. It is worthwhile to bring up to discussion Hatcher’s longitudinal study (1999) where American university students took the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay test through different academic levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean scores in the E-W test</th>
<th>Moroccan EFL Ls</th>
<th>American Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>26.71</td>
<td>43.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>55.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduates</td>
<td>39.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A quick look at the means shows that there is a striking difference between Moroccan and American freshmen and seniors in argument evaluation ability. This difference is manifested in the fact that the means obtained by MA Moroccan students (39.47) could not even exceed the mean recorded by American freshmen (43.79). This comparison highlights the low level of Moroccan EFL learners in argument evaluation in particular and critical thinking in general.

To sum up, the level of critical thinking among Moroccan EFL learners is relatively low. Splitting critical thinking into two skills (i.e. argument evaluation and argument construction) shows that their argument construction skills are fairly average while their argument evaluation skills are strikingly low.

5.2. Developmental path of Critical Thinking among Moroccan EFL Learners:

The present subsection discusses how academic level affects learners’ critical thinking ability (i.e., research question I) in the light of the results obtained from the one-way ANOVA test. Based on the findings presented above, academic level can be safely considered as a factor that determines the development of critical thinking.

The observed development across the three academic levels can be attributed to curriculum objectives and methods of teaching that students receive. Put simply, the difficulty of the courses
that EFL learners take increases as their academic level increases. In their first year of university, teachers focus on developing students’ language proficiency as courses range from grammar, speaking, reading, and writing to listening. Focusing on developing EFL learners’ language proficiency at the expense of their intellectual skills explains the low achievement of Semester-Two students in the two critical thinking tests.

Semester-Six students outperform Semester-Two students as the subjects are more challenging than the ones in the first year of university. Generally speaking, the tasks of final year students focus on summarizing, paraphrasing, and also analyzing data for those majoring in linguistics. Most importantly, the courses they take at this academic level are content courses (e.g., syntax, semantics, phonology and morphology etc.) and they are expected to write a paper (i.e. End of Study Project). It should be pointed out that we cannot claim with certainty that these tasks have been taught effectively; yet, what can be asserted here is that final year students use critical thinking skills more than do first year students since the findings indicate an extremely significant difference between these two academic levels.

The low performance of Semester-Two students can better be explained in the light of Bloom’s taxonomy (1956). The tasks in which these students are involved are confined to lower learning objectives (i.e. knowledge, comprehension, and application). The focus on lower learning objectives, in fact, constitutes the conceptions of university teachers on teaching. In a study where Moroccan EFL university professors were interviewed about their conceptions of teaching, most of the interviewed teachers confirmed that their role as teachers is to transmit knowledge and focus on basic language skills and accuracy (Belghiti, 2012). Establishing a relation between critical thinking and teachers’ conceptions of teaching also evokes Freire’s concepts of banking education where teachers view that their major role is to fill students with knowledge and information (Freire, 1970).

Hitherto, the discussion has been revolving around how courses taught in an academic level and teachers’ conceptions of teaching affect students’ critical thinking development. Nevertheless, discussion at this point of analysis is bound to ponder over the effect of language proficiency from a learning point of view. The claim to be made here is that the significant difference of critical thinking ability from one academic level to another can be explained by students’ language proficiency. Based on the findings reported earlier, MA students who have higher language proficiency obtained scores higher than Semester-Six and Semester-Two students. Besides, Semester-Six students scored higher than Semester-Two students. The fact that students with higher language proficiency perform better than do students with lower language proficiency indicates that language proficiency as a variable that is integral to academic level plays an essential role in determining the level of critical thinking among a group of EFL learners. The possible reason behind this correlation is that the less they feel anxious about correcting their language, the more they can think about assessing their ideas. A student with poor language proficiency will spend a great deal of time monitoring his/her language, looking for words, or correcting sentence structure instead of organizing his/her ideas, assessing his/her reasoning etc. Conversely, a student with advanced language proficiency uses English comfortably and consequently has enough room to think critically about the ideas s/he produces or receives.
In brief, the results of the present study suggest that academic level has a say about the development of students’ critical thinking skills. However, when it comes to EFL university students, academic level involves further subordinate factors such as curriculum objectives, the nature of courses (i.e. content courses or language courses) and students’ anxiety about language proficiency. For more robust results, future research is requested to investigate the effect of each factor separately.

5.3. Discrepancy between skills among Moroccan EFL learners

The present subsection aims to discuss why students fare better with respect to argument construction than they do with respect to argument evaluation (i.e. research question II). The results put forth by the paired-samples t-test have proved that Hypothesis II is retained since the scores obtained in argument construction test significantly differ from the ones obtained in argument evaluation.

An examination of the history of what learners have been taught justifies these results. Before going to university, Moroccan students learn how to write argumentative essays in high school in Arabic, French and English. When they go to university, they learn how to write cause-and-effect essays and simple five-paragraph argumentative essays in the first year. While in the second year they receive advanced instruction on argumentative essay writing, in the third year they get accustomed to reading and writing advanced types of essays and papers. The same goes for MA students who receive instruction on advanced academic writing where they learn how to write an MA dissertation. The fact that they receive explicit instruction on how to present arguments in the form of an essay has affected their performance in writing argumentatively in comparison to evaluating arguments. On the other hand, some EFL learners may have never received formal instruction on how to evaluate an argument and detect reasoning problems with argumentation. The lack of explicit instruction of evaluating arguments has given rise to low performance since none of the three groups reached the average in their argumen
t evaluation test.

The effect of training on the gap between the evolution of argument construction and argument evaluation is endorsed by empirical research. In an experimental study conducted by Davidson and Dunham (1997), the experimental group that received additional training on evaluating arguments scored significantly higher than the control group which did not receive any critical thinking training. Hence, the poor scores obtained in argument evaluation by the three groups can be explained by the fact that they have never received instruction on how to critically evaluate arguments. Generally speaking, when there is an intervention of critical thinking, students perform better than those who do not receive critical thinking instruction (e.g. Zare, et al, 2013; Kamali and Fahim, 2011; Malmir & Shoorcheh, 2012).

Seeking further explanation to the difference between learners’ performance in argument construction and argument evaluation is reminiscent of Bloom’s hierarchy of critical thinking skills. In Bloom’s taxonomy, evaluation is placed at the top of the taxonomy as being the most intricate skill, synthesis (i.e. argument construction) is placed at a lower position. As mentioned earlier, the hierarchy of the skills in the original taxonomy is based on their difficulty. Put simply, deconstructing an argument into its components, examining its skeleton, and exploring other alternatives are skills that cannot be exercised adequately unless they are learnt and
practiced. Therefore, the poor performance in argument evaluation can be attributed to the fact that it is more difficult than argument construction.

To bring the discussion to a close, the findings discussed above alarmingly indicate that Moroccan higher education fails to produce critical students as only MA students could approximate the average. In the present paper students’ critical thinking level is related to their academic level. In this connection, the findings have shown that a number of issues are at work. Put simply, the type of courses and tasks they are involved and teachers’ conceptions of teaching English as a foreign language are factors that affect the development of students’ critical thinking skills.

VI) Conclusions and Implications

The analysis of the findings of the current study has yielded a number of conclusions that are worth stating in the last section of the paper.

To begin with, the scores of the participants in the two tests offered valuable information about the current state of Moroccan university students’ reasoning skills. The findings point out that Moroccan university students perform poorly in critical thinking tests. In fact, even MA students (i.e. the highest academic level involved in this study) cannot catch up with American freshmen as the performance of the latter in the Ennis-Weir Critical Thinking Essay test exceeded the former. Therefore, these results should be taken into consideration by practitioners and curriculum developers in higher education.

In addition, the findings of the study have confirmed that academic level determines the development of critical thinking among Moroccan EFL university students. It is suggested through this study that the nature of the courses and tasks attributed to each academic level is more likely to shape the development of students’ argument construction and evaluation. In other words, EFL learners at academic levels where they take only English language courses use critical thinking skills less than do EFL learners at academic levels where they take advanced language and content courses.

Finally, the results draw the attention to the discrepancy of the progress of argument construction at the expense of argument evaluation. In the three academic levels under study, the performance of students in argument evaluation test was low in comparison to their performance in argument construction test. Hence, it is suggested that the fact that Moroccan EFL learners receive instruction on writing argumentative writing puts their argument evaluation skills at a disadvantage in contrast to their argument construction skills. In a nutshell, this result suggests that students’ level in a critical thinking skill is merely the output of the training they take.

The rationale behind conducting a study on the use of critical thinking skills in higher education is to come up with serious implications for curriculum development, syllabus design and future research.

With regard to implications for curriculum development, the study came up with findings that unveil the low level of higher order thinking skills among Moroccan university students. This finding conveys a serious message on the inability of Moroccan higher education to attain
the most important educational objective which is to instill critical thinking spirit in students. Accordingly, curriculum developers should start considering the integration of critical thinking courses throughout different academic levels in higher education. In addition, curriculum developers of EFL programs in higher education should consider introducing a course of the basic skills of critical thinking in the first year of university so as to avoid the critical thinking stagnancy experienced by First year students.

Speaking of implications for syllabus design, the present study recommends that EFL teachers should make use of teaching methods that take into consideration argumentation and reasoning skills. For instance, when teaching writing, EFL teachers should not focus only on language (e.g. punctuation, sentence structure etc.); rather, they are recommended to draw students’ attention to the reasoning fallacies that they make. With respect to evaluation skills, EFL instructors can include activities where students are encouraged to assess statements in a text (e.g. in reading) or each others’ statements (e.g. in speaking). In addition, EFL instructors are invited to make use of Socratic questioning (Paul, 1990) where students’ thinking is stimulated by higher order questions that go beyond asking for information. Higher order questions seek to encourage students to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.

Finally, the study aims to put forth implications for future research. First and foremost, a longitudinal study is called upon where a small-sized sample of students is assessed across different academic levels so as to closely examine how they develop their critical thinking skills. A longitudinal study will provide an in-depth account of the development of critical thinking across academic levels so as to compensate for the limitations of the present cross-sectional study. Furthermore, in order to find out whether majoring in a foreign language hinders the normal development of critical thinking, future research is recommended to compare the level of EFL university students (and other language majors) with university students non-language majors (e.g. engineering, geography, medicine, history, psychology etc.).

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References
A Developmental Approach to the Use of Critical Thinking

Amrous & Nejmaoui


The Dative Case for Comprehension-Based Grammar Teaching

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Abstract
This paper presents a comprehension-based model for explicit grammar instruction. It argues that the process of grammar teaching and learning can better be treated as a communicative event with content drawn from pedagogically relevant aspects of contrastive linguistic analyses of the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). Within a task-based pedagogy, L2 learners can be engaged in concept-forming activities that allow them to develop an understanding of the target grammatical features to facilitate later interlanguage restructuring. This model is illustrated with an exercise in the English dative alternation based on a contrastive analysis of this lexicosyntactic phenomenon in English, the target language and Moroccan Arabic, the students’ L1.

Key words: Dative case, comprehension-based grammar teaching, interlanguage
0. Introduction

Is there room for grammar instruction in the EFL classroom? As the pendulum of language teaching methodology swung from one approach to the other, corollary shifts took suit in answer to this question. Answers varied from positive to negative and were often inconclusive. With the move towards the communicative approach to, explicit grammar teaching was initially attributed a minimal if not a non-existent role in language teaching, relegating focus on form activities to an unnatural practice which does not pay heed to the basic function of language, that is communication.

By contrast, Fotos & Ellis’ (1991) interpretive tasks create a niche for grammar instruction within communicative methodology, making the grammar point being taught the object of communication itself. In the footsteps of this task-based framework and consciousness raising (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1988), the present article develops a series of activities to teach the English dative alternation to Moroccan EFL learners, emphasis drawing on the pedagogical implications of the formal typological mismatches between Moroccan Arabic as L1 and English as an L2. Under such an approach, not only can grammar instruction qualify as a communicative event but finds justification in the insights it derives from formal theoretical linguistics as well.

1. A framework for explicit grammar instruction.

For long, proponents of the communicative approach have relegated focus on form to an unnecessary burden or a non-naturalistic practice at its best. (e.g. Krashen and Terrel, 1983). Grammar exercises were kept for homework to reassure those who enjoy rule-learning. However, there is more to grammar teaching than the rote learning of rules and paradigms. Alternatively, it can be better viewed as a process of consciousness raising (CR) whereby the learner’s attention is deliberately drawn to the formal properties of the target language (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1988). The main departure of CR from traditional grammar teaching lies in the way pedagogical decisions are made. Within CR, decisions as to how to teach a specific grammar point vary along two dimensions: explicitness and elaboration. Contrary to expectation, learners can be made aware of the idiosyncrasies of the grammatical system of the target language without indulging much on metalinguage. On a continuum of explicitness, a grammar point can be presented through the use of either an informal rule or any other technique that would capture the form/function pairing under consideration such as matching exercises with forms in one column and their functions in the other. It is also suggested that different aspects of a grammatical structure be highlighted through the use of typographical techniques: underlining, circling, capitalizing etc…

The second dimension along which grammar instruction can vary is that of elaboration. Keeping their degree of explicitness constant, teachers may opt for different pedagogical decisions as to how elaborate their presentation might be. They may allocate more time and space or treat in more depth one structure while restrict their presentation to an informal rule in passing for another. But how can such pedagogical decisions be made in as a systematic a manner as possible?

In fact, it cannot be denied that CR is not a solution to all evils. The teacher’s decision as how to teach a certain grammar point depends primarily on learner variables, mainly, age and
level. CR works best for adolescents and adults in intermediate and advanced levels while a more implicit method would better suit children and learners at beginning levels. More importantly, the grammatical structure to be taught also has a say in the pedagogical decision of the teacher. Bearing in mind that EFL learners come to the learning task with a predetermined, full-fledged L1 grammar, EFL teaching cannot make use of the L1-L2 pairing to inform the pedagogical decision making process. In short, it is the mismatches between the L1 and the L2 that deserve more explicit grammar instruction. Thus, comparing the L1 to the L2 sheds light at the areas EFL learners find difficult to acquire and, hence, lay a solid ground for pedagogical intervention.

