**Assessing Professional Quality in EFL Pre-service Training Programme at the Department of English at Tlemcen University**

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Abstract
Although many claims about the necessity to restructure teacher education, not least pre-service training at universities, are aroused here and there, few attempts are made to update teacher education programmes that are responsive to the needs and expectations of future teachers of English as a foreign language. This work aimed to examine the adequacy of the pre-service training programme in use at the Department of English at Tlemcen University, Algeria. It attempted to unveil the students' needs to attain professional quality in teaching English. The findings of a multi-method study conducted at the Department of English with a sample of 108 students revealed that inadequate preparations of students in terms of the English language itself, first- and second- language acquisition processes, assessment procedures, educational psychology and lack of teaching practice are among the major problems that should be revised to render the current pre-service teacher training programme able to prepare a kind of professionally qualified EFL teachers.
*Keywords:* EFL Teaching, Needs Analysis, Pre-service Training, Professional Competence, Student-teachers

## Introduction

English has become a de facto global language. It is economically a workforce; socially and politically, a key to international integration. Competence in English is going more progressively vital for many societies sustained economic and commercial success. As such, the profession of English language teaching (hereafter ELT) became a sensitive issue in many countries, including Algeria. In such countries under rapid social, economic and political transformation, ELT is also to face the reform challenges that call for fulfilling the needs of the whole society, not least enhancing pupils' learning. The very first step to achieve the latter aim is to improve the professional quality of teachers: competent teachers who *know* the language, and *know how* to teach it.

However, in Algeria in which English is the second foreign language (FL2) after French, the society is still complaining about the pupils' low proficiency in English. It represents a frequent dilemma that pupils and their parents face before each exam, namely the official exams such as the BEM (final exam in middle-school) and the Baccalaureate exam. Among the common complains about the reasons behind this critical situation is the lack of professional competence among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

This problematic situation pushed the researchers to investigate the issue of EFL teaching professional competence among our teachers, with the avowed aim to find solutions at the end of the study. The researchers preferred to deal with this problem in universities where EFL students (future teachers) receive their primary pre-service (hereafter PS) training. The goal out of investigating the PS preparation of the students in the Department of English at the University of Tlemcen is to cover the pitfalls of the current PS training programme, and therefore to define students' needs to be qualified for the EFL teaching profession. In this way, this research is aimed to help improve the quality of teachers having their diplomas from this Department.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The importance of this research lies in the fact that PS training in universities is the first preparation for the future EFL teachers to be used to the world of their future profession. Systematically, PS preparation will be the primary source of intuition for novice EFL teachers before taking any professional action, and the premise upon which they will shape their professional identity at the beginning of their career. Taking the Department of English at Tlemcen University as a research site for our case study, this research is driven by the following research questions:

a) Do EFL university students receive adequate training to be qualified future EFL teachers?

b) What are the EFL students' needs, in terms of both *theory* and *practice*, in their PS training?

Bearing in mind the importance of both 'theory' and 'practice' as must conditions in the training and development of EFL teachers, the researchers suggest the following hypotheses:

a) The current PS training programme does not assure totally adequate training for future EFL teachers.

b) There is a sharp need to adopt a bi-directional PS training programme that would emphasize both theory and practice focusing on EFL methodology, EFL teaching skills, techniques of assessment, educational psychology and L1 and L2 acquisition theories.

## Literature Review

Before tackling directly the case study, let us first review some momentous aspects related to PS training, sketched below.

### The Needs for Pre-service Training

The importance of PS training of EFL students lies in the fact that it prepares them for the needs of schools and society in general. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL for short) moves fast and the challenges of the ELT profession are changing quickly in terms of time and place (Korthagen *et al*, 2006). Needless to recall that EFL PS training is the premise on which teachers would tackle these issues and challenges; it is the first 'workshop' to shape the teachers' professional identity and the source of intuition for any future professional action. Otherwise, as Britten (1988) makes clear that there are strong perceptions that novice teachers would teach as they have been taught, and likewise the EFL profession may become just a routine passing far from what is expected by society. In a similar vein, Loughran and Russel (1997) explain the importance of PS training programmes as follows:

> Pre-service teacher education programs are the first place of contact between beginning teachers and their prospective profession. If they are to value the pedagogical knowledge that is continually being developed, refined and articulated within their profession, if they are to understand the complex nature of teaching and learning, and if they are to be 'teachers' not 'tellers', 'trainers' or 'programmers', then this first contact through pre-service programs is crucial. (p.68-69)

### The Importance of Theory and Practice in TEFL

It is overtly stated that both theory and practice are must components to make a teacher qualified to practise his profession (Kennedy, 1993; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In the same way, Widdowson (1990, p.1) presents teaching as "a self-conscious enquiring enterprise whereby classroom activities are referred to as theoretical principles of one sort or another". Therefore, in this view, teaching is a venture where both theoretical principles and practical activities collaborate and complete each other. In fact, theory is a source of intuition for first practices in teaching and it is also a power of judgement on it. Of course, theory should be proved in practice (either experience or experiment) before being adopted. Nevertheless, individual practice can be also considered as a source of theory provision if it is proved and well evaluated. Teaching practice (experience) is seen as a critical appraisal that may lead to theory adaptation and adjustment to change (Widdowson 1990; Brandt, 2006).

