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**Assessment of Reading Comprehension Skills:
Case of 3 A.S. Students at El Arbi Abdelkader Bouguirat
Secondary School, Mostaganem**

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In Candidacy for the Degree of Magister in T.E.F.L and Applied Linguistics*

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DEDICATIONS

*I dedicate this work to
my parents*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis tried to shed light on the concept of assessment and its importance as a pedagogical tool in the teaching-learning process. It, mainly, emphasised the assessment of reading comprehension with reference to EFL classrooms in the Algerian secondary Schools and intended to investigate its methodology, types, aspects, and steps. For this purpose, a case study of 3rd year pupils from El Arbi Abdelkader BOUGUIRAT Secondary School and 10 EFL teachers has been developed.

The findings revealed that assessment of reading comprehension is central to English language teaching as it informs teachers about learners' needs, obstacles, and deficits. Thus, teachers need to apply the appropriate techniques and use the assessment results to improve their classroom instruction and enhance the learning abilities. Moreover, the results showed that vocabulary knowledge and comprehension strategies are essential elements to reading comprehension.

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List of Abbreviations

CBA	Competency Based Approach
CBLT	Competency-based Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
L1	The Mother Language
L2	The Foreign Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology

General Introduction

General Introduction

Assessment of reading comprehension is one of the essential practices to both teaching and learning. It includes a number of tools and techniques that should be used in class so that teachers can better understand their learners' needs, wants, and worries. It is, in other words, a pedagogical and educational task needed to be conducted in order to gather data about learners so as to properly identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Generally speaking, assessment raises many opportunities for teachers to identify their teaching objectives and to know the extent to which the anticipated goals are reached. Actually, it makes the teaching-learning process more successful and consistent by linking and adjusting the instruction to its results. Moreover, it can be viewed as a teaching practice that is designed to collect information about students' learning in order to make decisions about the most useful and constructive classroom instruction. In addition, its procedures should have positive impacts on the learning process. In fact; it needs to entail effective techniques and strategies that push learners to demonstrate their real achievements. Indeed, the ways learners are assessed may have different affects on their learning, and therefore, a well designed assessment is the one which have clear purposes and which makes learners actually show the extent to which they have grasped the classroom instruction.

This work has grown up from an important problem statement. In fact, assessment of reading comprehension needs to be conducted properly and adequately so as to improve and monitor learners' progress in this skill. Thus, teachers are required to seek and implement useful and effective assessment techniques necessary for the purpose of revealing and meeting learners' needs in this skill. Certainly, it should be consistent with the previously provided courses in class by taking into account the curriculum requirements that help attain a successful learning. Ideally, the ultimate goal of assessment is to provide opportunities to all learners to maximize and improve their learning process. Therefore, skillful teachers are those who implement continuous classroom

assessment and use the results to make their students aware about their abilities. This can occur by providing an effective feedback that informs learners about their weaknesses and strengths and offers solutions that help them enhance their learning capacities.

The main objective of this study is to illustrate the process of assessing reading comprehension skills with reference to 3rd year secondary school pupils. In fact, this kind of assessment has put many challenges to both teachers and learners because of its significant importance in language teaching. In this respect, teachers always try to precise the important ingredients that constitute reading comprehension so as to seek the elements and the tools that truly assess each part of this skill. In addition, it is important to mention that the use of the appropriate means to assess reading comprehension helps effectively teachers not only to discover the abilities of their learners but also to determine the teaching strategies that help them meet their needs.

Furthermore, assessment of reading comprehension is a task that includes various measures and criteria that should provide evidence about how well learners are able to read, understand, and interpret different kinds of texts. Obviously, specific activities can be designed to assess learners' abilities to read and understand words' meanings, sentences, and paragraphs. Moreover, many kinds of comprehension questions can be used to know whether learners have built a reasonable understanding of the whole text or not. Indeed, many approaches to reading comprehension assessment have attempted to introduce interactive activities and tests which include useful comprehension questions that help learners better interact with the text and stimulate them to create appropriate understanding of that text. Therefore, this research tries to mention the effective and the useful techniques and strategies that can be applied in class in order to successfully assess all reading comprehension skills.

One of the purposes of assessment is to discover the reasons that lead to learners' failure in any subject .As for reading comprehension, this study attempts to illustrate the problems that leads to learners' failure in this subject and provides

some evidence about the role of assessment in detecting the causes of reading comprehension deficits. In fact, this research focuses, in some of its parts, on the aspects that lead to poor achievements in reading comprehension and tries to provide some solutions to improve learners' capacities to read fluently and to achieve higher levels of texts' comprehension.

This study specifically aims to provide convincing answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the advantages of assessment for both teachers and learners?
2. How can reading comprehension skills be appropriately assessed?
3. What are the difficulties that cause reading comprehension failure?

The above mentioned questions are answered in the body of this thesis .In fact, one needs to read all the four chapters in order to get clear answers and explanations. More importantly, these questions are explored on the bases of the following hypotheses:

1. Teachers conduct assessment activities in order to reveal learners' needs and to improve classroom instruction.
2. Assessment of reading comprehension should include multiple techniques and should depend on clear criteria.
3. The lack of vocabulary knowledge leads to major reading comprehension deficits.

This research work entails four chapters:

Chapter one is devoted to the process of classroom assessment and its role in the teaching-learning process. Precisely, this part of the study attempts to provide a literature review of assessment as it gives some definitions and descriptions to the different types, methods, and benefits of assessment.

As far as the second chapter is concerned, the process of English language teaching in Algeria is highlighted. Indeed; it focuses on the importance and the need to English in Algeria, and especially, in the Algerian secondary schools.

Particularly, the second chapter of the this research highlights the syllabus, the methods, and the objectives of ELT with reference to the 3rd year secondary school students .More importantly, it tackles the process of both teaching and assessing reading comprehension with relation to the pupils' textbook "New Prospects". Moreover, this chapter deals with some other aspects of ELT in Algeria.

With respect to the third chapter, it can be considered as the core of the whole study. It, in fact, includes the research methodology and the data analyses of this research work. It contains the two questionnaires of the research and provides the interpretations and the discussions of both teachers and learners' answers .It is worthy to note that the steps of the research was carried out in the Secondary School of El-Arbi Abdelkader-Bouguirat .This research work included thirty pupils "of 3em AS" and ten EFL teachers schools.

With regard to the fourth chapter, it is aims at offering some recommendations to teaching and assessing reading comprehension as far as ELT is concerned. In this sense, this part of the research provides some important strategies and techniques that help teachers better assess reading comprehension skills. Also, it includes some definitions, descriptions, and clarifications about teaching and assessing reading comprehension as an essential skill to the learning of the English Language. Obviously, this chapter is an important part as it concludes and sums up the whole study with significant ideas and suggestions.

Chapter One

Chapter One: Aspects of Classroom Assessment

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1.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at shedding some light on the process of assessment as an essential educational component to both teaching and learning .In fact; a clear view will be given in this chapter related to assessment as an integral part of any successful learning. Indeed, it is one of the important pedagogic tasks that teachers need to carry out in the classroom to gather evidence about their learners' needs as it occurs at different levels and for different goals.

Classroom assessment involves some practices that help teachers make decisions about the implementation of the suitable means and strategies that help their learners make progress in their learning .With respect to these practices in which teachers are engaged during instruction, they may wonder and accordingly react to different questions such as: Are learners making progress? Are they engaged in the course? Do they understand the instruction? Does the instruction improve their learning? In sum, teachers' decision making occurs before, during, and after instruction.

On the other hand, gathering and interpreting information, planning instruction, and giving constructive feedback are elements that need to be considered when designing and implementing classroom assessment. These three elements place teachers at the core of the assessment task as they help them know how learners represent knowledge and develop competence. In addition, teachers' conceptions of how learners are learning influence not only the work of learners but also the feedback and the instruction they provide.

In brief, assessment enables teachers to hear learners as they intend to be heard and thus design and develop the courses and the strategies on the basis of their learners' needs and interests.

1.2. Definitions of Assessment

Assessment can be viewed as the process of identifying and describing the learners' knowledge, understandings, abilities, and skills. It is a classroom activity used to promote learning by gathering data and giving feedback (Black&William, 1998). In other words, assessment is the process of knowing about how learners are learning so as to make the right decision in designing and planning courses. In the same sense, it is defined by Palomba and Banta as follows:

Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning and development.

(Palomba and Banta, 1999 : 4)

Indeed, gathering data about learners, interpreting evidence, and improving instruction are assessment stages through which teachers can improve the learning outcomes.

Broadly speaking, assessment is seen as a task which includes all activities that teachers and student undertake to get information that can be used diagnostically to alter both teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). From this definition, one can conclude that assessment involves teachers' observation, classroom discussion and analyses of learners work including homework and tests. It is, also, defined by Carr and Harris as follows: *Assessment is an integral part of instruction...effective classroom assessment is relevant to immediate learning.* (Carr and Harris, 2001 :.35)

Surely, assessment is linked to instruction and learning because it enhances the quality of teaching and increases the learners' achievement. In practice,

assessment relies on different methods to ensure that learners really demonstrate what they have got and what they still need to get. This can be done through gathering evidence, designing constructive feedback, setting good classroom activities and adjusting the instruction according to learners' needs. The following diagram represents a guide to assessment practice:

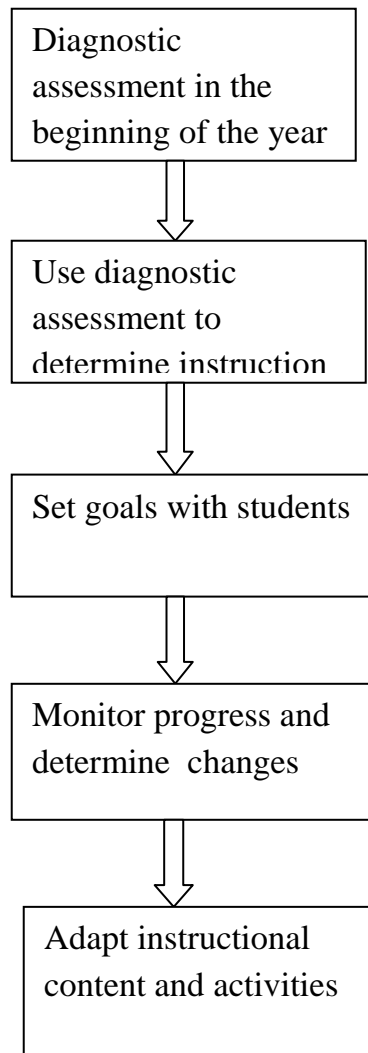


Figure 1.1 : Guide to Assessment for Secondary Students

(Denton , Bryan,Wexler,Reed, and Vaughn , 2007 :18)

This diagram emphasizes the importance and the role of assessment in designing teachers' instruction and monitoring learners' progress. In other words, diagnosing learners' needs is the first activity that teachers need to conduct.

Moreover, assessment includes the process of evaluating, marking, and grading learners' performance. It is regarded as a process of gathering, synthesising, and interpreting information in order to make decisions on students' performance. In class, assessment can be conducted to diagnose students' problems, to judge their academic performance, to provide feedback to students, and to plan instruction (Airasian1994).

In brief, assessment is defined as being diagnostic, formative, and summative. These three components are used together to help both teachers and learners determine what should be done to enhance the learning process.

1.3. Assessment VS Evaluation

Assessment is a classroom activity conducted to provide a valuable feedback for the improvement of both teaching and learning. It is the learners' feedback which helps the instructor knows about their learning. It is defined as the observation of the process of learning and the collection of frequent information about learners.

In contrast, evaluation is seen as a process of using methods and measures to judge the learners' achievement for the purpose of grading and reporting. Evaluation is, in some way, a feedback from the teacher to learners about their learning.

Assessment is the design of classroom techniques and methods that provide information on how learners respond to particular teaching approaches. Whereas, Evaluation is a summative result used for judging and appraising .It occurs through quizzes, exams, papers or tests. In brief, assessment is used to serve the learning while evaluation is used to assess it.

1.4. Definition of Reading comprehension

Reading is not only a process of decoding texts and building a personal understanding .It can be viewed as a process which requires a guessing techniques by which the reader rebuild as best as possible the message encoded by the writer .Grabe and william described reading as:

An active process of comprehending where students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e.g. guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc).

(Grabe and William, 1991:377)

That is to say that reading comprehension is a combination of identification and interpretation skills. In fact, it is an interactive process between the reader and the text which result in a specific comprehension. In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text and elicits the meaning and the ideas included in this text.

As for comprehension, it is the ultimate goal of reading .It involves a number of cognitive processes that help learners make sense of what they read. Indeed, for the purpose of understanding a text, they need to read and decode words, relate sentences, and use the background knowledge. Actually, learners

can easily understand a text by activating their prior knowledge and connecting it to the new information. This prior knowledge reflects the experiences, the attitudes, and the skills that learners have.

In brief, reading comprehension is a complex process that requires much from both teachers and learners. It is a sort of thinking during which meaning is created between the reader and the text. In order to teach learners how to build meaning, they should learn how to think about the text before reading, how to interact with the text, how to use the reading strategies, and how to use their own knowledge.

1.5. The Advantages of Assessment

Assessment is seen as a familiar part of classroom instruction and plays significant roles in the learning process. Certainly, teachers use a wide variety of activities which aim at measuring what learners know and can do to help them achieve higher learning standards. It is known that assessment cannot be seen only as a process of evaluating, placing, and grading learners, but also as a broad process that assumes various forms and functions to reach specific goals. Besides, it can be viewed as set of strategies that offer teachers copious opportunities to make judgements about their learners' abilities.

In addition, most of the teacher-made assessments procedures should be tailored according to daily instructional needs. These procedures are supposed to provide teachers with immediate feedback about learners' mastery of specific skills. Assessment is a tool which provides information about knowledge and skills that learners acquire as they enter a course. It also provides a reliable data about the learning.

Moreover, assessment can be seen as a tool of gathering richer data about the effects of the teaching approach on learners. It helps teachers get a larger view of learners' needs and accomplishments, identify directions for future instructional developments, and make reliable decisions about innovations and adjustments.

Furthermore, the role of assessment in stimulating the learning is undeniable. Indeed, it enhances learners' motivation, encourages self esteem, and develops skills of evaluation. More importantly, it defines the learners' needs and attitudes by identifying their areas of strengths and weaknesses. Accordingly, teachers can give constructive feedback rather than giving only ranks and grades. In brief, assessment in education involves the many processes and strategies that help both teachers and learners achieve successfully the educational objectives.

1.6. The Distinctive Features of Classroom Assessment

The primary distinction between internal and external assessment is that the internal assessment involves teachers and learners, whereas, external assessment includes standardized national tests or exams designed by other assessors for the reason of grading and marking learners.

Classroom assessment is an integral part of teaching. It is a systematic process of gathering information about what learners know. The primary goal of classroom assessment is not to evaluate and classify the learners' performance but to inform teaching and enhance the learning. In fact, teachers conduct classroom assessment not only by setting formal tests, but also by making continuous classroom observation and applying instructional activities. The following figure describes the process of classroom assessment:

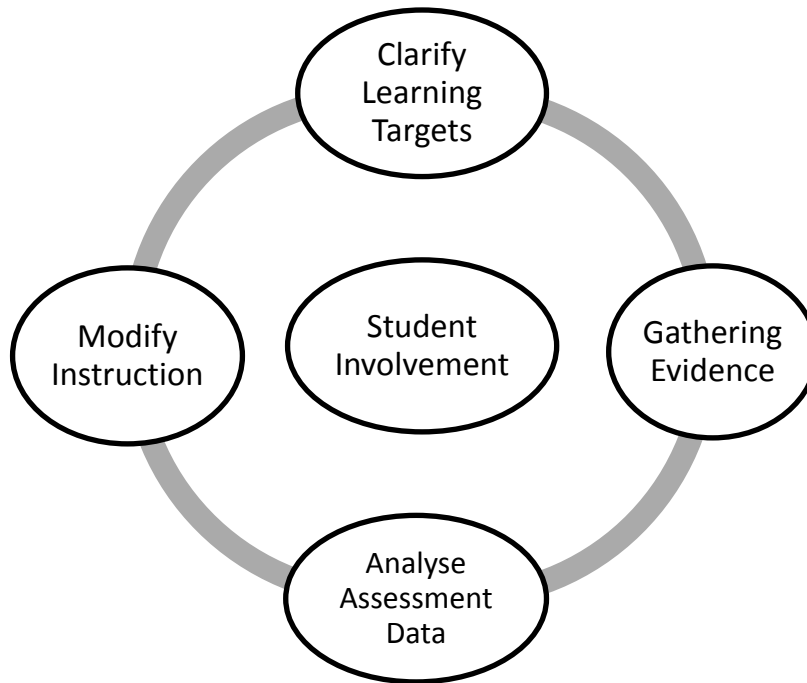


Figure 1.2: Classroom Assessment Cycle

(Susan and Nancy 2005 : 3)

This cycle outlines the classroom assessment process which focuses on improving learners' performance. It implies that assessment includes four main steps: clarifying learning targets, gathering evidence in a variety of ways, analyzing assessment data, and modifying instruction. Indeed, teachers should use the evidence to monitor progress, increase performance, and improve instruction.

The manner in which teachers choose to assess has a significant impact on their learners. In many ways, the format and content repeated tests may negatively influence them. Therefore, classroom assessment requires teachers to make regular decisions and judgment about the teaching-learning process. It is a

process that occurs on ongoing bases. This is why, identification, cognition, observation and interpretation can be seen as key elements that need to be considered when designing and implementing classroom assessment. These interrelated elements place teachers at the core of classroom assessment as they are concerned about how learners represent knowledge and develop competence in a particular skill.

1.7. Types of Assessments

There are many types of assessments which occur in different times, at different levels, in different forms to accomplish multiple purposes.

1.7.1. Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment is the process of diagnosing learners' strengths and weaknesses in the very beginning of a foreign language course. It greatly facilitates teachers' task to tailor instructions, meet the learners needs, or -at least- helps them plan classroom activities appropriate for the their level. In this sense, Jean Jacques Rousseau, in the following statement, calls for the introduction of pre-instruction assessment activities: *"Teachers, make it your first task to know your students better, for you surely do not know them."*

(Jean Jacques in Ellis, 2001: 67).

Certainly, teachers use this type of assessment to reveal learners' readiness visa vie a skill or a programme. It, also, identifies for both teachers and learners the needs and demands that should be met in any area of knowledge. The strengths lead to a formal consideration and should be explored in addressing the weaknesses.

Generally, it occurs when learners move to a new learning programme .It happens at the beginning of a course or a programme in order to develop plans and make links so as to prepare the next steps. It is, in another sense, a holistic process during which a picture should be built up about the individual's achievements, interests, skills, and wants. This evidence can be translated to teaching practices and used for planning the courses that best suit the learners. Moreover, it helps teachers to identify the goals and to choose the techniques and the strategies that enable them to reach these goals.

Additionally, diagnostic assessment deeply looks at the specific needs of learners as the diagnostic feedback needs to be descriptive and interpretable so that it can help learners take actions to close the gap between their current competency level and their desired learning goals (Black&William 1998).

In short, diagnostic assessment is an educational strategy used by teachers to determine the learning and the instructional goals. It paves the way to a continuous formative assessment.

1.7.2. Formative Assessment

Formative assessment can be referred to as continuous, interactive, and dynamic. It occurs and should be carried out in ways that help learners make a real progress in their learning. It is also an ongoing generative process which is designed to support learning .Therefore; this process includes several strategies such as sharing the learning goals and the assessment criteria with learners.

The distinguishing characteristic of formative assessment is that the its information is used, by the teachers and the pupils, to modify their work in order to make it more effective (Black 1995). This means that it aims at knowing about

how learners are progressing and where they are having troubles. It also helps teachers to make the necessary instructional adjustments so as to offer more opportunities to practices.

Formative assessment involves designing goals, providing instruction, measuring outcomes, and giving useful feedback. Actually, it includes the process of appraising, judging, or evaluating students' work or performance and using this to shape to improve students' competence (Gipps 1994).

That is to say, formative assessment is a process which requires skilful teachers who can better elicit and interpret information for the interest of their learners to improve both teaching and learning strategies. It is characterised by its progressive nature as it can happen at any period of time. It, also, can be planned or unplanned, proactive or reactive, formal or informal. As for informal assessment, it is a way of collecting information about learners' performance in normal classroom conditions. This can be done without establishing test conditions as it is done over a period of time. In contrast, formal assessment is carried out through tests which are used to find out about the learners' suitability to follow a course of a study and to know how learners are progressing in order to identify problem areas. Through tests teachers can know how much learners have learned during the course or during the academic year.

A common misconception is held by teachers and learners alike, is that a test is something which is done at pupils rather than something which is done by them and for them. In fact, Formal testing should be seen as a complement to other forms of assessment. In brief, formative assessment brings the assessor and

the learner together in a process of continual reflection by making clear judgements about the learning gains.

1.7.3. Summative Assessment

While formative assessment is for learning, summative assessment is of learning. It provides evidence of what learners got at the end of a specific term of learning. Furthermore, it marks the important stages of learners' development and should be formally recorded in the form of scores and marks. More importantly, it should be planned in advance so that learners can have enough time to prepare themselves and gain confidence in whatever area they are assessed in or about. In addition to this, it is generally used to discover what a learner has achieved during the program of the study. It is carried out at or towards the end of the course for the sake of knowing if learners have acquired the target skill as it gives an overall picture of learners' performance.

In the form of tests or exams, summative assessment aims at raising the standards of learning as it indicates the extent of success and the points of failure. It is carried out by the end of a period of instruction so that to make clear judgements about where learners are successful and where they are not in any area of knowledge. In short, the most powerful evidence of learners' progress is provided when teachers combine data from pre-tests and post-tests and provide a summative assessment.

1.7.4. Self Assessment

Self assessment is another type of assessment which provides teachers with useful information about learners' expectations and needs. It also helps teachers know about learners' problems and worries. It gives information about how learners feel about their own progress, their reactions to the methods and

techniques being used, and what they think about the course in general. Additionally, it has been a key issue to autonomous learning as it helps learners to establish goals and manage their own learning.

Successful language learning can be attained when learners are autonomous and are actively engaged in the process of learning. Furthermore, learners use self assessment to monitor and evaluate their levels of knowledge because it is what the students see from their own perspective (Oscarson 1989). In other words, self assessment makes learners know about their achievements by giving them the opportunity to make reliable and valid judgements.

The most important benefits of self assessment are related to its impact as an integral part of learning. To learn anything, learners need to assess what they already know and how they can improve. Self assessment can be encouraged by asking learners questions about what and how they have learnt. This can foster learners' evaluative attitudes and make them aware of the variability of language learning.

More importantly, self assessment involves the process of reflective thinking. In fact, in educational contexts, reflection is regarded as a means of useful thinking which involves the ability to make choices and assume the responsibility for the practice in class. In more clear words, reflection and self assessment are linked to each other in the sense that self assessment is a pedagogical tool which enables learners to reflect on their own practice and understand that learning is a real process which they should be involved in.

The most important thing about learners' self assessment is that it cannot work in a context where marks have an intrinsic value in themselves or in a

competition atmosphere. In short, it should have nothing to do with marks. It should concentrate on thinking about performance and progress in individual terms.

1.7.5. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is a key strategy that involves learners in taking more responsibility for their own learning. In fact; it offers the opportunity to learners to see the gains for themselves rather than for their teachers. Moreover, it gets learners involved in observing, monitoring and making judgements about their peers' learning.

As the potential benefits of peer assessment has long been recognized, various forms are increasingly used to help learners meet a variety of learning outcomes. Peer assessment encourages cooperative learning referring to the use of different strategies by which learners can learn with and from each other without the direct intervention of their teacher. In addition, peer assessment improves the group work by having learners take collective responsibility in identifying their learning needs and planning how these needs can be addressed. Indeed, learners can articulate their understanding and make it judged and assessed by their peers. As a result, peer feedback, in the form of questions and comments, prompts learners to reflect on what has been got and what still needs to be done. In fact, peers can provide rich information that cannot be provided by teachers.

A further important reason for engaging learners in the process of peer assessment is that it encourages learners' ownership of their personal learning and motivates active participation in learning. It makes assessment a shared activity by raising the proposition that the learner is the best person to assess learners'

inputs and outputs. It, also, stimulates more direct and effective learning as it encourages a more autonomous approach. Furthermore, it develops learners' autonomy, maturity, and critical abilities as it involves the transfer of their personal skills.

1.8. The Process of Assessment

Assessment is a formal process that involves deliberate efforts to gain evidence about learners' abilities and disabilities .This process includes a range of procedures and has the ultimate goal of getting valid and reliable information which is the basis on which teachers can make their decisions.

Planning, teaching, and assessing are three components of the educational instruction .They include the setting of instructional goals that lead learners to successfully achieve better learning outcomes .Moreover , they help teachers optimize their teaching strategies by identifying the real needs of their learners.