Many of the principles of CR discussed above find realization in Fotos & Ellis’ (1991) interpretive tasks later work (Ellis, 1995, 1999, 2001, 2002). Unlike traditional grammar teaching which focuses on output (the production of the grammatical structure taught), interpretation-based grammar tasks highlight the importance of input, the learners’ comprehension of the grammar point. The learners are given an opportunity to comprehend input and compare it to their own output in the hope that this would result in intake through the cognitive comparison of grammatical and ungrammatical utterances. The importance of these tasks lies in their provision for negative evidence, information on what is not correct in the target language, by having learners judge or process the grammaticality of the examplar items. Structuring the learning experience in this manner is believed to raise the learners’ awareness to the idiosyncratic formal properties of the target language. This in turn serves as a trigger for learners to subsequently notice the grammar point taught in communicative input, a basic process for the acquisition process to be set into motion (Schmidt, 1990). This highlights the importance of exposing the learners to rich input including the structures taught in an extended period later to instruction especially in the EFL context where natural exposure to the target language is very limited if not non-existent.

Grammar interpretation task may well be conducive to natural communication if designed as an information gap activity. In small groups, each learner can have a mixed set of grammatical and ungrammatical examples to study on the provision that the information every learners derives from the first cycle in the task fits into a larger picture to help the group form an informal rule later on in the task through negotiation of meaning and form.

As discussed earlier, explicit grammar instruction requires a thorough understanding of the target structure to be taught for the learning experience to be engineered smoothly; thus, a comparative account of the linguistic phenomenon both in the L1 and the L2 would serve to show which grammar points are worth an explicit treatment and to determine the different aspects of the linguistic structure which begs for more attention. To provide a comparative account for the dative alternation in English and Moroccan Arabic emphasis will be directed next as to unveil the similarities and differences this lexico-syntactic alternation exhibits in English, the target language and Moroccan Arabic, the students’ mother tongue.

2. The dative alternation in English and Moroccan Arabic.

Provided with the frame “John gave…….” and the two words (a ring, Mary), the sentence can be completed as “John gave Mary a ring”, resulting in a double object construction or as “John gave a ring to Mary”, ending up with a prepositional dative construction. This alternation realization of the recipient argument either as a noun phrase “Mary” (indirect object)
The Dative Case for Comprehension-Based Grammar Teaching

Ikbal

or a prepositional phrase “to Mary” (dative) is called in the literature as the dative alternation (Bresnan, 2003; Levin, 1993; Oehrle, 1976 Among others).

On hearing examples of this kind, learners are justified in judging as grammatical such a non-target structure as “He donated the museum the painting”. Despite the synonymy of the two verbs (give, donate), “give” can be considered as an alternating dative verb, admitting both constructions while “donate” occurs only in the prepositional dative construction, hence its non-alternating nature. This mismatch between the two verbs leads the learners to apply the alternation rule to instances where it does not, producing an overgeneralization error (Bley-Vroman and Yoshinaga, 1992, Inagaki, 1997, Mazkurewich, 1984; Zeddari, 2010, 2015). To constrain this over-general rule in the learners’ interlanguage (their developing mental grammars), it is of crucial relevance to sensitize learners not only to which verbs alternate and which do not but also to the reasons lying behind their variable surface syntactic behavior. The examples below illustrate this point within Pinker’s (1989) framework.

(1)  
a- He gave/donated all his money to the poor.  
b- He gave/*donated the poor all his money.  
c- She told/whispered the news to her friend.  
d- She told/*whispered her friend the news.  
e- Zidane threw the ball to Ronaldo.  
f- Zidane threw Ronaldo the ball.  
g- He pushed the box to Ann.  
h- *He pushed Ann the box

With the asterix (*) standing for “ungrammatical”, it is not difficult to see that the verbs “give”, “tell”, and “throw” occur both in the double object construction and the prepositional dative construction while the non-alternating “donate”, “whisper”, and “push” are restricted to the prepositional dative construction and blocked from occurring in the double object construction. Apart from the morpho-phonological ban on verbs like “donate” through their Latinate root, which restricts the alternation to verbs with a native origin (e.g. give), all the other constraints are semantically grounded as will be discussed below.

In the examples (1 a-b) above, the verb “give” is constrained by the animate possessor constraint which dictates the future possessor of the giving event be animate and so is the case with the recipient argument “the poor”. Second, the verb “tell” also freely alternates in both constructions in (1 c-d) as a verb of speaking encoding no specific manner of speaking unlike the verb “whisper”. The manner of speaking constraint just rules out of court the dative verb “whisper” and other semantically related verbs (e.g. shout, scream, mutter, mumble), hence, its ungrammaticality in “*She whispered her friend the news”. Another constraint pertains to the alternating verb “throw” which admits its recipient both as a noun phrase in a double object construction or as a prepositional phrase in a prepositional dative construction. A throwing event assumes a ballistic motion through the air and this features allows this verb category to alternation. Similar verbs are kick, shoot, throw, and toss. Push, on the other hand, does not involve such a motional ballisticsness but encodes a continuous imparting of force on the object pushed. By virtue of the continuous motion constraint, this verb is restricted in use to the prepositional dative construction along other similar verbs (e.g. bring, take, carry). Having laid
the main constraints regulating the English dative alternation, this section will proceed with a comparative treatment of the same linguistic phenomenon in Moroccan Arabic to see if these constraints are active in Moroccan Arabic. It is believed that contrasts between Moroccan Arabic as L1 and English as L2 would yield significant insights into pedagogical practice because these mismatches cause more problems to EFL learners and deserve a more explicit and elaborate treatment in the EFL classroom. Moroccan Arabic is a Western, North African type of Arabic spoken in Morocco (Caubet, 2011). As a Maghrebi Arabic dialect, the realization of arguments with dative verbs is mostly restricted to the prepositional dative construction unlike the other eastern Arabic dialects (Wilmsen, 2012). Given the alternate realization of arguments that English dative exhibits, the English dative alternation poses a serious learnability problem to Moroccan Arabic speaking EFL learners (Zeddari, 2010, 2015). This justifies the choice of these verbs as the subject of a thorough investigation in terms of representation, acquisition and teachability. Below is a presentation of the key characteristics of the syntactic behaviour of dative verbs in Moroccan Arabic (for more discussion see Zeddari, 2008, 2010, 2015).

(2) a- simu ʕtˤa lktab lddri
   ‘Simo gave the book to the boy’

   b- simu ʕtˤa (l)*ddri lktab
   ‘simo gave to the boy the book’ (only with a special intonation (Adger, 2003)

   c- simu ʕtˤah lktab
   ‘Simo gave him the book.’

Even with the most prototypical dative verb “ʕtˤa” (give), differences arise. In Moroccan Arabic, this verb cannot occur in a double object construction except when the recipient argument is a pronominal clitic. This may partly explain why Moroccan EFL learners find double object constructions with the verb “give” and pronominal recipients (Zeddari, 2010, 2015). It is also interesting to note that the prepositional phrase “lddri” (to the boy) may naturally occupy the position most adjacent to the verb, contrary to fact in English. This echoes utterances like “he gave to me the book” frequently produced by Moroccan EFL. These systematic errors might be due to this crosslinguistic contrast between English and Moroccan Arabic. The following example illustrate the syntactic behaviour of “lah” (throw) and “dfʕ” (push).

(3) a- simu lah / dfʕ lktara lddri
   ‘Simo threw/pushed the cards to the boy’

   b- simu lah / dfʕ (l-)*ddri lktara
   ‘Simo threw/pushed to the boy the cards’

   c- simu lah/ dfʕ (li)*h lktara
   ‘Simo threw/pushed the cards to the boy’

As the above example show, the dative verbs “lah” (throw) and “dfʕ” (push) show an identical syntactic behaviour. It seems that Moroccan Arabic is insensitive to the ballistic motion constraint and the continuous imparting of force constraint and so are Moroccan EFL learners
when judging the grammaticality of these verbs in illicit double object constructions (Zeddari, 2008). Unlike “gements" (give) however, these verbs categorically rule out the double object construction even with pronominal clitics as the ungrammaticality of (3 c) attests to. Let’s now turn to the Moroccan Arabic dative equivalents of whisper “w§w§" and tell “qal”.

4) a- fatima w§w§at / qalt klmt ssr lkarima
‘Fatima whispered/told the password to Karima.’

b- * fatima w§w§at / qalt karima klmt ssr
‘Fatima (*Whispered)/ told Karima the password’

c- fatima w § w § a t / qalt (1)-* ha klmt ssr
‘Fatima (*Whispered)/ told Karima the password’

Similar to “lah” (throw) and “dfoo” (push), the verbs “w§w§” (whisper) and “qal” (tell) are not delineated as to dativization as they are restricted to one syntactic frame, namely, the prepositional dative construction. The distinction between verbs of speaking (e.g. tell) and manner of speaking verbs (e.g. whisper) is blurred in Moroccan Arabic. This makes the learning task for Moroccan EFL learners even harder. While they could learn double object constructions with the verb “tell” from the target input though its equivalent is nonexistent in Moroccan Arabic, they could hardly recover from overgeneralization errors and expunge such an overgeneral rule from their language. Still, the preposing of the prepositional phrase within the verb phrase is also possible as is the case with the other dative verbs.

In the face of these sharp contrasts, it seems that Moroccan EFL learners are at a disadvantage when learning English dative verbs. Despite the clarity and straightforwardness of an overgeneral rule deriving the double object construction from the prepositional construction by deleting the preposition and moving the indirect object argument to the position most adjacent to the verb, this rule just misses the semantics regulating the variable syntactic behaviour of English dative. Therefore, it is an endeavour worth undertaking to draw our EFL learners’ attention to the morphophonological and semantic restrictions on the English dative alternation. Consciousness raising (Rutherford and Sharwood Smith, 1988) and interpretation-based tasks (Ellis and Fotos, 1991) seem a good match to serve this end. The coming section develops an activity in the spirit of this framework, taking into account the crosslinguistic differences between English and Moroccan Arabic.

3. Teaching the English Dative Alternation.

The task designed in this section aims at drawing the learners’ awareness to the morphophonological and semantic restrictions regulating what seems at first sight a simple dative rule. It will capitalize on the lexical variation various dative verbs exhibit as to dativization.

** Instructions:** Teacher (Tr.) cuts up into three separate cards and have the Students (Ss) form groups of three each. One card for each S with correction column folded with a paper clip.

** Cycle I:** One card for each S with correction column folded with a paper clip.
Ss will individually focus on meaning trying to understand the examples on their card

**Student A:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct or Wrong</th>
<th>Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John gave the book to Mary.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is telling story to the child.</td>
<td></td>
<td>correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He whispered his sister the news</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He pushed the cards to the other player.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artist donated the museum the paintings.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronaldo threw Zidane the ball.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann faxed the news to Beth.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She e-mailed her friends the pictures.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She gave to me the book.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student B:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct or Wrong</th>
<th>Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John gave Mary the book.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She whispered the password to her friend.</td>
<td></td>
<td>correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann faxed Beth the news.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He pushed the other player the cards.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old lady donated the money to the association.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronaldo threw The ball to Zidane.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The babysitter always tells a bedtime story to the Kids.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She pushed the guest the tea Wagon.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She whispered to her sister the news.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student C:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct or Wrong</th>
<th>Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He gave his wife a diamond ring.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She whispered her friend the password.</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
<td>Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He threw the beggar a dirham.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The artist donated the paintings to the museum.</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She is telling the child a story.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Correct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cycle II: Ss focus on form. They will individually process the grammaticality of each example and then check the correct ones while the teacher is monitoring.

Cycle III: Ss will attend to the function of the recipient argument and its possible realization as a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase.

**Instructions:** Complete the following Chart with the verbs which occur in these constructions *Verb (someone)+(*something*) AND Verb (*something*)+(to someone)*. Discuss all the options with your partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb (someone)+(something)</th>
<th>Verb (<em>something</em>)+(to someone)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give</td>
<td>Give</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cycle IV: Students will pair form to function

**Instructions:**

Step 1: Look again at the verbs in the chart again and classify each verb into one of the following categories depending on their meaning.

- Verbs of giving: …………………………………………………………………………………
- Verbs of speaking: ……………………………………………………………………………
- Verbs of speaking in a specific manner: …………………………………………………
- Verbs referring to means of communication: ……………………………………………
- Causing something to move while controlling it: ………………………………………
- Causing something to move through the air: ……………………………………………
- Verbs from latin (French-like verbs): …………………………………………………

Step 2: Note:

Some of the verb categories above belong to an alternating class, accepting both constructions: *(Verb someone+something and Verb something + to someone)*. Others are non-alternating, accepting only one grammatical construction: either *(Verb something + to someone)* or *(Verb someone + something)*.

Step 3: Look at the categories above and write “A” for the alternating classes and “N” for “the non-alternating classes”
Step 4: for the alternating and non-alternating verbs is it possible to use the following order.

Verb+to someone+something

Cycle V: Ss will extend the alternating non-alternating distinction to semantically related verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Correct or Wrong</th>
<th>Correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David suggested the trip to Ruth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David suggested Ruth the trip.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I suggest you this cream.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan explained the problem to Jane.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan explained Jane the problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please, could you explain me this exercise?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James lends his friends huge sum of money.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James lends huge sums of money to his friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please, could you lend me some money?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She passed the salt to the guest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She passed the guests the salt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She always carries breakfast to her father.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She always carries her father breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She always carries to him breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He murmured words of love to her</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He murmured her words of love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann wrote Richard an email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She wrote to Richard an email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lead-out: students discuss the punch line in jokes based on an ambiguity in alternate dative verb usage.

Joke 1: At a bus stop
A man was waiting at a bus stop, eating some fried fish and potato chips. A lady with a cat was standing next to him. The cat could smell the fish and became excited. It started to jump on his leg. The man turned to the lady and said, do you mind if I throw your cat a bit?
No not all, the lady said. So the man picked the cat and threw it over the wall.

Joke 2: At the hotel doorway
‘call me a taxi’ said the fat man.
‘Ok’ said the door man ‘you’re a taxi, but you look like a truck to me.’

Joke 3:
In 1951, An African American was down South during the apartheid days. He walked into a fancy restaurant and this white waiteress, embarrassed, came up to him and said, ‘We don’t serve colored people here’.
The African American guy said ‘That’s all right. I don’t eat colored people. Bring me a piece of fried chicken.

Conclusion
This article has presented a model for explicit grammar instruction within a comprehension-based approach to Focus on Form. It has been shown that while interpretation-based grammar tasks and consciousness raising principles could inform the way a grammar lesson may proceed, insights derived from formal linguistics give it substance and provide suggestions as to which structures deserve a more explicit treatment. All this was achieved through a working example, the English dative alternation.