Therefore, a qualified EFL teacher is to match between units of theory and practice. These units are respectively *principles* and *techniques*. The role of EFL teachers is to find adequate actualisation of principles as classroom techniques, taking into account their specific context. Wallace (1991, p.15) differentiates between two kinds of knowledge in TEFL: *received and experiential*. Equipped with received knowledge in TEFL, the trainee is to be familiar with "the vocabulary of subjects and matching concepts, theory and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession". Experiential knowledge is developed by practice of teaching and to a lesser extent through observation.

### Linking Theory and Practice in Teacher Training

Just like in all other professions (e.g. pharmacy, nursing, etc.), there is always a gap between theory and practice in TEFL (Wallace, 1991; Harmer, 2001). Bridging this gap, for novice teachers, is by no means an easy task. This issue is known in EFL circles as *knowledge*

*transfer.* For instance, Bartels (2005) claims that it is necessary for an EFL teacher to have a high level of Knowledge about Language (KAL), but this knowledge is not the only requirement to be a *good* L2 teacher. Hence, the problem does not lie in KAL only, but also in its transfer in practice.

The main concern among EFL trainers, curriculum designers and student-teachers as well is what KAL should include. Popko (2005) describes KAL as an umbrella term that includes all language aspects that EFL teachers should cover: linguistic, applied linguistic and metalinguistic aspects (Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Assessment, Second Language Acquisition, and EFL Methodology). According to Andrews and McNeill (2005) also, these are the main aspects of knowledge about the underlying systems of language that enables teachers to teach effectively, and consequently these are the fundamental facets of any adequate PS training programme.

### The Challenges of Non-native EFL Teachers

Non-native teachers' task is more difficult than native teachers', because they have, first, to communicate in English, for the noble reason to ensure maximum exposure to the target language (TL), with pupils who share with them the same L1, and above all, to convince them to do so (Britten, 1988; Fareh 2010). This is what Harmer (2001, p.131) calls the "Please Speak English" issue. The second challenge – the one of theory-is that non-native EFL teachers should cover a set of ELT theories mainly about linguistics and the nature of language and second language learning upon which they will build their teaching; otherwise, their practice in classrooms will be mere carbonic copies of the teaching they experienced as EFL learners. In addition, they have to master specific skills (practice) that qualify them for the profession of ELT teaching as time and place requires.

Many studies were made to trace in detail the hurdles facing EFL teachers in many non-native English speaking countries, not least in the Arab world. For instance, a study was undergone by Fareh (2010) seeking for the challenges in EFL teaching, in Arab countries, resulted in the categorization of a number of problems in the teaching/learning process:

- Inadequate adoption of EFL teaching methodologies which is mainly due to the inadequacy of teachers' training. Fareh (2010, p.3602) argues that "although many of these teachers are BA degree holders, most of them have no teaching certificates that qualify them for teaching."
- EFL teaching is not learner-centred; it is rather teacher-centred: a fact that neglects the different factors among learners which may inhibit good learning.
- Learners' aptitude, preparation and motivation are other barriers facing EFL teachers in the Arab world. In this study, not few teachers claim that students are uneducable, impolite, unable to think, incapacitated or they do not want to learn...
- English is taught as isolated skills (grammar alone; reading and writing, the same) rather than integrated skills (for example, grammar in reading). Fareh (2010) calls this issue *Compartmentalization vs. Whole language approach.*
- Lack of emphasis on developing skills, and the best example is EFL examination which is based on rote learning with no room for creativity such as critical thinking and problem solving...
- Many complains were made about teaching material mainly textbooks: the first of these is that EFL textbooks are very large to be covered in one year, while their levels are higher than the learners' achievement. Also, many books are said to be culturally inappropriate, with many irrelevant topics, which may influence learners' motivation.

- As a result of the ways of teaching, assessment is not appropriate since two crucial linguistic skills are not tested in most of the official exams in the Arab world (speaking and listening).
- Learners do not profit from sufficient exposure to English since the use of Arabic is a frequent phenomenon in classes. In addition to this, teachers' speaking time is always superior to students' speaking time.

**Methodology**

The present research is a needs analysis; needs analyses are procedures followed to accumulate information about students' needs in terms of their learning. In this study, the researchers attempt to obtain a general idea about what EFL students need to meet at the university level to be professionally qualified teachers. The purpose of the needs analysis conducted in this research is to identify the possible gap between what EFL students in the research site are able to do and what they need to be able to do in future professional sites. It is to this end that it could be said that at many times learners' long-term needs are decided for them, not by them. Richards (2001, p.53), on this point, comments that "needs analysis [...] includes the study of perceived and present needs as well as potential and unrecognized needs".

As to the procedures for making needs analysis, many choices are available to the researchers in the field (questionnaires, self-ratings, interviews, meetings, observations, learners' language samples, case studies…) (Rhodes *et al*, 1997; Remesal, 2011). However, no one of these tools is without drawbacks: a fact that compelled the researchers to follow a 'triangular approach' to maximize the accuracy of the research. Triangulation is in fact the major means of validating any research, especially in social sciences. Considering the issue of triangulation, the researchers used two different research instruments to look for EFL students' needs in terms of PS training which are: questionnaires and interviews.