More importantly, assessment depends on teachers' competence to analyse data and use information to formulate inferences and give corrections. The following cycle clarifies the process of data analyses:

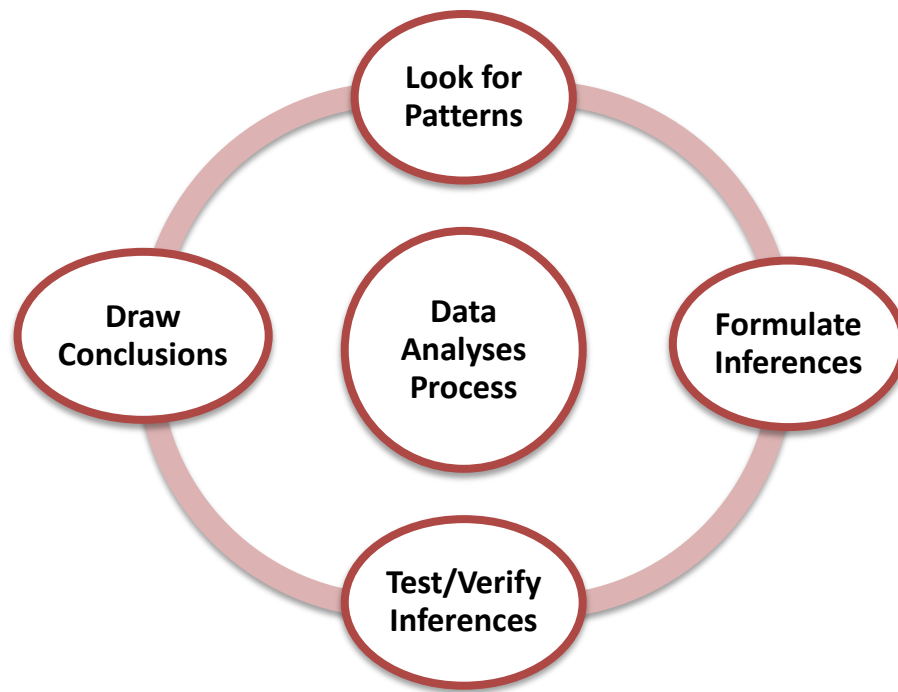


Figure 1.3 : Data Analyses Process

(Susan and Nancy, 2005 : 54)

This figure gives a perspective on the process of data analyses which provides teachers with insights about students' learning. In fact, teachers are required to make inferences from the collected data and test these inferences in order to draw final conclusions about the kind of instruction they need to provide.

It is argued that for effective learning to occur, congruence should exist between instruction, assessment, and outcomes. When assessing learners, teachers should use different strategies and tools such as observation, portfolios, and communication in class. Authenticity, feedback opportunities, validity, fairness, efficiency, feasibility, and using multiple methods are important characteristics of assessment (Millan, 2000).

Apparently, poor assessment methods lead to poor learning achievements and a well designed assessment enhances both learning and teaching. As far as the importance of assessment is concerned, teachers need to give considerable attention to the criteria they use as they should know the extent to which their assessment activities are aligned with the instruction they provide.

The process of assessment should not be separated from the curriculum nor from instruction. It is, in other words, a process which is used to judge performance, to inform the teaching, and to improve the learning. In this sense, Ramsden (2003:182) wrote: “*From our students’ point of view, assessment always defines the actual curriculum.*”

That is to say that the curriculum should be taken into consideration in planning assessment and instruction.

1.8.1. Assessment and Teaching

Assessment is a pedagogical instrument that aims at serving teaching. It helps teachers to make judgements and decisions about the instruction they use in class.

Actually, higher learner achievement can be the central goal of all educational activities when teacher professional development is related to learners’ assessment which can be used as a tool to measure the teaching approaches and methods. One major change in making assessments more appropriate is to include techniques that require learners to supply information such as explanation, long answers, drawings, and all performance tests. Teaching to the test has a negative connotation among many educators but when

assessment tasks closely mirror what learners should be able to do in a particular skill, then instruction and curriculum are closely aligned and the teaching to the test is appropriate.

It is often considered as a good idea for the teacher to share criteria for assessment with the learners, and make the whole process open and transparent. One of the major principles of good assessment practice is that the criteria are clearly communicated to learners (Lorrie, 2000). This allows the educators to fashion better the learning process and induce desirable learning outcomes. From the point of view of the learner, explicit communication of criteria is desirable as it allows them to focus on what they should be doing.

Indeed, the criteria are broad and abstract in nature and reflect, in part, a preference for developing intellectual skills. Assessment criteria are used to direct the learning into specific tasks. Thus, teachers who have shared assessment criteria with their learners, often, report not only increased interest from learners, but also improvement in their work.

1.8.2. Assessment and Learning

Assessment in learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence to be used by both teachers and learners to decide how to tailor instruction so as to meet and fulfil the learning requirements (Black and William, 1998). In addition, assessment serves the learning by providing opportunities to gain and use information about learners' abilities.

Moreover, it includes strategies which help learners and teachers know and understand the objectives they are working for as well as the criteria that is used in assessing the learning achievements. It is supposed to enable learners to be

aware of the “how” and the “what” of their learning .Therefore ,teachers are required to make plans and seek the techniques that help learners take part in the process of assessment.

As a pedagogical tool, assessment is considered as a central part to classroom practice, because it includes the instructions, tasks, and questions that prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and competencies .More importantly, this assessment helps gather, interpret and judge evidence about the learning outcomes(Earl,2003). Furthermore, assessment in learning is considered as a key professional skill for teachers who constantly gather and analyse evidence so as to give constructive feedback to learners and tailor the instruction according to their needs. In addition, they should be conscious about the impact that assessment may have on their learners. Therefore, comments, marks, and grades should be used to enhance the learners’ confidence and motivation.

For effective learning to take place, learners need to know and understand what they want to achieve .Therefore; the criteria by which they are assessed should be clear and well defined to them by engaging them in peer and self assessment. In addition, learners need to receive continual constructive guidance about how to be successful by helping them to discover their weaknesses and strengths and to identify the steps that need to be made.

1.8.2.1. Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning is a continuous process .It is designed to provide teachers with information about their learners. It is intended to make learners’

understanding visible and clear so that teachers can decide what to modify or innovate in their teaching.

Furthermore ,assessment for learning can be seen as an interactive process as it helps teachers align instruction, identify particular needs ,create differentiated teaching strategies ,and offer better learning opportunities by enhancing learners' motivation and consolidating their commitment to learning (Derby City Council2002) . As the main objective of assessment for learning is to improve the learning,teachers use it to uncover what learners believe to be true and right .Accordingly ,they adjust their instruction so as to build productive learning. Additionally, educators use assessment as an investigative means to know as much as they can about the needs of their learners. Besides, they can collect a wide variety of information that builds up the teaching and provides constructive feedback for learners.

In assessment for learning, teachers should take into account the syllabus as the starting point to determine what and how to assess. Therefore, they should use assessment techniques that expose learners' thinking and skills in relation to the intended goals of the syllabus.

In short, assessment for learning focuses on the nature of learners' strengths and weaknesses at any point over time. It is a useful strategy that reveals the learners' needs and determines, accordingly, the phases of teaching. It is different from assessment of learning in the sense that it is a continual process that serves and improves the learning rather than evaluating it.

1.8.2.2. Assessment of Learning

Assessment of learning is summative in nature. It refers to the strategies and techniques used to confirm what learners know and can do. This assessment demonstrates to teachers whether or not their learners have met the learning outcomes. Besides, it is designed to give a sound statement about learners as it provides evidence of their achievements.

The purpose of assessment of learning that comes at the end of a course or a term is to determine the extent to which the instructional goals have been reached. Its consequences are far reaching and have a great impact on learners. Therefore, teachers need to assume their responsibilities of reporting and grading learners fairly and accurately on the bases of the gained evidence from a variety of application (Black and William, 1998). Furthermore, it is designed to measure, certify, grade, and report the level of learners. It requires the collection and the interpretation of information in specific areas. For this reason, it should enable learners to reveal the complexities they have in their learning and apply the knowledge and the skills consistently with the learning goals.

In assessment of learning, the methods and strategies used should address the intended curriculum outcomes and help learners show their understanding and produce sufficient data about the nature and the quality of their learning.

It is important to say that assessment of learning should be carefully constructed so that it produces accurate description of learners' competencies in relation to the defined learning goals. Therefore, it should include rigorous, equitable, valid, and reliable measures.

1.9. Characteristics of Effective Assessment

Effective assessment should be congruent with instruction and integral to it. It requires teachers to be conscious of several concerns such as: what do I want my learners to know? What can they do to show they have known it? And how can I know that they have acquired a set of knowledge?

Moreover, effective assessment should be based on authentic tasks and meaningful processes (Beverley and Bronwen, 2000). More importantly, learners should be aware about the fact that tasks are designed for their interest rather than for teachers or others. These assessment tasks are designed to consider learners' understanding and to reveal to them how important learning is. Additionally, Effective assessment is multi-dimensional and uses a wide range of tools and methods such as tests, observation, projects, and rubrics. In addition, it should be based on criteria that learners know and understand. These criteria should be clearly established and made explicit before an assignment or a test so that they can focus their efforts on the subject being assessed. No need to say that each assessment task should focus only on the learning outcomes that have been identified to learners. On the other hand, it needs to be a collaborative process involving learners. Indeed, among the purposes of autonomous learning is to enable learners to assess themselves. It is argued that the collaborative process increases learners' responsibility and develops their autonomy. And therefore, assessment should decrease rather than increase learners' independence on teachers.

In order to make assessment an effective process, it should be equitable in the sense that it should offer opportunities for success to every learner. In fact, it should not only focus on identifying deficits but also on demonstrating the knowledge, the skills, and the talents that learners own.

For a good assessment practice, teachers need to use a variety of instruments which actually reveal learners strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, it should be continuous, ongoing, and woven into daily instruction so that learners can receive frequent feedback and make progress. It is important that teachers make informal assessment in the form of questions and comments. Similarly, formal assessment at different stages and for different purposes is a necessary process.

In more clear words, effective assessment is that kind of assessment which includes various instruments and strategies. It may be conducted in formal or informal ways that provide copious opportunities for teachers to review revise or change instruction for the interest of learners.

1.10. The Role of Assessors

Teachers, as assessors, are field practitioners who are responsible for the assessment of their learners' achievements. Facilitating, supervising, managing, and leading learning are important roles of assessors. As modern learning is no longer teacher-centred, the role of teachers has changed from imposing discouraging assessment techniques on their learners to using supportive methods so as to help learners gain access to further learning. More importantly, teachers need to inform their learners about their weaknesses so as they know and understand their requirements in order to make progress in their learning.

Moreover , the assessors is required to seek, plan , and apply the appropriate assessment methods and instruments , and modify them in order to make constructive decisions according to learners' needs . In fact , when learners reveal their knowledge and understanding of the target skill, the assessor should set reports and make fair and right judgements about whether the objectives

were reached or not . Therefore, teachers' proficiency is a crucial matter for any successful teaching.

When assessing learners, teachers are not required to provide them with too much help. Instead, they should scaffold their learners by giving them the opportunity to think, work and propose solutions for the improvement of their learning outcomes . Teaching and assessing are inseparable functions of teachers which should be carried out in a way that develops and enhances learners' skills and knowledge. For this to take place, teachers are required to provide copious opportunities for learning practices so as to get their learners ready to be assessed. Actually, assessment plans are necessary in that they cover what needs to be assessed, and how and when it should be assessed.

1.11. Assessment Methods

Teachers can introduce different strategies and tools in assessing their learners. These strategies involve learners themselves in the process by having them take part in judging and evaluating their learning so that they discover their needs and wants. From the existing literature, the following strategies have great importance:

1.11.1. Projects

Research projects allow learners to achieve the learning outcomes in individual ways. In fact, assessment can be built up into the project throughout the different stages from planning, to researching, to the presenting of final work. Projects are distinct from the other types of written assessment as they are cumulative i.e. they reflect the work done over an extended period of time rather than in response to a particular prompt. Through projects, learners draw upon the

skills they have developed over time. In general, it includes three components: a research paper, a product of activity, and an oral presentation.

Furthermore, the project-based teaching engages learners in the practice of significant research. It is a process which offers opportunities for profitable learning experiences. Its implementation as a tool of assessment involves both teachers and learners who cooperate to reach the established goals. Assessment through projects requires teachers to guide the learners' selections and help them accomplish their work while learners are required to make efforts to present a better work.

1.11.2. Portfolios

Portfolios represent another form of assessment .They are considered as systematic collections by both teachers and learners. They can serve as a means to evaluate and estimate the achievements of learners, and reveal the needs in the instructional process(Gitomer and Duschl, 1995). Additionally, portfolios can be used as part of formative assessment and as an appropriate mechanism to monitor learners' progress .Indeed, the evidence included in the portfolio demonstrates the learners' proficiency on a number of tasks.

As for learners, portfolios give them the chance to be involved in the assessment practice by having the chance to select samples of their work and update them in a regular way .Through portfolios, learners can demonstrate their talents and skills and develop criteria of evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their work .In this sense, portfolios conceptualize the classroom interactions and provide authentic documentation of learners' achievements.

Like projects, a portfolio is a cumulative assessment that represents learners' work and documents their performance, however, the project focuses on a single theme, whereas a portfolio may contain many forms of assessments. Portfolios are designed to represent the learners' work and to show how their work has evolved over time. It should be noted that portfolios represent major scoring problems because each learner's portfolio includes different pieces. This variation makes it difficult to develop scoring criteria.

For a better use of portfolios, teachers need to set guidelines for the contents of portfolios so that they all contain similar components which make specific learner outcomes identified and assessed.

1.11.3. Rubrics

Rubrics are tools that identify the criteria upon which learners' processes, performances, and outcomes can be assessed. They also describe the qualities of work at different levels. A good rubric identifies the criteria that are used to make the difference between the excellent and the weak works. Moreover, rubrics are considered as tools that help learners redirect their attention to the concerns that matter in their learning. Besides, they give them several opportunities to choose suitable learning possibilities among others. Also, rubrics are used to communicate teachers' expectations and students' results.

The use of rubrics to judge the quality of learners' outcomes is an effective strategy in the process of assessment. Indeed, rubrics are intended to give a more descriptive, holistic characterization of the quality of the learners' work and teachers' performance. Moreover, they are considered as helpful tools in enhancing learners' understanding and expectations as they are highly informative and useful for feedback purposes.

Ideally, the regular use of rubrics ensures that learners and teachers have understood the importance of assessment as an essential part of the teaching-learning process.

1.11.4. Testing

Tests can be defined as a procedure which is designed to elicit and evaluate the learner's abilities in a specific skill. They are teacher-devised tasks carried out in the classroom and used as an assessment technique .It can be more or less formal and carefully prepared .Tests can also be defined as activities which are carried out in class to know about the learners' abilities and to measure their performance in a given area.

Still, testing is one the most important ingredients of language teaching .Its enormous value is and should be evident in its congruence with the learning goals . Being in relation with the skills practiced in class , tests intend to enhance the learning rather than undermining it . It should be noted that testing is one of the most important assessment tools that differ in terms of purposes and types .They are intended to provide teachers with the information about the students' abilities to perform a specific task .According to Spolsky : “*Language tests involve measuring a subject's knowledge and proficiency in the use of language.*”

(Spolsky 1989 : 140)

Indeed, tests aim at providing a measure of learners' competence and measuring their performance. Teacher-made tests have an important role in the assessment process. In light of tests results, teachers can make their decisions to improve the quality of their teaching. Therefore, it is important that preparation for tests deserve the same priority as the preparations instruction .As Buck put it:

“A good test is the one that allows us to make inferences about the test takers’ communicative language ability.” (Buck 2001 :92)

That is to say that good learning inferences come from the carefully designed tests. When tests are perceived by learners as trivial, they have the attitude that the process of learning is a passive process. Thus, learners cannot be successful if they are accustomed to taking poorly constructed tests that are perceived as too easy or too difficult. Therefore, the best approach to offer a realistic sense of effective tests is to expose learners throughout their entire learning to well designed tests that require them to think critically and to demonstrate their acquired knowledge.

One of the main purposes of testing is to provide opportunities for learning both for learners who are being tested and the teachers who should use the tests’ scores to enhance their teaching strategies .Teachers can gain from tests information about what their learners can and cannot do in the target language. In addition, tests are considered as assessment tools that inform teachers about learners’ progress and needs.

It is obviously important that tests should be fair, valid, and reliable . They should be seen by learners as part of their learning and as tools that give them opportunities to discover their weaknesses. As Buck (2001:201) viewed: *“It is sensible to make the test as similar to the class material as possible”*. In other words, tests need to be considered as authentic activities that serve both the teaching and the learning. More importantly, teachers should test learners in the skills being taught in class, because, the effect of testing on instruction can be positive when the testing procedures emphasize the skills that have been taught to learners.

Ideally, tests should be conducted in a way that promotes the learning rather than inhibiting it. Therefore, teachers need to assume the responsibility to help learners maximize their success by convincing them that they can be successful when they want.

Typically speaking, tests may be formal or informal .As for the informal testing of what learners can do in the target skill, learners should not know when they are going to be tested and should have no formal preparation for the test .Those informal tests should take the kind of daily tasks that learners are familiar with. In this sense, learners' anxiety is likely to be reduced as they do not take time for any special test preparation .However, it is obviously impossible to conceal the necessity of the formal tests. In fact, this kind of tests affect the importance of teaching and learning as the preparation for them leads learners to achieve higher outcomes .The main point is that when tests provide useful experiences for learners , then preparation for them can be seen as useful .

Broadly speaking, tests can be seen as incentives for further learning. Apparently, learners can gain new knowledge and develop awareness about the skills in which they are tested. Therefore, teachers should make their learners learn from the tests by:

- ✓ Teaching learners new strategies through tasks such as teaching them ways of scanning a text for specific information during a test.
- ✓ Testing learners' ability to develop their awareness of the functions of language.
- ✓ Using new topics when testing learners.
- ✓ Testing learners' abilities to use their skills in new contexts.

- ✓ Teaching learners new vocabulary and new skills when testing them.

The most important way through which learners can learn from tests is by receiving useful and constructive feedback during and after any test. In fact, the tests' scores should be discussed with learners by demonstrating their mistakes and providing corrective answers so as to help them know their weaknesses and overcome their learning problems. In response to these problems, identified in the tests' results, teachers need to provide focused instruction and advice. Tests, sometimes, fail to measure accurately what they are intended to measure. Learners' true abilities are not always reflected in the scores they usually obtain. Tests techniques and tests content can be seen as reasons of tests inaccuracy. Moreover, the lack of validity and reliability leads to test inaccuracy. Different scores of the same test composition at different times make a test inaccurate.

1.11.4.1. Test Reliability

Reliability is a necessary element of validity. It provides the consistency of scores from one occasion to another and across different forms of tests. It is related to the quality of tests' scores and to the extent to which those scores reflect the students' true abilities. As Nunan (1992, 14) argued: "*Reliability refers to the consistency of the results obtained from a piece of research*". In the context of assessment, reliability refers to the consistency of the scores received by groups of examinees.

Moreover Reliability is viewed as the extent to which results are consistent over time (Joppe, 2000). It is an essential element of test quality. The test reliability is its ability to lead to the same scores about the examinees' performance in different occasions. A test with poor reliability may result in different scores.

It is important to say that reliability may be influenced by some factors such as; ambiguity, clarity of instruction, and tests' format and content .Therefore, it is desirable for teachers to design tests of high reliability rate .As Crocker and Algina (1986:106) view : *“Test developers have a responsibility of demonstrating the reliability of scores from their tests”*. Researchers have revealed that reliability can be determined by the test-retest method. In other words, for teachers to seek reliability for their tests, they should repeat them in different occasions so as to see whether they get the same results.

1.11.4.2. Test Validity

The validation is the process of gathering evidence that test measures what it is designed to measure .The validity of a test refers to its ability to support the inferences that are to be drawn from it . It refers to the extent to which test scores and the uses of those scores can be supported by evidence. A valid test is the one which accurately measures what it intends to measure.

Validity is arguably the most important criteria for the quality and the purpose of a test of as it depends on how a test is designed and used. A test which is designed for one purpose cannot be valid if used for another purpose. As the term validity refers to whether or not the test measures what it claims to measure, tests with a poor validity do not measure accurately the competencies they ought to measure. In short, teachers can judge the validity of their assessment techniques by understanding and monitoring their learners' progress.

1.12. Conclusion

The first chapter demonstrated the need for assessment as a classroom activity to enhance the learning. It makes it clear that assessment is more than

merely a test at the end of instruction to know how learners learn and perform, but it is rather an integral part of instruction that informs and guides both teachers and learners. The classroom discussion that results from the learners sharing problems and solutions is, in fact, an assessment event.

Apparently, this chapter informed that assessment, being for or of learning, is used to serve different and valuable purposes, because it is purpose which dictates how assessment should be planned and applied. The need for gathering and understanding learners' feedback places teachers in a mode of inquiry, and therefore, the ideal assessment of learners' performance takes place through different comfortable ways by which teachers can simultaneously monitor and improve the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, teachers need to be skilful enough to help learners articulate and develop their thoughts and judgments about the instruction they receive so that they become able to take part in the process of assessing their own learning. Teachers who value the learners' informal or formal knowledge are in a better position to build up the instructional activities and relate them to the process of assessment. When considering teachers' classroom assessment practices, additional factors such as school organisation, routines, and the educational system should be taken into account. Moreover, the duration of class period, the number of learners and the system's expectations for grading are other factors which influence the task of assessment.

In sum, the first chapter focused on the importance of assessment as a daily classroom practice that includes different methods and strategies. It is tied to instruction and is always intended to find out the different needs of learners

.Therefore teachers need to plan, rethink, and reflect on their assessment strategies so as to enhance both the teaching and the learning practices.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: Teaching English in the Algerian Secondary Schools

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2.1. Introduction

The second chapter aims at shedding some light on the teaching and the learning of English in the Algerian secondary schools .In fact, Algeria has had the tendency to introduce basic reforms whose goals revolve around the improvement of the teaching corps, the reformulation of the pedagogic approach, and the implementation of specific measures to develop the whole educational system.

With regard to the reformulation of the pedagogic approach, the government focused on including three languages in the basic education; Arabic, French, and English. It is well known that Algeria's colonial past had profoundly influenced the policy of foreign languages teaching in the country, and no one can deny the fact that the French language has played a significant role in the Algerian educational system. However, the Algerian authorities have become more conscious of the escalating importance of the English language in the world and in all domains. Therefore, Algeria has tended to foster the teaching of English in its schools. Furthermore, an explicit consideration has been given to the role of English as a foreign language. This consideration is embedded in the improvement of the English textbooks, the training of EFL teachers, and giving a high instrumental value to the English Language.

In addition, this chapter includes the different approaches and methods that have been applied to the teaching of English in the secondary schools in Algeria. Besides, it illustrates the modern roles of EFL teachers and learners with reference to the 3rd year secondary school classes.

2.2. The Status of English in the World

English has become more accepted and is used broadly in many countries in the world. It is the language of politics, science, technology, medicine, tourism, and business. This overwhelming use of English made it necessarily acknowledged as a global language, and therefore, it succeeded to develop important roles in every country in the world and got a special privilege in peoples' lives and policies. Such roles are evident in countries where people speak English as a mother tongue as in USA, and Britain.

Moreover, the English language has adopted important status in Africa and Asia where it has been given educational priority as the language of world knowledge and skill transfer. English now plays the role of the official language in some seventy countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and India (Crystal 1997).

Having achieved the status of a global language, English has been attributed a great consideration by other countries in the world which decided to give it a special place within their communities and in their schools and institutions such as in the Middle East region. Other countries adopted it as an official language and used it as a medium of communication in courts, in media, and in academic meetings and conferences (Crystal 1997).

The continuing growth in size and importance of English in the world has pushed many non-native speakers to attribute more considerations to this language. The English language has been given the priority and the privilege to be taught as a second language in many countries even though where it has no official status. It is widely taught as a foreign language in over one hundred countries such as Russia, Spain, China, Brazil, and Germany.

According to some statistics, about a quarter of the world's population masters the English language and this is probably due to the fact that English has less grammar than other languages or it does not have a lot of endings on its words or due to other factors which made English much more dominating than other languages (Crystal, 1997).

As for the reasons which have given English the status of global language, David Crystal viewed:

The history of a global language can be traced through the successful expeditions of its soldier/sailor speakers and English has been no exception. But international language dominance is not solely the result of military might. It may take a military powerful nation to establish a language, but takes an economically powerful one to maintain and expand it.

(Crystal, 1997: 9)

That is to say that the dominance of English over the other languages is due to the power and success of its speakers in all domains. In more clear words, The emergence of the United States of America as a great power in the economic, the scientific, the technological, and the military fields is the main reason for English to be a global language. In brief, the influence and the power of English have been fed by the supremacy of United States.

2.3. The Status of English in Algeria

As Algeria had been colonized by the French for 132 years, the French language had deeply rooted in the Algerian society. After the independence,

French still remained the language to be taught in schools and to be used in the various Algerian administrations. This is due to the need for a foreign language to contact the outside world. However, Arabic has been believed to have many functions to fulfil and, therefore, a process of Arabization had been carried out in order to give the national language greater values and significant roles.

However, in the late 1980s, Algeria tended to reinforce the teaching of the English language. Actually, the Algerian authorities have given significant considerations to English so as to make it play innovative and modernising roles.

The English language in Algeria is rapidly getting importance as the Algerian authorities are becoming more aware about the status that this language has gained in the world. It is the chief language of world knowledge, technologies and computing. As Cook put it :

In recent years, the growth of English has been further accelerated by a startling expansion in the quantity and speed of international communication and the rise of international operations linked to expanding U.S power and influence.... films, songs, television programmes, and advertisement are heard in English and seen in many countries where it is not the first nor even a second language.

(Cook, 2005:25)

In other words, the English language is widely used as an international language and has become the language of science, media, advertisement, and entertainment programmes.

One of the chief goals of the Algerian educational system is to achieve a great deal of success in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Algeria has realised that there is crucial need for individuals to be able to speak and write in English in order to catch up with the advance which is taking place in all fields in the world. Therefore, the aim of English language teaching is to provide learners with the cultural experience through the English language. This will help them know about the world around them.

Another central aim of teaching English is to provide the learners with the means to read, speak, and write in English in sufficient, accurate and fluent way to enable them to get access to world knowledge. Moreover, the ELT in Algeria aims at deepening and developing the learners' capacities, skills, and knowledge that they have acquired during the learning process.

2.4. Objectives of Teaching English in Algeria

In Algeria, the English language is taught as a foreign language. Most of the Algerian learners learn and use English only in the classroom while the outside environment does not offer enough opportunities for its use. Indeed, the Algerian educational policy tends to foster the teaching of English to impose it as the first foreign language instead of the French language .As Miliani stated:

In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the Socio-cultural and educational

environments of the country; the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills, including economic, technological and education.