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References


Abstract

Visual studies are imparted as majors in many western institutions. This concern with visual culture stems from the vital role of images in communication and how they shape the mindset of the global citizen. Moroccan academia has recently introduced such discipline in some departments in order to modernize the curricula and enhance a liberal education. However, socialization and the dominant local culture favor a more conservative perception of images. The paper explores how these converging narratives operate and how students react to some modern values such as body politics, freedom of expression, subjectivity, etc. The last concern of this study is to analyze to what extent images interrogate and disrupt traditional norms and perceptions and contribute in developing students’ critical thinking, visual literacy, modernist perspectives, intercultural communication and mindfulness. The paper is a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods. It is first grounded in the postmodern theoretical framework, but it is also based on a four year teaching visual arts experience, classroom observation, and questionnaires. The ultimate aim of this paper is to share some findings with other practitioners, to address the impediments and challenges of university education and to contribute in designing modern curricula that smoothly prepare the students to embrace multicultural values.

Keywords: critical thinking, negotiating meaning, postmodernism, reception, Visual literacy
Introduction:
Moroccan university has constantly been preoccupied with modernizing its curricula in a way that would make it fit in with the changes and challenges of academia, as well as to satisfy the practical and functional needs of the society. It has also been assigned the fundamental role of establishing cultural bridges between the local culture and the universal one in a manner that would smoothly keep Morocco integrated in the global community without losing its roots and traditions. Actually, such a flexible and open rapport between tradition and modernity is the core of Moroccan national identity. For example, a Moroccan student in the school of arts and humanities has the total freedom to enroll in a given department of his or her own choice; it could be Islamic studies, philosophy, foreign languages, sociology, etc. The contents, the objectives, the methodologies of each department are so diverse that they favor cultural diversity and multiculturalism rather than uniformity. It is in this context where foreign languages, in general and English in particular, have been introduced in education as a key tool in the service of cultural openness.

Of course Morocco is a francophone country with strong ties, due to the colonial heritage, with the French language, economy and culture. But Morocco is also encouraging the use and learning of English on an official and private level. Therefore, one may expect that the general policies related to the formation of national identity and the objectives of the state run education should automatically favor the emergence of a multicultural mindset that celebrates diversity and modernity. This paper explores whether the Moroccan society and culture, on one side and the use of English as a global language in academia on the other side, have succeeded or have failed to make a Moroccan student and citizen who is open minded enough to embrace difference and diversity as well as to navigate smoothly between tradition and modernity. It also tries to address whether the universal rise of fundamentalism has had any impact on students and their way of thinking. To achieve this, semester five students from the department of English at Moulay Ismail University, school of arts and humanities were selected to respond to some questions related to visual arts/studies class. Students were asked to react to three open-ended questions addressing artistic ways of representation and expression in Western art. The three questions are:

1) The nude is a recurrent topic in western painting. How would you assess this from your Moroccan perspective?
2) Religious icons are central figures in the western painting tradition. How would you assess this, and would you agree/disagree with using religion in art?
3) In modern art, freedom of expression is a central value. Would you agree/disagree with this?

The number of respondents was 93 students; they actively cooperated in filling the questionnaire. 59 of them were girls and 34 were boys.

Mapping the theoretical framework
It should be stressed from the outset that education is always shaped by cultural and political factors. All nations and governments assign to education the role of maintaining certain values that are cherished by a given community. For example, the French republic has attributed a secular role to the public school so as to serve the values of “laicité”. Kamal Attaturk, and immediately after the creation of modern Turkey in 1924, decided to modernize the curricula of
schools and institutions in a manner to break with religious teaching and the supremacy of Ulama. The liberal values of a multicultural society, like Canada, are also visible in the national curricula that respect all ethnicities (Parekh, 2008).

Education is also shaped by the cultural heritage and identity of a people. For instance, schools in the Islamic world are deeply rooted in Islamic history and religion and, therefore, are shaped by the legacy of the past and the Islamic world vision (Hefner, 2007). Today, even in the most sophisticated universities in the Islamic world, a place of worship (mosque) is a compulsory component of the general edifice—the beautiful mosque in Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane testifies to that— not to speak about the content of courses, the way classes are imparted, their objective, their methodologies, etc. The same applies to western institutions which give priority to secular subjects, because these institutions belong to the Greco-Roman secular tradition. The question that arises now is: how does the Moroccan university negotiate such a double belonging? Has the Moroccan university succeeded to create a third and hybrid space (Bhabha, 1994) where modern values and Moroccan ones are harmoniously embraced? Where does the Moroccan student position himself/herself within these two converging narratives?

I confess that to answer such complex questions is gigantic and almost impossible a mission to carry out by one single researcher; it requires means, time and human engagement. Thus, the choice of the department of English and visual studies/arts class is taken as a case study that might illuminate us on the state of affairs in the school of arts and humanities. Students who enroll in the department of English are expected to be de facto more liberal than others because the department imparts classes which are deliberately global both in language and content. Indeed students take modern subjects, such as world literature, critical thinking, intercultural communication, linguistics, cultural diversity, to name but few. The modern dimension of this education is strengthened even further when students take a visual studies/art class. This latter is deemed by experts in Western academia as a postmodern discipline promoting excellence, interdisciplinarity, reason and culture. James Etkins (2003) calls the institution where visual culture is taught as:

The university of Excellence, the mostly administrative heart of the modern university. The theoretical issue (what counts, in this case, as interdicsiplinarity?) belongs more to the university of Reason, which Readings understands as philosophy and other disciplines that represent rationality and knowledge, and also to the University of culture. (Etkins, 2003. p.26)

Indeed visual culture is a novel discipline in western academia; it emerged in the late 1990s as a deliberate break with cultural studies. The latter was criticized and deemed too politically engaged and less neutral and academic. Today visual studies and arts are taught almost all over the world; departments and institutions are dedicated to the visual in US, in Europe, in Latin America, in Japan (Etkins, 2003). It also emerged in line with what is called the “pictorial turn”; that is this new perception of learning and reading. The global citizen is now more a visual reader than a script reader, more shaped by and sensitive to images than words. Internet has accelerated this shift from the verbal to the visual and internet has also blurred and broken boundaries between cultures and people. Today a Moroccan student is as much connected and shaped by the digital communications as any other citizen of the western world. The wired
youth (Mesch, 2010) have a common digital behavior; they relate to images, take a lot of photos, post and share their photos on Instagram, etc. Theoretically, one should again expect that the Moroccan student of visual arts class to be familiar with this visual global culture and to have internalized more liberal attitudes towards images produced and consumed on a global scale.

Visual arts class could also contribute in illuminating students in matters of arts and developing their critical and analytical skills of all forms of expression. One should first regret the little interest accorded to arts in higher education in general and in the faculty of letters in particular. This institution still considers the script (literature, philosophy, history, languages) as the most sophisticated forms of culture and by so doing disregards visual arts and popular culture. Farid Zahi is right when he argues that “L’image fait encore peur dans le monde arabe. Cependant, si l’image fait encore peur, elle demeure néanmoins l’impensé de nos sociétés modernes du monde arabe parce qu’on l’accuse de violence” (Zahi, 2015.p.12).

Such a class could introduce students to “high” or “low” arts in an equal manner without privileging one at the expense of the other, because culture, as Raymond Williams would argue, is the series of practices and beliefs of a community (Williams, 1983).

This class could also introduce students to a myriad of artistic expressions, such as classical painting, photography, street arts, cinema, among others, and engage them in a process of interactive and critical learning that a literary text might fail to do. Autumn Rhythm by Jackson Pollock, for example, challenges the students with regards to meaning, freedom of expression and subjectivity; this painting pushes them to rethink their definitions of art, their definition of meaning, then to discuss and debate the role of art in our contemporary life. Visual artistic materials could also help them learn more about their local artists who use a universal visual language that everyone could comprehend. The photography of Yto Berrada, Leila Alaoui, Lalla Essaydi, for example, relates them to the societal and cultural issues of their contemporary context and could, therefore, be an efficient way to explore cultural and social issues that such photographers address. In short, such a class could contribute in creating a savvy, literate and critical student who uses English to communicate with the rest of the world, but who is also knowledgeable enough about the concerns and issues of his/her society.

Still, some researchers might disagree with the positive impact of a global language like English on students or even a liberal class like visual arts. For such scholars (Berkey, 2007; Dialmy, 2016; Hefner, 2007; Tibi, 2005) learning in the Islamic world is not problem-solving and critical thinking oriented. It is also a learning that favors stabilization rather than change. These two fundamental characteristics are attributed to the very old tradition of memorization and hierarchy that is so dominant in Islamic institutions either in the ancient Madrasas of the 11th century onwards or even nowadays in modern public schools. Jonathan P. Berkey claims that the transmission of knowledge and the role of education in the Islamic institutions of the past were reluctant to promote change and relied heavily on memorization:

But for all the power that medieval Muslims attributed to education, change was not something that the transmission of knowledge was ordinarily expected to foster. The conservative character of the transmission of religious knowledge is further illustrated by the importance of memorization. (Hefner, 2007. pp. 45-46)
What Jonathan P. Berkey (2007) implicitly tries to state in his study of “Madrasa Medieval and Modern: Politics of Education, and the Problem of Muslim identity” is the correlation between education in the Islamic world both in the past and present; new subjects are introduced, new schools are built, new textbooks are designed but the approach to education has not changed much.

Tibi (2005) adopts the same diagnosis when he argues that education in Muslim society is based on rote-learning and memorization rather than critical thinking. Such an approach is common not only in religious subjects but even in secular ones using English as a language of learning. The main objective of the student in not to learn proper, to develop his/her skills, to unlearn what s/he has uncritically internalized through socialization but simply to obtain good exam grades:

University education in most Islamic countries does not amount to a professional qualification. This type of education, moreover, does not contribute to the acquiring of skills for change since it is based on how to learn by rote […] This is the fertile soil on which Islamists invade the institutions of learning and use them as their instruments. (Tibi, 2005.pp. 178-9)

Dialmy (2016) adopts the same critique of how knowledge is transmitted in the Moroccan educational system. He claims that the school favors memorization rather than critical thinking and debating and this generates an individual/student unable to argue independently from the dominant ideology (Dialmy, 2016.p, 56). His diagnosis of the Moroccan school is even more radical when he argues that the public school tries to reconcile two opposite narratives: on the one hand a conservative Islamic schooling shaping the thought and conduct of the pupil/student, and on the other hand a modern, liberal curricula imparted to pupils, such as foreign languages and human sciences. These two opposite paradigms cannot be reconciled without inner tension and conflict (Dialmy, 2016. p, 253).

Such strong and alarming arguments should be verified and checked by researchers and practitioners who are constantly in contact with students and academia. The rationale of this paper is also to address such issues and explore whether the university student does really or not achieve some gains from learning visual arts in English. The questions addressed to the students in the questionnaire have deliberately tackled taboo subjects. Indeed, the body (sexuality), religion (the sacred) and freedom of expression (politics) have long been qualified as the forbidden triangle in Islamic thought and society since the 1970s and we should today verify whether the new Moroccan/Arab citizen has surpassed such stigmas or not.

It should also be recognized that the use of a language, be it national or foreign, is also conditioned by culture and society. Anthropologists (Strauss) and linguists (De Saussure) have explored how language is thought and culture and not only a means of expression mastered by the users for communicative purposes. Meaning for De Saussure is based on arbitrary relation between the signifier and signifier. An image, for example, has a given meaning according to the social conventions where it is produced and interpreted. Thus, the “nude” would be a sign of a liberal perception of the body in the West and a “shame” in another context that treats the body sacredly.
The illuminating thoughts of some postmodern thinkers are of a great utility when addressing the strong and invisible links between language and society. Michel Foucault argues that knowledge and culture are a soft form of control. The modern society, I would add even the pre-modern society, is controlled by discourse or by ideology in circulation which creates willed power relations. “By discourse he meant a group of statements that provide a means for talking...about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Hence discourse is a body of knowledge that both defines and limits what can be said about something” (Sturken, 2009. p.105). The power of discourse, according to Foucault, is socially and culturally reflected in body politics; that is the set of rules and values established by a society to define and regulate the body. It is the dominant discourse that will dictate its ideology on the body; this discourse could favor liberal representations and definitions or more conservative and coercive ones (Foucault, 1977).

Roland Barthes introduced the theory of denotation and connotation to define what he calls “myth” (Barthes, 1972). For Barthes meaning/myth is defined and controlled by the invisible values and conventions internalized by a specific group of people in a specific context. Myth allows an image, a sign to appear natural. Myth, in this sense, is the set of ideologies that circulate everywhere in society; it could be in media, in education, in socialization, etc. Such ideologies are double-edged; they give a sense of meaning to individuals in a community but they also shape and condition their perceptions.

In the light of all these theories and arguments, it would be necessary to verify whether these approaches to education, language and culture are confirmed or denied by facts. The responses of the students could indeed provide us with concrete answers from those who are concerned, in the first place, with education and the dynamics or tension between tradition and modernity. The mixed quantitative and qualitative research methods were adopted to verify whether a certain theoretical framework is compatible with facts and responses of students.

Findings and Discussion

The nude

In Ways of Seeing, John Berger (1972) argues that “to be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself” (Berger, 1972. p.54). In Western painting tradition the nude is an artistic representation of the female body often produced by male painters and gazed at by male beholders. This rapport confirms power relations and gender inequality. But when put in a non Western context, like Morocco, it could reveal other discursive definitions of the female body deeply grounded in local culture and ideologies.
The Challenges of Teaching Visual Arts: The Case of Moroccan
Nachit

Table 1: The Nude and Painting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUDITY IN PAINTING</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO clear answer</th>
<th>Conditioned YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>16.12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The Nude and painting
Key words: negatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nudity and painting Key words: Negatives</th>
<th>forbidden</th>
<th>shamefull/shame</th>
<th>unaccepttable</th>
<th>taboo</th>
<th>a sin</th>
<th>punishable</th>
<th>worthless/valueless</th>
<th>not allowed</th>
<th>guilty</th>
<th>bad</th>
<th>disrespectful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As stated above, the first question addressed to students was dealing with the representation of the nude in western painting and how they respond to this issue. Out of 93 respondents, 68 expressed their disagreement with the way the body is represented in western painting. In other words, 73.11 per cent were against the liberal treatment of the body in artistic matters. What is mostly striking among this category is the language used to justify their response and refusal of the nude in art. As the graph shows, some meaningful and strong adjectives were employed by students to express their disagreement:

- Forbidden: 20 times
- Shameful/shame: 15 times
- Unacceptable: 13 times
- Taboo: 5 times
- Sin: 4 times
- Punishable, worthless, not allowed: 3 times each
- Guilty, bad: 2 times each
- Humiliating, lustful, insulting, disrespectful, a scandal: 1 time each.