As to the design of the instruments, the questionnaire was divided into two parts: The first dealing with students' theoretical knowledge; the second with teaching practice. Part I was completely built on two close-ended questions:
a. To what extent do you know and understand the following?
b. How useful do you find the following to enhance your teaching?
The participants had five choices ranging between 'very low' and 'very high' for question (a), and between 'not useful' and 'very useful' for (b) (Likert Scale Questionnaire). These two questions were asked about the areas supposed to cover KAL teachers need in their profession. These areas were classified in their turn into four rubrics:
1. Fundamental Language Concepts.
2. The Foundation of EFL Education.
3. First- and Second- Language Acquisition Processes.
4. EFL Teaching Methodology and Assessment.
Part II of the questionnaire was meant to investigate the transfer of the previous four areas in teaching practice. Likewise, the interview was based on a number of questions investigating the same areas of KAL, mentioned above, and their practice in teaching. (See the final drafts of the questionnaire and interview in the Appendix)

**Sample Population**

The sample population differs in size according to the data collection tool employed. The subjects considered through questionnaires are "Licence" (equivalent of BA) EFL students

enrolled in the Department of English at Tlemcen University. Respondents of the questionnaire were 108 out of 158 enrolled. As to the interview, it was relied on to approach EFL inspectors. There are four EFL inspectors covering the 'Academy of Tlemcen' (the first authority charged of education in the state of Tlemcen). One inspector is reserved for secondary school EFL teachers and the three others for middle school teachers. The axis of the inspectors' mission is to observe and qualify novice EFL teachers, and sometimes to organize in-service training programmes for practising teachers.

**The Study Proper**
The researchers approached all students through a questionnaire designed to look for their needs to be qualified for the EFL profession. Since students were divided into four groups, it seemed preferable to administer the questionnaires for each group separately to manage easily the process. Questionnaires were distributed during the classes of the modular session of TEFL. Administering the questionnaires during classes was to ensure high rate response, regarding the considerable presence of students; and also to realize that the target population filled the questionnaires themselves. The procedure took in all cases between 15 and 20 minutes.

After the first procedure, it was time to interview EFL inspectors. After designing the interview schedule, the researchers were always to prepare the Dictaphone before each recording, and explain to the interviewee the way it better works and especially the appropriate position of the microphone and the distance that should be kept to ensure a good quality of sound. Having the interview schedule in hand, the interviewers read the questions and the inspector answered. The use of the Dictaphone did not forbid the researchers to take some remarks that could not be recorded, mainly body language such as hands gestures, nodding and smiling. Directly after finishing the interviews, the researchers transcribed the recordings orthographically.

**The Results**
Questionnaire findings and interview results show a great extent of compliance. Little mismatch was noticed.

### The Questionnaire Results
Since the questionnaire contained different parts and numerous details, the researchers thought it would be preferable to deal with each rubric of each part separately, to make the outcome of the questionnaire clearer and the discussion easier. Five tables are presented to illustrate each rubric.
### Part I

### Rubric 1: Fundamental Language Concepts
The results of the first part of the questionnaire are presented in table 1, shown below. The first remarkable feature is that the highest percentages of the students' answers about their knowledge about the nature of language, functions of registers in English, the structure of the English language and patterns of oral and written discourse were in the column 'moderate'; Respectively, 51.85%, 52.77%, 43.51%, and 43.51% thought that these former areas as 'useful' in their EFL teaching. As to 'the relationship among listening, speaking, reading and writing' (1.3), 37.96% of the respondents considered their knowledge in this area as 'high', and 64.81% saw it as 'very useful' in their future career.

**Table 1**

*Results of Fundamental Language Concepts*

| | | Extent of Knowledge | | | | | Usefulness in Teaching | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Not Useful | | Useful | | Very Useful |
| **1.1 The nature of language and basic concepts of language systems.** | *AF\** | 00 | 11 | 66 | 26 | 05 | 02 | 07 | 56 | 06 | 37 |
| | *RF\*\** | 00.00 | 10.18 | 61.11 | 24.07 | 04.62 | 01.85 | 06.48 | 51.85 | 05.55 | 34.25 |
| **1.2 Functions of language register in English.** | *AF* | 02 | 30 | 40 | 31 | 05 | 13 | 05 | 57 | 07 | 24 |
| | *RF* | 01.85 | 27.77 | 37.03 | 28.70 | 04.62 | 12.03 | 06.48 | 52.77 | 06.48 | 22.22 |
| **1.3 The relationships among listening, speaking, reading and writing.** | *AF* | 02 | 06 | 26 | 41 | 33 | 01 | 00 | 27 | 10 | 70 |
| | *RF* | 01.85 | 05.55 | 24.07 | 37.96 | 30.55 | 00.92 | 00.00 | 24.99 | 09.25 | 64.81 |
| **1.4 The structure of the English language and conventions of written and spoken** | *AF* | 02 | 10 | 45 | 40 | 11 | 04 | 06 | 47 | 12 | 39 |
| | *RF* | 01.85 | 09.25 | 41.66 | 37.03 | 10.18 | 03.70 | 05.55 | 43.51 | 11.11 | 36.11 |

**English.**

| 1.5 Patterns of written and oral discourse. | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *AF* | 03 | 08 | 48 | 37 | 12 | 04 | 02 | 47 | 17 | 38 |
| *RF* | 02.77 | 07.40 | 44.44 | 34.25 | 11.11 | 03.77 | 01.85 | 43.51 | 15.74 | 35.18 |

*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)*

### Rubric 2: The Foundation of EFL Education

Table 2 illustrates the results obtained from the students' answers about their knowledge in the area of EFL education. As to 'knowledge about EFL education foundation'; note that the number of students whose knowledge in this area is 'low' and 'moderate' was equal (40 students), which represented 37.03% for each group. Likewise, there was not a great difference between the results of the respondents having 'low', 'moderate', and 'high' knowledge about 'types of EFL programmes' (29.62%, 35.18%, and 28.70% respectively).