(Miliani , 2000 :13)

Actually, English is being taught in the middle and secondary schools in Algeria as well as in most of the Algerian universities .The main objectives of teaching it can be described as linguistic and cultural.

2.4.1. The Linguistic Objectives

Teaching English to learners for linguistic purposes makes part of a broad objective to impose English as a crucial need in Algeria. Learners are trained to consolidate and develop the basic knowledge which is supposed to help them carry on their learning of the English language and to keep them equipped with the necessary means to improve their linguistic abilities and skills in English.

Indeed, ELT in Algeria is aimed to generate competent learners able to read, write, and communicate in English. Therefore, the English language syllabus is designed to provide learners with practice and application of the key elements and concepts. Besides, ELT is aimed to develop learners' proficiency by enhancing their knowledge through graded levels, and tends to familiarize them with language functions, grammatical structures, language components, as well as skills and strategies.

In addition, it is important to mention that proficiency in English is a basic skill that helps learners to get access to the world knowledge and to carry on further studies in this language. This proficiency requires learners to acquire sufficient grammar that helps for a good comprehension and production of

English. Moreover, it involves vocabulary knowledge as an essential part of any language learning .Therefore; learners need to know word meaning, word use, word formation, and word functions. Besides, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the basic skills that need to be worked on and developed so as to achieve the linguistic proficiency in English.

It is worthy to note that the current 3rd year secondary school syllabus of English truly caters for all areas of language as it sets sound tasks and activities, and offers valuable texts and rubrics.

2.4.2. The Cultural Objectives

Since languages make part of cultures, language and culture cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, ELT in Algeria is linked to the teaching of culture in order to develop learners' cultural background. As Goodenough put it:

As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Cultures, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end-product of learning knowledge in a most general sense of the term.

(Goodenough, 1957 :74)

This statement seems to reveal the close relationship that language and culture have. It views that the rules of culture operate through the rules of language within any society. In other words, social groups and individuals express their cultural views through languages.

In relation to ELT, culture can be taught to learners through teaching the traditions and the practices of the native speakers in particular situations. This may help learners to get a clear view of the foreign culture and makes them realize that language elements are related to those of culture .As Brown, D.H. mentioned:

A language is part of culture, and culture is part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.

(Brown, H. 1994 :165)

In other words, culture and language are one body. People can be defined by their languages which affect and organize their beliefs, customs, and perceptions. The cultural purpose of the English language teaching is to ameliorate learners' capacity to contribute to the broadening of their minds by providing a frequent exposure to various contexts of English culture and civilization. As Thomson wrote: *:"To learn a language is to be nurtured or apprenticed into the life-world of individual host people and groups".*

(Thomson, G.2007:1)

Placing learners in an environment which fits their needs helps plan activities in real life situations. Therefore, teachers need to create a suitable atmosphere in which learners can develop positive attitudes towards learning English and broaden their cultural knowledge. Needless to say that giving learners a clear understanding of different foreign cultures helps them raise awareness of the different ways of life and makes them develop positive views towards other cultures.

It is, therefore, highly important to bind language teaching to its culture so as to link language meanings to their cultural contexts. That is to say that the language use is unavoidably social and cultural, and languages are determined and shaped by cultures.

As far as foreign culture is concerned, learners should be provided with the basic language acquisition tools so as to help them cope and communicate with others fluently and accurately. In fact, the cultural codes and norms play important roles in setting the linguistic rules of communicative competence. Learning how to communicate in English needs to be accompanied with learning the cultural factors and circumstances through which communication can take place. In this sense Samovar et al wrote:

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds ,it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent ,noticed, or interpreted. And added : Culture is the foundation of communication.

(Samovar,and Porter , 1982:32)

Therefore, the sound approach to the English language learning is the one which does not neglect the cultural elements which are integrated in this language. In short, the development of learners' intercultural and linguistic competence depends on both teachers and learners. Thus, learners must not only

acquire the skills and the rules of the foreign language, but also the tools and the means which enable them to practice the real use of this language.

2.5. Factors Affecting the Foreign Language Teaching

When education is to be said to have failed or succeeded, one can automatically think about the possible factors or reasons which lead to either success or failure. Many would think about the shortcomings, the underfunding, the overcrowded classes, the teacher shortages, the quality of textbooks, and the lack of the appropriate material which allows for a high quality language teaching.

2.5.1. Number of Students

Classrooms in the Algerian secondary schools include 30 to 45 learners .In this case, a good language teaching is hard to be achieved because teachers neglect the individual learning and, generally, deal with mass brains.

The fact that classrooms contain large numbers of learners leads to teachers' tiredness as they devote much more energy to manage and control their classes .Yet, an effective teaching is not likely to take place and the learning goals are far from being reached.

Moreover, teachers' physical conditions can have a great impact on learners' motivation either positively or negatively .Classrooms that are overcrowded and badly managed can never help achieve a successful learning, and unfortunately, many of them widely exist in the Algerian secondary schools. Besides, the phenomenon of large classes has created discipline problems and damaged the teachers' aspirations, and resulted in a bad learning quality.

2.5.2. Learners' Attitudes

Some of Algerian learners are not fully aware of the importance of the English language and its leading role in the world. In fact, they consider it as a foreign language which does not affect their educational carrier. The dislike of English is still a major feeling among some learners. Therefore, teachers need to change learners' attitudes towards English.

It is known that differences between learners lead to differences of levels and degrees of a foreign language mastery. Learners' needs, age, learning styles, learning strategies, learning experience, motivation, and attitudes are the most known differences that can impact directly or indirectly the learning process. Being aware of these differences and factors helps teachers to select the appropriate methods to improve the pupils' learning. However, there are other factors that may have a direct or indirect impact on the teaching learning process.

Learners' attitudes should be taken into consideration in order to increase their motivation for learning. Encouraging teacher-learner interaction, alleviating learners' anxiety, breaking the psychological barriers, and the use of simple and clear instruction are some of the techniques that stimulate learners in a positive way and facilitate their learning.

2.5.3. Learners' Needs

Some of Algerian learners do not know the aims of their learning, nor do they know the broad objectives of the English language curriculum. In fact, they attend the courses, and receive knowledge for memorisation. In addition, they are not given sufficient information about how to benefit from their learning in their real lives. As a result; learners' needs are not easy to meet as far as the syllabus is concerned. Therefore, EFL teachers are required to seek what their learners really

need to know so as to narrow the gap and break the barriers between them and their learners. Actually, the English language teaching depends on teachers who should be skilful enough to discover learners' needs so as to implement the effective techniques to reach better results.

Teachers of English as a foreign language have been giving more importance to the task of identifying the needs of their learners as they have become aware about the fact that the learners' needs identification is a major requirement of a successful teaching. Therefore, needs analysis which has to do with aims of teaching has received considerable attention and assumed a significant role in language learning.

Truly, analyzing learners' needs includes the criteria and the rationale for selecting the course content, methodology, and course duration. In other words, the process of needs analyses aims at identifying the appropriate techniques that can be applied in setting the goals and objectives of both teaching and learning.

The task of identifying the learners' needs embraces various factors such as; level of proficiency, teachers and learners' goals and expectations, and the learning skills. These aspects help inform the methods and techniques used in class in order to provide specific tasks to remedy specific weaknesses. As for the Algerian teachers of English, their job lies in developing their learners' mental abilities and skills in order to make them able to interact, read, interpret, and write in English. Therefore, the methods and techniques used in class should conform to these needs.

It is important to say that the Algerian syllabus designers integrate the basic objectives experienced by the learners themselves such as the need to

communicate effectively, to be familiar with the language systems, and to take more responsibility for their own learning.

2.5.4. Learners' Autonomy

The learner autonomy is central to ELT as it is considered as an essential factor for a good learning. It is the ability to take charge of one's own learning and having the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning (Hollec,1981).

Learner autonomy is a means of increasing the sense of responsibility and awareness amid learners to take their own decisions about what they actually need to acquire. In other words, the learner autonomy is one of the pedagogical techniques which pushes learners take the initiative and to play important roles in their learning.

To develop learners' autonomy, teachers need to help their learners to know and understand what their responsibility is by convincing them that success depends on them rather on others. This can occur by increasing their commitment to self management, self reflection, and self assessment.

As far as the educational contexts are concerned, learners' autonomy includes their engagement in planning, implementing, monitoring, and assessing their learning. As for language learning, the scope of learner autonomy depends on what learners are able to do in the target language. Therefore, teachers should keep their learners in a non-stop quest for the best strategies and activities which should be shared, discussed, with the whole class. Moreover, learners should be assessed at regular times in any area of language.

In brief, the learner-centred teaching is becoming much more important as it has gained better achievements. This pedagogical approach views learning as an active and effective process which gives learners the ability to gain new skills, new understandings, and new knowledge.

2.5.5. Learners' Types

Learning styles can be viewed as the ways in which learners prefer to manage their learning. They affect how pupils like to learn and how to learn best. Harme (2001:43) states four learners' types:

1. **Convergers:** These are learners who, by nature, prefer to avoid groups and who are independent and confident in their own abilities. They can impose their own structures on learning and they are usually cool and pragmatic.
2. **Conformists:** These are students who prefer to emphasize learning about the language rather than using it. They are independent in authority and are perfectly happy to work in non-communicative atmosphere .A classroom of conformists is one which prefer to see a well organized teacher.
3. **Concrete learners:** Though they are like conformists, they also enjoy the social aspects of learning and like to learn from the direct use of language as communicators rather than language as a system.
4. **Communicative learners:** These are learners who are comfortable out of class and usually show a degree of confidence to take risk which their peers may lack. They are more interested in social interaction with other speakers of the target language, and are perfectly happy to act without the guidance of their teachers.

The more successful learners are those who risk mistakes and try to communicate in the foreign language.

2.6. The Teaching Methods

The importance of teaching foreign languages is largely acknowledged in the world .Being a global language which is used in all domains of human life, English has imposed its teaching in all countries, and Algeria is not an exception. Indeed, no one feels the belonging to the world of globalisation without learning the English language as Burshfield put it : “*Any literate, educated person on the face of the globe is deprived if he does not know English.*”

(Quoted from Louznadji 2003:78)

It is important to note that English is the world’s language not because it is widely spoken as a native language, but because it is largely spoken and taught outside the native countries either as a second or a foreign language. According to Kitao :

English is the major language of news and information in the world .It is the language of business and government even in some countries where it i a minority language . It is the language of maritime communication and International air traffic control, and it is used even for Internal air traffic control where it is not a native language .

(Kiato, 1996:1)

Therefore, since the independence, the Algerian educational experts have adapted many approaches and methods to improve and update the teaching of the English language in Algeria. Among these methods, one can cite The Grammar

Translation Method, The Direct Method, The Communicative Approach, and the current one; the Competency-based Approach .These methods have been changed and replaced due to some internal and external factors.

2.6.1. The Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method was introduced and applied to the teaching of English in Algeria after the independence .It is also called the Classical Method as it was first introduced to the teaching of Latin and Greek .It was used for learning foreign languages literature under the form of reading passages.

This approach is based on the use of L1 along with L2 in class. Besides, it focuses on the deductive teaching of grammar rules, provides vocabulary with direct translation, and stresses memorisation as a learning technique. Actually, memorisation of grammar rules and vocabulary items was aimed to provide mental exercises for the development of learners' cognition.

In such a method, vocabulary and grammar, reading and writing are the first skills that learners work on. As for teachers, they are considered as the source of Knowledge and represent the total authority in the classroom by orienting and deciding the instruction without allowing teacher-learner nor learner-learner interaction.

This method is very much based on written texts accompanied with a list of vocabulary items with a clear translation into the mother tongue .In fact; the mother tongue is the medium of instruction as it is used to convey meanings, to

solve the learning problems, and to discuss the use of particular grammar structures.

As for the weaknesses of the Grammar Translation Method, The ELT experts put much criticism on its focus only on reading and writing without devoting sufficient time for listening, pronunciation, and communication .In other words, this approach emphasizes the learning about the language instead of learning and using the language itself.

However, it has been widely argued that the Grammar Translation Method had a remarkable success. This is proved by the fact that many people have successfully learnt the English language to a high degree of proficiency without any contact with the native speakers.

2.6.2. The Direct Method

The Direct Method was intended to give learners the feeling that they are truly learning a foreign language as it pushes them to the real use of the English language. Actually, this method eliminates any equivalents between L1 and L2 .Unlike the Grammar Translation Method, it allows no translation in the classroom and meanings are directly connected with L2.

Indeed, learners are given active roles as they are required to think, communicate, and interact in the foreign language .Therefore, teachers are asked to instruct, explain, and communicate only in L2 .The over exposure to the target language is a basic assumption of this method and the mother tongue is given no roles in the classroom.

In this method, the syllabus is based upon situations and topics. Thus, vocabulary is emphasised over grammar which is taught in an inductive way. In fact,

learners are asked to figure out the rules and proceed to generalisations. Teachers are required to work on all four skills by giving the chance to their learners to truly use the foreign language instead of just giving them knowledge about it.

Besides, learners' autonomy and self assessment are encouraged whenever possible and their mistakes are tolerated and seen as part of their learning progress. By doing so, learners practice new words and discover new grammatical structures and proceed to use them in complete sentences.

2.6.3. The Communicative Approach

After applying and trying many approaches, the Algerian educationalists agreed upon the effectiveness of the communicative approach. This decision stemmed from their conviction of the fact that teaching is communication. As Morandi (2002:20) stated it: *“Teaching implies a know-how to communicate.”* In other words, teaching should generate communicatively competent learners.

The broad objective of this approach was to enhance learners' communicative competence as it focused on the real use of English in class. Since communication is a process, it was insufficient to simply have the knowledge of the foreign language forms, meanings, and functions. More importantly, learners had to be able to use this knowledge in negotiating meaning.

The Communicative Approach provides learners with a variety of linguistic forms for the purpose of making them communicatively competent. For this reason, their errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the

development of the communicative skills. In the principle of this Approach, teachers should not play a dominant role nor should they be authoritative in class. Instead, they need to give their learners the chance to discuss and express their ideas so that they take part in their learning progress. Moreover, teachers need to act as advisors and co-communicators as they manage the classroom activities, and monitor the learners' performance.

However, the Algerian learners felt the risk of holding the responsibility of their own learning as they lacked the linguistic and the communicative competence which helps them to be successful learners. For them, communicating in a language that they hard tried to learn was a tedious task .In addition, the Communicative Approach was based on the inductive way of learning .This technique required learners who were not accustomed to such a way of learning to find out and discover the language rules. Thus, The Communicative Approach, according to the language teaching experts, failed to offer learning solutions to learners, nor could it answer the problem of helping them to move from the deductive to the inductive learning.

Besides, the focus on learners as active communicators in class required teachers to equip them with various linguistic strategies and sufficient knowledge for a successful communicative learning .Nevertheless, this was not easy to afford in the Algerian context due to social and cultural reasons.

2.6.4. The Competency-Based Approach

With the beginning of the 21st century, Algeria moved to the application of the CBA as a modern approach .This approach is inspired from the cognitive and

the constructive theories. In fact, it intends to link the classroom learning to the outside world.

The Competency-Based Approach is, in some way, defined as a skill or characteristic of a person which enables him or her to carry out specific or superior actions at a superior level of performance (Hedge, 1996). That is to say that performance can be said to be good when it is referred to competence. As far as the teaching-learning process is concerned, the notion of competency was defined as a system of conceptual procedures that help identify a problem task and its possible solutions. It is, in other words, a know-how to act process which involves a set of knowledge and skills that can be applied in order to solve a particular problem in a particular situation.

The competency-based approach has been first developed and applied in the United States of America. It focuses on acquiring life coping skills while developing the language skills. It is based on theories of adult learning which state that for effective learning to take place, learners need to know that what they are studying is intended to improve not only their learning but also their lives. Because of its success, the competency-Based approach was introduced in Algeria in 2005 as the Algerian authorities introduced reforms to the whole educational system.

This approach has been applied to the teaching of the English language and was largely adopted in the field of education so as to develop the intellectual competencies among learners. Therefore, experts and teachers have been mobilized for the adequate implementation of this approach so as to prepare learners not only for good learning, but also for their real life tasks. Enabling learners to be competent and skilful to deal successfully with a variety of leaning

situations is one of CBA's principles. This can happen through pushing learners to rely on their pre-acquired experiences and use their own thinking strategies and their cognitive skills in order to achieve higher performance.

With regard to ELT, competencies can be defined as the skills that learners need to acquire in order to develop their abilities and enhance their level of assimilation in all areas of language, and eventually, reach higher standards. Therefore, the competencies are determined by learners' needs and demands which the teachers should take into account in any teaching situation.

The competency-based approach, which emphasizes the skill development and knowledge transmission, involves teachers who are field practitioners as well as learners who are considered as essential partners rather than knowledge receivers. In addition, this approach includes the syllabus which is aimed to meet both learners and teachers demands.

Unlike the traditional methods which focus on the memorization of fixed knowledge, the CBA pushes learners to develop new skills and articulate new knowledge by introducing new learning strategies which foster the autonomous learning. In brief, the CBA is a functional approach to education which helps learners to demonstrate their learning wants so as to make significant progress.

2.6.4.1. The Distinctive Features of the CBA

The competency-based approach is distinguished by its many characteristics. In fact, it is an approach which stimulates and leads the learning to the possession of know how skills. It functions in a way that enables learners to be autonomous and self-orienting individuals.

More importantly, the CBA trains learners to cope with the various learning tasks in the classroom, and to deal with the real-life situations in their society in successful ways. This approach includes the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required for effective performance of a real world task or activity. The learners' needs dominate the competency-based approach principles and language skills are emphasized accordingly. Docking viewed the competency-Based teaching as follows :

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT) is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies and assessment.

(Docking,
1994:16)

That is to say that competency-Based approach considers that learning is mainly achieved through acquiring the competencies and seeks to develop a know how to act among learners by means of different functions and skills .To become a competent language user in real-life task, learners must acquire the learning strategies and should be aware of how to possess and use knowledge. Moreover, they must learn how to co-operate with others.

Thanks to this approach, the learners can develop the ability to observe, discover, apply, control, and integrate their own learning. In order to allow this to take place, pair and group work are recommended. Besides, this approach is based on problem solving situations in which learners are engaged in activities and tasks which are actually related to solving a problem. These problem-solving activities help learners to enhance their abilities to go beyond the obstacles and to become competent and successful in their learning.

In addition, there is a general agreement among educationalists that the competency-based approach is defined as a constructive approach in the sense that it pushes learners to use their previously acquired skills to build new ones. It is , also, a cognitive approach in the sense that it is designed to develop learners' creative thinking and to increase their autonomous learning .

One of the main features which govern this approach is the project work which can be defined as a set of tasks in which learners are involved with their classmates and with the help of their teacher. The rationale behind this is to enable the learners to ask questions and find answers throughout all the steps of the project.

It is worthy to note that the CBA gives the learners the opportunity to develop a kind of autonomy, creativity and responsibility as it makes them, at the same time, the inventors and the problem solvers. In fact, through projects, learners can enhance their competencies and outcomes and make their attainments concrete. Projects, as learner-centred work, should be under the continual guidance of the teacher whose role consists of checking, controlling, and encouraging the learners by providing the necessary corrections for an effective learning.

Briefly speaking, the CBA is a less authoritarian pedagogical approach which aims to develop learners' thinking abilities by driving them to acquire the techniques and strategies that help them build and improve their self-learning by deploying their lower achievements to reach higher ones.

2.6.4.2. EFL Teachers' Roles

Teachers are considered as important partners in the English language teaching process. They are the ones who are supposed to apply the methods and approaches and to give life to the educational theories.

Being dominated by the learner-centred principle, this approach requires new roles to play whereby teachers are recommended to be much more autonomous by getting rid of their traditional job of instructing, monitoring, testing and evaluating.

Their role is no longer restricted to communicating but to help and encourage learners to take part in their own learning as they are seen as active participant in the learning process. In addition to improving the value of co-operation and group work, teachers are also asked to help their learners to process information and to teach them the learning strategies that help them build their own knowledge.

Indeed, teachers need to act as agents of change as they need to have certain qualities such as; self-esteem; autonomy; and self confidence. Besides, they should be open-minded and receptive to their learners' wants and worries. Furthermore, they need to act as educators, instructors, organisers, managers, and facilitators of the learning process. They should think as planners, evaluators, and motivators.

As for teachers' personality, *Having*, *Doing*, and *Being* are three aspects that should be developed in their personality .Arnold mentions these aspects in the following table:

Aspect	Definition
<i>Having</i>	Refers to the knowledge the teacher holds either of the subject matter (Language in this case) or the treatment of learners and the psychological handling of situations.
<i>Doing</i>	Is related to putting that knowledge in action and implementing it in real learning situations.
<i>Being</i>	Concerns the traits of the teacher's personality, attitude, and conscience.

Table 2. 1: Aspects of Teacher's Personality

(Arnold, 1999: 4)

That is to say that teachers are believed to be the most important members of the educational system. They are the field practitioners who should acquire considerable knowledge, apply that knowledge, and decide and assess the appropriate teaching strategies. In more clear words, teachers should be attributed active and significant roles. In this sense, Bouabdessalem wrote:

The educational system is still highly centralized, although several suggestions have been voiced by skilled teachers, and are still being attempted towards decentralization .In vain, the general education policy is ultimately decided at the top .

(Bouabdessalem 2001: 102)

Apparently, the teaching methods are decided on the bases of political and economic factors which, most of the time, clash with what is actually needed to be taught in classrooms.

2.6.4.3. Learners' Roles

Since they live in a real world of real things, the learners are required to develop abilities to perceive these things by getting in cognitive activities which can improve their creative and critical thinking. They are asked to use their minds to meet the new challenges that occur when they come to interpret, analyse, or manipulate information. As they are no longer passive recipient of knowledge, they are asked to use previously learned knowledge to discover new one.

Within the framework of the competency-Based approach, the learners are asked to find solutions to the problems they encounter in learning any of the language skills by co-operating, sharing, and exchanging information with their peers and with their teachers in the classroom. Moreover, they are supposed to be introduced to different tasks which enable them to discover and build their own knowledge and make sense of what they do. This can be achieved through the acquisition of the learning strategies and by the continual guidance and support of their teachers.

2.7. Learners' Textbook

New Prospects is a textbook designed for the teaching of English to the third year secondary school learners. As one may expect, the procedures included in this textbook comply with the recommendations issued in the official syllabus set down by the Ministry of National Education. Its main focus is on communicative language teaching which engages learners in real communicative situations. In fact, learners are given the opportunity to process content by relating it to their personal backgrounds.

In this textbook, language learning is viewed as a developmental process in which learners are allowed to make mistakes which are seen as a natural part of that progress. Besides, the mastery of grammar is seen as the cornerstone of good English language learning. Therefore, grammar points are taught in a way that requires learners to apply them to language functions.

New Prospects is a task-based textbook. It provides a big number of useful learning tasks through which learners are required to perceive, reveal, and practise the English language. These devised tasks provide copious opportunities for learners to cooperate in the classroom and negotiate meaning. Indeed, many of them include the inductive learning and aim to enhance the autonomous learning as well as peer learning. Actually, these tasks are designed in such a way in order to push learners to use various learning strategies more perfectly. The effects of the diversity of tasks lead learners to gradually activate their knowledge and review the required language skills during learning. As for the teachers' role, they are required to seek the appropriate tasks that meet the learners' needs in all areas of language.

This textbook, with its six thematically based units, is regarded as a following up of the previously learnt aspects of language. It is designed to raise more awareness of the complexities of the English language. Therefore, the selected texts represent language in different styles and types such as; dialogues, interviews; news reports, newspapers and magazines, articles, fiction, and poems. Thus, learners can be prepared to interact with different language situations that they may encounter in their real life.

2.7.1. The Organisation of the Textbook

The third year textbook, *New Prospects*, is aimed to develop the competencies of interaction, interpretation, and production that include all areas of language through six gradually designed units. These units entail graded tasks which are identical to the type of tasks to be seen in the English paper of the Baccalaureate exam .Thus, the Purpose of the many tasks, included in the textbook, is to familiarize learners with the exam's requirements.

Moreover, each unit in the textbook involves the description and practice of grammar rules, vocabulary knowledge, and pronunciation through the practice of the four skills. In addition, each unit is followed by an evaluation grid so as to assess learners' progress. This part reviews the learners' knowledge of the language points offered in the unit and assesses their ability to use the skills and the strategies through reading passages.

At the end, *New Prospects* includes the following elements:

- ✓ Listening script: This part is designed for all listening tasks in the units and can be used by the learners to correct their work in the classroom.

- ✓ Grammar reference: This part is a rubric to which learners are referred throughout the textbook .It is used by learners to check and revise the grammar points .In addition, it enhances their autonomous learning and makes it easy after the classes.
- ✓ Resources portfolio: This section is intended to help learners maximize their language learning abilities and gives them the opportunity to consolidate the language skills presented in the textbook. It includes a number of texts which conform thematically to the texts in the units and presents reading texts for skimming and scanning purposes (Teachers' Book, 2006:7).

This textbook is designed in such a way so as to instil and enhance learners' motivation and confidence in their learning of the English language .The units which the book includes provides various tasks which reflect real life situations and prompts learners to practice English in a creative way .Stemming from the CBA, this textbook aims at consolidating all the four skill through a number of activities .As is mentioned in EFL teacher's book:

The tasks in question have cognitive aspects elaborated in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objective. The surface levels involve knowledge, comprehension, and application, while the deeper levels of cognitive processing appeal to analysis, synthesis, and evaluation .Every unit contains a number of tasks which have been designed to provide subject-matter knowledge, lower and higher order thinking skills, reading strategies and compositional skill .These will enable the students to

achieve proficiency in the three competencies, namely: interaction, comprehension/interpretation, and production .

(Teacher's Book, 2006: 13)

In short, the third year secondary school textbook, *New Prospects*, is designed to be an enjoyable and a pleasant tool of learning the English language. Actually, it is an effective instrument that helps learners make progress and seek success at higher standards.