Both the high percentage and the terms used by students confirm their total refusal of any liberal attitudes towards the body in art and, of course, one should deduce in social life as well. The words “forbidden”, “shameful/shame” and “unacceptable” have strong religious, legal and moral connotations. By the word “forbidden” students refer to the Islamic law that bans uncovering the body and favors the veil. As for the words “Shameful/shame, unacceptable” they reveal the dominant moral and social conventions that shape individuals through socializations and, therefore, condition one’s thoughts and attitudes. The other terms used by students (taboo, sin, punishable, humiliating, lustful, a scandal, insulting) confirm the previous general trend as well as the conservative mindset of students with regards to art and body.

The results have also shown that:
- 15 students were neutral; that is about 16.12 percent.
- 4 students were favorable for the use of the nude in painting; that is about 4.30 per cent.
- 2 students answered with a conditioned yes; that is about 2.15 per cent.
- 4 students gave no clear answer.

Religion and Art
Religion is the expression of the sacred and divine while art is more inclined to express the subjective and profane. Mircea Eliade argues that “the sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from “natural” realities. [the] sacred and profane are two modes of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history” (Eliade, 1956. pp. 10-14). These two opposite world views have always characterized people’s attitudes toward history and nature. The question again is how would a Moroccan student negotiate such a polarity between the sacred and the profane in class and in social life?
The response of students to the question related to the use of religion in art revealed a more balanced attitude. The graph shows that 52 students (55.91 per cent) expressed their agreement to using religious subjects and stories in art, 33 students (35.48 per cent) expressed a negative response, and some did not respond at all (8 cases or 8.6 per cent).

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For the first category, students believe that religion could be compatible with art when serving some purposes and objectives. 17 respondents asserted that religion and art should have a didactic role; the viewer of such a painting is expected to learn more about religion, to relate to religious morals and identify with its world view. 6 respondents restricted their favorable attitude to the condition of art respecting religion. For this category, there are red lines that art should not trespass. The third category (6 respondents) believes that art and religion could go well together if they encourage tolerance and intercultural communication. The fourth and fifth categories are favorable to art and religion if they serve religious purposes or aesthetic reasons. By religious purposes students insisted on the moral dimension of religion that art could highlight and by the aesthetic reasons they meant the decorative use of art in places of worship, such as mosques. The common denominator between all these responses is that the rapport between art and religion should be governed by the fundamental values of the society and not the liberal and individual choices of the artist as a free and independent creator.

As for the negative response to using religion in any artistic expressions, students insisted on the common thought that human figures should not be represented at all because religion forbids it and because only God can give life. Such a response could be explained in two possible ways. It could be associated with the misrepresentation of some Islamic figures in western media; the case of Charlie Ebdo is the most striking illustration. It could also confirm both a very rigid definition of religion and a reluctance to liberate art from taboos. The other reactions demonstrate either the fear of using art for non-religious purposes, the insignificance of art as a whole compared to religion or the necessity to respect religion.

**Freedom of Expression and Art**

Freedom of expression is one of the fundamental values of human rights and modernity. It is based on the undeniable right of the individual to express his/her thoughts in diverse matters, be them cultural, political or artistic. But freedom of expression is also challenged by some non-western societies that deem it improper for people belonging to different histories and cultures.
Such a polar approach to freedom of expression and art would undoubtedly reveal the dynamics in the perception and definition of freedom of expression by the Moroccan student.

Table 6: Freedom of expression and art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ART</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO CLEAR ANSWER</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>80.64%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>04.30%</td>
<td>01.07%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is sticking to notice the high percentage of students who responded favorably to freedom of expression and art. Indeed 75 respondents (80.64%) expressed their agreement with freedom of expression and deemed it a fundamental value. Such trend demonstrates the general belief that freedom is important not only in art but even in the other sectors of life. Students are inclined to be more rebellious and politically engaged. Their arguments confirm this political consciousness.

Table 7: Freedom of expression and art: positive responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES answers</th>
<th>Yes but should respect red lines</th>
<th>It is central/valuable/Necessary</th>
<th>Part of human rights and democracy</th>
<th>It encourages freedom of choice</th>
<th>Art should be challenging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of them shared the same belief that freedom of expression is part of human rights and democracy, encourages freedom of choice, is central and necessary in modern life and that
art should be challenging. Even those who claimed that “it should respect red lines” had a positive attitude toward freedom of expression. Such a general consensus is confirmed by the insignificant number of students who disagreed with freedom of expression; only four responded negatively. These students believe that red lines and borders should not be trespassed and art should be controlled.

One may conclude from the above results related to freedom of expression and art that students assign a political definition to freedom of expression and do not approach it in a holistic way. Art could be subversive and challenging in political matters but should not interrogate the cultural values of the society. Such a divide between the cultural and the political is confirmed by the series of contradictions within the students’ responses. Several cases reveal the inconsistency and contradiction of their arguments. For instance, they could be totally opposed to the representation of the body in painting and at the same time favorable to freedom of expression.

### Conclusion

The study has shown that students are torn between the global values of their digital world and the traditional values of their cultural belonging. They are willing to be part of the global village in matters of technology, communications and learning foreign languages but are reluctant to embrace the philosophical arguments of modernity. They regard a foreign language, such as English merely as a means of communication and not as a vehicle of modern cultural values and thoughts. Such a divide might explain how modernity is accepted as hardware but not as software. Seen from a general perspective, it also confirms the failure of the Islamic world to create its own modernity and its tendency to stick to tradition as a defensive mechanism against the western and secular values of globalization.

The response of the students also confirms the predominance of tradition in the way of seeing not only arts but culture and society as well. The majority of students were against audacity, border-crossing and liberal thoughts when it comes to taboo subjects. The impact of socialization and the dominant culture is definitely more shaping than university education. The curriculum might be very modern and liberal at university but its effect on the receiver is very
minimal because the social and cultural contexts are conservative. The reform of the educational system should, therefore, start from the primary school by introducing new teaching materials, modern pedagogies, new communication technologies, among others, in order to inculcate modern values and objectives to the pupil, be them in visual arts or in other disciplines. As for university education, the multicultural values based on the respect of diversity and difference should be promoted and implemented in the national curricula so as to generate a transnational student/citizen with a hybrid identity. The optimistic dimension of this research lies both in the enthusiasm and eagerness of the students to learn from materials and thoughts that are new to them as well as in their awareness of the necessity to be a critical visual reader of artistic images in particular or discourse in general.

This study could also be interpreted as the strong desire of students to stick to their values and traditions as a way of being. Their identities are deeply rooted in a culture that gives them a reason d’être. Therefore, they prefer to embrace these values in class or in real life. They are willing to learn from other cultures and narratives but would stick to the fundamentals of their culture. Of course, no one would deny a person the right to belong to and cherish a culture; it is even one of the basic rights of the human being. However, a culture resisting renewal and interrogation is doomed to stagnation.

It is in this context where higher education in Morocco is situated; a context characterized by the flow of information, the rapid change of technology, the scientific innovations and discoveries, the converging of narratives, etc. But at the same time the strong hold of traditional values and thoughts on the life of the students. The real challenge lies in successfully finding a middle ground between these two opposite world views and creating a modern education and culture that celebrates the bright, humanistic and rational practices and values of the past and the liberal and global values of modernity. Such a project could be and should be achieved either when teaching English as a foreign language or when teaching pure sciences. Education has indeed proven a double edged sword; it could promote development, tolerance and rationality or radical thoughts and practices.

This researcher should to confess that such an issue is a very thorny and complex one and that the above mentioned findings should not be generalized or mechanically applied to other educational subjects and contexts. Further research and investigation are required by more than one scholar so as to uncover other zones and questions that were neglected in the paper. I deliberately focused only on visual arts class, but other studies could consider how literature, translation, gender, critical thinking, inter alia, are imparted in the department of English so as to come up with more exhaustive findings. A similar research could be insightful if applied to other disciplines in the school of arts. Only then could we envisage a constructive and scientific reform of university education.

Notes
The Challenges of Teaching Visual Arts: The Case of Moroccan Nachit

1. Such an official concern with the use of English in education is currently debated by the national commission for educational reform. The private interest in English is manifest in the multitude of English language centers all over Morocco.

2. See Marie Mc Andrew’s “The Hijab controversies in Western public schools: Contrasting conceptions of ethnicity and ethnic relations” where she explores the challenges facing the French laic school in a multicultural France.


4. “The image is still frightening in the Arab world. However, if it is still frightening it remains the unthinkable in the modern Arab societies and therefore we accuse it of violence” (my translation).

5. See a study conducted in 1972 by Abou Ali Yassin entitled “A Talout Al Moharam” where the author explores such issues. This study has a symbolic rather than a scholarly interest for the methodology and ideology of the author is more political than academic

6. Recently the public sphere in different Moroccan cities witnessed gay bashing and violent attacks on women dressed in a liberal clothing. What is sticking is that such “street justice” or violence was completely unknown in Morocco of 1960s and 70s.

7. For more details on this issue, see the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam adopted in 1990 where the universal and the local definitions of human rights converge in this declaration.

8. The works of Nasr Hamed Abou Zaid, Mohammed Arkoun and Mohammed Abed Aljabri, among others, have explored such issues in detail.

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References


The Importance of Pragmatic Competence in the EFL Curriculum: Application and Implications*

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Abstract  
The field of language teaching and curriculum development has been characterized by its constant development, with a concomitant impact on the quality of education and training. The drive is mostly due to the rapidly changing world characterized by globalization and the result of openings on other fields of research. One area that has informed this field is the teaching of L2 pragmatic competence, with the commonly expressed generalization being that there is a gap between what research in pragmatics has found and how language is generally taught today (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). On this view, this paper purports to investigate the role of pragmatic competence in the teaching of English. We provide evidence that language proficiency should not only be equated with grammatical well-formedness, but also with how to use it appropriately and efficiently in the target language. This being the case, however, we will show that the implementation of this view is far from being easy, especially in a trend that has for long been characterized by a focus on the grammatical competence, both in terms of training and curriculum design. This is paired with a similar difficulty in terms of how to translate the pragmatically-based approach into L2 classroom practices and how to identify modes of assessment. Addressing these issues, we believe, will shed light on some of the challenges and implications on the teaching of English along with the applicability of the suggested approach to the current ELT reform in the Arab world in general and in Morocco in particular.

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Foreign Language Teaching, Intercultural Competence, Interlanguage Pragmatics, Pragmatic Competence.
1. Introduction
The dialectical relationship between language and culture has for long been a topic of interest since antiquity (see Kramsch (1998) and Sharifian (2015) for a collection of papers in this regard). With the burgeoning of the science of foreign language teaching in more recent years, this issue has been of paramount importance in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). With intercultural communication being at the forefront of learning a second language (Byram et al. 2002), there has been a growing recognition of the fact that grammatical knowledge alone is not sufficient. This is largely motivated by the theoretically and empirically informed case studies that demonstrate the effects of culture and native language on the development of learners’ L2 suggesting that for non-native speakers/ L2 learners to achieve a fully-fledged competence in the target language, a consideration of the sociocultural and pragmatic aspects of the target language is a requirement (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper, 1992; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010, amongst others).

In fact, it has become widely accepted that language is more than a cognitive individualistic process (Firth and Wagner, 1997). Instead, it is seen as a social construct as well, learned and acquired through social interaction. Findings in the area of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) have shown that grammatical well-formedness alone does not suffice to warrant successful communication. In this regard, Hymes (1971:278) argues that “there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless”. This entails that language also includes the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of appropriate language use. Translating these findings into Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) suggests the fact that the incorporation of the socio-cultural rules of the target language has become a pressing need (see the discussion in Lange and Paige, 2003). However, the actual manifestation of this is far from being easy, especially in a teaching paradigm in which language proficiency has for long been equated with the ability to produce and understand well-formed sentences in the target language.

This issue has resulted in a schism within the SLA paradigm. As demonstrated Arabski and Wojtaszek (2011), a deep disciplinary divide between research in the SLA and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) has developed within the Chomskyan revolution in the 1960s. Basically, the field has been dominated by two practitioners. The first group of scholars focuses on the internal aspects that underline speakers’ competence. This branch investigates the psycholinguistic aspects of the process of L2 acquisition, in which the study of linguistics had little to do with language teaching, the focus being primarily on the formal linguistic properties of the learner’s interlanguage. This line of research had become less tenable with the increasing attention to the role of sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors that affect and shape the process of L2 development. The latter assumptions constitute the gist of the second approach to SLA. Within this perspective, this paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate of whether or not pragmatic competence should be incorporated into the L2 classroom and syllabus design. In pursuance of this aim, this paper has a two-fold goal. First, it attempts to emphasize the importance of incorporating the teaching of pragmatic competence in the L2 classroom. The main motivation, we argue, emanates from the cross-cultural variation that different languages deploy to convey the same speech act. More frequently than not, this results in communication breakdown. We support our claim by taking the speech act of requests as a way of illustrating the speech act research paradigm grounded with the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). The two languages used to illustrate this fact are English and Moroccan Arabic (MA), showing that...
the variation exhibited by the two languages brings about pragmatic transfer. The second goal is to raise some issues and strategies related to the teaching of L2 pragmatics, emphasizing on the role of the teacher in shaping and improving such a competence.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The section that follows introduces the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics within SLA. In this section, we compare how native speakers of English and Moroccan EFL learners perform the speech act of requests. In particular, we argue that the two languages use different requestive strategies. This difference, we note, may result in pragmatic failure, a state of affairs which requires pedagogical intervention. Section three proposes some of the strategies that can be used in L2 classroom to enhance and raise students’ awareness of pragmatic behavior. This section also raises some of the issues related to how to assess L2 pragmatic competence. Section four looks at the role of the teacher and the knowledge s/he should be equipped with in order to meet this end. Section five shows that the assumptions we suggest here are in harmony with EFL reforms in higher Education. Finally, section six concludes with providing some suggestions for some future research avenues in the area of Interlanguage Pragmatics and Pragmatic Development.