Concerning research findings related to EFL education, 43.51% of the students have 'moderate' knowledge in, while the second largest percentage (34.25%) represented the ones who have 'low' knowledge in the area. Then, 32.40% estimated their 'knowledge about techniques to urge learners to use TL rather than L1' as 'high'.

**Table 2**
*Results of the Foundation of EFL Education*

| | | Extent of Knowledge | | | | | Usefulness in Teaching | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Not Useful | | Useful | | Very Useful |
| 2.1 EFL education foundation. | *AF*\* | 04 | 40 | 40 | 17 | 07 | 17 | 20 | 35 | 13 | 23 |
| | *RF*\*\* | 03.70 | 37.03 | 37.03 | 15.74 | 06.48 | 15.74 | 18.51 | 32.40 | 12.03 | 21.29 |
| 2.2 Types of EFL programmes, their characteristics, and goals. | *AF* | 02 | 32 | 38 | 31 | 05 | 10 | 13 | 40 | 13 | 32 |
| | *RF* | 01.85 | 29.62 | 35.18 | 28.70 | 04.62 | 09.25 | 12.03 | 37.03 | 12.03 | 29.62 |
| 2.3 Research findings related to EFL education. | *AF* | 05 | 37 | 47 | 15 | 04 | 12 | 11 | 38 | 23 | 24 |
| | *RF* | 04.62 | 34.25 | 43.51 | 13.88 | 03.70 | 11.11 | 10.18 | 35.18 | 21.29 | 22.22 |

| 2.4 Techniques urging learners to use TL not L1. | AF | 07 | 21 | 29 | 35 | 16 | 11 | 06 | 20 | 11 | 60 |
| | RF | 06.48 | 19.44 | 26.85 | 32.40 | 14.81 | 10.18 | 05.55 | 18.51 | 10.18 | 55.55 |

*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)*

### Rubric 3: 1$^{st}$ and 2$^{nd}$ Language Acquisition Processes

Table 3 provides detailed results. From one side, the students' answers about their knowledge about L1 acquisition process (3.1) were divided between three columns 'low', 'moderate' and 'high' by the percentages of 26.85%, 34.25%, and 24.07% respectively. This is while their answers concerning knowledge about L2 acquisition process (3.2) were more discriminate by 37.03% for 'moderate' and 35.18% for 'high'. As to 3.3, the interrelatedness of the two processes in TEFL, 43.51% of the respondents have 'moderate' knowledge, followed by a group representing 27.77% of the respondents who thought their knowledge to be 'low' in the area; nevertheless, this number was not very far from the one which represented the respondents considering their knowledge as 'high' in the same area (22.22%).

**Table 3**
**Results of 1$^{st}$ and 2$^{nd}$ Language Acquisition**

| | | Extent of Knowledge | | | | | Usefulness in Teaching | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Not Useful | | Useful | | Very Useful |
| 3.1 Theory related to L1 development. | AF* | 09 | 29 | 37 | 26 | 07 | 23 | 17 | 50 | 10 | 08 |
| | RF** | 08.33 | 26.85 | 34.25 | 24.07 | 06.48 | 21.29 | 15.74 | 46.29 | 09.25 | 07.40 |
| 3.2 Theory related to L2 development | AF | 01 | 15 | 40 | 38 | 14 | 05 | 10 | 41 | 17 | 35 |
| | RF | 00.92 | 13.88 | 37.03 | 35.18 | 12.96 | 04.62 | 09.25 | 37.96 | 15.74 | 32.40 |
| 3.3 Interrelatedness of L1 and L2 processes. | AF | 03 | 30 | 47 | 24 | 04 | 17 | 15 | 39 | 20 | 17 |
| | RF | 02.77 | 27.77 | 43.51 | 22.22 | 03.70 | 15.74 | 13.88 | 36.11 | 18.51 | 15.74 |
| 3.4 The role | AF | 03 | 13 | 39 | 39 | 14 | 09 | 09 | 34 | 16 | 40 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **of the linguistic environment in L2 acquisition.** | RF | 02.77 | 12.03 | 36.11 | 36.11 | 12.96 | 08.33 | 08.33 | 31.48 | 14.81 | 37.03 |
| **3.5 Difficulties in learning English.** | AF | 03 | 28 | 50 | 22 | 05 | 09 | 11 | 43 | 10 | 35 |
| | RF | 02.77 | 25.92 | 46.29 | 20.37 | 04.62 | 08.33 | 10.18 | 39.81 | 09.25 | 32.40 |

*\*Absolute Frequency (out of 108); \*\*RF= Relative Frequency (%)*

***Rubric 4: EFL Methodology***
        Next to the fact that 42.59% of the answers about the extent of knowing EFL instruction planning were 'moderate', there was not a great gap between the ones with the answer 'low' and the others answering 'high' since the former represented 24.99% of the total answers; the latter, 23.14% (data are not tabulated). As to techniques and methods in TEFL (4.2), the majority of the answers were limited between 'moderate' and 'very high'. Then, it could not be denied that the majority of the respondents had 'moderate' knowledge about strategies to foster communicative competence among EFL learners (4.3); however, there were other numbers that could not be neglected as well: 23.14% answered 'low', and 26.85% claimed that their knowledge in the area is 'high'. In this way, the results were balanced to a high extent.