2.7.2. Reading Comprehension in the Textbook

The reading skill is included in Sequence Two in the textbook .This sequence, entitled *Read and Consider*, contains six rubrics with a great consideration to the reading skill as one of the demanding areas for the language learning. Besides, it includes a large number of additional materials for extensive reading.

The first rubric is *Language Outcomes*. It contains no tasks, but reminds learners of the linguistic goals to be achieved by the end of the whole course .These language outcomes can be assessed in the assessment rubric at the end of the unit.

The second rubric is entitled *Getting Started*. It begins a brainstorming task during which the topic under focus is investigated and discussed. This rubric is intended to develop and activate learners' background knowledge as it reviews some aspects such as vocabulary and language structures. Through this pre-

reading task, learners can acquire some information necessary to understand the text .

The third rubric is labelled *Taking a Closer Look* .It includes *reading the text silently and individually, and answering the comprehension questions* .Two types of activities are provided in the *Around the Text* rubric: *Grammar Explorer* and *Vocabulary Explorer* .The former involves three levels of activities of graded difficulty, and its main aim is to highlight the grammar of the text under study. Whereas, the latter caters for building and enriching learners' vocabulary knowledge and deals with word formation and idiomatic expressions.

The fourth rubric is *Pronunciation and Spelling* .It deals with language-related activities and points the differences between the spelling system and the pronunciation system in English .More importantly, learners are required to raise awareness about these systems while reading the text.

The fifth rubric is entitled *Think, Pair, Share*. It emphasizes the individual work and the discussion between the group members .In fact, the teacher's role lies in facilitating the task and guiding the learners.

The sixth rubric, *Take a Break*, is the last one as it brings an end to the *Read and Consider* sequence. It introduces jokes, proverbs, and songs .Indeed; it reviews the intercultural dimensions as a means to point to the other peoples' customs and experiences.

In addition, reading is also emphasized in Sequence Four in the book .This sequence is entitled: *Reading and Writing*. It defines the communicative, the linguistic, and the cognitive goals to be achieved by learners. *Before reading, As*

You Read, and *After Reading* are *stages* which focus on learners' abilities to use their skimming and scanning strategies. Actually, they are pushed to activate their pre-existing knowledge and to make predictions about the topic. In many cases, they are required to discover the structure of the text, to infer meanings from the context, and to build accordingly their own understanding.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to give a clear view about ELT in Algeria with reference to the 3rd year secondary school classes. Indeed, Algeria, like many other countries, has been trying to enhance its educational system so as to make it conform to the advance which is taking place in the world. As for the domain of foreign languages teaching, English has gained a special consideration in the recent educational reforms. This importance, given to the English language, roots out from the awareness of government of the crucial need for this language in all fields and disciplines.

Therefore, important steps have been made towards developing learners' English language skills. In fact, improving the textbooks, organizing teachers' training sessions, and introducing new approaches and methods are among the efforts which have been made in the field. Furthermore, learning opportunities have been offered to learn English in all streams so as to reach better achievements.

Apparently, the complex global mutation and the revolutionary advances in information and science have stimulated the government and the academic experts to ponder over the appropriate strategies and techniques to articulate and develop a broad educational plan that promotes the English language teaching

and learning so as to meet the national expectations and the international exigencies.

However, there are still factors that largely cause unsuccessful English learning such as the large number of learners in class, the small number of hours that are devoted to English, the methods which are applied in the ground, the lack of co-ordination among teachers, and the lack of the appropriate material.

In short, it is important to say that a successful learning of English happens through a combination of different factors such as the exposure to the target language, the high quality of teaching, the developed materials, and the appropriate teaching approach.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: Research Methodology And Data Analyses

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3.1. Introduction

Recognizing the competent and the weak learners in reading comprehension is considered as a regular task that teachers need to fulfill through assessment practices. It is, indeed, an important practice that requires useful techniques and strategies. It is worthy to note that assessment is the task that shapes and dictates teachers' activities in class because it informs them about the attitudes, the levels, the abilities, and the need of their learners. In addition, assessment provides teachers with clear information about the quality of their teaching and stimulates them to introduce the necessary changes to correct and monitor their instruction by setting precise purposes.

More importantly, this chapter is considered as an empirical phase in this study. It includes the practical work that took place in the field. In fact, it emphasizes the process of assessing reading comprehension skills and includes the analyses of data that has been gathered through the use of two questionnaires. Besides, it entails the interpretation of the responses and the results that have been achieved by the practical work.

In more clear words, this chapter attempts to describe the criteria and the educational factors that are related to the assessment and the teaching of reading comprehension to the 3rd year pupils.

3.2. Research Aims

The process of assessing reading comprehension skills is an integral part of the English language assessment. Therefore, this study attempts to describe and explain how reading comprehension can be effectively assessed and to show the techniques and the means that should be used in this assessment. Moreover, this research aims to mention the components of reading comprehension and the main difficulties and the obstacles that cause failure to learners' reading comprehension learning.

Besides, this work intends to emphasize the role of assessment in developing not only reading comprehension but the whole English language learning in the Algerian secondary schools. This study entails also the roles that teachers should play as assessors by explaining the importance of assessment in innovating and adjusting their instruction according to the evidence that has been provided by assessment results. Moreover, this research aims to highlight the impacts and the effects of assessment and its contributions in enhancing reading comprehension learning.

3.3. Research Methodology

In this study , two broad approaches of research were used : qualitative research method and quantitative research method .As for the qualitative research method, it is favored by many researchers and has been adopted in the field of human sciences .It is an approach which is based on making enquiries ,exploration ,and discovery. As McDonough (1997:53) stated: **“Qualitative research usually gathers observations, interviews, field data records, questionnaires, transcripts, and so on”**. Actually, the findings, in this approach, address and illuminate the “why” and try to find answers and solutions as final results.

In respect to the quantitative research method, it is an approach which is favored by the fundamental sciences .In fact, it entails the construction of hypotheses that can be assessed by gathering evidence and measuring it in an empirical way .It is based on statistical analyses of large amount of information .In brief, the quantitative research method addresses the “what”, the “where”, and the “when”.

This study is conducted by the use of two questionnaires .The first one is designed to 30 pupils who are enrolled in the third year secondary school while the second is administered to 10 EFL teachers from different secondary schools.

Actually, the questionnaire is a useful research instrument that allows a wider sampling and gathers different and various responses to the same questions. These responses can be used as evidence in finding facts achieving results.

In addition, the questionnaire is considered as an effective tool of research as it provides autonomy to the participants by giving enough time to think about the answers and to illustrate freely their views and thoughts. Besides, the questionnaire is an important instrument that helps the researcher gather evidence by translating the research hypotheses into questions. As Wray and Bloomer (2006:158) argue: *“The questionnaire is useful for surveying a lot people in many different locations”*. In other words, questionnaires proved easier to quantify and analyze results.

3.4. Research Procedure

This research was conducted in the form of case study. The main research instruments in this study have been questionnaires. One of these questionnaires was designed to elicit the views of thirty pupils from ElArbi Abdelkader-Bougairat Secondary School. The pupils' questionnaire entails 20 questions that sought to gather data about learners' attitudes, beliefs, and needs. The main focus of the pupils' questionnaire is to achieve an overview and to find out a clear data about the assessment of reading comprehension skills.

The second questionnaire has been administered to ten EFL teachers from different secondary schools. This questionnaire entails 13 questions that have been aimed to collect teachers' opinions, worries, and proposals about teaching and assessing reading comprehension within the application of the Competency-Based Approach. Moreover, teachers' questionnaire included some questions about the teaching and the learning of the English language in order to detect the problems and seek the solutions from teachers' views.

Many questions in both questionnaires have the form of multiple choice questions in order to offer some ideas to both teachers and learners and help them

discover and select the suitable answers. Besides, some questions included gaps for additional answers and proposals. In fact, teachers were asked to justify some of their answers for the reason of precisising and clarifying the motives behind their choices.

Furthermore, the pupils' questionnaire was discussed in class with the presence of the teacher of English. Indeed; all the questions were explained orally to learners in order to facilitate the task for them and to help them express their opinions and to demonstrate their demands. More importantly, the responses of learners were debated and discussed in class with learners so as to receive their real needs and wants and to listen to them about their learning difficulties especially the ones related to reading comprehension.

The evidence collected from the responses of both teachers and learners have been analyzed and interpreted in a way that provides convincing answers to the research questions of this study. This evidence has been explored according to the hypotheses mentioned in this research in order to reach the research purpose. In fact, learners and teachers' answers and proposals have been the bases of the findings and the results of this current work.

3.5. Pupils' Questionnaire

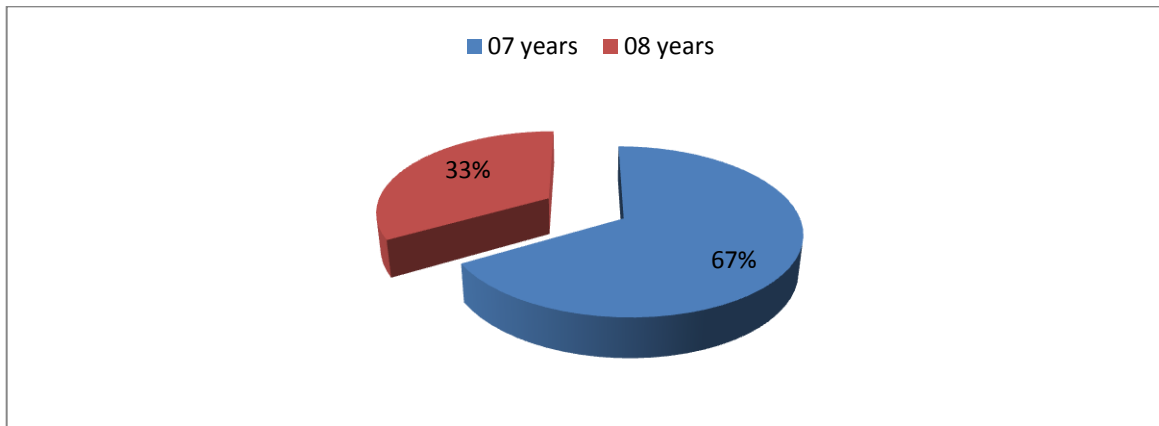
This questionnaire is divided into 3 main parts in order to elicit information about pupils' learning process. The first part contains questions about the general learning of English, the second one tackles the learning of reading comprehension, while the most important one is about the assessment of reading comprehension .The participants are aged between 18 to 20 years old .Indeed, they had enough time to think about the questions without any anxiety or stress. They were asked to put the appropriate answers and to express their real needs and wants as far as their learning is concerned.

3.5.1. Questionnaire analyses

The 20 questions of pupils' questionnaire are analyzed and discussed in the following points:

Question 1: How long have you been learning English?

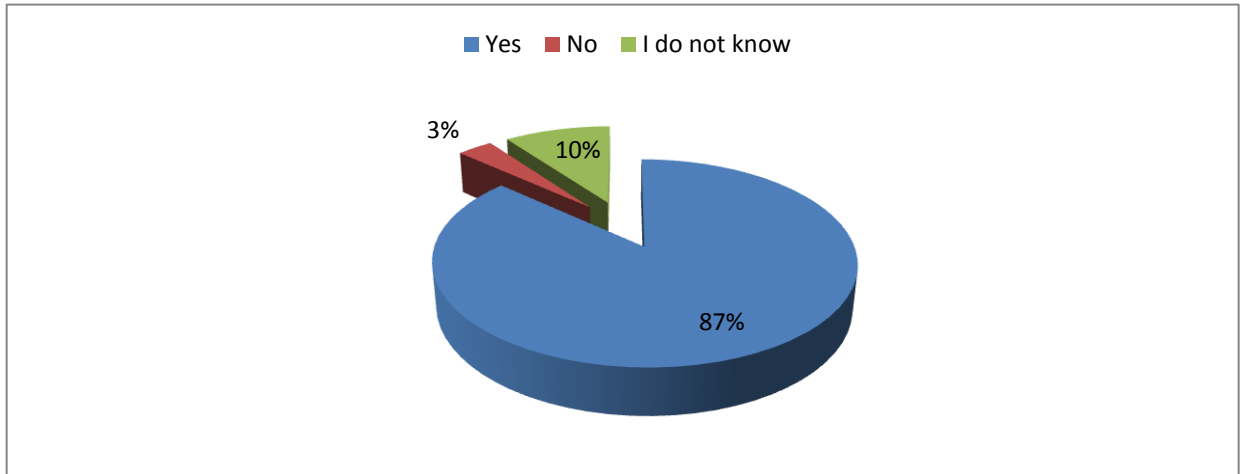
The aim of asking learners this question is to know the years that each learner has spent on learning the English language. In this respect, among thirty learners, twenty have been learning English for seven years, and ten others have learnt it for eight years.



Pie-Chart 3.1: English Language Learning

Questions 2 and 3: Do you think that English is important for your education? Are you motivated to learn it?

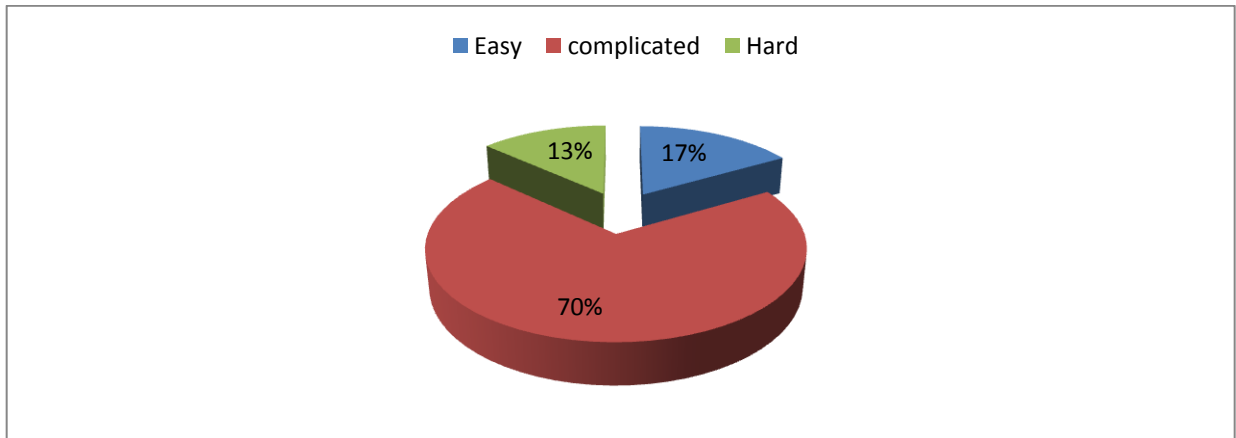
The purpose of this question is to know learners' attitudes towards the English language. It aims also to display if learners are conscious about the importance of English or not. According to learners' responses, 87% believe that English is an essential subject to their education, while 10% think that English is not important to them. Only 3% do not know whether it is important to learn English or not. As for their motivation to learn English, the majority of them showed that they are motivated since English is a global language. Some of the informants showed that English is hard and is not well taught.



Pie-chart 3.2: The Importance of the English language.

Questions 4 and 5. How do you find your learning of English? Do you use it out of the classroom?

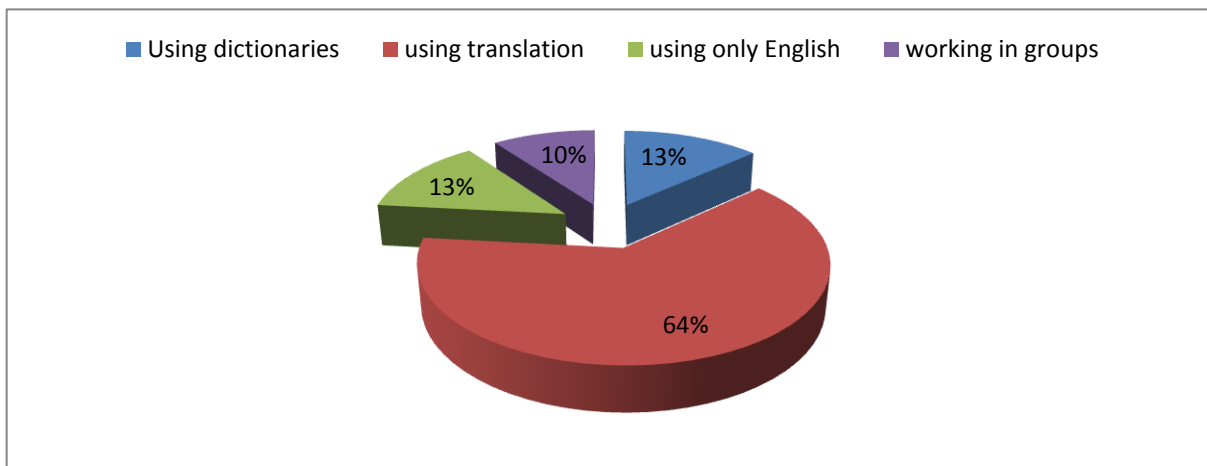
This question aimed to know about the English learning process. As for learners, 70% of them see their learning of English complicated and face problems and difficulties to learn this language. Only 17% think that they learn English at ease, and 13% find it hard. These statistics show that there is still a need to reform the English language syllabus or the teaching approach so as to make the learning more suitable, flexible, and effective. As for question 5, it aims at providing information about the use of English in non-class circumstances. In this regard, the majority of the participants mentioned that they do not have the opportunity to use English out of the classroom, and only few of them try to do so. This implies that the classroom is the only environment that offers opportunities to learners to practice English. Therefore, it is important to give learners homework by asking them to read short texts and stories.



Pie-chart 3.3: Pupils' Learning of English.

Question 6: How do you want to learn English?

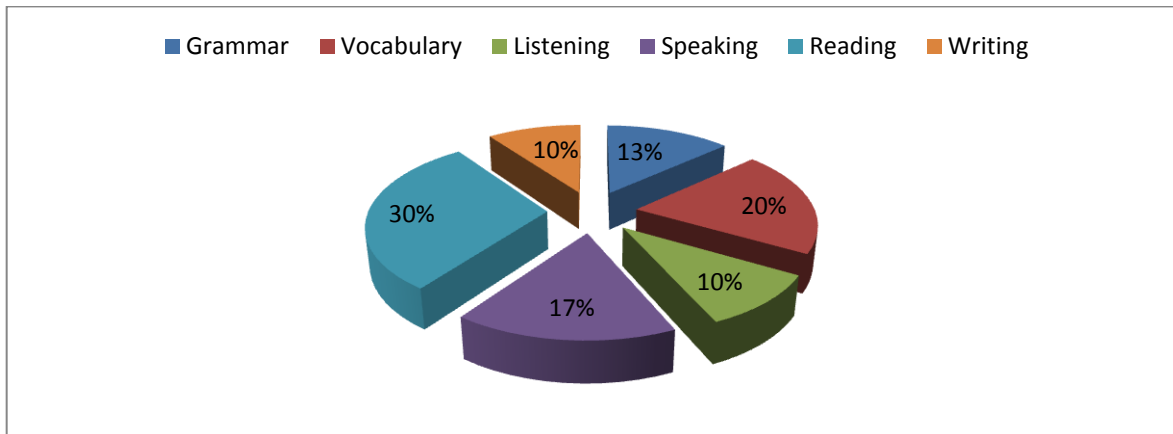
In order to push learners to take part in their learning process, teachers need to ask them the way they prefer to learn English. Indeed, learners' preferences and wants are so important and should be taken into consideration in order to make their learning more successful. At this point, 64% showed their need for the use of the mother tongue in order to ease and simplify their learning, while 13% preferred to use only English in class. In the same run, 13% want to learn English through the use of dictionaries and 10% chose to learn English by working in groups. This information indicates that the majority of the informants still think that the use of L1 offers solutions to language learning.



Pie-chart 3.4: Learners' Preferences in Language Learning

Question 7: In which area of language you think you need to learn more?

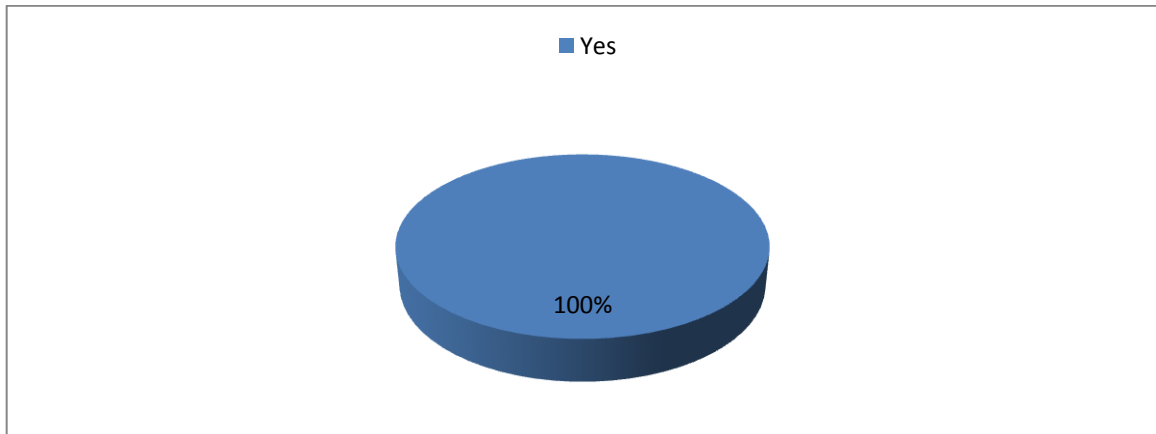
Generally, learners do not have the same strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the goal of this question is to discover the areas of language in which learners still have difficulties. Responding to this question, pie-chart 3.5 shows that 30% of learners think that reading is the language skill that they need to develop more, 20% have a lack in vocabulary knowledge, and 13% need to improve their grammar. As for the remaining skills, 10% preferred to ameliorate their speaking capacities, and also 10% need to develop their skills in writing. These results mean that reading and vocabulary are inter-related areas as they complement and improve each other. Actually, the lack of vocabulary leads to reading deficits and the lack of reading activities causes and leads to the lack of vocabulary knowledge.



Pie-chart 3.5: Learners' Needs in Language Skills

Question 8: Do you think that reading is an important skill?

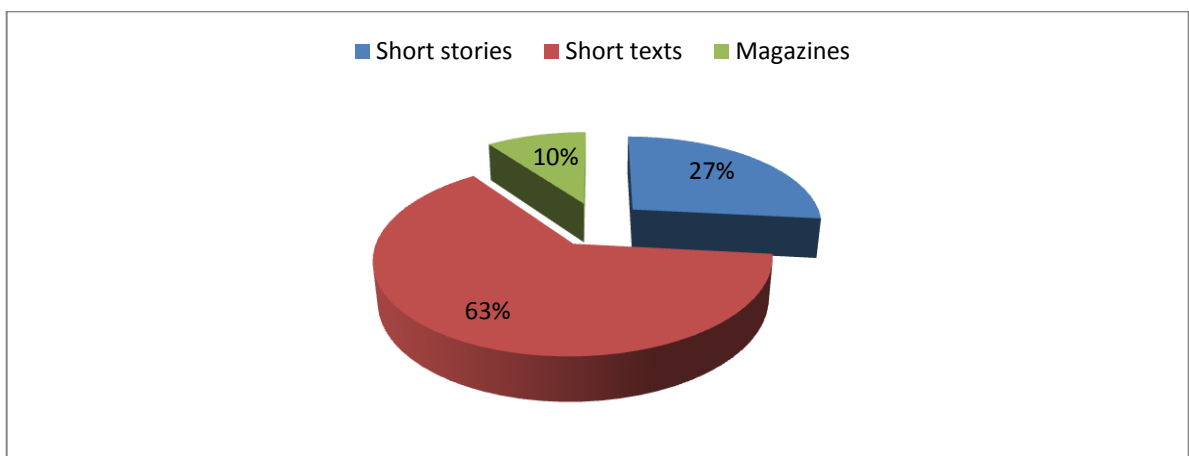
Since reading comprehension is the focus of this research, it was necessary to ask learners this question in order to know their opinions and perceptions about reading as a language skill. As a result, all learners believe that reading is an important skill.



Pie-chart 3.6: The Importance of Reading Comprehension.

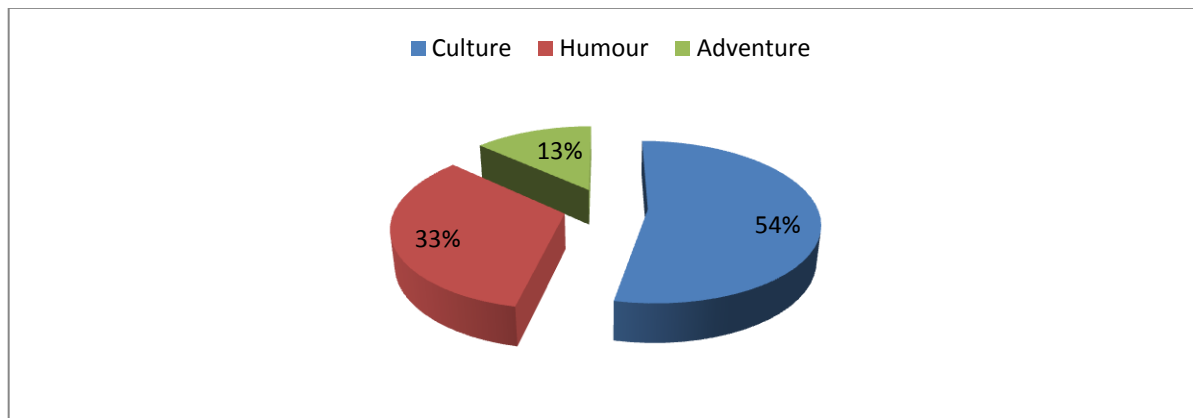
Question 9: What do you usually read?

Since all learners mentioned that they consider the importance of reading in language learning, this question aimed to provide information about what learners like to read. The question was accompanied with three suggestions. Learners' responses show that 63% of them prefer to read short texts, 27% like the short stories, and only 10% read magazines. These results tend to mean that the majority of our learners prefer and like short texts, while long texts and stories may be beyond their capacities. Therefore, introducing short texts may motivate them to read, especially at the level of secondary schools.