2. Pragmatic Competence and SLA

Crystal (2008: 379) defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”. Succinctly stated in this definition is the fact that the way we use language is constrained by a number of sociocultural constraints. These constraints affect not only our linguistic choices (the speaker’s point of view), but also the way we comprehend language (the hearer’s point of view). On this view, ILP is the study of how speakers develop, produce, and comprehend linguistic action in context (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

A widely held belief in the area of pragmatics is that pragmatic ability means going beyond the literal meaning of what is said or written in order to get the intended meaning. Central to the study of pragmatics, Leech (1983) subdivided pragmatics into Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics. The latter, on the one hand, means the knowledge of how social rules affect language use. The factors considered here are factors such as appropriateness, politeness, social conventions and taboos. Pragmalinguistics, on the other hand, is “the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms” (Brown, 2007: 233). This type of pragmatic knowledge primarily concerned with how to obey the sociopragmatic constraints in our choice of linguistic tools. On such a view, being pragmatically competent prerequisites the two facets of pragmatics: to understand and produce sociopragmatic meanings with Pragmalinguistic conventions. Lacking one of these results in pragmatic failure (Roever, 2009). As has been pointed out earlier, the field responsible for how L2 speakers develop, comprehend, and produce pragmatic patterns is called ILP, with the generalization being that native speakers and L2 learners differ as to how they use their pragmatic knowledge (Ellis, 1994; Kasper and Rose, 1999, amongst others). This apparent mismatch results in Pragmatic Transfer (Bou-Franch, 1998), as a result of L2 learners falling back on their L1 pragmatics to comprehend and produce the pragmatics of L2.

One area in which cross-linguistic variation has been observed is the realization of speech acts. One of the speech acts that have received much attention in ILP is requests (Blum-Kulka,
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19987, 1991; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Abdou, 1999; Achiba, 2003; Latif, 2002; Loutfi, 2016a). Cross-linguistically, three types of requestive strategies have been discussed. In particular, a request can be direct (1-a, 2-a), indirect (1-b, 2-b), or in the form of a hint (1-c, 2-c), illustrated in the examples below:

(1) **English**
   a. Open the door.
   b. Can you open the door?
   c. It is hot in here.

(2) **Moroccan Arabic**
   a. ⱅәl l-bab ⱱafak.
      ‘Open the door please’
   b. (waʃ) mumkin t- ⱅәl l-bab?
      ‘Can you open the door?’
   c. kayn S-Sahd bәzzaf hna.
      ‘It’s hot in here’

Similar though the requestive strategies may seem, the two languages use different requestive strategies in different social contexts. As discussed in Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016), EFL Moroccan learners use more direct strategies and modification categories than native speakers, in that the bulk of EFL Moroccan students’ requests is characterized by the use of the verb ‘bәgit’ “I want” along with the use of downgraders, like ‘ʕafak’ “please” in order to alleviate the impositive force of a request. Crucially, in the absence of the appropriate context and the relevant modifiers such as ‘ʕafak’, direct requests can be interpreted as an order.

As opposed to native speakers of English, EFL Moroccan learners’ requests have been shown to be characterized by the so-called Speech Act Set (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983). These are instances where distinct speech acts are combined, one expressing the core meaning and the other functioning as a modifier. As demonstrated in the example in (3-a) below, this utterance consists of two distinct speech acts that of requesting and criticizing.

(3)
   a. [waʃ mumkin tɔyʃ l-mmaʃәn d-l-barәh] rah [dima ka-t-xәlli-hum m-musxin]
      Requesting          Criticizing
      ‘Can you wash the dishes of yesterday? You always leave them dirty.’
   b. [hәyyәd T-Tumubiltәk man hna] wallә [nqәyyәd lik b-bruSi]
      Ordering            Threatening
      ‘Move your car or I will give you a ticket’
   c. [ʔустәd, waʃ mumkin t-ʔaʒʒәl lina l-mtihәn] rah [ʕәnd-na had simana ʕәmra mtihәn]
      Requesting          Complaining
      ‘Professor, can you postpone the exam. We have a lot of exams this week.’

These differences between EFL Moroccan learners and native speakers of English were argued to be the result of L1 pragmatic transfer. One problem that such differences arise is the so-called pragmatic failure, which in turn may result in communication breakdown. Part of the reason is that these errors may not be tolerated by native speakers, as they may lack ‘sociolinguistic relativity’ (Wolfson, 1983: 62, cited in Lin, 2008: 43). Likewise, learners may not be aware of the negative perceptions that native speakers may have of them as a result of...
pragmatic errors (Gass and Selinker, 1994: 289). Undeniably, this issue may not only thwart the learning process, but also negatively affects interpersonal relations. Therefore, what is needed here is raising students’ pragmatic awareness through pedagogical intervention and instruction, a point further discussed in the section that follows.

3. Teaching and Assessing Pragmatic Competence

Compared to the teaching of grammatical and lexical knowledge, the area of pragmatics still lags far behind. For one thing, the efficiency and proficiency of language use can only be achieved when the interlocutors are speaking in a socio-culturally-informed context/setting, where considerations of a number of social factors are at play. This includes the situation per se, alongside the speaker-hearer’s relationship to the interlocutor. The classroom for the most part does not allow such requirements. To establish these variables in the classroom as well as the modes of assessment is far from being easy. To the extent that these requirements are established in the classroom, the obvious question is whether or not pragmatic competence can or needs to be taught. For another, shall we consider pragmatic ability on a par with grammatical knowledge requiring pedagogic intervention or is it simply subordinate to the knowledge of grammar? By the latter, we mean that the function of pragmatic competence is ornamental. As has been shown earlier, there are cases where grammatical knowledge proves useless, in that it can result in awkwardness, embarrassment, rudeness, failure of the speaker’s message to get through, all of which result in communication breakdown. This is paired with the fact that however advanced, pragmatic competence is still lacking in L2 learners whose grammatical knowledge is deemed proficient (see Latif, 2001; Loutfi, 2016a; Kasper, 1997 for a discussion).

Another issue is whether the teaching of pragmatics should be explicit or implicit. Using explicit instruction means the use of meta-pragmatic explanation, that is the explicit teaching of rules of use, drawing the students’ attention by giving them examples of the target feature (Roever, 2009: 566). A number of studies have investigated the teachability of pragmatics. For instance, Rose and Ng (2001) have argued in favor of explicit instructions. Their explicit instruction group performed native-like compliment responses. In a similar vein, Koike and Pearson (2005) found that the group that received explicit instructions outperformed the implicit instruction group in the production of the speech act of suggestions in Spanish. For the speech act of requests, Takahashi (2001) taught bi-clausal requests to two groups. Similarly, the group that received explicit instruction produced more native-like requestive strategies than the implicitly taught group.

Another area of research in the teaching of pragmatics has been primarily concerned with developing teaching materials. For the most part, materials to teach pragmatics are and should be developed based on findings from pragmatics and ILP. These materials would represent an accurate reflection of naturally-occurring discourse. For instance, Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) used as classroom activities examples of opening sequences of phone conversation from American and German. Paired with meta-pragmatic explanation, their activities helped raised students’ awareness of the cross-cultural differences. In much the same way, Crandall and Basturkmen (2004, cited in Roever, 2009) used role-play strategies for teaching requests in a status-unequal setting (international students to professors). Additionally, they adopted an approach where students produce and at the same compare their speech acts with authentic native speakers’ data. Meier (1997), on the other hand, relied on the students’ critical incidents,
incidents in which communication fails, to teaching pragmatics. Roever (2009) proposes a task-based syllabus, wherein students target tasks that are considered appropriate in real-world setting. This syllabus, Roever argues, would ensure that pragmatic competence goes hand in hand with learners’ general L2 competence.

Assessing pragmatic competence may be also viewed as the most challenging area in teaching pragmatics. The basic reason for this state of affairs resides in whether we should assess pragmatic competence categorically, on a par with grammaticality in which a given structure is either well-formed or ill-formed, or in a gradient way, wherein the acceptability of a sentence ranges from the most appropriate to the least appropriate. Since pragmatics bifurcates into two main components, namely Sociopragmatics and Pragmalinguistics, another question is whether the two should be taught simultaneously or they require distinct pedagogical instructions. Equally importantly is the task of developing their corresponding modes of assessment.

Another issue is the reference point against which a given answer will be evaluated. In other words, as EFL language instructors, the problem is whether we are going to evaluate students’ production and comprehension with reference to American English or British English. One challenge is that English has become the main European lingua franca. It is used by both native and non-native speakers to communicate in a variety of social and cultural settings. The intercultural setting encompasses not only native speakers of English, but also nationwide speakers. The dilemma herein lies in the exact culture that we should teach in the English language classroom. This means a dissociation of the language from its culture (see Nizegorodcew (2011) and references cited therein).

This being the case, however, various methods of assessing pragmatics have been proposed. One such a method is the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). This method has been frequently used as a data-gathering device in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. It provides the learners with a set of situations with differing contextual and social variables. Examples of these constraints are as follows:

To illustrate with a pertinent example, consider the following situation:

You are invited to attend a wedding party. So you want Ayoub, a friend of yours, to lend you his new suit, what would you say?

The social constraints observed in this situation include power, which can be described here as equal, social distance which is of acquaintance, imposition, that is low, and the request goal, a favor. In point of fact, there are number of problems that such a test may suffer from. One shortcoming is that the DCT cannot be said to elicit naturally-occurring and interactional data. There is no denying the fact that context is a dynamic construct that changes constantly and instantaneously. Moreover, a DCT provides the learners with a limited space for answers, contrary to real-life discourse. This can be coupled with the possibility that a learner may misunderstand the situation. Last but not least, given its written nature, a DCT overlooks the non-verbal side of communication that may play a major role (for more shortcomings, see
Yamashita, 2008). The other alternative evaluation measures that have been proposed are as varied as multiple-choice tests, role-plays, and picture and video prompts.

4. The Role of the Teacher
The role of the teacher is of paramount importance even before teaching L2 pragmatics. Moreover, pragmatically-relevant input in the classroom is limited. Therefore, teachers are often the only models of appropriate (pragmatic) behavior. There are a number of facts that play a crucial role in making the teaching process successful. Such factors are the teachers’ backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, and beliefs and teaching training programmes s/he has taken.

For the present purposes, it is essential to identify exactly the areas teachers of pragmatics need to know to help learners understand other’s intentions and express themselves as intended in the given sociocultural context (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010:23). In other words, what is more important than helping learners express themselves in the best possible way is to recognize what the teacher is supposed to know before teaching L2 pragmatics. The following table indicates what the teacher is supposed to know in order to teach L2 Pragmatics (from Ishihara, 2010: 23-24):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected components of teacher knowledge for teaching L2 in general</th>
<th>Components of teacher knowledge specifically required for teaching of L2 pragmatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject-matter knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of pragmatic variation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of a range of pragmatic norms in the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of meta-pragmatic information (e.g., how to discuss pragmatics).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pedagogical-content knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of how to teach L2 pragmatics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of how to assess L2 pragmatic ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of the learners and local, curricular, and educational contexts</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge of learners’ identities, cultures, proficiency, and other characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of the pragmatics-focused curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of the role of L2 pragmatics in the educational contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above identifies the types of knowledge that teachers are required to have in order to teach L2 pragmatics. Each type of knowledge is of great importance in this regard. These types of knowledge are classified in terms of subject matter, pedagogical content and learners and local curricular and educational contexts. It is maintained in this concern that the ways teachers perceive their knowledge affect the way they use it for teaching, evaluation, and curriculum development. It is therefore worthwhile to mention that teachers should not only have knowledge, but also be cognizant of the impact of their beliefs on the ways they teach language in general and L2 pragmatics in particular. In other words, teachers should have knowledge of L2 pragmatics as well as awareness of the impact of their beliefs on the teaching and evaluation of L2 pragmatics, not to mention its inclusion in curriculum development.

No less important than having knowledge of L2 pragmatics and being aware of the impact of one’s beliefs on teaching and evaluating in L2 pragmatics is the teaching of L2 pragmatics per se. Indeed, The EFL teacher can use a number of frameworks to teach L2 pragmatics. The frameworks in question include, according to Ishihara (2010:101), the *Noticing Hypothesis*, the *Output Hypothesis*, the *Interaction Hypothesis*, and the *Sociocultural Theory*. Teachers can as well use instructional tasks inductively or deductively as is shown in the following figure (from Ishihara (2010:117):

(6)

**Table 2: Deductive and inductive approaches to teaching L2 pragmatics:**

Teachers are also required to participate in curriculum development. In fact, Brown (2007:225) asserts that “the most apparent practical classroom application of functional description of languages was found in the development of functional syllabuses, more popularly notional-functional syllabuses.” Brown (2007) uses the term notional-functional syllabus to refer to the integration of contextualized language functions in curriculum development.

5. **EFL Reforms in Higher Education**

The assumptions suggested herein are in fact in consonant with the reform in the field of education in general that started in 1999 with the drafting of Education and Training National Charter in Morocco. As a matter of fact, higher education, according to the charter “aims at fulfilling the following functions:
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- Initial and continuous training
- Preparing the youth to integrate in the active life
- Technological and scientific research
- Spreading of knowledge

(Education and Training National Charter, 1999:28)

The functions mentioned above are meant to meet the needs of higher education and prepare young people for easy integration in society and more importantly in the job market. English is also concerned in this respect, as it is subsumed under the umbrella of foreign languages when it comes to language mastery. A foreign language, including English, is, indeed, meant to be learnt via focusing on the functional use of language as well as preparing to communicate using it and develop certain linguistic competencies (Education and Training National Charter, 1999:37).

The National Charter puts emphasis on the functional use of foreign languages as well as their mastery. This is why it is worthwhile to consider the importance of L2 pragmatics in learning a foreign language and mastering it. All things considered, one can note, therefore, that the presence of L2 pragmatics is considered as an integral part of L2 mastery.