**Table 4**
***Results of EFL Methodology***

| | | Extent of Knowledge | | | | | Usefulness in Teaching | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Very Low | Low | Moderate | High | Very High | Not Useful | | Useful | | Very Useful |
| **4.1 Factors and procedures in planning EFL instruction.** | AF* | 03 | 27 | 46 | 25 | 07 | 07 | 10 | 44 | 21 | 26 |
| | RF** | 02.77 | 24.99 | 42.59 | 23.14 | 06.48 | 06.48 | 09.25 | 40.74 | 19.44 | 24.07 |
| **4.2 Methods and techniques for EFL instruction.** | AF | 03 | 11 | 39 | 35 | 20 | 04 | 09 | 28 | 12 | 55 |
| | RF | 02.77 | 10.18 | 36.11 | 32.40 | 18.51 | 03.70 | 08.33 | 25.88 | 11.11 | 50.92 |
| **4.3 Strategies fostering communicative competence.** | AF | 01 | 25 | 43 | 29 | 10 | 04 | 13 | 42 | 10 | 39 |
| | RF | 00.92 | 23.14 | 39.81 | 26.85 | 09.25 | 03.70 | 12.03 | 38.88 | 09.25 | 36.11 |
| **4.4 The use of technology in EFL teaching.** | AF | 13 | 22 | 23 | 31 | 14 | 11 | 15 | 25 | 14 | 43 |
| | RF | 12.03 | 20.37 | 21.29 | 28.70 | 12.96 | 10.18 | 13.88 | 23.14 | 12.96 | 39.81 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **4.5 Strategies for classroom management.** | *AF* | 02 | 17 | 52 | 30 | 07 | 06 | 09 | 32 | 22 | 39 |
| | *RF* | 01.85 | 15.74 | 48.14 | 27.77 | 06.48 | 05.55 | 08.33 | 09.62 | 20.37 | 36.11 |
| **4.6 The issue of method transfer.** | *AF* | 06 | 28 | 39 | 29 | 06 | 07 | 15 | 51 | 14 | 21 |
| | *RF* | 05.55 | 25.92 | 36.11 | 26.85 | 05.55 | 06.48 | 13.88 | 47.22 | 12.96 | 19.44 |

*\* AF= Absolute Frequency (out of 108); \*\*RF= Relative Frequency (%)*

### *Part II*
Questions of the second part of the questionnaire were concerned with the teaching practice sessions organized at the Department of English. It is paramount to mention here that only 36 students out of 108 were attending teaching practice sessions. The results were summarized under the following rubric:
### *Frequency of Topics Practice in Teaching*
Results are provided in table 5, mentioned below. The first attracting result was that 19 out of 36 trainees respond that they 'sometimes' practice guided classroom observation. Actually, the trainees used to observe their peers' performance; however, they never observe a qualified teacher practising his profession as part of their teaching programme. Nevertheless, 12 respondents did not deny that they never practice guided classroom observation. In addition, the majority of the trainees' answers, about the practice of EFL skills training, self-evaluation and EFL teaching methodology, were between 'never' and 'sometimes'. Conversely, the highest percentages of the answers to the questions that concern trainer's evaluation and lesson planning graded between 'sometimes' and 'always'.

**Table 5**
*Frequency of Topics Practice in Teaching*

| | | Frequency of Practice | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Never | | Sometimes | | Always |
| 1. **Guided Classroom Observation** | *AF\** | 12 | 03 | 19 | 00 | 02 |
| | *RF\*\** | 33.33 | 08.33 | 52.77 | 00.00 | 05.55 |
| 2. **EFL Skills Training** | *AF* | 09 | 07 | 14 | 04 | 02 |
| | *RF* | 25.00 | 19.44 | 38.88 | 11.11 | 05.55 |
| 3. **Teaching Freely** | *AF* | 07 | 07 | 10 | 05 | 07 |
| | *RF* | 19.44 | 19.44 | 27.77 | 13.88 | 19.44 |
| 4. **Trainer's Evaluation** | *AF* | 03 | 02 | 14 | 10 | 07 |
| | *RF* | 08.33 | 05.55 | 38.88 | 27.77 | 19.44 |
| 5. **Self-evaluation** | *AF* | 14 | 05 | 12 | 04 | 01 |
| | *RF* | 38.33 | 13.88 | 33.33 | 11.11 | 03.60 |
| 6. **EFL Methodology in** | *AF* | 08 | 08 | 15 | 04 | 01 |
| | *RF* | 22.22 | 22.22 | 41.66 | 11.11 | 03.60 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teaching** | | | | | | |
| **7. Lesson Planning** | *AF* | 00 | 05 | 13 | 08 | 10 |
| | *RF* | 00.00 | 13.88 | 36.11 | 22.22 | 36.00 |

*Absolute Frequency (out of 36); **RF= Relative Frequency (%)*

As to the last question, respondents were given a free space to add anything they thought they need or wished to see during their years at the Department of English. It resulted in a number of needs at several levels, which were categorized as follows:

a. *Linguistic Competence:* Some of the students wished they worked more on the four skills, not least the oral/aural.

b. *Communicative Competence:* Many of the respondents agreed that their knowledge is passively accumulated without finding any environment where to practise their English.

c. *Theoretical Side in EFL Teaching:* A considerable number of students claimed that what they have seen in TEFL and Psycho-pedagogy was not sufficient in terms of volume; consequently, they wished if there were more sessions in these two important modules.