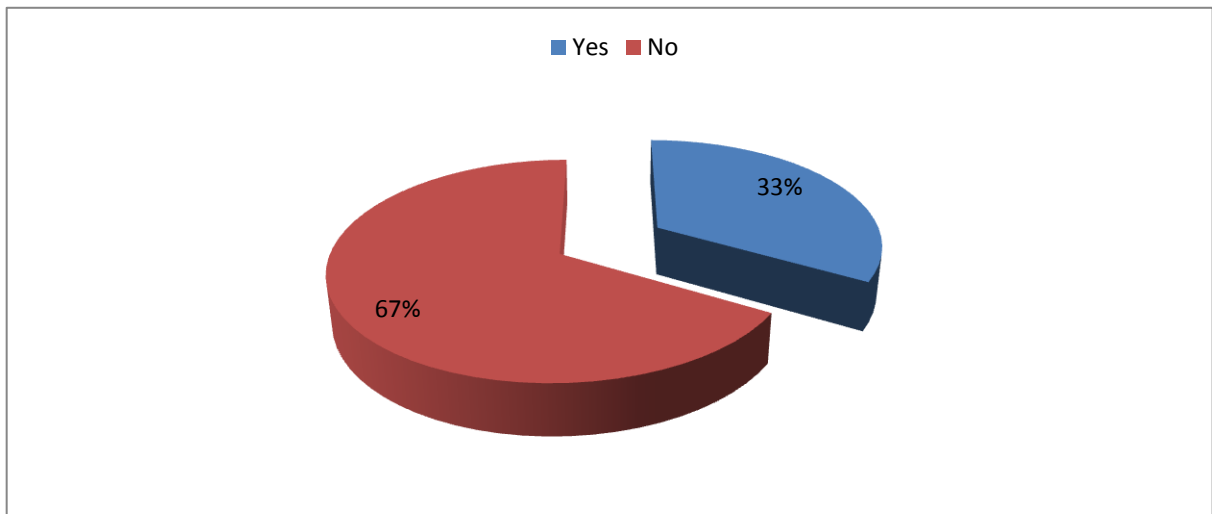
Pie-chart 3.7: Learners' Reading Preferences.**Question 10:** What kind of texts do you like to read?

Since texts may take various and different types, it is important to know what type of texts learners like to deal with. Indeed, they do not have the same preferences because some texts may be easy and comprehensible for some, while they are hard for others. As it is mentioned in pie-chart 3.8, 54% of learners showed that they prefer cultural texts, and 33% mentioned their like of texts that contain humour, while only 13% prefer texts of adventure .As for texts related to history and fantasy, no learner showed his preference of these two types. Actually, learners' responses indicate that texts which deal with culture are broadly welcomed by our learners as they provide them not only with linguistic competence but also with the foreign language culture.

**Pie-chart 3.8:** Learners' Texts Preferences**Question 11:** Do you use any reading comprehension strategies?

The focus of this point is to know whether or not learners know about the reading strategies that are supposed to be applied to any reading activity. In fact, learners should be taught reading comprehension strategies in order to facilitate their reading and to improve their comprehension of texts .Answering this

question, 67% of the investigated learners do not use these strategies, while 33% know and use them. Actually, this result indicates that learners may have comprehension failure since they are not aware of the advantages of the reading strategies.



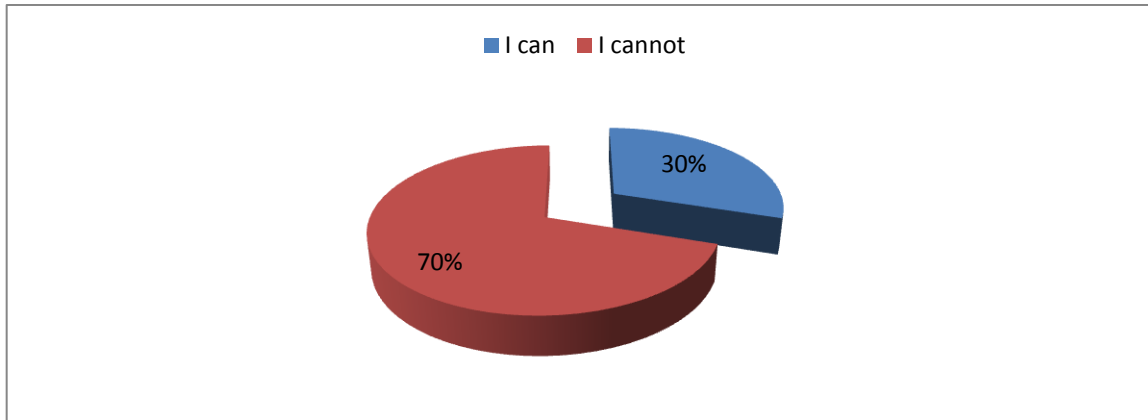
Pie-chart 3.9: The Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies.

Question 12: When you finish your reading, can you make a summary of what you read?

When assessing reading comprehension, learners may be required to summarize the reading passage in order to test their comprehension. Generally, learners who are able to give a summary of a text are those who have got a full understanding, whereas those who are not able to do so may have problems of comprehension.

Indeed, reading comprehension tests which demands learners to provide summaries are useful in assessing their texts' comprehension. As for the informants, 70% of them are unable to summarize a text, while only 30% can do this task. Thus, it can be said that the majority of learners lack the capacity to

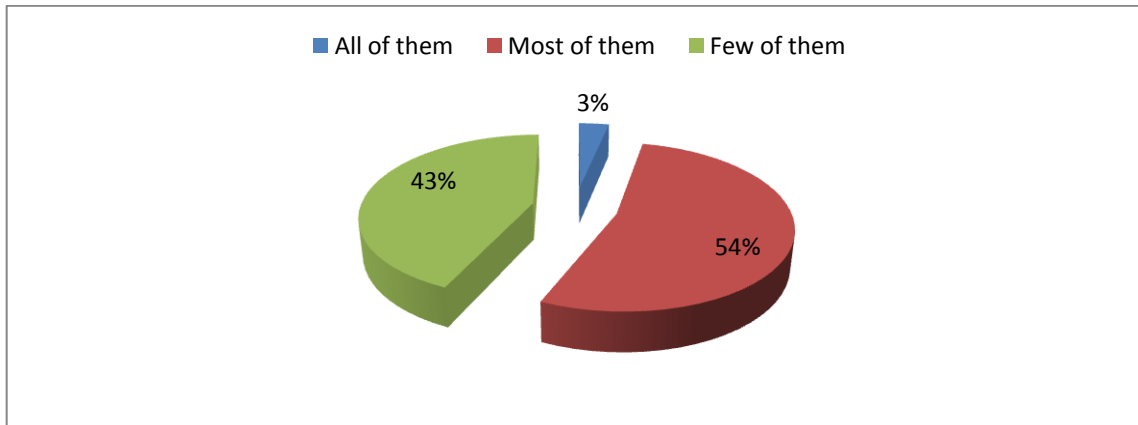
rewrite a text in their own words according to their comprehension .This problem needs to be solved by training learners to discover the text’s essential ideas and ignoring the unimportant ones .This strategy may improve their understanding and develop their reading skill.



Pie-chart 3.10: Learners’ Abilities of Texts’ Summarizing

Question 13: When you are asked to answer the reading comprehension questions, you generally answer; all of them, most of them, or few of them?

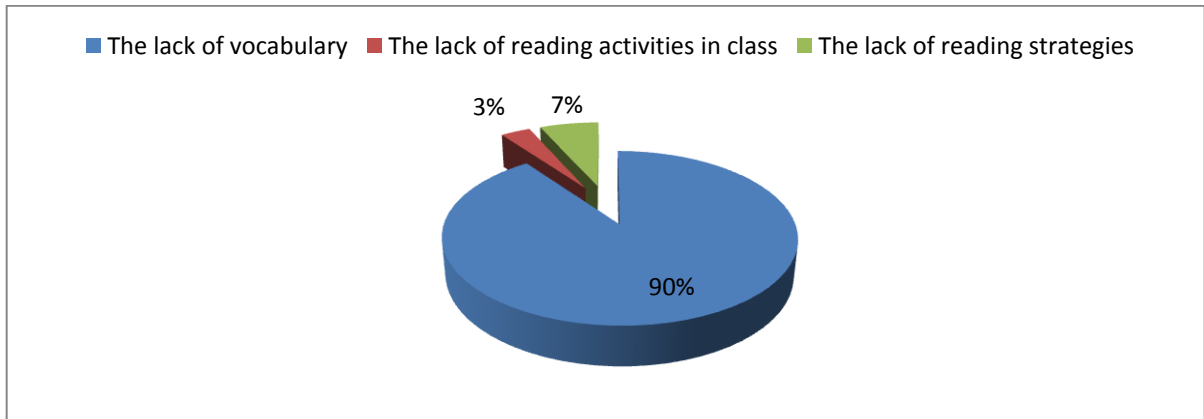
It is known that reading comprehension questions are useful and essential in any reading assessment .Therefore, testing learners’ comprehension cannot be effective without carefully formed questions. Learners were asked this question in order to see if they have problems with this type of questions. Their answers show that 54% of them usually answer most of the comprehension questions, while 43% are able to answer only few of them .The remaining 3% said that they have the ability to answer all the questions .Thus, according to their answers, it seems that learners still have problems of comprehension .This may be due to some reading weaknesses that should be investigated and diagnosed in order to seek solutions and, eventually, develop learners’ comprehension.



Pie-chart 3.11: Answering Reading Comprehension Questions.

Question 14: What causes a reading failure?

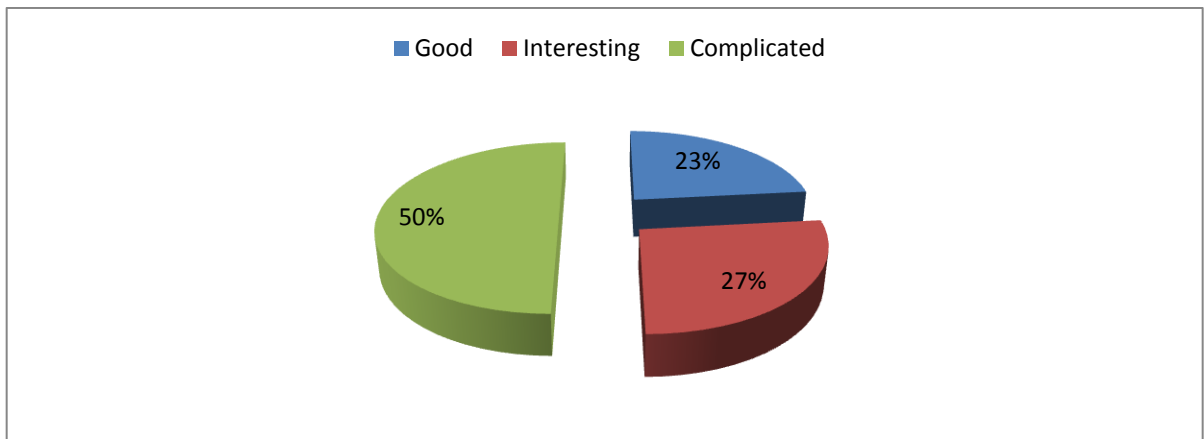
This question is formed to complete and to give more clarification to the preceding question. It aims to check the reasons that make learners unable to have a full comprehension of a text. The majority of the informants agreed that the lack of vocabulary knowledge is the main reason to their comprehension problems. In fact, 90% of them acknowledged that vocabulary is their main obstacle in reading. As for the reading strategies, 7% of the questioned learners think that the lack of reading strategies is the main cause of their reading failure, while only 3% believe that they still need to practice more reading activities in order to overcome their reading weaknesses. Consequently, it can be assumed that vocabulary knowledge is very much important in reading comprehension courses and tests, and therefore, teachers, as assessors, are required to bring solutions to problems to increase the vocabulary knowledge.



Pie-chart 3.12: Causes of Reading Comprehension Failure

Question 15: How do you find the reading material in class?

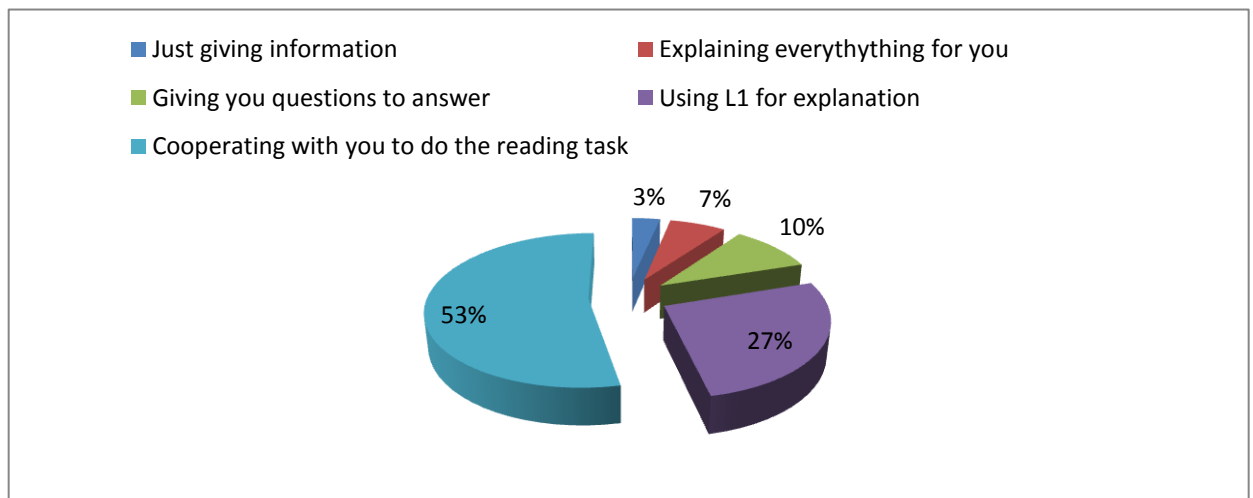
The purpose of this question is to know learners' opinion about the texts included in their textbook. Their responses indicate that 50% of them find the reading material complicated, 27% viewed that the designed reading texts and activities are interesting, and only 23% find it good. Thus, it can be said that the third year secondary school reading material needs to be reconsidered so as to make it conform to our learners' needs and wants.



Pie-chart 3.13: The Reading Material in Class.

Question 16: How do you want your teacher to act when doing a reading task?

This question is introduced in order to know the way by which learners want to learn reading .In fact, their wants and needs should be taken into account so as teachers can meet these needs .This question was accompanied with 5 suggestions so as to offer learners some ideas .According to their answers, 53% of learners want their teachers to cooperate with them when doing a reading task, 27% need the use of L1 in the explanation of the reading activity and 10% want their teachers to ask them questions verbally and answering them together in class .These statistics may lead us to say that learners want their teachers to play significant roles by providing them with the help they need when they do reading tasks and tests.

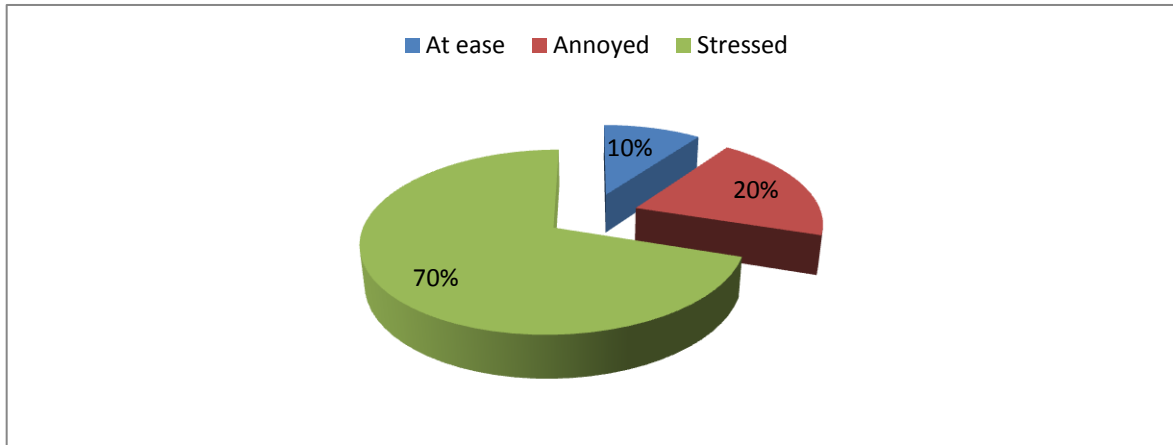


Pie-chart 3.14: Learners' Preferences in Doing Reading Tasks.

Question 17: How do you feel when you are assessed?

Generally speaking, all types of assessment have impacts on learners. Therefore, this question intends to reveal learners' feelings during tests and exams .In this respect, 70% of learners feel stressed when they do an assessment task, while only 10% do their tests at ease and 20% feel annoyed .These responses may indicate that our learners have psychological barriers towards tests

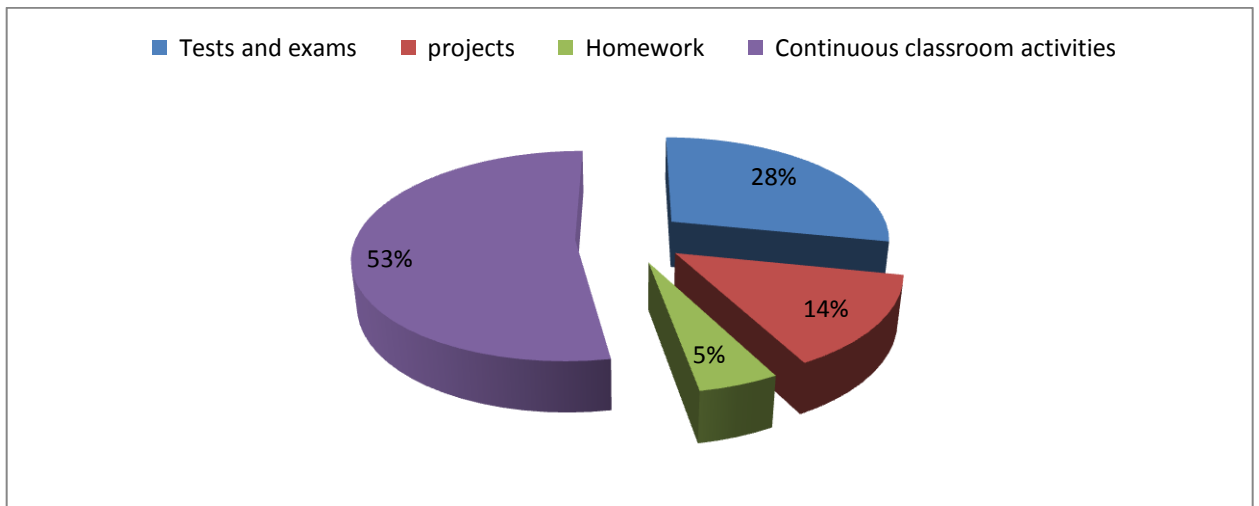
and exams. Therefore, conditions of assessment should be taken into consideration so as to prepare our learners carefully to any assessment activity.



Pie-chart 3.15: The Impact of assessment

Question 18: How do you want to be assessed?

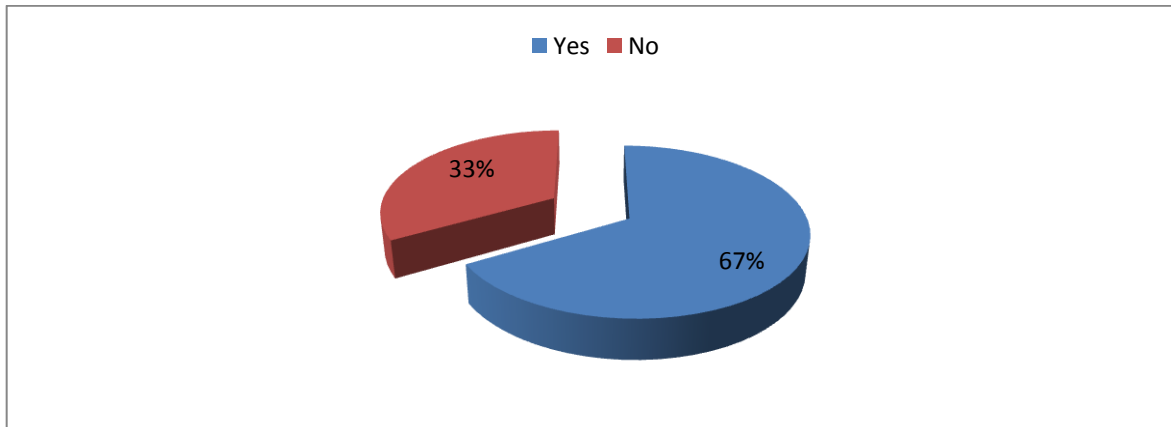
It is known that teachers can assess their learners by different types of assessment. However, learners may like some assessment techniques and dislike others. Therefore, it is important to probe learners' opinion about kinds of assessment and which ones they prefer. Pie-chart 3.16 shows that 53% of them prefer the continuous classroom activities in class, while 28% think that tests and exams are good assessment tools. As for homework and project, they got 14% and 5% respectively. These results lead us to say that the majority of learners prefer the ordinary and the continuous classroom activities as assessment means as they better help them know their abilities.



Pie-chart 3.16: Learners' Preferences of Assessment Instruments.

Question 19: Do you make any self assessments?

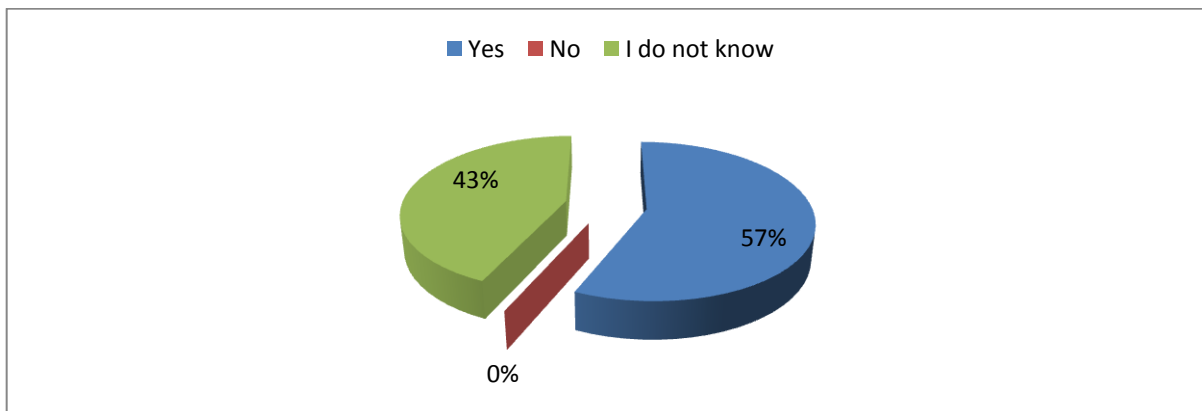
Learners' awareness about the effectiveness of self assessment is important for their learning. Indeed, helping learners to assess themselves makes part of the teaching process and develops the spirit of the autonomous and the self learning. At this point, learners' responses to this question show that 67% of the targeted population assess their abilities by themselves, whereas 33% of them do not make self assessments. This result indicates that many of our learners think that self assessment is necessary to their learning process. It also shows the fact that some of our learners, are not well taught how to rely on themselves and how to enhance their learning capacities and strategies by discovering and assessing their weaknesses and exposing them to their teachers so that they receive a constructive feedback.



Pie-chart 3.17: Learners' Self Assessment.

Question 20: Does assessment develop your reading comprehension skills?

The effectiveness of assessment is supposed to develop and enhance learners' capacities in reading comprehension. Dealing with this question, 57% the informants believe that assessment of reading does improve it, while 43% of them do not know whether assessment develops their reading abilities or not, and no learner think that assessment has no impact on his or her learning. These statistics show that most of the informants do benefit from assessment and many of them still ignore the role of assessment in developing their learning and their reading skills in particular.



Pie-chart 3.18: The Role of Assessment in Developing the Reading Skill.

3.5.2. Results Interpretations

The goal of this work is to gather data about learners' preferences, needs, and weaknesses concerning their learning of reading comprehension and its assessment. Therefore, the pupils' questionnaire included, in its first part, some introductory questions related to the general learning of English in order to know learners' attitudes towards this language. In the second part, the questionnaire tended to emphasize the reading skill as it included some questions that tried to elicit data about learners' preferences about the teaching of this skill. In its final part, this questionnaire tended to probe learners' opinion about the assessment of reading comprehension.

In the beginning, the first six questions in the questionnaire tended to discover learners' thoughts about the English language. Indeed, most of the informants showed their consciousness about the importance of English in their educational process, and almost all of them are motivated to learn the English language. In fact, according to learners' responses, this motivation stems from their conviction of the fact that English is a global language and the language of world communication. In addition, the questionnaire tried to know the way by which learners need to learn English and provided some suggestions and choices so as to meet these needs. As it is mentioned (pie-chart 3.4), their answers indicate that many of them are still in need to the use of L1 in order to overcome the linguistic obstacles and to provide communicative solutions to those learners who do not agree upon the exclusive use of English in class.

This fact may lead us to say that current approach needs to reconsider the attitudes, the levels, the weaknesses, and the differences of our learners because one single method cannot be applied to all learners. Therefore, one can suggest that using different techniques and applying various methods can provide a successful teaching to all learners. These methods and techniques are supposed to be dictated by learners' needs and wants. Besides, in order to know the areas of language that learners want to develop, question 7 was aimed to discover and

explore their needs and demands .In this regard, learners showed their want to develop different skills and each learner has a special concern .In other words, all areas of language need to be given significant consideration and learners' weaknesses should be detected and remedied by innovating and enhancing the instruction .(see pie-chart 3.5).