6. Conclusion

This paper has been primarily concerned with highlighting the importance of teaching L2 pragmatic competence in the L2 classroom. It has been shown that language proficiency should be correlated with not only grammatical knowledge, the mastering of syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics, but also with the pragmatic aspects of the target language, the lack of which may result in communication breakdown. This enforces the inclusion of sociocultural awareness raising into both the classroom and the teacher training programmes. In this regard, we have argued that this form-context relationship can be mediated through, among other things, pedagogical intervention. A number of teaching methods and modes of assessment have been proposed, pinning down the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, we have emphasized the role of the teacher in shaping and improving this ability.

The teaching of L2 pragmatics being a relatively new area of research, more research in this area is still needed. While speech acts are considered to be the most rigorously studied area in pragmatics, in the Moroccan context, to the best of our knowledge, only two speech acts have been studied, Abdou (1999), Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016) for requests and Benbarka (2002) for apologies. As stated in the table in (6) above, to teach L2 pragmatics knowledge of pragmatic variation norms in the target language is a requirement. To the best of our knowledge, pragmatics in general remains the area that is the least studied or investigated, if at all. More research is highly needed in this area for more insights in order to further inform research and theory in the area of ILP. This would help for developing new teaching techniques and material design, based primarily on data from natural interaction.

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7. References


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i Before we proceed, a terminological clarification is in order. In the literature on cross-cultural communication, the terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ communication are often times used interchangeably. In this paper, however, we do not use the terms as such. Rather, by the former, we refer to a comparison that we seek to establish between two or more languages. The latter, however, is intended to mean instances where two or possibly more speakers from different cultures communicate.

ii This is not to deny the fact that there are cross-cultural similarities as well (see Ringbom, 2007). These aspects represent the so-called positive pragmatic transfer, which we dub here as the free-of-charge pragmatic knowledge.
Interestingly, instances of interlanguage transfer have been reported as well (see Cenoz et al. 2001). This is the influence from an interlanguage back into a previous interlanguage. As should be obvious, this kind of transfer affects only multilingual learners.

Data transcription conforms the standard International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Emphatic consonants are represented by a corresponding capital letter.

To elicit their data, Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016) adopted a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which provides a set of situations with varying social and contextual variables, i.e. social status, the level of social distance, and the degree of imposition. See section three for more details.

Ghawi and Jonson (1993) found that Arabic learners of English tend to apologize less than native speakers do. Benbarka (2002) found similar results in the production of apologies.

The Status of English in the Age of Globalization: Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane as a Case in Point

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Abstract
The linguistic situation in Morocco is very complex. Moroccan population is diverse and people tend to speak many languages in different regions. Multilingualism is deeply rooted in Morocco and Moroccans are exposed to a host of languages in different social and economic contexts. Yet, not all the languages in Morocco enjoy the same amount of support. In spite of the fact that French is widely used in many political institutions and administrations, there is still room for other foreign languages like English which is gaining ground and ascendancy in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. Hence, in the rapid age of globalization, nothing is impossible and the American system will invade Morocco in different domains. This paper is mainly intended to investigate students’ choice of different languages in Al Akhawayn University as well as their attitudes to English and other foreign languages. Most of the results in the study reflect the impact as well as the influence of globalization on the students’ choice of foreign languages.

Keywords: Al Akhawayn University, Globalization, Language Attitudes, Linguistic Repertoire, Multilingualism
1-Attitudes to Foreign Languages

Since the main objective of this paper is to investigate students’ use of foreign languages at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, it is imperative to deal with the various attitudes that students hold toward languages in order to see the extent to which certain foreign languages gain strong ascendancy in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. In this respect, it is important to provide the reader with a theoretical framework which encompasses both the notion of languages attitudes and the major types of attitudes held toward Bilingualism and Multilingualism. In fact, the notion of attitudes is deeply rooted in the domain of social psychology. The term “Attitude” is such an elusive concept that cannot be pinned down to one particular approach and is therefore open to different interpretations. Hence the best definition of attitudes is to be found in the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics. According to the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, language attitudes are:

Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language (which) may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, status, etc. Attitudes may also show what people feel about speakers of that language. (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985:155).

This definition is very significant because it shows the extent to which languages are linked to emotional feelings or reactions. These reactions or responses can actually be noticed in the set of stereotypes, prejudices and thoughts about people and the language.

Apart from this, Ludi and Py (1981) point out that an attitude is an “acquired predisposition to react in a certain way to social objects. The social objects can be the individual’s behavior and his discourse”. (Ludi&Py, 1981: 97). What can be understood from the quotation is that an attitude is a mental state in which the individual has to be ready to behave and to respond to social objects. In addition to this, there are many researchers who have defined the term from different angles. The following are some of the many definitions of attitude:

(a) “An internal state aroused by stimulation of some type and which may mediate the organism’s subsequent response”. (Williams,1974:21).

(b)

(c) “An intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person’s response”. (Fasold, 1984:147).

d) “An attitude is a mental a neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related”. (Allport, 1935:798).

(e)

What can be concluded from the above definitions is that an attitude is a “state of readiness”. In other words, this state leads the individual to perceive things as well as people around him or her readily. In their daily interactions, people are always ready to face objects as well as people when they are in close contact with them. They hold either a positive or a negative attitude toward them. In addition to this, attitudes are basically learned from previous experience. Moreover, they are enduring and they determine the direction of the individual’s behavior.
Apart from this, Grosjean (1982) states that language is not just a means of communication, rather it is qualified as “symbol of social or group identity, an emblem of group membership and solidarity” (p.117). In this respect, we could say that the different languages are intricately related or linked to the different attitudes and mainly the social values that are not only advocated or held by the native speakers of these languages but by the people who do not know these languages. In this sense, we could further argue that attitudes towards a particular language could not be dissociated from attitudes towards its users. Haugen (1956) states that languages that are always in contact are the targets of diverse attitudes. Haugen (1956) makes it clear in the following passage:

Whenever languages are in contact, one is likely to find certain prevalent attitudes of favor or disfavor towards the languages involved. These can have profound effects on the psychology of the individuals and on their use of the languages. In the final analysis these attitudes are directed at the people who use the languages and are therefore inter-group judgments and stereotypes. (pp.95-96).

The above passage deals with the notion of attitudes in relation to languages. Therefore, it must be noted that attitudes are all the time associated with languages and people. The most important types of attitudes that I will deal with in this theoretical framework are the attitudes held towards bilinguals and attitudes towards languages.

Language attitude is a broad topic that has actually stimulated the interest of many researchers in the field of social sciences simply because it can be studied from different perspectives and approaches. Therefore, the major types of attitudes that need to be investigated in this piece of paper are basically the attitudes held toward Bilingualism and Bilinguals and those held towards languages.

2-Attitudes towards Bilingualism and Bilinguals
The attitudes held towards Bilingualism and Bilinguals are very diverse. In this respect, there are some people who intricately associate Bilingualism with negative attitudes and at the same time, there are other people who associate it with positive attitudes. People who associate Bilingualism with negative attitudes rightly argue that the adoption of more than two foreign languages for instance by a particular individual will certainly lead to the dominance of foreign languages and this at the detriment of the native language of the individual. In the kingdom of Morocco for instance, there are some intellectuals who hold negative attitudes towards the notion of Bilingualism. Larousi (1988) referred to AbdelkrimGhallab who insinuates that the reason why Moroccans are not interested in reading is basically due to bilingualism:

“Concerning bilingualism, I have already exposed my point of view. We can never be the son of two mothers otherwise we will be exposed to the psychological dissociation”. (Larousi, 1988: 67).(My own translation).

It must be noted, therefore, that Bilingualism may actually be the source of some problems for certain bilinguals because it leads to the negligence of one language at the detriment or expense of another. Hence, it is noticed today that many bilinguals are seen torn between two
different cultures and consequently between different identities. As a result, bilinguals cannot master well the languages which they use daily in their life. Likewise, the same attitude or view is held by some people in the United States of America who fear that bilingual education may contribute to the maintenance of languages other than English which is the official language of the state. Furthermore, even the US government officials and more specifically president Reagan held a very negative view towards the notion of bilingual education. In one of his historical speeches in 1983, president Reagan clearly states his point of view towards bilingual education:

“It is absolutely wrong and against American concept to have a bilingual program that is now openly admittedly dedicated to preserving their native language and never getting them adequate in English so they can go out into the job market”. (Romaine, 1989: 251).

What can be concluded from the above is that President Reagan strongly favoured the English language as the basic medium of education. At the same time, he discarded other native languages to a secondary position. Apart from this, people who favor bilingualism rightly argue that it is much better to learn more than two languages because the individual’s mind will then be exposed to other cultures. In Morocco, people who master or know more than two languages are highly respected compared to ordinary people.

3-Attitudes towards Languages

From the outset, it must be stressed that attitudes towards a particular language or languages encompass two outstanding elements, which are prejudices and socialization. In fact, prejudices are the basic shared stereotypes or beliefs that a person advocates or holds towards somebody or something. Hence, prejudices and socialization may be qualified as the two factors, which determine language attitudes. In this respect, Loveday (1980) cited Fishrman (1976) in relation to the sort of attitudes and reactions to a particular language:

“Students, teachers, parents and politicians alike react differently to a language, in the classroom and outside of it, depending on whether or not it is their mother tongue whether or not it has long been authoritatively codified and attuned to the needs of modern technology”. (Loveday, 1980:14).

What can be understood from the above quotation is that Loveday states that the criteria, which lie behind languages attitudes, can be summarized in whether a language is a mother tongue and at the same time whether it is a powerful and dominant language that can fulfill the basic needs of modern technology.

Apart from this, it must be noted that whenever two languages are in close contact, one of the two languages can actually be granted more prestige than the other. For instance, in spite of the fact that positive attitudes are held and attributed to both French and Arabic in Morocco, French and Arabic bilinguals associate French with prestige. In this respect, Grosjean (1982) provides the reader with a very pertinent definition of the prestigious language. He points out that:

The prestigious language is often considered more beautiful, more expressive, more logical and better able to express abstract thoughts, and the other
language felt to be ungrammatical, concrete and coarse. This is the attitude
towards classical Arabic as opposed to dialectal Arabic in most Arab countries.
(pp.121-122).

It must be noted, therefore, that attitudes towards bilinguals and to languages they use differ
garding to the shared beliefs and prejudices. Hence, it must be stressed that language attitudes
determine the extent to which languages are learned, used and favored by learners. Grosjean
(1982) states this argument in the following passage: Language attitude is always one of the
major factors in accounting for which languages are learned, which are used, and which are
preferred by bilinguals. (p.127).

What can be subsumed from the above quotation is that language attitudes are associated
with the notion of language choice. Bilinguals find themselves in situations in which they have to
choose between separate languages when communicating with other bilinguals.

It must be noted that linguists and researchers hold diverse attitudes towards foreign
languages. In this context, it is necessary to mention some attitudes that some linguists and
researchers hold toward the English language. In his article entitled “Towards a Moroccan Model
of Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language”, Ennaji (1988), pointed out that many
linguists and researchers in the domain of sociology had come up with very pertinent results
about the attitudes that students hold towards the English language. According to him, Guebels
investigation of languages in Morocco is very significant because it basically deals with the
motivations and attitudes that pupils at high school hold towards the English language. The
importance of Guebels study (1976) resides in the fact that it sheds light on the diverse
motivations for choosing English as a means of communication. Hence, the following tables
illustrate both the percentages of students who choose to study English and the motives for
learning it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Percentage of Pupils who choose to study English in Morocco</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source (Ennaji, 1988:41).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Motives for Learning English According to Fifth Form Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To read literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To listen to radio news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To write to a pen friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To listen to the songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To converse in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source (Ennaji, 1988:42).

What can be deduced from tables 1 and 2 is that most Guebels informants hold a positive
attitude towards English. Moreover, students have different motivations for learning this
language. The study shows that 64.80 percent and 36.65 percent of Guebels respondents study
English in order to read classical literature and to communicate with each other. Furthermore,
61.5 percent of Guebels informants learn English because it enables them to write letters to their friends. Apart from this, a relatively high percentage of Guebels respondents study English because it enables them to know what is happening in the world and to be more open to what is new in the world of music. Table 2 shows that 67 percent and 56.9 percent of Guebels informants respectively learn English because it helps them to understand both the news and English songs presented on the radio.

In the same vein, we could further say that students at the university level also hold positive attitudes towards English. In this respect, it is important to mention some researchers who have investigated the attitudes of university students towards English. According to Elbiad (1985), Ouakrime (1986) and Sadiqi (1988) students at the university level hold a positive attitude towards English. Moreover, Ennaji (1988) argues that English has a high status in Morocco. In fact, it is qualified as “the first international language that is useful in scientific research, in international communication and in transfer of technology. It is also interesting because it enables students to have access to modern literature and science” (Ennaji, 1988:42).

Equally important, in his fieldwork on the attitudes of university students towards English, Ouakrime (1986) maintains that most of his informants have a favorable attitude towards English. Moreover, most of them have different motivations for learning this language. In fact, 89 percent of his respondents study English in order to get general knowledge about the English culture. Furthermore, 76.5 percent of them want to learn this language because it will help them to get involved easily in the work place.

Similarly, in her article entitled “The spread of English in Morocco”, Sadiqi (1988) highlights the importance of this language in Morocco. According to her, most university students hold a positive attitude towards English. In fact, 61 percent and 73 percent of her respondents respectively claim that English is their most favorable foreign language as it enables them to secure a good job and to read English literature.

The above facts are clear evidence that the English language is spreading in Morocco and that in the near future it will gain a high status and will compete with French. Hence, most Moroccans are interested in this language because it helps those who have a good command of it to get involved easily in the work place. In her article entitled, “The spread of English in Morocco”, Sadiqi (1988) concurs with this argument when she notes:

The languages used in Morocco fall into three types: national, colonial and foreign. Being a colonial language, French has inevitably been considered as a symbol of political and cultural dependence although this is not always explicit. This rather negative attitude towards French indirectly increases the language without any colonial connotation for Moroccans. In the case of English, there are no such counteractions hindering its spread. The status of English in Morocco is not connected to political considerations or to ties with Great Britain or the USA because it is not viewed as a sign of colonialism or attachment to another nation. Another point worth mentioning here is that whereas France is no
more politically and economically dominant on the international scene (France has lost a lot of its colonies and prestige), English speaking countries, especially the USA are internationally powerful. Morocco, like so many other countries, is economically dependent on countries which use English as part of its diplomatic commitments. This, of course, means new prospects for English graduates in Morocco. English has certainly started to compete with French in Morocco. (p.73)

Likewise, in his sociolinguistic investigation of the issue of multilingualism in Morocco, Gravel (1979) provides us with some interesting statistics concerning students’ attitudes toward languages. Hence, the following table gives us a deep insight into the diverse attitudes toward languages:

**Table 3 Attitude toward Languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standard Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>41 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Gravel, 1979:232).