### Inspectors' Interviews Results

While EFL students are apt to give an opinion about their own needs in the PS training, they are not necessarily the only people to know about their needs. As a cross-validating exercise, the researchers took the route of asking another population, which is highly concerned with the issue of EFL teachers' development; this population is EFL inspectors who were approached through a semi-structured interview.

First, as to the question about the problems at the level of the structure and conventions of the English language, all of the EFL inspectors agreed on the fact that newly-recruited teachers are still 'suffering' from this side. Two of them agreed that pronunciation comes as the first hurdle in front of novice teachers; grammar comes after, then stress and intonation to less extent. Another informant added that novice EFL teachers have a better grasp of written academic English rather than spoken English. He claimed that their conversational English is low. However, the fourth interviewee claimed that this issue is not due only to lack of knowledge of these areas, but rather to lack of practice.

When asked about the novice EFL teachers' knowledge about the foundation of EFL education and types of EFL programmes, three of the EFL inspectors believe that the problem is not only in knowledge, but how to use this knowledge. Novice teachers may know many concepts, but they fail to see the relevance of this mere theory in teaching.

In what concerns the understanding of the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition, their interrelatedness, and their uses in EFL teaching, the first interviewed inspector saw the issue more complex than that. He claimed that we should be aware that the linguistic situation in Algeria obliges us to take into account L1 (Arabic), FL1 (French), and FL2 (English). Consequently, this may lead not only to Arabic interference in the teaching/learning of the TL (English), but also to the interference of French, which may result in negative transfer (though English and French have many cognate forms in common). The others claimed simply that novice EFL teachers cannot differentiate between L1 and L2 acquisitions, which always leads to pedagogical translation: that is the teaching of English in the same fashion Arabic is taught.

The first remark made by one of the interviewees, when asked about novice teachers' knowledge of the EFL methodology, is that an EFL teacher is a *practitioner* not a theorist. They all shared the same opinion that newly-recruited teachers may have a sound theoretical knowledge about the different subjects of EFL methods; however, this was acquired just by rote learning to pass exams, not to be practised in classrooms. One of them added that he had no little doubt EFL students have never met a situation where to put theory in practice.

In a nutshell, there was a general agreement among inspectors that EFL students cover, to a certain extent, the areas of EFL foundations and programmes, EFL methods and L1 and L2 acquisition processes, though sometimes not enough, still they cannot transfer all this knowledge in their teaching. The problem lies in the system of teaching and assessment experienced by EFL students, at the level of university: they found themselves learning by heart several definitions and concepts, not to see their practical relevance in EFL teaching, but simply to re-export their knowledge to their teachers in written exams. Strictly speaking, EFL students may *know*, but they lack the *know-how*. Awareness about the factors that may influence EFL learners and knowledge about assessment procedures seem to be the last things to talk about in the current EFL formation. Even theoretically, EFL students need more knowledge about these two important issues in EFL teaching/learning. It seems that these two areas are considered as advanced stages in EFL teaching that could be tackled during or after a period of teaching: this is the only evidence to explain why these crucial points are neglected.

**Discussion of the Main Results**

In the beginning of this research, it was suggested as a first hypothesis that the EFL PS training programme in use at the University of Tlemcen is not entirely adequate, since it depends mainly on EFL teaching theory embodied in the modules of TEFL and Psycho-pedagogy. After analysing the data collected through the two research instruments, the present research revealed that this programme lacks many facets of EFL PS training, not least a *compulsory* teaching practice programme. It is to this end that the current PS training cannot be said totally adequate: a fact which confirms the first hypothesis put forward by the researchers.

In the second hypothesis, the researchers suggested that EFL students need a PS programme that provides them with training on EFL teaching methodology, EFL teaching skills, assessment, educational psychology and language acquisition theories. After the procedures of data collection and analysis, the findings of this research showed that this hypothesis is true to a high extent. The topics and the activities suggested in this hypothesis were proved to be crucial in EFL PS training. However, this does not forbid the emergence of other results which represent other areas to be introduced in the students' PS training, or the need to foster some already existing areas.