The second part of the questionnaire was devoted to the teaching and the learning of the reading skill. Thus, a number of questions tried to gather learners' perceptions about this skill. As for the importance of reading, the results show that all the informants think that reading is an important skill .Indeed, teachers' role lies in ameliorating their learners' abilities by choosing the suitable texts and making the reading task enjoyable and successful (pie-chart 3.6). For that reason, questions 9 and 10 tended to know the types of readings that our learners prefer .In this respect, the responses display that the majority of the informants prefer short text that are related to culture. This result may stem from learners' conviction of the fact that these texts may provide them with the foreign language and the foreign culture in the same time.

Moreover, it is well known that the learning of reading includes the learning of reading comprehension strategies that facilitate learners' comprehension and help them read for special purposes .Therefore, question 11 came to discover if the informants use some strategies. The results demonstrate that the majority of the informants do not know or use these strategies. Thus, it can be said that the reading strategies are so important in developing and enhancing learners' comprehension. Strategies such as; activating prior knowledge , making predictions, making meaning inferences, and building final understanding should be included in the teaching of reading in order to give all learners the chance to learn and develop their reading skill as successfully as possible.

As for learners' understanding of the reading passages, the responses show that the majority of learners cannot make summaries of what they read and only few of them are able to do so. As for reading comprehension questions, the results reveal that supplying correct answers to all these questions is not at the level of all learners. These results, actually, may lead us to ask questions about the reasons that hinder learners' comprehension and cause their reading comprehension deficits.

More importantly, question 14 is designed to complement the preceding questions as it aims at seeking the causes of reading failure. The results indicate that the main reason is their lack of vocabulary knowledge (see pie-chart 3.12). Certainly, vocabulary and reading are interrelated and inseparable elements because they serve and develop each other. In fact, the lack of vocabulary usually leads to texts' misunderstanding and causes dire results in reading comprehension tests. Thus, it can be said that vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of reading, and therefore, it can be enriched and enhanced by practicing more reading activities in class and at home. Vocabulary should be given a significant consideration in all reading courses and assessments in order to grasp learners' abilities and accordingly provide the suitable teaching by seeking the constructive solutions that truly improve both learners' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension skills.

In addition, the questionnaire intended to find out learners' opinion about the reading material and the methods and techniques used in teaching and assessing the reading skill. Thus, the answers show that 50% of the informants find the reading material in class complicated (see pie-chart 3.13). This complexity is caused, maybe, by the methods and the techniques used in teaching reading or by the way teachers present and assess their reading courses. For the same concern, learners' wants and demands in doing the reading tasks should be taken into consideration so as to meet their needs. Actually, their responses

display the fact that teachers' help and cooperation with learners are very much needed in class so that the reading activities can be done as successfully as possible. In other words, the reading activities in class can be considered as a continuous classroom assessment.

Consequently, cooperating and interacting with learners when doing the reading activities help teachers detect their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Thus, it can be assumed that teacher-learner interaction is part of assessment practices because it informs teachers about their learners needs and help them to adjust their instruction in order to fulfill the learning requirements. Indeed, making conversations, discussions, and dialogues with learners about the reading task can be considered as effective tools that make teachers truly assess their learners' thoughts and comprehension of the whole reading course.

As for the impact of assessment, the results reveal that the majority of learners feel the stress whenever they are assessed. In this respect, the fact that tests or exams cause fear to learners cannot be considered as a severe problem but as a natural case. As a solution, teachers can prepare learners for assessment in order to help them overcome their fear and hesitation. Moreover, they can create a suitable atmosphere by guiding and advising their learners. In this regard, it is necessary to avoid the assessment tools that disturb learners and do not lead them to demonstrate their true abilities. Therefore, it is useful to ask them about their preferable assessment techniques or means that make them discover their weaknesses and strengths. As it is mentioned, 52% of the pupils show their preference of the continuous classroom activities as useful assessment tools. This is due to the fact that this strategy does not impose test conditions and help pupils learn without fear or stress. (See pie-chart 3.16).

Undoubtedly, introducing simple classroom activities is an effective strategy that helps both teachers and learners know the causes of failure and the way to success without giving marks or rankings. In fact, through these activities,

teachers can modify and improve their instruction according to the assessment results and learners' needs. Furthermore, although they are considered as evaluation tools, tests and exams are essential ingredients to any assessment procedure because they lead learners to consider the importance of learning and increase their seriousness to be committed to achieve better results. In addition, assessing learners through tests and exams make them stand at their levels and motivate them to go beyond these levels by making more efforts to reach higher ones.

As for the purpose of assessment, it is known that it makes part of the teaching-learning process. Thus; learners need to make self assessment so as to raise their responsibility of their learning. Their responses to question 19 show that most of the informants make some kind of self assessments. These positive results are due to their awareness of the importance of self assessment in developing and enhancing their autonomous learning. Indeed, our learners are conscious about the role of assessment in developing their reading comprehension skills, and most of them are convinced that assessment is something done for them rather than on them.

3.6. Teachers' Questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire is set of 13 questions designed to elicit the views and opinions of ten EFL teachers from different secondary schools. In its first part, it aims at gathering information about the whole process of the English language teaching while its main focus is on the assessment of reading comprehension skills. Therefore, the majority of questions are designed to know about how these skills can be assessed within the competency-Based approach. It, also, aims to know about the main reasons and obstacles that cause reading comprehension failure to learners. Besides, the informants were asked to give

their suggestions and opinions about teaching and assessing the reading skill as part of their job.

In short, this questionnaire tried to explore the essential issues that are related to reading comprehension assessment. Among these issues, one can note the adequate testing techniques, the role of assessment in reading comprehension instruction, the means and the tools that are used in this kind of assessment, and the main difficulties that learners face in learning the reading skill.

3.6.1. Questionnaire Analyses

The answers of the EFL teachers who were enrolled in this study are analyzed and clarified in the following points:

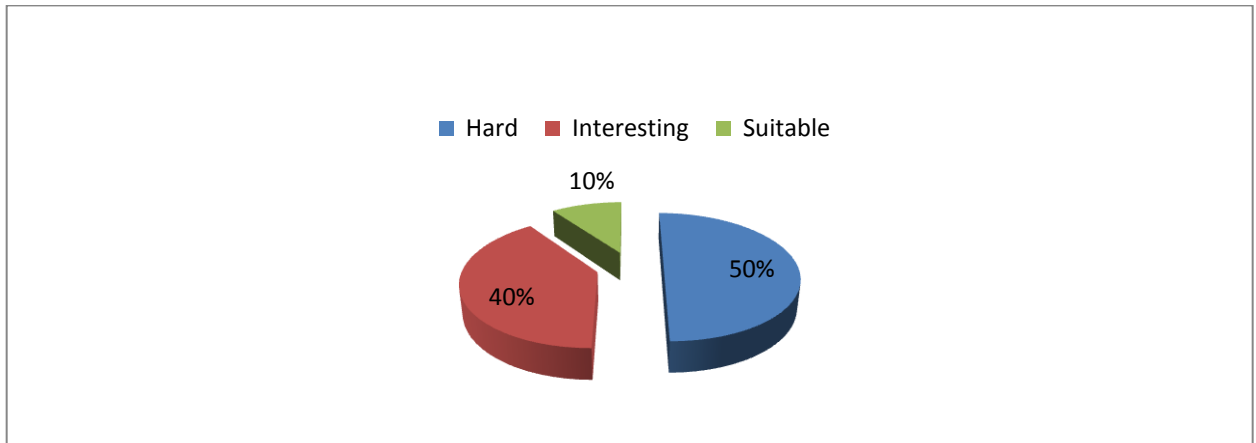
Question 1: How long have you been teaching English?

This question aims at gathering data from different experiences and to explore various opinions. Most of the informants have been teaching English for 5 years while two of them have 2 years as a teaching experience and only one of the ten have taught English for 6 years. Indeed, they are all young teachers who are well trained to apply the reforms that have been introduced to the teaching of the English language in the secondary schools.

Question 2: How do you find the syllabus of English?

Question 2 is designed to have teachers' perceptions about the syllabus of the English language. In fact, they gave different answers which included different opinions. In this regard, 50% of the participants think that the syllabus of English is hard for learners, 40% view that it is interesting, and only 10% see it suitable. This result may lead us to think twice about the types of texts, activities, and language points that this syllabus consists of. Moreover, we can say that a higher level of difficulty may not help learners reach higher standards

and their competencies should be taken into consideration in order to step up their learning abilities.



Pie-chart 3.19: The syllabus of English

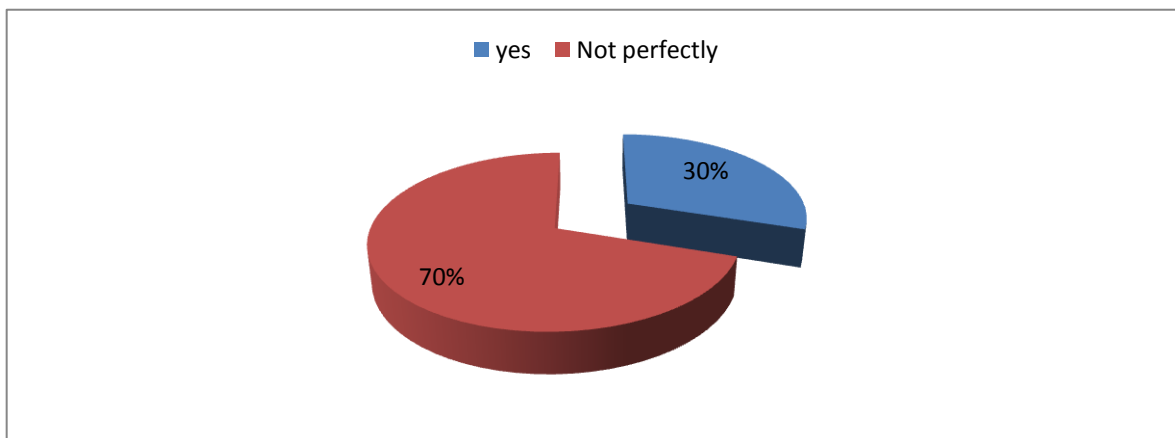
Question 3: Do your learners like English?

As learners' motivation is an essential element to any successful learning, teachers need to know whether their learners like the subject or not. Some of the teachers are sure that their learners like English while some others think that their learners like the English language to some extent and one of them confess that his pupils dislike it. Some of teachers argued their answers by the fact that their learners lack the required vocabulary to their learning while others think that there are many reasons that make the learning of English complicated such as the teaching approach and the classroom material. Some other teachers pointed that their learners do not give importance to some language skills whereas they are interested in other skills. These results may explain the attitudes of our learners towards the English language. Therefore, one of the teachers' tasks is to facilitate their teaching methods in order to motivate their learners and make them interested in the English language learning. In other words, teachers should be autonomous and self confident in presenting their courses.

Questions 4 and 5: How do you find the CBA? Do you actually apply this approach in class?

The newly introduced competency-based approach has been praised by many teachers and has been criticized by some others. Thus, this question is aimed to point out the informants' opinion about this approach. According to their answers, 6 of them view that the CBA is a useful approach, while 4 think that it is complicated, and no one of them believe that it is useless.

Responding to question 5 which is concerned with the implementation of the CBA in class, 30% of the participants showed that they actually apply this approach while 70% of them admit that they cannot perfectly apply it. According to the informants, the causes that impede the application of the CBA are various and different. Among these causes, they pointed learners' disabilities and the lack of the linguistic competence, the need to the use of L1, the lack of training sessions for teachers, and the number and the level of pupils.



Pie-chart 3.20: The Application of the CBA

Question 6: In which area of language you think your learners need to learn more?

Learners weaknesses differ from one learner to another and therefore teachers are required to know how well their learners grasp the courses, how

much they need, and in which area of language they confront difficulties. Ideally, it is through the continuous classroom assessment that teachers can gather information about their pupils' learning demands.

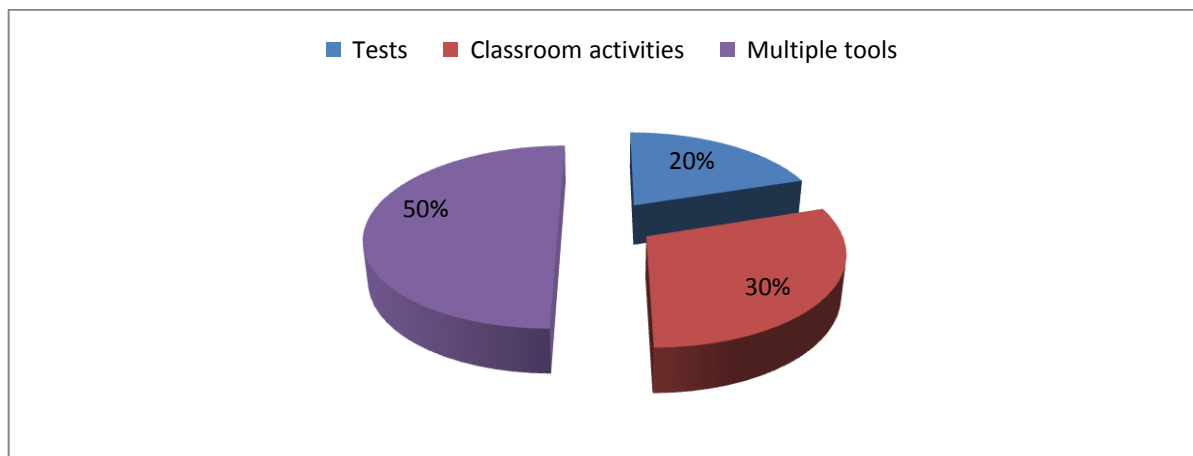
As for the informants' answers to this question, some focused on vocabulary and reading ,others on grammar, and the majority think that their learners need to develop all the language skills .Their answers can be justified by the fact that all the skills should be taught effectively and seriously so as to meet all learners' needs .

Question 7: When you teach the reading skill, what strategies do you use?

Teaching reading is one of the tasks that requires a careful consideration as it should depend on effective strategies that entail all reading comprehension skills .This question is about the techniques that the informants usually use in their teaching of this skill .According to their responses to this question, many of the informants focus on learners' comprehension as a key component of reading .In fact, they use various strategies in order to successfully their teaching goals. Among these strategies, one can mention their use of the reading passage to teach other reading-related skills such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, negotiating words' meanings, asking learners to use dictionaries, improving learners' initiative, and allowing for learners' self assessment.

Question 8: What kind of assessment tools do you prefer?

As for teachers' answers to this question, the majority of them use multiple tools in assessing their learners. Indeed, they think that a combination of effective means help them better gather data about their learners and the use of a unique instrument cannot reach this goal. As for the other tools, 30% of the teachers prefer daily classroom activities, while 20% prefer the exclusive use of tests. In brief, teachers' answers indicate that the use of different means of assessment help them better know about their pupils' needs and guides them to provide the required instruction.



Pie-chart 3.21: Teachers' Assessment Tools

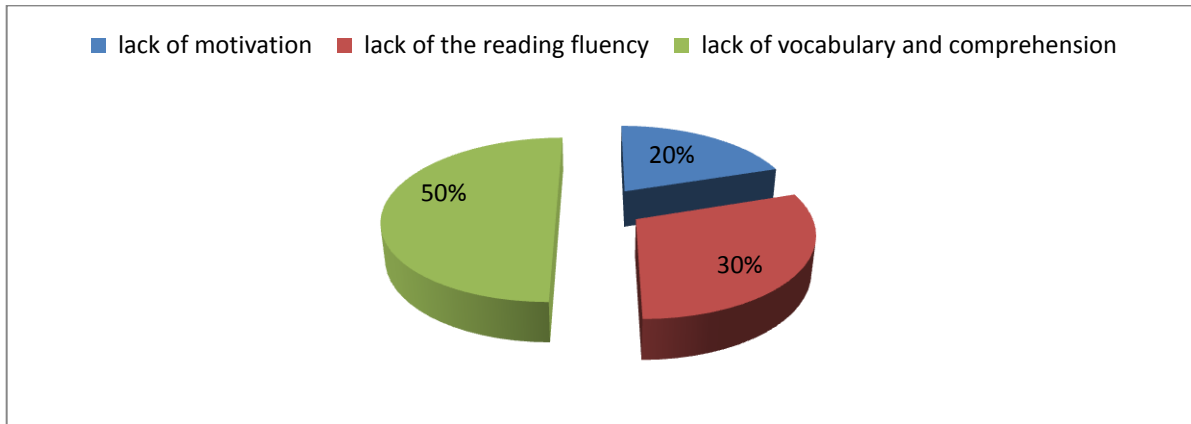
Question 9: What test techniques do you apply to assess reading comprehension?

Testing reading comprehension is one of the assessment tasks that requires teachers to implement useful techniques that effectively assess all the components of the reading skill. Therefore, using different and various techniques or questions is necessary and important in order to target all levels of comprehension. As for teachers' responses to this question, many of them use at least three types of questions or activities. According to their answers, the frequently used activities are; multiple choice questions, filling the gaps, reading comprehension questions, and emphasizing words' meanings, however few of them ask learners to write texts' summaries. These techniques are used altogether and not separately in order to know if learners have got a good understanding of the text.

Question 10: When you assess reading comprehension, what kind of difficulties and obstacles do your learners generally meet?

One of the purposes of reading comprehension assessment is to find out the causes that make learners fail to successfully learn this skill. Actually, assessment makes the task easy for teachers to point out the difficulties and the obstacles that learners face. In this regard, the answers collected from the informants show that the major problem of learners is the lack of vocabulary and comprehension. This fact leads us to think about the type of the given texts and

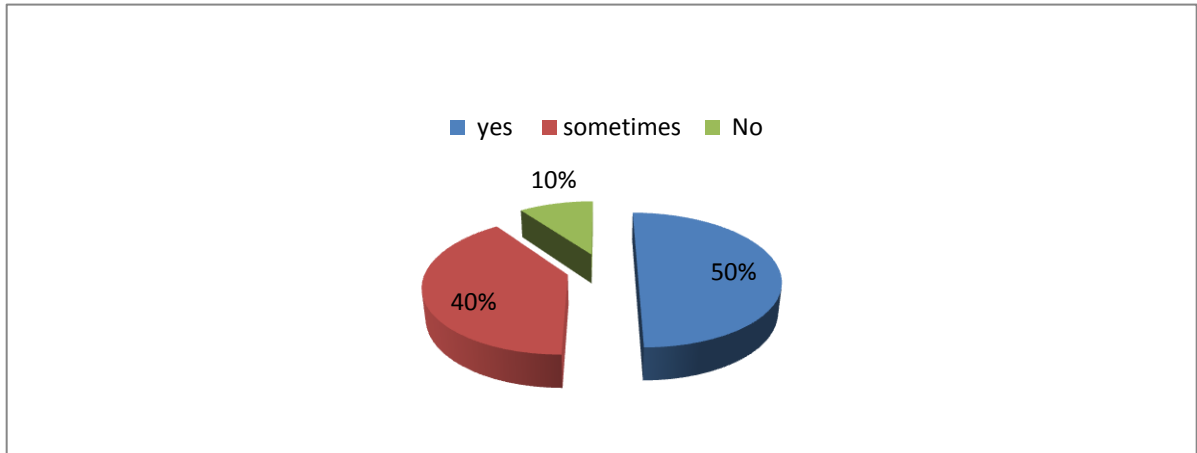
the kind of vocabulary items used in these texts and motivates us to seek the solutions for this problem.



Pie-chart 3.22: Learners' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

Question 11: Do you use assessment results in designing your courses?

Answering this question, pie-chart 3.23 shows that 50% of the participants take the assessment results into consideration when they plan their instruction, while 40% do not always rely on these results in preparing their courses, and only 10% neglect them. According to their justifications, some teachers lack some autonomy in designing their daily classroom instruction. In other words, they are more committed to the teaching curriculum than to learners' needs. Thus, it is important for teachers to link instruction, curriculum, and assessment in order to reach their teaching objectives.



Pie-chart 3.23: The use of Assessment Results in Course Design

Question 12 and 13: As a teacher of English, what do you suggest for teaching and assessing the reading skill? What do you propose to improve the teaching and the learning of English in Algeria?

Question 12 is intended to elicit teachers' proposals and views concerning teaching and assessing reading comprehension. Responding to this question, many of the informants suggest that asking learners to read texts, stories, or even books in English help them better teach and assess the reading skill. Some of them think that asking learners to summarize the text is a useful technique that helps teachers assess learners' comprehension and makes them reproduce and rewrite the text according to their understanding, while some others proposed that learners need to participate in learning and assessing reading by preparing the course of reading at home. One of the teachers viewed that giving direct questions and asking learners to match words with their synonyms or opposites help them understand the text and extend their vocabulary knowledge. Another one believes that the think-aloud procedure is a successful technique in assessing reading comprehension.

The following question aims at gathering teachers' views about the improvement of the English language teaching and learning in Algeria. Two

informants focus on the need to organize meetings and seminars that help teachers update their teaching and exchange ideas with colleagues. Two others think that setting simplified syllabus and using multiple methods and approaches help teachers meet learners' needs and demands.

Besides, some of teachers suggest that decreasing the number of units and emphasizing the most important ones may facilitate the learning of English and improve it, while some others propose that decreasing the number of learners in the classroom is a necessity. One of informants views that introducing English in the primary school may develop learners' capacities from an early age, and another one calls for the introduction of ICT because teaching English by using technology motivates and stimulates both learners and teachers.

3.6.2. Results Interpretations

Teachers are considered as field practitioners who have direct contact with learners. Therefore, they are the ones who are truly aware about their learners' needs and wants. Indeed, their status as teachers who are required to apply the teaching methods in their daily instruction allows them to adequately assess the syllabus, the approach as well as their learners.

According to the participants' responses to the questionnaire, many of them think that the 3rd year syllabus of English is interesting but hard for learners. In fact, the way the syllabus is designed has a major impact on both teachers and learners and may either increase or decrease their motivation. For this reason, it is preferable to take into account the level, the capacities, and the needs of learners when designing the syllabus. In addition, many teachers point that their learners like the English language but they face some obstacles and problems such as the type of texts included in their textbook or the way the courses are segmented and presented.

Furthermore, the Competency-Based Approach which is applied to the teaching of English is considered by many EFL teachers as a useful method but its application with learners is not an easy task. As for the problems that may impede its adequate application, some participants relate them to the competencies of learners while some others think that the number of hours devoted to English is not sufficient, and some others claim about the lack of the adequate material and the high number of pupils in class. One teacher points that the CBA can be useful for some learners and useless with others.

Besides, the EFL teachers' questionnaire includes one question about the areas of language that learners need to develop more. According the responses of the participants, some of them focus on reading, vocabulary, and grammar, while few others emphasize writing and speaking. In all cases, it can be said that all language skills are important and complement one another because these skills are interrelated and cannot be taught separately.

As for the teaching and the assessment of reading comprehension, teachers' views are different and various. In fact, they use different techniques and strategies in presenting and assessing their reading courses. More importantly, no one of them use one single technique because the application of multiple strategies results in better teaching achievement and increases the learning standards. Among these strategies, one can note the inductive learning of vocabulary and grammar through the reading passage, the teaching of other sub-skills such as pronunciation, focusing on learner's comprehension as a key element to reading, and the use of dictionaries by learners. Certainly, one can say that the use of effective assessment techniques is part of the teaching strategies because they are all interrelated and should be interwoven in a way that improves the teaching outputs and the learning outcomes.

Still, in assessing reading comprehension, most of the participants use multiple test techniques in order to have a clear view about their learners'

capacities. In this respect, multiple choice questions, gaps filling, comprehension questions, and writing summaries are the mostly used activities. Moreover, vocabulary is also emphasized in reading comprehension tests through asking learners to check words' synonyms and opposites. Indeed, learners' comprehension can be effectively assessed through the use of many activities which serve to assess every single component of reading comprehension.

Actually, the application of multiple strategies in the continuous assessment offer to both teachers and learners the essential information about the level of comprehension that learners are able to reach and help them to discover the weaknesses, the difficulties, and the obstacles of learners. In this concern, many of the informants mention several types of reading comprehension difficulties that are frequently faced by the pupils. The main obstacle that causes reading failure, according to EFL teachers, is that learners do not possess enough and adequate vocabulary knowledge that helps them achieve a good text understanding (see pie- chart 3.22). This fact is expressed by all teachers who gave their proposals about the ways and the strategies that may improve both teaching and assessing reading comprehension. In fact, some of them suggest that giving more activities of words' definitions pushes learners to use the dictionaries and ask about these words in order to acquire new words while reading texts. Some others propose that learners should be asked to make extensive readings and write summaries of what they have read so as to show them to their teachers for assessment purposes. The most important proposal is that learners should be given short interesting texts to read at home accompanied with comprehension activities in order to develop and improve their reading competence. These tasks should end up with evaluative sessions in class and should be marked in order to motivate learners and make them feel the importance of their learning.

More importantly, teachers' views reveal that they need to gain autonomy in classroom for the reason of selecting the adequate assessment tools and using

the appropriate instruction in order to meet learners' needs. In fact, they are bound by the curriculum requirements which cannot always address learners' real needs. Therefore, they should make a link between the syllabus and the assessment results in order to provide a constructive classroom instruction.

In addition, EFL teachers put significant suggestions concerning the development of ELT in Algeria. In fact, many of them stress the importance of seminars, meetings, and the training sessions in the field of foreign language teaching. These meetings are essential and necessary because they provide the opportunity to exchange ideas and assess the teaching –learning process. Moreover, the participants emphasize the need to include teachers in designing the syllabus and the importance of giving them more autonomy to act freely with their learners not only in assessing and teaching, but also in using multiple approaches and techniques that are dictated by learners' needs.

In sum, assessing reading comprehension is a task which includes multiple ways and techniques because this skill is composed of several interrelated components. Reading fluency, vocabulary knowledge, sentences processing, paragraphs chronology, and the whole text comprehension are the main points that should be addressed in any reading comprehension assessment activity.