What can be understood from table 3 is that a great percentage of students strongly claim that English will continue to retain a high status. Most of them have a positive attitude towards it. Moreover, Berber and dialectal Arabic are qualified as inferior languages.

The field work conducted at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane reveals some interesting findings concerning the status of foreign languages in Morocco. It seems, therefore, that students have their own motivations and reasons for choosing and using English as a foreign language in diverse walks of life. Al Akhawayn University is an international institution known for its prestigious academic standards both at the cultural and social levels. All the academic research activities are conducted in English and most of the students enrolled in the different schools are compelled to demonstrate their oral and written skills in English in order to get easily into the workplace after graduation. Getting a degree from this university most often opens up better future horizons for the candidates who aspire to get good job opportunities in Non governmental organizations as well as international companies. It seems that a good mastery of the English language as well as some technical experience is the key to get involved in the workplace.

Most of my respondents in this fieldwork belong to the middle class and only a small percentage of students belong to the rich class. The students I interviewed at Al Akhawayn University belong to different schools and to different social classes. The following table gives us information about the respondents by social class:

**Table 4 Respondents by Social class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich class</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to note that 67 percent of the respondents in this survey belong to the middle class. Moreover, 22 percent of them state that they belong to the upper class. Apart from this, 2 percent and 5 percent of the informants report that they belong to the lower class and the poor one respectively. Still, in this fieldwork, the informants have assessed themselves as having a good command of languages in their daily conversations. Hence, the following table gives us the number of languages that are used for communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of languages used for communication</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>72 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>24 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five and more</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 5, 72 percent of the informants report that they use three languages in their daily conversations. Furthermore, 24 percent of them use four languages in order to interact and to communicate with people. Apart from this, 2 percent of the respondents use more than five languages as a means of communication. Ultimately, none of the informants in this study is monolingual.

Likewise, the following table gives us an insight into the languages that are mainly used for communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages that are used for communication</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Italian.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-German.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Spanish-German.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Spanish-Tashelhit.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Spanish-Italian.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,49 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In table 6, 67.16 percent of the informants state that they use standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French and English as a means of communication. Furthermore, 13.43 percent of them use more than three languages in their daily conversation. In fact, they use Standard Arabic, French, English and Spanish. Moreover, 3.73 percent of the respondents in this investigation indicate that they use Standard Arabic, French, English and Tamazight in their oral conversations. Apart from this, 5.97 percent of the informants report that Standard Arabic, French, English and Tashelhit enable them to deal with issues that are intrinsically linked to their life. Besides, very small percentages 0.74 and 3.73 of my respondents use a mixture of languages such as French, English, Spanish and certain Tamazight languages like Tashelhit and Tamazight.

The reader of these statistics will notice that the informants have been inconsistent while dealing with the languages that are basically used for communication. Hence, the data in table 10 confront those in table 9. The percentages of the informants who assessed themselves as having a good command of three and four languages are pretty close. Likewise, the majority of the informants assessed themselves as having a good command of languages. Hence, the following table illustrates this fact:

**Table 7 The ability to read and to write in different languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ability to read and to write in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-Moroccan Arabic-French-English-Spanish</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.43 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>66.41 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Tarifit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.49 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Tamazight</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.73 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Tashelhit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.97 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Italian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.23 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Spanish-German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English-Spanish-Italian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.49 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The inability to read and to write in:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic-French-English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.74 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is interesting to point out that 13.43 percent of the informants in table 7 have reported that they can read and write in Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, English and Spanish. Furthermore, 66.41 percent of them maintain that they can read and write in Standard Arabic, French and English. In the same vein, a relatively small percentage of my informants report that they can read and write in Standard Arabic, French, English and Tamazight. In fact, 3.73 percent of them state that they are able to read and to write in these languages. It is imperative to say that an interesting percentage of the respondents have shown their strong adherence to their national languages. In the study at hand, 3.73 percent of the informants have stated that their parents have helped them a lot in order to read and to write in Tamazight. The respondents further argue that their parents have used certain researchers’ outstanding books in order to teach them how to read and to write in Tamazight. Moreover, 5.97 percent of the respondents in this survey have indicated that they can read and write in Standard Arabic, French, English and Tashelhit. Apart from this, 1.49 percent of the informants state that they cannot read and write in Standard Arabic, French, English and Spanish. Moreover, 0.74 percent of the respondents report that it is difficult for them to read and write in Standard Arabic, French, English and Tamazight.

Similarly, the informants in this survey have maintained that they have started learning English at an early age. The following table illustrates this fact:

Table 8: The Age to start learning English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>29.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 and more</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>99.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.94 percent of the informants in table 8 have started learning English at an early age. In fact, they have reported that they have started learning this language at the age of 8, 9 and 10 years old respectively. Moreover, 29.85 percent of them have started learning English at the ages of 11, 12 and 13 years old. Apart from this, 58.20 percent of the respondents have learnt English at the age of 14 and more. The study further revealed that most of the respondents learnt the English language from different sources. The following table gives us an insight into the diverse sources from which the informants have first learned English:

Table 9: The first source of learning English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The first source of learning English</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74.62 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.20 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies-Video-Music</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.22 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of the informants in table 9 have reported that they have learnt English in school. 74.62 percent of them have internalized this language in public schools. Furthermore, 8.20 of the respondents state that they have first learned English at home and that 5.22 percent of them have first learned English from movies and music. Apart from this, none of my informants has learned English from friends. The respondents in this survey have clearly stated that they have been learning English for a relatively extended period of time. The following table gives us an insight into this issue:

### Table 10 Years for learning English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years for learning English</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29.10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9 years</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52.98 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.95 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 or more years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.95 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>99.98 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 10, 29.10 percent of the informants have been learning English for 3 to 5 years. Moreover, 52.98 percent of them report that they have been learning English for 6 to 9 years. In addition to this, 8.95 percent of the respondents state that they have been learning English for 10 to 12 years. Apart from this, a relatively small percentage of my informants 8.95 percent have learned this language in 13 years and more. This is clear evidence that the English language is gaining ground in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire.

The survey has also revealed that students strongly believe that in the age of globalization, there are some foreign languages which can be used widely as effective means of communication. The following table illustrates this fact:

### Table 11 The most suitable language in the age of globalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The most suitable language in the age of globalization</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74.62 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berber (Tashelhit)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.49 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Arabic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.71 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.92 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.49 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>99.97 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74.62 percent of the respondents in table 11 maintain that English is the most suitable language in the age of globalization. They point out that English is the language of business. They further indicate that it is an international language that can strengthen Morocco’s relationship with other countries all over the world. Apart from this, 14.92 percent of the informants qualify French as the most suitable means of communication in the age of globalization. In addition to this, 6.71 of the respondents state that Standard Arabic is a very
important language in the age of globalization. In the same vein, 1.49 percent of the informants in this study assert that Tashelhit is the most effective means of communication in the age of globalization. Moreover, 1.49 percent and 0.74 percent of the respondents report that German and Spanish are the most useful languages in the age of globalization.

Likewise, many respondents in this study have reported that English will replace French in the near future and that it will become the official language of Morocco. The following table gives us an insight into this issue:

**Table 12: English as the official language of Morocco instead of French**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English as the official language of Morocco instead of French</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>50.74 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>49.25 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>99.99 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50.74 percent of the informants in table 12 report that English will replace French in the near future. They indicate that the American system of education will invade our country in all fields. Furthermore, they argue that English is the language of modern sciences and international trade. Apart from this, 49.25 percent of the respondents do not think that English will replace French as the official language of Morocco in the future. Still, a very considerable percentage of my informants strongly argue that it will take some time for English to replace French in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. The following tables illustrate this fact:

**Table 13 English replacing French in Morocco**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English replacing French in Morocco</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People who answered the question</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41.04 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who did not answer the question</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>58.95 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>99.99 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can be deduced from table 13 is that the informants mostly did not answer the question. In fact, 58.95 percent of them report that English and French do not enjoy the same amount of support in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. The former is not taught in all levels in the Moroccan system of education whereas the latter has a high social and linguistic
status as it is taught in all levels. According to the informants, French will continue to retain a high social status and it is somehow difficult for English to replace French in the Moroccan system of education and in other domains of life.

Apart from this, in table 14, the reader will notice that 41.03 percent of the respondents state that English will replace French in the near future. 17.16 percent of them point out that English will replace French in 3 to 5 years and this is basically due to the fact that the latter is an international means of communication in diverse domains. In addition to this, 18.65 percent of the informants in this survey indicate that English will replace French in 10 years. According to them, the French system of education will no longer be useful in the future. Furthermore, the American system will be beneficial for Morocco in the social, economic and cultural domains. In other words, since globalization is spanning the world, French will certainly lose its prestigious position and therefore leave a dominant hegemony for English which is qualified nowadays as a global language and as an effective means of communication in domains like business, diplomacy, modern sciences and international trade. Ultimately, 3.73 percent and 1.49 percent of the informants in this study maintain that English will replace French in 15 to 20 years or in 40 years respectively. According to them, it is very difficult to eradicate French from the Moroccan linguistic repertoire because it is a colonial language. It is widely used in different domains of life like the administration, public places and among family members. However, hopefully with the great effects of globalization English will surely replace French one day in Morocco.

Conclusion
In the course of the study at hand, I attempted to deal with the students’ use of different languages at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane. In this investigation, language attitudes received great emphasis, as they are the basic preoccupation of linguists, sociolinguists and sociologists. In view of my expectations, the results are perhaps most surprising and amazing because a relatively high percentage of the respondents have manifested diverse attitudes toward local and foreign languages. Hence, most of them have granted English their most favorable ratings in spite of the fact that French is deeply rooted in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. In Morocco, a very considerable number of the population interacts in French in different cultural and social contexts. Accordingly, this language is qualified as a prestigious tool to broaden one’s mind and to be in close contact with the technological innovations going on in Europe and the rest of the world. Yet, we must not forget that French and English are not on equal footing. In other words, since we live in a global village, English will certainly continue to retain a high status because it is the language of diplomacy and global business.

Above all, we can say that Morocco is a multilingual country par excellence because people are exposed to diverse languages in their daily life. In addition to this, it must be noted that languages in Morocco are not on equal footing. In other words, there are some languages which still occupy an inferior position. A case in point here is the Berber languages which are not yet taught in schools and which are not widely used in Moroccan houses. Most of the respondents in this study maintain that the inclusion of Berber in schools may result in a split within the Moroccan nation. Apart from this, French and English in Morocco do not still enjoy the same amount of support. In other words, the former will never lose its high social and linguistic position and it will be very difficult to eradicate it from the Moroccan linguistic repertoire and replace it by another foreign language. The data in this study shows with clear
evidence that it will take some time for English to replace French in the Moroccan complex linguistic repertoire. However, in the rapid age of globalization nothing is impossible and the American system will definitely invade Morocco one day and therefore French will gradually lose its great position and leave a dominant hegemony for the English language.

About the Author:

Dr. Rachid Agliz is an assistant professor of the English language and literature at the faculty of Letters, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal. He has been teaching different subjects like readings in culture, mythologies of the western world, British culture and society and culture in Britain and the United States of America. His research interests include post colonialism, post colonial literature, critical theory, orientalism, exoticism and postmodern anthropology. He is the author of a master’s dissertation entitled, Language Choice Among University Students in Morocco: The Case of AUI (2003) and is also the author of a thesis entitled, Exoticism and the Construction of the Orient: A Study of some European and American Travel and Anthropological Writings on Morocco (2012).

References


The Status of English in the Age of Globalization: Al Akhawayn Agliz


English as a Medium of Instruction in Moroccan Higher Education

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Abstract
Currently, French is used as a medium of instruction in Moroccan colleges of science and engineering. There have been several calls to replace French with English since English is gradually becoming the language of science and technology par excellence. This study examines science and technology doctoral students’ attitudes towards the use of English as a medium of instruction in three Moroccan colleges using a survey questionnaire. The results indicate that students are strongly in favor of using English as a medium of instruction. Some reasons behind this preference include the need to read and cite indexed journal articles in their dissertations, their intention to pursue postgraduate studies abroad, and the desire to have an edge in the job market.

Keywords: bilingualism, bilingual education, English as a medium of instruction, English-in-Education;
Introduction

In recent years, the Moroccan government has been striving to improve the outcomes of the higher educational system and to boost scientific research output. One of the main measures that are key to achieving this goal is openness to foreign languages, especially English, a language that is becoming the international language of science and technology. The Minister of Higher Education, Scientific research, and Training Mr. Daoudi Lahsen announced in an interview with “Akhbar Alyaoum newspaper”, that the government “will make it mandatory for students of engineering and medical studies to demonstrate English proficiency before obtaining a doctorate” (2014, p.9).

However, the above-mentioned decision has not been accompanied with concrete measures. French is still the language of instruction in faculties of science and engineering, and English is not a mandatory subject. In addition, such a decision should normally take into consideration the opinions of science students toward this issue because they are the target group; otherwise, the envisaged goal may not be achieved.

This study investigates the perceptions of science and engineering doctoral students vis-à-vis the use of English as a medium of instruction instead of French. Furthermore, the study seeks to determine the challenges students encounter when it comes to the use of English in their studies. The study derives its importance from two significant reasons. The first one is the topic that it deals with, which is language planning in education. As argued by Ferguson (2006), “Education is probably the most crucial, sometimes indeed bearing the entire burden of LP implementation” (p. 33). Indeed, the education sector is considered one of the most crucial sectors for a county’s development. It enables the students to contribute to economic, social and cultural development (HM King Mohamed VI, 2013). Secondly, the study targets doctoral students, who are the main entities concerned with the issue of using English in Higher Education. The findings of the study will provide decision makers with useful recommendations regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction in science and engineering schools.