First, it cannot be denied that the current PS training programme provides the students with some courses in EFL Methodology and Educational Psychology; however, the students deal with these subjects 'only' theoretically. They have no occasion where to meet this abstract knowledge in real situations. The research shows also that EFL students cannot benefit from these courses without seeing their relevance in EFL classrooms. In other words, EFL methodology and educational psychology were presented by the researchers to be useful courses in EFL PS training, but the research adds that it is of paramount importance that these two areas need also to be covered from a practical side as well. Furthermore, it is true that the researchers pointed to the importance of teaching L1 and L2 acquisition theories to EFL future teachers in

the second hypothesis, but they discovered, after categorizing the research results, that there are other factors to be taken into account. The first of these is that students need to see, in real situations, how their native language (Arabic, which they share with pupils) can influence the teaching of English. Future teachers should cover this highly important knowledge to avoid any negative influence of Arabic on EFL teaching and employ any possible positive interference in facilitating English teaching. In addition, the research unveils another fact which is dependent to the Algerian context and which also influences the teaching of English. The Algerian linguistic context is characterised by the existence of the French language (FL1), which is taught in Algerian schools before English. French is known among linguists to have plenty of linguistic similarities (also known as linguistic affinities, or cognate forms) with English, with also many linguistic "false-friends". However, these facts, which are highly influencing in TEFL, seem to be totally neglected meanwhile. Therefore, the current PS training programme lacks the introduction of the importance of the French language as a crucial subject in EFL teaching, and also it needs to foster the teaching of L1 acquisition theories and its influence in TEFL.

As to assessment in TEFL, the results obtained go hand in hand with what was mentioned in the hypothesis. This area is almost ignored among EFL students save for some few accumulated theoretical definitions. Strictly speaking, the research provides evidence that teaching techniques of assessment and evaluation to future teachers is very important and should have its share in the PS programme in use, as it was suggested by the researchers in the beginning.

Likewise, the study unveils the absence of a *compulsory* teaching practice programme. In other words, attending PS training sessions is optional. This implies the absence of any space for students to be trained on EFL teaching skills: an activity that was pointed to its weight in PS training in the review of literature.

However, there was a striking new result that appeared after the data analysis process which is that newly recruited teachers are still ill-trained at the linguistic level. In addition to what was introduced in the second hypothesis, this research also revealed that the linguistic level needs to be more fostered in the EFL students' training, especially the phonological level since the three research tools overlapped in the students' weakness in conversational English in comparison with their written English.

To sum up, one can say that the EFL PS training held at the level of the Department of English at Tlemcen University needs to be enriched from two sides, depending on the area in question: theory and/or practice. As it is mentioned above, the current study highlights a number of theoretical areas which are totally neglected which should be introduced in the current PS programme to be at the level of EFL future teachers' needs and expectations to be professionally qualified, and others that are dealt with but need to be more promoted either in theoretical courses or in practice sessions. The latter fact makes clear the importance of teaching practice in the transfer of student-teachers' knowledge and the practice of many activities and skills that qualify them for the EFL teaching profession.

## Recommendations for Change in Teacher Education
The results of the current study gave a clear image about what EFL students at the Department of English at Tlemcen University need to attain professional quality in TEFL. These

needs were classified into two categories: needs in terms of *theory* related to EFL teaching and needs in terms of *practice*. As to the students' needs in terms of theory, the results of the current research were analogous to a high extent to what was introduced, in the literature review, to be crucial knowledge in the preparation of future EFL teachers. The PS training programme in use, in our research site, needs first to foster the teaching of the language itself (pronunciation, grammar, writing, etc.) and to help the students to immerse themselves in linguistic environments to practise what they learn. Also, what was touched at the end of this research is that students need a great work at the level of educational psychology and TEFL, since the results indicated that these students could acquire just little knowledge in these two important subjects in the form of abstract definitions and concepts, while ignoring lot of other crucial areas. In addition, first- and second- language acquisition theories seemed to be neglected among these students, as well as assessment techniques which are totally dismissed in the current PS training programme. Generally, the results of this research call for the adoption of a PS programme which, on one hand, assures a good and sufficient preparation in the English language in all levels of linguistic analysis and which provides ample space for language use (linguistic environments), and on the other hand, it gives a share for all knowledge areas that are considered among specialists as must conditions in the 'building' of competent EFL teachers: EFL teaching methodology, educational psychology, assessment techniques and L1 and L2 acquisition theories, etc.

However, the investigators reached another fact that even assuring all these issues in a PS training programme will not be always sufficient, since there are frequently new emerging demands and needs among trainees. The last question in the questionnaire, that provided an open space for the respondents to mention any individual need or problem, was the source of many unexpected data. It made known the fact that each individual student has his own needs and problems. It is worth recapitulating what the students summoned for to be more fostered:

- Linguistic competence
- Communicative competence
- Theoretical side in EFL teaching methodology
- Practical side in EFL teaching methodology
- Psychological side
- Extensive readings

Every subject in the questionnaire could determine his own area of weakness; and at many times, these areas create no problem among other peers. This fact implies that a well-designed PS training programme is not to be totally based on prescribed courses and activities; yet, it is to let a margin to deal with any possible emerging individual needs. Likewise, it could be said that the focus of the PS EFL training programme is to be made on the student/trainee rather than the curriculum. In other words, the trainers are not to follow a PS EFL training programme slavishly, but they have also to take into account each individual student' actual needs.

As far as teaching practice is concerned, what is to be summoned for is the adoption of a comprehensive, intensive and extensive teaching practice programme which should be compulsory for all EFL students. This programme should provide future EFL teachers with

ample time and maximum chances to see the relevance of theory they acquired in all what concerns TEFL, while it furnishes them with 'models' to imitate and to well understand how to transfer all these activities in real settings. In addition, a well-designed PS training programme is the one which lets a 'margin' for the discussion of emerging individual needs and does not totally dependent on prescribed activities. An effective PS training programme is to be developed in accordance with future professional environments (schools and their local communities). It should facilitate the trainees' shift from university to schools, and an opportunity to discover the nature of real learners, colleagues and administration.