3.7. Summary of the Main Results

This study argues that assessment of reading comprehension is an essential teaching task that is conducted for the advantage of both learners and teachers. Indeed, it gathers a number of ways and strategies that push learners to reveal their learning abilities to their teachers. In addition, it makes learners aware about their weak and strong points and leads them to seek the solutions to enhance their reading comprehension skill.

Generally, assessment of reading comprehension is conducted in the form of tests, projects, and daily classroom activities. Indeed, the construction of simple and well organized tests which entail various tasks and activities is

important for this type of assessment in order to address learners' texts comprehension. According to the responses, most teachers use activities that include multiple-choice questions, filling the gap exercises, and reading comprehension questions.

Still, this research shows that assessment has many advantages. Actually, it informs teachers about the learning capacities of their pupils and guides to provide useful instruction to meet their needs. In addition, it helps learners to discover and detect their true competencies and leads them to seek useful ways to improve their own learning.

Besides, this work argues that the lack of vocabulary knowledge causes a major obstacle to reading comprehension learning. In this respect, both teachers and learners demonstrate that developing and enhancing the vocabulary is necessary for this skill. Truly, it can be assumed that our pupils suffer from the lack of strategies that enrich their vocabulary and help them reach a better texts' understanding. Therefore, teachers are required to give solutions throughout the reading course such as: pushing learners to use dictionaries, introducing words' definitions activities, or providing a list of the text's difficult words.

More importantly, the results indicate teachers need to gain a degree of autonomy in planning their classroom instruction. In fact, they are required to design their courses according to their teaching goals, the curriculum requirements, and learners' needs.

Finally, it is worthy to note that learners and EFL teachers gave important proposals and views concerning the process of assessment and put their recommendations about the role of assessment in enhancing the whole teaching-learning process.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has been designed to include and describe the empirical phase of this study. It defined the specific area of the research and explained the

research procedures and the methodological steps that have been the bases of this study. Moreover, it defined the participants in this research and contained the analyses of the two questionnaires and the interpretations of the results.

More importantly, this chapter is considered as an investigation of the process of assessing reading comprehension. In fact, it sought to emphasize how reading comprehension skills can be adequately assessed and tried to show the importance of this assessment in the development of this skill. Actually, chapter three checked to find out the appropriate tools and the suitable strategies that teachers use in this assessment.

Finally, this chapter entailed the analyses and the interpretations of the responses, the views, and the opinions expressed by both teachers and learners. In fact, they put significant remarks and explained their needs and demands not only about the process of assessment but also about the teaching and the learning of the English language.

chapter Four

Chapter Four: Recommendations for Reading Comprehension

Assessment

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4.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to entail implications and suggestions about assessing and teaching reading comprehension .In fact, it includes a description of the steps that should be followed and the strategies that should be applied in assessing reading comprehension. Besides, it tackles the elements and the skills that should be measured in this kind of assessment.

Furthermore, definitions and explanations of reading comprehension components and issues are provided in this chapter in order to clarify the factors that affect reading comprehension and its assessment .In fact, it tries to identify reading, types of reading, and types of comprehension and attempts to give a clear idea about how these elements can be improved through the use of different methods of assessment.

In addition, chapter four contains suggestions and proposals that are related to reading comprehension assessment and illustrates solutions to enhance the assessment and the teaching of reading comprehension.

In brief, this concluding chapter is designed to show how reading comprehension can be assessed and to clarify the criteria and the measurements of reading comprehension assessment.

4.2. Types of Reading

Reading has got various types that may differ in terms of purpose, level, and length.

4.2.1. Extensive Reading

There are different definitions of the term “extensive reading” .Some use it to refer to the skimming and scanning activities ,while others relate it to the

quantity of the reading material .As far as extensive reading is concerned, Hafiz and Tudor stated that :

The pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 materials, will in the long run, produce a beneficial affect on the learners' command of L2.

(Hafiz and Tudor, 1989:5)

That is to say that the extensive reading is seen as an important technique in language teaching .Indeed, it improves the writing skills, broadens the vocabulary knowledge and consolidate grammar mastery .This can happen through the exposure to a range of lexical, syntactic , semantic, and textual features in the reading material .

Extensive reading varies according to learners' motivation and attitudes .A well motivated and trained teacher is the one who is able to select the suitable texts and activities for his or her learners .Besides, this type of reading helps learners develop their reading comprehension abilities and achieve independency of reading . Therefore, teachers need to help their learners to select their reading passages .In this respect, Carrel and Eisterhold viewed: *Students select their own reading texts with respect to content, level of difficulty, and length.*” (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983: 567).

In short, no one can deny the fact that extensive reading helps greatly in exposing learners to English and especially when the class time is limited as is the case for the Algerian classes. Indeed, the extensive reading enables learners to improve their language competence, progress in their reading

ability, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning.

4.2.2. Intensive Reading

The intensive can be also called the creative learning .It is a process in which learners read a text to explore meaning and to acquire language mechanism .This kind of reading helps learners gain essential practice and reading strategies .These strategies can be either learner related such as the linguistic and the metacognitive strategies, or text related such as the awareness of the text type and text organization.

As for the difference between the extensive and the intensive reading, Hafiz and Tudor mark:

In intensive reading activities, learners are, in the main, exposed to relatively short texts which are used either to exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic, or discursal system of L2, or to provide the bases for targeted reading strategy practice. The goal of extensive reading, on the other hand is to “flood” learners with large quantities of L2 input with few or possibly no specific tasks to perform on this material .

(Hafiz and Tudor ,1989 :5)

In other words, intensive reading is used to refer to short texts that learners are asked to read , to find out the main ideas, and to build their understanding of the text .

4.2.3. Scanning

Scanning is a kind of reading for the purpose of extracting specific information. It trains learners to run their eyes quickly over a text in order to locate specific information (Grellet, 1981). Also, it can be seen as a type of a speed reading technique which is used when the readers want to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or a passage (Richard and Platt, 2003).

Scanning is useful when learners read something for a particular interest without reading the whole text .They use this type of reading to find the information they are looking for., and when they find it, they read it with more attention without caring about the other parts of the text.

4.2.4. Skimming

Harmer (1991) suggested that readers could try to learn to get the general picture of a text. This action is called skimming. It can be defined as a type of rapid reading which is used when a reader wants to get the main idea from a passage. (Platt, Platt and Richard, 1992).

To instil the skill of skim, teachers try to train learners to recognize the key sentence of a passage. The skill of skimming shows readers that one sentence sums up the gist of each paragraph, and this key sentence often appears at the beginning of each paragraph .The purpose of teaching the skill of skimming is to help learners to have an idea of the main points of the text .It entails their ability to pick out the main points rapidly and to disregard what is not essential to their understanding of the text (Grellet1981).

4.3. Teaching Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is an important skill in language teaching and learning .It is taught for a set of goals such as:

1. Enabling learners to read a wide range of texts in English.
2. Developing a knowledge of Language which improves the reading competence.
3. Building schematic knowledge.
4. Helping learners to adopt the reading styles according to the reading purpose (such as skimming and scanning).
5. Raising learners' awareness of the structures of texts.
6. Helping learners to build their critical thinking towards the text.

The modern reading tasks, unlike the classical ones, include three phases: pre-reading, while reading, and post reading procedures.

Actually, the pre-reading activities help motivate learners before the actual reading starts .In this stage, teachers may ask learners about their interest while previewing the text .Drucker proposed the following procedures that can be used as a pre-reading activities :

...Relate the passage students are going to read to something that is familiar to them .Next, provided a brief discussion question that will engage the students, and after, provide an overview of the section they are about to read. Name the selection, introduce the characters, and describe the plot .last, direct the students to read the story and look for particular information .

(Drucker, 2003 :23)

In the same sense, other scholars viewed that a sound approach to teaching reading requires teachers to activate learners' schema during the pre-reading step by helping them recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of the text and by creating discussions about the titles,

subtitles, photographs, and identifying text structure and type .These activities can also be called as pre-reading strategies.

The while reading phase is an interactive process .It aims at developing learners' ability to deal with the text by enhancing their linguistic and cognitive competence .In this step, learners are encouraged to exploit their personal strengths and to revise their background knowledge about the topic so as to better understand the text .Moreover, they need to infer meaning of the unknown words that seem necessary to their understanding of the text .Besides, in the while reading stage, learners should decide on the difficulty and note how hardness or the easiness of the text in order to reconsider and revise their prior questions about the text's content .

Finally, the post reading phase can include assessment activities that should aim to enhance learners' comprehension through the use of different types of exercises .These activities give both teachers and learners the opportunity to discover the misunderstandings and to correct and improve the comprehension of the text .

4.4. Keys to Reading Comprehension

Language researchers have focused on the effective reading strategies that truly improve learners' comprehension. For example, motivation is an important factor that should be enhanced in order to engage learners in the reading process .Therefore should take some responsibility to motivate reading by selecting the appropriate materials and suggesting meaningful conceptual content .

Besides, the reading comprehension syllabus should provide choice of texts so that to perform the reading tasks at higher levels. Another strategy to enhance learners' motivation to reading is seeking and selecting interesting

texts and consider a variety of topics in order to help learners check the fields that suit their interest. Some researchers viewed that the reading comprehension task includes three simple stages : experience, text, and relationship. In the experience step, the teacher leads the learners to a discussion of their pre-existing knowledge or experiences that relate in some way to the reading passage. In other words, this step is called a pre-reading activity.

As for the second step, learners need to deal and interact with the text. In fact this step is done by having learners read short parts of the text and the teacher ask them questions about the content of each part. In this part, the teacher should correct any misunderstanding of the text revealed by learners.

In the final step, the teacher tries to help learners build a relationship between the content of the text and their own knowledge. Consequently, through these steps, the teacher attempts to guide the learners to construct and form a cognitive process through which they understand a written text.

In brief, reading comprehension is a complex process that requires much from both learners and teachers.

4.4.1. Fluency

Reading fluency is important and essential to text comprehension. Indeed, fluency in reading means the capacity of learners to read accurately and build their understanding of the text. Many studies showed that reading fluency depends on the ability to recognize words and their meanings. It includes accuracy and automatic word identification, the decoding ability, and text understanding.

In order to assess fluency, teachers need to listen to their learners reading aloud, and then, give their feedback and corrections about the reading.

4.4.2. Vocabulary knowledge

The learners' lack of vocabulary can be an obstacle to their text comprehension. Although some learners may have the ability to infer meanings of unknown words from the context, they may derive uncertain and incomplete meanings. The goal of vocabulary assessment is, in some way, to determine whether or not learners are able to make meanings to words in various contexts.

Vocabulary knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension. Actually, text understanding requires learners to know the meanings of the individual words and recognize them in the text context. Vocabulary can be taught directly or indirectly providing learners by the words definitions, exposing them to rich contexts, and engaging them in various tasks and projects.

Assessing vocabulary knowledge may occur at different levels. Therefore, one would not confound reading vocabulary with oral vocabulary. Furthermore, learners should know that words have multiple meanings because they may know partial meanings of words, and know the meaning of a word in a specific oral context while they find it difficult to determine its meaning when this word appear in other contexts.

4.4.3. Prior Knowledge

Learners need to be trained to use their prior knowledge to understand texts. This prior knowledge may include many aspects such as world

knowledge, cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and subject matter knowledge.

Teachers need to find out what learners know about the topic and should stimulate them to connect their knowledge to the new information in order to help them better understand the text. Indeed, linking the prior knowledge with the new information helps learners detect the direction of the text and the intent of the author.

4.4.4. Comprehension

Comprehension is an active process in the construction of meaning .It includes using vocabulary knowledge, thinking, and reasoning .Besides, it involves making inferences from words, sentences, and paragraphs of the text.

When reading a text, the final purpose for learners is to understand its content .For this reason, they should learn how to decode sentences and paragraphs and how to use their previous knowledge and information that are related to the text content .Some scholars viewed that comprehension is made up of various components such as fluency in reading, vocabulary knowledge, motivation, and the reading purposes.

Furthermore, comprehension involves the identification of information and the main ideas included in the text .It, also, entails the clarification of the difficult and the unfamiliar aspects of the text such as unclear sentences, difficult vocabulary, or false understanding.

4.5. Indicators of Comprehension

Researchers have showed that there are many types of comprehension useful in helping learners to be interactive readers .This taxonomy is influenced by the work of Pearson and Jonson (1972), and Nuttall (1996).

4.5.1. Literal comprehension

This comprehension refers to the understanding of the meaning of the text such as vocabulary, dates, locations and facts .Questions about literal comprehension can be answered explicitly from the text .Generally, teachers often check their learners’ literal comprehension first to be sure that they have got the basic meaning of the text .

The literal comprehension can be assessed and enhanced by prompting learners to self questions to help them monitor their comprehension .Pushing learners to ask comprehension questions during and after reading helps teachers to better assess their comprehension and discover their misunderstanding as it helps learners check their understanding and adjust it.

The literal comprehension involves also the recognition of the text structure. Learners who are able to recognize the text structure or type are better able to reach a good comprehension of this text. Therefore learners need to be taught how to identify transitional words and how to use subtitles and graphs in order to construct meaning of the text.

4.5.2. Reorganization

Reorganization is the second type of comprehension .It is based on the literal comprehension of the reading passage .In fact, learners use data from different part of the text and link them to get a full comprehension of this text .For example, the learner may read at the beginning of a text that a man named John was born in 1920, and later at the end of this text, he reads that this man died in 1980 .In order to answer the question: “*How old was John when he died ?* ”,the learner needs to combine to pieces of information that are mentioned in different parts of the text .

Questions that serve to assess this kind of comprehension are important because they push learners to examine the entire text by moving from a sentence-by-sentence consideration of the text to a more global understanding.

4.5.3. Making Inferences

The task of making inferences from a text requires more than a literal comprehension. Learners, often, confront problems in answering inference questions because the answers are based on the information which exist in the text but not explicitly mentioned. Indeed, making inferences requires learners to combine their literal comprehension of the text with their own background knowledge. For example, if we take this inference question: "*Do the Americans and the British have the same traditions?*", the answer may not be mentioned explicitly in the text, but it can be induced after reading and understanding the whole text .

4.5.4. Prediction

Prediction is another indicator of comprehension .It involves learners using both their understanding of the text and their own knowledge of the topic in a systematic way to determine what might come or happen next.

There are two varieties of prediction: while reading and post reading .The questions that are related to while reading prediction are different from the post reading prediction questions .For example, learners may read the first paragraph of a text and then asked about what might happen after .On the other hand, post reading prediction questions require learners to find the answers according to their understanding of the text.

Pushing learners to make predictions before they read the text can be included in the pre-reading activities by asking prediction questions that help teachers know how much their learners know about the topic. prediction includes tasks that come with different types such as activating the pre-

acquired knowledge, previewing, and overviewing .These activities aim to encourage learners to use their existing knowledge to facilitate their understanding of the new ideas discovered in the text .In other words, prediction is the task of bridging the known with the new .

The explicit activities that are designed to engage learners in prediction behaviour have proved successful in increasing interest and promoting the overall understanding of the text. Generally, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come (Duke and Pearson 2002). Therefore, learners need to be taught the prediction strategies that help them make hypotheses about what a text may involve and make them set goals of their reading and focus their thinking. This strategy may include asking learners to skim the reading passage and focusing on the key words in the title or in the introduction of text.

4.5.5. Summarizing

Summarizing is the process of identifying the main ideas of the text and reorganizing them in a concise statement that actually entails the essential meaning of the text .This assessment technique provides information about learners' understanding of a text. Besides, research suggests instruction and practice in summarizing not only improve students' ability to summarize a text, but also their overall comprehension of the text content (Duke and Pearson 2002).

However, most of learners have difficulties in making summaries of texts as they are required to sift throughout the text and identify the important and the unimportant ideas in order to use the important ones to build a new concise text that stand for the original one.

4.5.6. Evaluation

Evaluation requires learners to give their personal judgement about the text .For example, a comprehension question such as:”*Do you think that the information in the text can be useful to you?*” demands learners a sort of evaluation to the text .In order to answer this question, learners need to use both their literal understanding of the text and their own knowledge about the topic. Effective readers are strategic as they make prediction, organize information, and interact with text .They evaluate the ideas they are reading about in light of what they already know (Barton and Billmeyer, 1998).

In order to make a good interaction with the text, learners need to be taught how to evaluate before, during, and after reading .They should acquire the skills that help them consider if the text interest them, if the text is accurately presented by the author, and if the author is exaggerating or distorting ideas. In other words, the evaluation of the text by learners can be considered as a personal response as it makes learners show their feelings about the text .

4.6. Assessment of Reading Comprehension

In assessing reading comprehension, teachers need to use various techniques and no single method can actually assess the reading abilities. A reading comprehension test may include gap filling, short questions such as multiple choice questions, true or false questions, and yes-no questions .

The benefits of using short-answer questions based on a reading passage in testing reading comprehension is that the answers need to be sought and expressed by the learner rather than being given. Moreover, this can facilitate the testing at higher order skills,such as interpretation and evaluation, and gives the assessor the opportunity to assume reasonably that the learner truly put the answer for no reason other than he has actually comprehended the text .

The primary goal of reading comprehension tests is, according to (Weir, 2005), to measure reading literacy without emphasizing grammar or spelling. However, in assessing reading, failure to take errors in language use into consideration may lead to the perception that spelling, grammar, and punctuation are not essential to language learning .Therefore, reading comprehension assessment should target not only learners' comprehension of a text but also the elements that facilitate or hamper this comprehension .

In order to actually check learners' understanding of a text, many types of questions should be introduced in assessing learners' comprehension. In fact, approaches to the assessment of reading comprehension have attempted to introduce interactive activities and tasks .The use of questions is an integral part of these activities and well designed comprehension questions would help learners better interact with the text to create or construct meaning .Besides, a variety of comprehension questions helps learners respond to a variety types of comprehension.

4.6.1. Types of Reading Comprehension Tasks

There are several techniques and forms of reading comprehension tasks that can be used in testing learners' comprehension and stimulating their understanding of a text. These techniques may take formal or informal forms. Sally and Katie (2008:27) stated some of these tasks:

4.6.1.1. Yes-No Questions

These are questions that should be answered with either yes or no .However, teachers are recommended to follow up these questions by other types of questions to make sure that learners have understood the text because *Yes/No* questions can be answered correctly by chance.

4.6.1.2. True or False questions

This is another type of a reading test that is familiar to most learners .It consists of a text accompanied by a series of statements. Learners need to decide and mention whether the given statements are true or false according to the text.

This kind of reading comprehension questions provide learners with a set of sentences or statements. For answering these questions, learners are required to read the text and discover the true and the false statements without giving answers in a complex written response .They are good activities for memory of literal details in the text but they are limited in assessing specific comprehension skills such as making inferences and meanings. More importantly, teachers should not rely exclusively on them because, like *Yes/No* questions, learners can give right answers by chance without knowing why these answers are correct.

True or False questions need to be carefully designed because the false answers should target the potential misunderstandings of a text. Besides, the false answers that sound obviously incorrect do not help teachers assess learners' comprehension because learners do not need to understand the text to recognize them as incorrect.

4.6.1.3. Matching

This type is likely to be less familiar to learners, but increasingly common .They are used by many assessors. Some of reading comprehension tests designers may include more than one matching task in their tests.

For doing a matching task, learners need to choose from a list of prompts .These prompts may be statements, headings, or question completion .For

instance, learners can be asked to match a description to the appropriate paragraph, or to match words and phrases to their meanings.

4.6.1.4. WH questions

Wh questions are questions that begin with *Wh* such as : “where”, “why”, “who”, when, and “how” .These questions are useful in providing learners with literal understanding of a text and help them recognize information in the text and make evaluations and personal predictions .

4.6.1.5. Open -Ended Questions

These questions are used in standardised assessments .They are useful in assessing the component skills of comprehension such as the ability of learners to make inferences from the text .In fact, learners are asked different questions for the reason of testing their memory and their comprehension of the text .However, it is important to mention that this form of assessment may have some weaknesses because learners have to formulate verbal or written responses which may underestimate their comprehension because of their language deficits .

4.6.1.6. Multiple-Choice Questions

This type of the reading task is the most familiar to learners .It is composed of a text which can be of any type accompanied by one or more multiple choice items. These choices may be in the form of statements, a question with answers, or incomplete statements with a choice of phrases or words .Generally, there are three or four options and only one of them is the right one .It is important to have statements corresponding to specific paragraphs or sections of the text, but there may be statements that assess comprehension of the whole text .

These questions are based on other forms of questions. For example; a multiple choice question can take the following form:

When was David born?

- a. In 1960
- b. In 1965
- c. In 1967

Generally, this type of questions may have one correct answer when it targets the literal comprehension .Actually, a multiple choice format with “*wh*” question is easier than no-choice “*wh*” question because it pushes learners to check the text to know if any of the choices are discussed .

Developing a good multiple choice question needs a careful consideration .In fact, a question with four choices works best for learners with low proficiency in the target language ,and one of the four choices should sound the right and the desired answer .

Literal comprehension can be checked more effectively by the use of multiple choice questions .Besides, they can also be used for prediction and evaluation. However, these questions need to be followed by other activities to make learners explain their choices .

4.6.1.7. Cloze Tasks

These are tasks which include sentences where a single word is concealed and replaced by another selected word .This assessment activity is used to target learner’ word reading skill and to assess both sentence and passage comprehension. Indeed, learners who have good sentence processing can perform well on cloze tasks. However, it is important to say that cloze tasks may fail to discover learners with the whole text processing difficulties.

4.6.1.8. Gapped Texts

This kind of reading test include texts or diagrams from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs are deleted .These *filling the gaps* tasks can also be used in testing grammar and vocabulary .

In some tasks, learners have to decide what should fill in the gap, while in some others, they are given a series of alternatives for choice. Where words, sentences, or paragraphs are removed, there is an item among the given alternatives that is odd to the text.

Gapped texts offer a task that can be used in testing or assessing learners' reading skills. It can be applied to all types of texts, or dialogues and can be included in lower-level exams and for learners with low-level performance.

4.6.1.9. Proofreading

This kind of tasks includes deliberate errors or mistakes of different types in the text provided. Despite the fact the proofreading activities make part of grammar and vocabulary tests, they can also be used in reading comprehension assessments. In fact, the texts can be of any type and, in most cases, is formed of numbered lines. Some lines may involve an extra, or a misspelt word, or an error of punctuation, while the other lines are correct. At this level, learners need to read the text, mark the correct lines, remove the extra words, and correct the spelling and punctuation errors.

4.6.2. The Criteria of Reading Comprehension Assessment

Some tests can be used to assess both reading and writing as learners are required to write longer responses to answer the questions related to what they have read. These responses can also be assessed as pieces of writing. Similarly; many writing tests include quite a lot of reading. In fact, although they may focus primarily on grammar and vocabulary, they are text based and so assess reading sub-skills. Learners should be aware of this as they sometimes perform poorly in the writing because of their limitations of the reading competence.

More importantly, each type of reading tests is designed to assess different combinations of reading skills. Lower-level tests are designed to measure learners' ability to understand the main idea and some details .Here, only short factual texts should be used for testing .At the intermediate level and above, learners are required to be able to deal with a range of text types, genres, and lengths. More advanced tests are usually designed to assess a greater range of reading skills. According to Sally and Katie (2008:29), reading comprehension assessment should address the following elements:

4.6.2.1. Understanding the Main Ideas

The skill here is skimming or reading for a gist .In fact, learners need to read the text from beginning to end in order to find out the answer to the question .Indeed, it is not possible to find any single section or paragraph that actually provide the right answer to the question because the answer should be derived from understanding the whole text.

For assessing learners' abilities to understand the main ideas of a text, teachers may preferably use multiple choice questions and matching tasks such as the following example:

What does the writer complain about in the text?

- A. overcrowded buses.
- B. Bus stations are poorly maintained.
- C. Children need to be more polite on buses.

4.6.2.2. Finding Specific Information and Details

In order to have learners read for finding out specific information, the reading sub-skill to be used is scanning which means looking through the whole text to point key words and phrases .Most of the time, the words and phrases used in the questions are not found explicitly in the text, so learners should recognize synonyms and expressions closest in meaning .Therefore,

vocabulary knowledge is necessary to learners in order to be able perform well on reading tests.

The suitable tests that can be introduced to assess this sub-skill are those which include multiple choice and the matching tasks such as the following example:

“Match each question in column (A) to its answer in column (B)”

4.6.2.3. Recognizing the Writer’s Attitude

Questions that require learners to discover and state the writer’s opinion have no explicit answers at any one point in the text .In order to have learners appreciate the writer’s attitude or opinion, they should be trained to pick up the meaning of adverbs and modal expressions that can be scattered throughout the text .In order to ask learners about the writer’s attitude, teachers can use multiple choice questions such as the following question :

“The writer thinks that companies who rely on advertisement”

- A. exploit their customers.
- B. must be carefully bridled.
- C. are successful in Germany.
- D.sell good quality products.

4.6.2.4. Identifying the Tone of the Writer

A particular tone of a writer can be appreciated on the basis of information found in many parts of the text and never in one single section or paragraph .Adjectives, adverbs, and modal verbs throughout the text can help learners determine the tone as critical, sarcastic, or admiring. A multiple choice question such as the following one can be used to ask learners to discover the writer’s tone:

The writer’s comments on the media in America are :

- A. critical
- B. Ironic
- C. Admiring

4.6.2.5. Understanding Implications

In order to have learners able to understand the implications or the intentions included in the text, they should be taught how to read between the lines and understand what is not said explicitly rather than seeking the answer in the words of the text .However, it is important to make difference between what the text actually implies and one’s own ideas and attitudes. For example, a multiple choice question that is used to test learners’ understanding of text’s implications can be formed as follows:

The writer implies that female nurses:

- A. are professional.
- B. take their work seriously.
- C. are better than their male counterparts.