English as an International Language

English is, nowadays, enjoying the most important status amongst all languages in the world. Two major factors have led English to gain ascendency over the rest of the world’s languages. According to Ferguson (2006): “Standard explanations of the spread of English have … the role of the British Empire and secondly the growing economic, military and political dominance of the United States in the later twentieth century as key factors” (p.110). The historical factor that stands behind the spread of English is related to British colonialism that impacted different sectors of the colonized societies to the extent that Great Britain was referred to as “The Empire on which the sun never sets” (see the map below).
Map 1: Map of the British Empire in the 1920s

According to Ferguson (2006), the fact of colonizing many countries all over the world by the British Empire has created conditions that served as fertile ground for the emergence of English as a global language. This emergence occurred due two processes, which Brutt-Griffler (2002) refers to as “spread by speaker migration” and “spread by macro-acquisition”. The “spread by speaker migration” refers to the settlement of British immigrants in the colonized territories, which led to the emergence of new native speaker communities, while the “spread by macro-acquisition” means that the indigenous populations maintained English owing to its social and economic benefits.

During the twentieth century, this world presence was maintained and promoted almost single-handedly through the economic supremacy of the new American superpower. Economics replaced politics as the chief driving force and the language behind the US dollar was English (Crystal, 2003, p. 10). In addition, since the economic position of a given state determines its political one, the US stands as a major political actor on the international scene. This explains the emergence of English as the first dominant language in international institutions such as the United Nations, in which English is the most widely used language for spoken and written communication. According to Ferguson (2006):

There is no shortage of evidence, then, for American economic and political influence, and it seems reasonable therefore to assent to the linkage (...) between the dominance of the United States and the increased use of English not only in former colonies but as an international lingua franca in countries where there was no British colonial presence – in Europe, for example (p. 111).

This claim is confirmed by Thomas (1999) who explains that: “English - thanks largely to the predominant world role of the United States - is now the international language most sought everywhere, including in North Africa and Central Asia” (p. 2).

In his endeavor to explain this linkage between the political dominance of the US and the spread of English, Phillipson (1992) proposes the concept of hegemony as it was first
conceptualized by Gramsci. Hegemony in this sense refers to the process by which ruling elites maintain their dominance not through overt coercion but by winning the consent of the mass of the population to their own domination and exploitation. This explanation sounds reasonable since one can easily observe how English and the American culture are widely spreading all over the world. The hegemonic character of English is expressed in the media, technology, and cultural industries. This dominance is also expressed in the educational arena since there is a huge demand for learning English and an increasing number of non-English speaking countries that use it as a medium of instruction.

This hegemony is also manifest in the field of science. Ammon (2003) explains that by 1995 English accounted for 87.2 per cent of publications in the natural sciences and 82.5 per cent of publications in the social sciences. Crystal (2003) highlighted the fact that the majority of scientific papers were published in the English language in the 1980s: 85% in biology and physics, 73% in medicine, 69% in mathematics, and 67% in chemistry. Today, many countries have realized the importance of English as a vital means to reinforce scientific research and adjusted their language policies in order to integrate English in their educational system.

Another hurdle resides in students’ limited job and research prospects. Once they receive their diplomas, students find themselves unable to pursue their studies in prominent research universities, which offer better conditions in terms of the quality of their training, thus assuring better employment opportunities.

**English in Morocco**

The presence of English in Morocco goes back to the period of World War II, when American bases were established in Tangier and Kenitra. The Moroccan workers, who had interactions with Americans, were motivated to learn English in order to communicate with them (Ennaji, 2005). Since that time, English has witnessed an increasing degree of popularity in Morocco and become overtime one of the important foreign languages that shape its linguistic landscape. According Ennaji (1991), this popularity was the result of two main reasons: the absence of colonial connotation associated with English (in comparison with French for instance), and the positive attitudes towards this language and its emergence as an international language of science.

Sadiqi (1991) identifies four major factors behind the spread of English in Morocco: first, the policy of education adopted since independence, which has been favorable to English; second, the emergence of English as an international lingua franca widely used in vital sectors and activities, such as trade, diplomacy, and finance; third, Moroccans’ positive attitudes toward English; and fourth, the lack of an association between English and colonialism in Morocco.

Some of the fields in which the spread of English has been acutely observed are education, mass media, internet websites, business and tourism (Ennaji, 1991). In the mass media sector, many newspapers, especially the digital ones, have emerged in the Moroccan media landscape. In tourism, English has become an indispensable language, both in the private sector (hotels, tourist guides, etc.), and in the public one, as the government aims to increase the
number of visitors to the kingdom, thus increasing the revenue generated from tourism. According to Buckner (2011), “Today, the rise of tourism in Morocco, with the country aiming to attract millions of new tourists over the next five years, and the growth of international trade, facilitated by Morocco’s Free Trade Agreement with the US, are bringing new job opportunities to Morocco that increasingly require English skills” (pp. 233-234).

In the field of education, the educational policy adopted in Morocco since independence has been favorable to English. This important link between English and education (Ennaji, 2005) was in fact, a result of a cooperative and beneficial interaction between the two of entities. The importance and the global spread of English as an international language prompted colonial and national authorities to integrate the teaching of English in secondary education. In higher education, English is taught as a foreign language to freshmen in many public universities. However, the subject matter is taught either in French or Arabic.

Regarding the significant position that English enjoys in the world, and its crucial role as a language of science, one may feel the scale of the loss Moroccan higher education will endure because of the weak presence of this language in the curricula. The main problems students face at this level have to do with their inability to access scientific references in English, and pursue their studies abroad in universities that adopt English as a medium of instruction. According to Ennaji (1991) “A good number of university students and researchers must learn English to be able to read the English references relevant their specialty” (p.21).

Recently, the Moroccan higher authorities have displayed a keen awareness of this issue and started efforts to improve the position of English in higher education. In his speech on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People, HM King Mohamed VI (2013) has hinted that the educational language policy needs to be revisited when he explained that:

The education sector is facing many difficulties and problems. They are mostly due to the adoption of some syllabi and curricula that do not tally with the requirements of the job market. Another reason has to do with the disruptions caused by changing the language of instruction from Arabic, at the primary and secondary levels, to some foreign languages, for the teaching of scientific and technical subjects in higher education. Accordingly, students must be provided with the necessary linguistic skills so that they may fully benefit from training courses. Moroccans should, therefore, be encouraged to learn and master foreign languages(www.maroc.ma)

Another indicator of the trend to enhance the status of English in Higher education is reflected in a recent memorandum addressed to university presidents by Dr Lahsen Daoudi, The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Morocco on Sep 15, 2014. He explained that proficiency in English should be taken as one of the criteria in the recruitment of new professors in Moroccan universities, particularly in the areas of science, technology, health, management, and economics. He added that the reason behind this decision lies in the fact that mastering English provides promising prospects to develop scientific research in universities, and affords graduates better opportunities in the job market.
In addition, Dr Daoudi announced in March 2014 that the government is seriously considering using English, albeit partially, as a medium of instruction in Moroccan universities. In his view, Engineering and medical programs should be conducted in English, and English proficiency ought to be a condition for obtaining a doctorate. Daoudi also stressed that English will play a key role in improving Morocco’s fledgling education system (www.alyaoum24.com). If these ideas come to fruition, English will finally gain a foothold in the Moroccan educational arena. As explained by Ennaji (2005), “English will start to compete seriously with French in the areas of education, science, and technology” (p. 114).

**Data and Methodology**

The purpose of the study is to examine science and doctoral students’ attitudes towards the use of English as a medium of instruction in Moroccan universities. A total of 208 students participated in this study: 110 females (53%) and 98 males (47%). The subjects were pursuing their doctoral studies at Mohammed V University in Rabat in the faculty of Sciences, the National School of IT, and Hassan II Institute of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine.

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to explore students’ perceptions regarding the use of EMI. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A asked for demographic information about the students (e.g., gender, age, college). Section B asked students about their views on the current status of English in their studies and research. Section C tapped into students’ perceptions about the adoption of an EMI policy in Moroccan higher education. Students were given an open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire asking them to write down any further comments that they might have about the EMI policy. The goal was to glean new ideas and insights from the perspectives of the students in case these would not have not been captured by the Likert scale method. The table below provides the key demographic information pertinent to this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Demographic information of study participants</th>
<th>Number and percentage of students in sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>110 (53%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>98 (43%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25</td>
<td>20 (10%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>121 (58%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>36 (17%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>17 (8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>14 (7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National College of IT (INSIAS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassan II Institute of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and Analysis
The Current Status of English in Higher Education

Table 2 below summarizes the students’ answers to the survey questions 4 to 8. These questions have to do with the current status of English in the institutions under study, and its use by the respondents. As illustrated in the table, responding to question 4, which reads “Does your college provide English courses?”, 75% of the students said that their institution does not (or did not) provide English courses. The answers to question 5 show that among the students who said their institution provide English courses, no one claims that those courses are adequate compared to 23% who state that the courses are “adequate enough”. On the contrary, more than two-thirds (77%) report at the courses are “inadequate” and do not enable them to use English for research purposes effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Number and percentage of students in the sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your college provide English courses?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>156 (75%)</td>
<td>52 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, are these courses adequate?</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>Adequate enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use English?</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to question 6, which asks whether students use English references in their research and studies, more than 80% of the students claim that they “always” use references written in English, 9,6% said they use them “sometimes”, while only 8,2% said they never use English references in their research. A doctoral student from the faculty of sciences explains:

All my research is in English; even the articles that I have published are in English. My thesis is the only work that will be in French Insha’Allah. I want to mention that the best scientific articles are written in English.

Three alternatives were proposed in the questionnaire as a possible response to question 7, which tackles reasons behind the lack of English use. Among the 17 students who said they never use English in their research, nearly 65% said they are unable to use English, while 17,6% stated that scientific references in French are sufficient for them, and 17,6% said that they have difficulty accessing English references.

Responding to question 8 concerning how students deal with obstacles in using English in their research, 82% said they rely on their own efforts (e.g., using dictionaries), 15% seek help from another person, while 17% use other solutions to overcome the problem, such as using “Google translation” and studying English in language centers.
The Importance of English as Language of Science and Technology

Table 3 shows students’ answers to statements 9 to 13. Statement 9 deals with students’ opinions about adopting English as a language of instruction in HE. Sixty three percent said they “Strongly agree”, and 31,3% “Agree”, while 4,3% “Disagree”, and none of them said they “Strongly disagree”. Three approaches were suggested in the questionnaire (statement 10) in order to investigate the opinion of students who agree with the adoption of English as a language of instruction in higher education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Number and percentage of students in the sample</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English should be adopted as a language of instruction in HE</td>
<td></td>
<td>131 (63%)</td>
<td>65 (31.3%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>9 (4.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>208 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best approach to introducing English as a language of instruction in higher education is</td>
<td>First option*</td>
<td>54 (28%)</td>
<td>49 (25%)</td>
<td>93 (47%)</td>
<td>196 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second option*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third option*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is an important language because:</td>
<td>First option*</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>115 (55%)</td>
<td>15 (7%)</td>
<td>72 (35%)</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
<td>208 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second option*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third option*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of English will improve the quality of scientific research.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>164 (78.8%)</td>
<td>3 (1.4%)</td>
<td>41 (19.7%)</td>
<td>208 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not necessarily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of English will improve the quality of student education</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>182 (88%)</td>
<td>4 (2%)</td>
<td>22 (11%)</td>
<td>208 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not necessarily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As is shown in the table, 28% of students said that the appropriate approach is to maintain the use of French and add some courses in English, especially in scientific translation. 25% said they prefer switching from French into English from the first year of studies in higher education, while 47% thought that a progressive switch from French into English should be adopted.

It is worth mentioning that some students suggested other proposals concerning this issue. For example, some students proposed that English be enhanced from the secondary level. A doctoral student from Hassan II Institute of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine said:

I think English should be used from the first year of high school with a large number of hours, especially in scientific branches. It is essential to prepare students in high school in order to enable them to study sciences in English. For me, studying scientific subjects in Arabic is useless.

Another student from the faculty of science commented:

English should be introduced from primary school and not high school. If we do not implement this change, we will disable many generations, for good!

In response to statement 11, which deals with the importance of English in student’s academic and professional life, 55% of the students said that English is significant because it is a crucial language for conducting scientific research and using the latest academic sources. Moreover, 7% claimed that it is helpful because it opens doors for pursuing studies abroad, compared to 1% who said that English helps better access to the job market. In addition, 7% said that all the options mentioned above are valid.

Concerning the added value of English, the responses to statements 13 and 14 show that the overwhelming majority (84%) of students agree that the use of English will improve the quality of scientific research and the quality of students’ education, compared to 1.7% who disagree. For the rest of students (14.9%), they think that English will not necessarily have an added value. According to a student from the INSIAS institute:

It is true that English language is important in scientific research, but it does not necessarily represent the key factor of improving the quality of scientific research. Indeed, other complementary factors are involved to guarantee a successful research and education in our country, such as coaching, equipment, and communication.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions held by science and technology doctoral students toward the use of English in higher education. The major findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

The majority of the students do not seem to be satisfied with English courses offered by their colleges. Yet, they believe English is a crucial language to conduct scientific research.

- a) The majority of the students face difficulty using English to conduct their research.
b) The majority of the respondents agree with the need to mandate EMI in engineering and medical programs.

c) A progressive switch from French into English from the first year of studies in higher education is viewed as the best language-in-education policy for HE.

d) English is perceived as a significant language for students due to many reasons, namely its crucial importance in conducting scientific research, pursuing studies abroad, and ensuring better job prospects.

e) The majority of the students believe that using English in higher education will improve the quality of scientific research and their overall educational experience.

The results of this study thus reveal that English is gradually perceived by Moroccan doctoral students as a vital language in higher education. The study also shows the inefficiency of the current measures to reinforce the status of English in higher education even though decision makers continue to underscore the importance of English for the country’s development. Another important finding of this study is that French seems to be less useful for these students even though it is the first foreign language in the country and the language of instruction in colleges of science and technology. Indeed, many participants in the study expressed this fact explicitly, arguing that French has become a real burden on the Moroccan higher educational system. As one of the participant said, “we should switch to the Anglo-Saxon system simply because the French one has proven its weakness and failure for years.”

Based on these findings, the current study proposes the following recommendations:

a) Improving the teaching of English in secondary and tertiary education.

b) Providing universities and technical colleges with the necessary tools to conduct research in English (e.g., databases, translators, editors, etc.)

c) Establishing partnerships with international universities that use English as a medium of instruction

d) Offering courses using English as a medium of instruction.

e) Creating a synergy involving policy makers, language planning experts, subject matter instructors, and English language teachers in order to prepare a comprehensive plan that will help elevate the status of English in higher education

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