**Conclusion**

Highlighted above are the findings the researchers achieved throughout their investigation of the PS training programme at the Department of English at Tlemcen University. The researchers cannot deny that it was impossible to control some variables during data collection. First, the number of trainees attending teaching practice sessions was so limited in comparison with the total number of students (36 out of 158); furthermore, trainees had only one chance of performance for each. These facts may raise questions about the generalizability of the results obtained concerning teaching practice. In addition, the researchers could not collect information about the trainees' competence in some areas, especially theoretical ones, which cannot be easily observed through a retrospective instrument in one session, such as knowledge about EFL teaching methodology and L1 and L2 acquisition theories. It is to this end that the study design was based on a questionnaire which could address introspection among all the students, in addition to the interview.

The results accumulated from this study raise many other questions that open the door for further research. First, questions may be raised about effective curriculum design if these results are taken into consideration. In other words, how to design a programme which includes and organises all the necessary elements in PS training? Also, further research can reveal useful ways of collaboration between institutions of higher education and pre-university schools, namely in the development of teaching practice programmes: a fact which prepares future EFL teachers for what they will exactly meet, as syllabuses and subjects, in their prospective profession.

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### *Appendix 1.EFL Inspectors' Interview*

*Interview #*

Starting from the fact that EFL students (would-be teachers) necessitate a good preparation at university level to practise their profession, could you please shed light on the common areas in which novice EFL teachers encounter problems when teaching?

As the EFL teaching profession demands several skills and qualities, this question is preferable to be discussed at *different levels*:

1. The problems they face at the level of the *structure and conventions of the English language.* That is, the phonology, grammar and semantics of the language, language registers , language skills …

2. At the level of knowledge about the foundation of *EFL education*, from history and theory of EFL education to types of EFL programmes.

3. Do they know and understand *the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition*, their interrelatedness, and their use in EFL teaching?

4. What about *EFL teaching methods and techniques*?

5. After this, what to say about their awareness of the factors that may affect EFL students' learning like personal differences among learners (age, personality, socio-economic background), variations in learning styles …

6. Finally, the last question is devoted to an important professional quality in EFL teachers which is the design, development and interpretation of formal and informal *assessment procedures and instruments*.

   What are the recurrent difficulties that novice EFL teachers encounter at this level?

*N.B:This is a semi-structured interview. Follow-up questions can be made depending to the situation.*

### *Appendix 2.Students' Questionnaire*

**Please complete this questionnaire with regard to the courses you had during your years in the department.**

*Part I*

a. To what extent do you know and understand the following?

b. How useful do you find the following to enhance your teaching?

| very low | low | moderate | high | very high | | not useful | useful | very useful |

**1. Fundamental Language Concepts:**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  1.1. The nature of language and basic concepts of language systems. (e.g. phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon)  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  1.2. Functions of language register in English. (e.g. social vs. academic)  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  1.3. The relationships among listening, speaking, reading and writing.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  1.4. The structure of the English language and conventions of written and spoken English.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  1.5. Patterns of written and oral discourse.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

**2. The Foundation of EFL Education:**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  2.1. The historical, theoretical and policy foundations of EFL education.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  2.2. Types of EFL programmes, their characteristics, their goals and research findings on their effectiveness.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  2.3. Research findings related to EFL education, including effective instructional and management practices in EFL programmes.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐  2.4. Techniques to urge learners to use the target language (English) and to avoid using their L1 as much as possible.  ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

### 3. First- and Second- Language Acquisition Processes:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   3.1. Theories, concepts and research related to L1 development.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   3.2. Theories, concepts and research related to L2 development.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   3.3. The interrelatedness of first- and second-language acquisition and ways in which L1 may affect L2 development.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   3.4. The role of linguistic environment and conversational support in second language acquisition.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   3.5. Common difficulties (e.g. syntax, phonology, L1 interference …) experienced by EFL students in learning English and strategies for overcoming these difficulties.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

### 4. EFL Methodology:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.1. Factors and procedures in planning EFL instruction, including consideration of students' developmental characteristics and individual needs.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.2. A variety of methods and techniques appropriate for instruction in the EFL classroom.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.3. Strategies for fostering EFL students' communicative competence.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.4. The use of technological tools and resources to facilitate and enhance EFL instruction.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.5. Classroom management strategies for a variety of EFL environments and situations.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐   4.6. Sharp awareness of the methods actually in practice and their differences from the ones experienced as learners.   ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

## Part II

1. **Do you attend the 'teaching practice' sessions held at the level of the department?**

   Yes ☐                 No ☐

2. **If yes; how often?**

   Always ☐        Sometimes ☐        Rarely ☐

3. **How often do you practise the following in your teaching training?**

|  | never | | sometimes | | always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom observation for other teachers practising their profession. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| EFL skills training. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Being given a chance to teach freely. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Evaluation of the teaching performance by the trainer. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Self-evaluation of the teaching practice. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Practice of the teaching methodologies in teaching. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Self-reliance in lessons planning and evaluation. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Do you have any other comments which might be helpful in giving an obvious idea about EFL students' needs, in their pre-service training, to achieve professional competence? If so, please write them here.**

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