4.6.2.6. Identifying the Purpose of the Text

It is important to say that the purpose of the text cannot be stated necessarily in any part of the text .However, grammar can be considered as a good indicator .A text that is aimed to entertain the reader includes narrative tenses, whereas if the writer’s intention is to advise the reader, the text entails structures such as imperatives and modals of obligation .Once again, multiple choice questions are suitable to facilitate the task for learners to identify the purpose for which the text was written .This question, for example, can be introduced as follows :

Which of the following titles best suits the text?

- A. My first day at university.
- B. The diary of a student.
- C. How to be good citizens.

4.6.2.7. Understanding Text Structure and Organization

There are different recognition skills that learners need to learn and use in order to recognize text patterns. These skills can be acquired by exposing learners to scrambled texts of different types so that they can get plenty of practice and experience.

For instance, in narrative texts, sections of the text introduce characters that perform a series of events and actions that create some kind of problem which is eventually solved in some way. Whereas, in descriptive texts, there is a frequent transition from the general to the particular, while in discursive texts, a common pattern includes introducing a problem and providing possible solutions of different values.

Moreover, learners need to know that single paragraphs contain topic sentences and the other sentences in the same paragraph support the topic sentence by offering more details and examples. Thus, Teachers can introduce gap texts or proof reading activities in order to test learners' abilities to recognize the text structure.

4.6.2.8. Understanding Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion is related to the extent to which the elements of the text such as words, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs are connected to one another, while coherence is concerned with the organization and the connection of the ideas and the concepts of the text (Sally and Katie, 2008).

One way to have learners understand the organization of a text is by looking for the relationships between the words and the clauses. This way may include the understanding of the meanings of pronouns and the understanding of the use of the definite articles and the demonstrative adjectives that refer to something that has been mentioned earlier. Besides, it may include the

understanding of the relationships between lexical items such as opposites and synonyms.

In gapped-text activities, learners can use their intuitive guesses about the positions of words, sentences, and paragraphs by seeking these relationships. For this reason, learners can be asked questions about the meaning of a pronoun and its indication. In order to assess learners' competence of understanding cohesion and coherence, teachers can use different tasks such as gapped-texts, proofreading, and multiple choice tests. For example, the following task can be a good sample:

*“Who or what do the underlined items refer to in the following paragraph?
John says he wants to know about his past. He has a classic case of amnesia.
This illness can be caused by an injury in the brain or by a shocking event.”*

4.6.2.9. Understanding the Meaning of Words in Context

Although it is important to know about how much vocabulary learners know, it is rather more important to test their ability to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. This requires learners to look at the context or the environment in which the word or the phrase occurs. For example, for asking learners about the meaning of the word: “Crestfallen”, the question may take the following form:

The word “Crestfallen” in the second paragraph is closest in meaning to:

1. proud
2. relieved
3. disappointed
4. irritated

4.7. Preparation for Reading Comprehension Assessments

Many teachers may not devote enough time to reading assessment since reading tasks can be carried out as homework. Actually; they use class time

very wisely to work on developing reading comprehension skills and strategies and raising learners' awareness of the reading tests. These strategies are developed by Sally and Katie (2008:34):

4.7.1. Developing Task Awareness

Teachers can ensure that learners give considerable value to the reading tests by familiarizing them with the test itself. Indeed, they need to know how many sections or parts there are in the reading test and what kind of tasks exist in each part. Therefore, in preparing their reading tests, teachers need to be aware of several factors such as :

- How long the reading test should last.
- How many parts the test includes.
- How long learners have to do each part.
- What kind of tasks should be introduced in each part?
- How to answer the questions.
- How long the text is.

Moreover, graduation is very important in preparing a reading test. In fact, the kind of tasks and items should be introduced gradually. Ideally, the reading test should cover all reading skills by including gradual and progressive tasks that truly assess these skills.

More importantly, teachers can give information about the tasks used in the reading test, explain what kind of reading these tasks are designed to test, and providing help and procedures to tackle them by presenting specific strategies. This can be done by accompanying each task by an example so that learners can try out the procedure and put the strategy into practice.

4.7.2. Developing Testing Skills and Strategies

Although the reading courses in class may not give out enough time to prepare for tests, it is preferable to use graded materials while preparing for a reading test. Texts, tasks, and the circumstances in which learners practice their reading activities can become increasingly test-authentic- focused on reading tests themselves rather than on the reading in general-as the date of exams or tests gets closer.

Certainly, this approach is so motivating because learners can have enough time and good chances to practice the reading tasks through the reading courses. Preparation for reading tests can be introduced and graded in three ways: by simplifying the tasks, by simplifying the texts, and by gradually familiarizing learners with test conditions .

4.7.2.1. Simplifying Reading comprehension tasks

The tasks included in reading can be simplified in various ways according to the task type. These are some methods that can be applied to task simplification:

- Including fewer questions.
- Including only questions that actually measure a particular skill, e.g. only one attitude or opinion question.
- Including fewer distractors, e.g. few options in multiple choice, and no extra sentences in gapped text. For example, the number of sentences offered for matching should be the same as the number of gaps.
- Avoiding ambiguity in multiple matchings.

- Including distractors that actually offer opportunities to practise a particular test strategy, i.e. multiple choice options which demonstrate a statement that is true but not mentioned in the text .
- Offering some answers and justifying why they are right or wrong.
- Focusing on parts of the text where answers are supposed to be found.

For task simplification, teachers can modify for use materials from past papers, select texts from previous exams, and choose the tasks from exam coursebooks that include simplified tasks.

4.7.2.2. Selecting Texts

The gradual process of developing reading comprehension skills, tests, and strategies should include the application of those strategies and skills to the reading texts. The following table summarises the factors that should be considered in texts’ selection:

Student-Related	Text-Related
<p>Word-recognition ability: How accurately does the student read the words in the text?</p>	<p>Text format: How much print is on the page? How complex are the sentences ?</p>
<p>Fluency: Can the student read the text fluently enough to understand and remember what is being read and to enjoy reading?</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Are there difficult vocabulary words that will make comprehension difficult? Is it necessary to understand the challenging words in order to comprehend the text? If so, can</p>

	difficult words be pretaught ?
<p>Comprehension strategies: Is the student a strategic reader? Does the student monitor and self-correct errors? Does he or she stop and form connections to the text.</p>	<p>Genre: What type of material is it? Is it narrative or expository? If it is expository, is it well organized, with clearly presented ideas in coherent paragraphs?</p>
<p>Interest and motivation: What is the student interested in? What topics will keep his or her attention? Can you give the student a choice of reading material?</p>	<p>Content and concepts: What is the topic of the text? Is the subject matter accessible to the students? If the students do not have sufficient background knowledge to relate to the text, can ideas be pretaught to make it easier for students to access the text?</p>
<p>Background and vocabulary knowledge: What background knowledge does the student bring to the text?</p>	<p>Illustrations/Graphics: Do the graphics support the text? What is the quality of the graphics?</p>

Table 4.1.Factors to Consider When selecting Texts for Students.

(Denton , Bryan,Wexler,Reed, and Vaughn , 2007:38)

In other words, learners should confront only texts at the level of the test itself. Therefore, teachers need to consider the following points when they select and simplify the texts of a reading test:

A) **The length of the text :** the length of a text is very important for learners .In fact, many interesting books or magazines may afford suitable texts for exams .However, these articles may be too long for classroom use though they are useful for extensive reading .Therefore, teachers need to manage to edit or choose cutting paragraphs until the required length is reached .Besides, texts that are too long need to be read many times by the teacher and presented in a summary without changing or the neglecting the meaning of the original vision .

B) **The unknown words:** teachers need to be skilful enough to develop good intuitions about the words that may seem difficult to learners so that they choose texts that contain few unfamiliar words .In Algeria ,learners complain about the texts included in their textbook and many of them have difficulties to understand the meanings of these words .Therefore, teachers should change ,innovate ,and replace the unknown words so as to ensure that every sentence entails few unfamiliar words and enough familiar words ,and to allow learners find out meaning from context .

C) **Unfamiliar structures:** in order to avoid complexity and misunderstanding, the text should not involve too high proportion of grammar and vocabulary that learners have not yet seen .If it is necessary that some structures should be included for the test requirements, teachers should simplify these structures.

For example, if the text is complicated in terms of grammar and vocabulary, teachers may decide to make explicit what is left implicit in the text by adjusting, changing, summarizing, and simplifying what sounds hard for learners.

D) Background knowledge :learners generally enjoy reading text when they feel that they are learning something new .However, they may be lost and irritated by texts that do not take into consideration the cultural level of learners .Indeed, text that may make teachers rolling on the floor by laughter may leave their learners cold .Therefore, teachers can remove and modify some items that refer to places, times, or people but if the text understanding requires too much cultural or specialist knowledge, it is preferable and safest to reject it .

E) The structure of the text: in some cases the structure of the text is not clear to learners, and therefore, much is left up to teachers and learners to make relationships between the parts of the text much more explicit .For instance, if there is a cause and effect relationship that is not clear to learners, teachers can introduce or add some sentences or questions to the text to simplify and clarify the links between the sections and the ideas of the text.

F) The topic of the text: learners may enjoy their practice with the vocabulary that they discover in the exam texts as they may also enjoy reading texts that involve content and style that may not come up in the test. Sometimes, many topics that may be considered too controversial for use by assessors are appropriate and suitable to be included in reading comprehension tests.

In brief, the simplification of texts is necessary and useful, particularly in early testing. However, it is important not to exaggerate in this respect because learners need to feel that they are getting texts at the level of complexity that they are supposed to meet in tests and exams .Teachers should not introduce much change to texts and must preserve as much as possible of the original text. Ideally, learners should be given access to all kinds of authentic texts that they should read for test and non-test purposes.

4.7.2.3. Introducing Test Conditions

The classroom conditions under which learners do and practice their reading comprehension tasks can be gradually approximated to test and exam conditions .For example, after each ordinary reading task, learners can be pushed to discuss their answers in pairs or in groups before exposing them the whole class .

Moreover, learners can be given homework or reading tasks to do outside the class .This technique offers a degree of freedom to learners as they can spend as much time as they need on the reading task by reading and concentrating carefully on the tasks, using dictionaries to check meaning ,and exchanging their answers under non-classroom conditions .As the course develops, these conditions can be gradually eliminated so that most reading tasks are done under conditions like those of tests and exams .The transition from non- test to test conditions can occur by :

- . Limiting the time devoted to each task .
- . Asking learners to work individually.
- . Giving no guidance about how to approach the task.
- . Preventing the use of dictionaries.
- . Asking learners to present their answers in a cleaned and organized form.

4.7.3. Improving the Reading Speeds

Many learners may have problems with timing when they do a reading test. Therefore, it is important to make them know how much they should read and how much time they must devote for a reading task .In addition, teachers need to train their learners how to manage their time so that they do not waste too much time on one part of the test and then devote short time for the remaining parts.

Actually, they should make them aware of time limitations at the beginning of the course by asking them to read and understand a text of the maximum length at a speed that gives out them time to do the accompanying tasks. For example, when the time allotted to a reading task is up, their answers should be collected regardless of whether they have finished or not. Indeed, this may frustrate learners but the final goal will be reached.

Furthermore, it is important to set a limited time for each task and stick to it. During the ordinary reading activities, the teacher can remind and warn learners about the allotted time so as to accustom them to keep an eye on the clock .For the reason of encouraging learners to give importance to timing, teachers can reward and congratulate those who finish their task within the allotted time .This makes learners understand that everyone can do the job without going over time.

In addition, helping learners to cope with unfamiliar vocabulary is an important factor in reading speeds .Usually, slow readers stick on the individual words, whereas the fluent ones are more aware of the meanings beyond the sentences .This help can be provided by teaching learners to:

- Make distinctions between essential and non-essential words.
- Find out meaning from context.
- Checking meaning from words forms.

4.7.4. Using Reading Comprehension Strategies

Besides developing their reading skills and familiarity with the reading comprehension tasks, learners need to be taught a series of reading procedures

and strategies that apply to all kinds of reading activities. The following table entails before reading, during reading, and after reading strategies:

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
Establish purpose for reading.	Identifying the main ideas and supporting the main details.	Summarize
Activate background knowledge.	Create mental images Make inferences.	Make inferences
Make predictions.	Make informed predictions/ verify predictions.	Verify predictions
Generate questions about the text.	Generate questions about the text.	Generate question about the text
Evaluate test structure.	Use text structure as a frame work for comprehension. Monitor understanding of words and use vocabulary strategies. Monitor Comprehension.	Summarize what was learnt to respond to the questions.

Table 4.2. Strategies Used by Effective Readers

(Denton , Bryan,Wexler,Reed, and Vaughn , 2007:66)

This table lists some reading strategies that learners need to employ before, during, and after reading in order to get full text understanding. In fact, activating the prior knowledge in the beginning, making predictions and inferences, identifying the main ideas, and monitoring the text's understanding are useful strategies that should be developed in reading comprehension courses.

4.7.5. Meeting Learners' Needs

The ultimate goal of assessment is to discover students' needs and determine specific instruction. However, EFL teachers find it difficult to adequately instruct learners with a variety of reading comprehension needs. The following table states some of these needs and provides the type of instruction that correspond them:

Student Needs	Focus On
Adequate Skills : good decoding ability, average vocabulary knowledge, but poor text comprehension	Comprehension strategies +Vocabulary
Low fluency level and poor comprehension, but adequate word recognition	Comprehension strategies+Vocabulary+fluency practice with connected text

Weak decoding ability, slow reading, and poor text comprehension	Comprehension strategies+ vocabulary +word recognition practice with connected text
Severely impaired decoding ability, very low fluency,and poor text comprehensio	Explicit, systematic instruction in decoding and wordrecognition+fluency+vocabulary+comprehension

Table4.3 : Categories of Secondary Struggling Readers

(Denton , Bryan,Wexler,Reed, and Vaugh, 2007 :34)

This table defines some of students’ reading comprehension needs and offers the kind of instruction that teachers should apply in order to meet these needs. Clearly, focusing on comprehension strategies and vocabulary knowledge can be considered as an effective method to overcome reading comprehension deficits.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, many issues related to reading comprehension have been discussed. Actually, It gave information about the types of reading, the types of comprehension, and the keys to reading comprehension .Besides, it provided some implications about how to assess reading comprehension skills as it emphasized the most common reading task types that can be used in assessing these skills.

Moreover, it listed the specific criteria that should be considered in reading comprehension assessment and gave examples of tasks and questions that actually test this skill. In addition, this chapter indicated how learners can be informed, motivated, and prepared for a reading test. Indeed, teachers can design graded reading courses, choose simplified texts, and gradually familiarize their learners with testing conditions.

Furthermore, this chapter focused also on the need to improve the reading speeds and discussed how learners can deal with unfamiliar vocabulary when they read a text for exam and non-exam purposes.

In the end, the fourth chapter looked at the general reading strategies that should be taught to learners for the reason of helping them read cleverly and pick out the meaning of the text .These strategies can be practiced during the ordinary reading courses and should be used in any assessment activity.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This Study tried to investigate the importance of assessment in the Algerian EFL classrooms. Actually, it aimed at bringing some details about the process of assessment and specifically focused on reading comprehension as an essential skill in English language teaching. In fact, it showed that teachers need to assess this skill accurately and adequately in order to get a clear view about their learners' needs. Therefore, the assessment practices

should depend on clear criteria so as to indicate and inform perfectly both teachers and learners about their achievements.

The current research was conducted in the form of a case study and combined both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data collection. Its main objective was to give answers to the following research questions:

4. What are the advantages of assessment for both teachers and learners?
5. How can reading comprehension skills be appropriately assessed?
6. What are the difficulties that cause reading comprehension failure?

Thus, this research intended to investigate and confirm the following hypotheses:

4. Teachers conduct assessment activities in order to reveal learners' needs and to improve classroom instruction.
5. Assessment of reading comprehension should include multiple techniques and should depend on clear criteria.
6. The lack of vocabulary knowledge leads to major reading comprehension deficits.

This thesis comprised four chapters: the first chapter gave a literature review about the aspects of classroom assessment and highlighted its importance, types, tools, and benefits. As for the second chapter, it intended to provide a general view about ELT with reference to the Algerian secondary schools. In fact, it investigated the status of English in Algeria and explained the process of ELT as far as secondary learners are concerned. Chapter three included the research design, methodology, data collection, and data analyses. Besides, it included the analyses and the interpretations of the main

results. The fourth chapter concluded the whole work and provided some recommendations and suggestions about the assessment of reading comprehension skills.

Furthermore, this study entailed some definitions, explanations, and answers about some challenging questions and problems concerning the assessment of reading comprehension. In this respect, one can say that developing pupils' learning abilities and enhancing their levels of reading and understanding different types of texts involves an adequate integration of many processes. This can occur through seeking and implementing useful assessment strategies that actually illustrate the difficulties that interfere with reading comprehension such as drawing inferences, decoding words, understanding figurative language, and monitoring comprehension.

Actually, this research argued that assessing all components of reading comprehension is a task that requires different methods and techniques that lead learners to demonstrate their abilities and needs. It is through the continuous classroom assessment that EFL teachers can inform and adjust their teaching practices.

Generally, assessment is aimed to maximize and improve the teaching-learning process by providing copious opportunities for learners to discover their weaknesses and to raise their learning standards. This, also, can be reached by linking assessment results to classroom instruction and by providing constructive activities that truly conform to learners' needs.

Obviously, assessment procedures have significant advantages for both learners and EFL teachers. Indeed, it is considered as a classroom process that helps them focus their attention on the important aspects of any subject of learning. Moreover, it encourages the learning strategies, raises opportunities

to practice language skills, offers information about the learning outcomes, and consolidates successful learning. Besides, it develops the sense of self evaluation, monitors the learning progress, and increases the learners' performance.

As far as reading comprehension is concerned, there is an increasing demand for thoughtful and adequate assessment plans that include appropriate methods and useful tools that determine the pupils' needs and help them understand the expectations of their learning. In other words, this kind of assessment should be considered as a comprehensive approach that is tailored to the objectives of the classroom instruction. Indeed, reading comprehension is a complex process that gathers several inseparable skills which require sufficient time so as to be perfectly taught and assessed.

In addition, EFL teachers need to use a wide variety of texts that enhance learners' understanding and provide them with knowledge of various text structures. The following points can be considered as key criteria to reading comprehension assessment:

- . Identifying the main ideas
- . Finding out facts and details
- . Identifying sentence and paragraph sequence
- . Understanding language and vocabulary
- . Recognizing cause and effect
- . Making comparison and contrasts
- . Distinguishing fact from opinion
- . Making predictions
- . Understanding words meanings from context
- . Applying prior knowledge
- . Drawing conclusions and deciding about the final understanding.

In addition, this study proved that vocabulary knowledge is a key element to reading comprehension. In fact, both learners and teachers admit that the lack of vocabulary is a major obstacle to successful reading

comprehension learning. Actually, the assessment results revealed that most of learners do not reach a good text comprehension because of their vocabulary weaknesses. Therefore, teachers are required to adjust and enhance their teaching to overcome this obstacle. This can take place by devoting considerable time to vocabulary instruction throughout the reading course and by asking learners to learn more vocabulary items through the use of dictionaries.

Moreover, the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies can bring effective solutions to many problems such as reading disabilities and poor comprehension. For example, teachers can provide a sort of a reciprocal teaching through which they can provide instructional strategies that lead to interactions and discussions between the teacher and the learner .Of course, the reciprocal teaching allows teachers to explain why, when, and how the reading strategies can be used in order to reach higher learning outcomes .In addition, it engages both teachers and learners in a cooperating work in which they can identify the purpose of the reading task and provide opportunities for useful assessment practices .

Besides, it is important to note that, at the secondary level, the reading comprehension tests should avoid tricky tasks, cleverly worded questions, or complex sentences so as not to discourage, mislead, or undermine learners. Instead, these tests should include questions and activities that cover all aspects of the text in a clear and an unambiguous way.

In brief, assessment of reading comprehension skills can be conducted through the use of multiple techniques and strategies that provide evidence about learners' real abilities .On these bases, teachers need to modify and enhance their teaching according to the information provided by the assessment activities. In fact, the ultimate goal of assessment is to serve and

improve both the teaching and the learning process. This can occur by setting clear objectives, gathering information about learners, and providing constructive and corrective classroom instruction.

The results of this study could lead us to ask further questions about the process of assessment. The following questions could open the door to further research: Are the Algerian teachers autonomous in selecting assessment tools and procedures? How can they link the curriculum requirements and the assessment results to meet learners' needs? Does the current teaching approach allow for a good assessment practice?

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Pupils' Questionnaire

Dear pupils,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions. This questionnaire aims at gathering information about your learning and your needs concerning the reading comprehension skill. It, also, aims to give you the opportunity to show your wants and preferences.

.Age:

.Year:

.School:

1. How long have you been learning English?

07years

08years

09years

more

2.Do you think that English is important for your education?

Yes

No

I do not know

3.Are you motivated to learn English?

Yes

No

1.If yes,why?

a-It is an easy language

b-It is an enjoyable language

c-It is the language of world communication

d-It is a global language

2.If no,why?

a-It is hard

b-It is not important

c-It is not well taught

4.How do you find your learning of English?

Easy

Complicated

Hard

5.Do you use English out of the classroom?

Yes

No

6.How do you want to learn English?

a-Using dictionaries

b-Using translation

c-Using only English in class

d-Working in groups

e-Working individually

f-Practicing more activities

g-Communicating in class

7.In which area of language you think you need to learn more?

Grammar

Listening

Reading

Vocabulary

Speaking

Writing

8.Do you think that reading is an important skill?

Yes

No

9. What do you usually read?

Short stories

Short texts

Magazines

10. What kind of texts do you like to read?

History

Culture

Adventure

Humour

fantasy

11. Do you use any reading comprehension strategies?

Yes

No

12. When you finish your reading, can you make a summary of what you read?

I can

I cannot

13. When you are asked to answer the reading comprehension questions, you generally answer:

All of them

Most of them

Few of them

14. What causes a reading failure?

a-The lack of vocabulary

b-The lack of reading activities in class

c-The lack of reading strategies

15. How do you find the reading material in class?

good

Interesting

complicated

APPENDIX 2

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions related to the teaching and the assessment of your learners' reading comprehension skill. You are also requested to give your proposals and suggestions about the approach and the strategies which are applied to the teaching of the English language.

1. How long have you been teaching English?

Years

2. How do you find the syllabus of English?

Suitable

Interesting

Hard

3. Do your learners like English?

Yes

No

To some extent

Please justify:

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

4. How do you find the Competency – Based Approach?

Useful

Complicated

Useless

5. Do you actually apply this approach in class?

Yes

Not perfectly

No

Please justify:

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

6. In which area of language you think your learners need to learn more?

Grammar

Pronunciation

Listening

Reading

Vocabulary

Communication

Speaking

Writing

7. When you teach the reading skill, what strategies do you use?

a-Using L1

b-Using only L2 for explanation

c-Asking learners to use dictionaries

d-Using the reading passage as the focus for grammar and vocabulary

e-Focusing on learners' comprehension

f-Negotiating the words' meanings with learners

g-Teaching other sub-skills through reading, such as pronunciation

h-Improving learners' initiative

I-Improving learners' self assessment

8. What kind of assessment tools do you prefer?

- A-Tests
- B-Classroom activities
- C-Project
- D- Multiple tools

9. What test techniques do you apply to assess reading comprehension?

- A-Multiple choice questions
- B-Filling the gaps activitie
- C-Asking the learners to write summaries
- D-Asking the learners to explain and discuss the main idea
- E-Focusing on the reading comprehension questions
- F-Focusing on words' meanings

10. When you assess reading comprehension, what kind of difficulties and obstacles do your learners generally meet?

- A-Lack of motivation in class
- B-Lack of the reading fluency
- C-Lack of vocabulary and comprehension
- Others:.....

11. Do you use the assessment results in designing your courses?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

Please, justify your answer:

.....

.....

.....
.....

12. As a teacher of English, what techniques do you suggest for teaching and assessing the reading skill?

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

13. What do you propose to improve the teaching and the learning of English in Algeria?

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

Thank you so much for your help.

APPENDIX 3

SUGGESTED TYPES OF TASKS FOR READING COMPREHENSION

- Choosing (all streams) / giving the general idea of the text (LLE)
- Answering multiple choice questions
- True / false statements
- Locating the right paragraph
- Filling the table with information from the text
- Putting ideas in the right order according to their occurrence in the text
- Answering comprehension questions
- Choosing (all streams) / giving a title to the text (LLE)
- Identifying type of discourse
- Identifying type of text
- Matching words from the text with their definitions
- Finding words in the text whose definitions are given
- Giving opposites keeping the same roots
- Giving opposites, synonyms to words from the text
- Filling gaps with a number of words
- Re ordering scrambled sentences into a paragraph
- Matching statements from A with statements from B
- Summarizing the text

APPENDIX 4

A Sample of Reading Comprehension Activity

Read the text carefully and answer the questions.

British and American people are similar in many ways, but in expressing feelings they haven't much in common. Nearly all the Americans believe that it is better to share what they think or feel than hide it. Almost all of them enjoy talking about their own experiences even with foreign visitors the first time they come into contact with them. When some of them are upset they prefer to cry rather than retain their tears. Few Americans consider it bad to show anger in public. Many of them would rather let all of it out and say what they feel in order not to make matters worse.

In contrast, the British people have the tendency to avoid showing strong emotion of any kind. They don't like to show or talk about their feelings. They rather prefer hiding them because people who reveal their emotions are thought to be weak and bad-mannered. Few British people dare to show even a little anger in public places. However, this attitude is less common today than it used to be. Many British youths show feelings of affection in public.

(New Prospects pp.

174).

Questions

1. Which of the following titles best suits the text?

The American society

The British culture

Feelings

2. To which type does this text belong ?

History

culture

fantasy

adventure

3. Are these statements true, false, or not mentioned?

1. Americans and British people are similar in expressing feelings.
2. Few Americans prefer to reveal their emotions.
3. Americans never share their feelings with foreigners.
4. British people do not show their feelings in public.
5. Today, the British youths dare to express their feelings in public.

4. Who or what do the underlined words refer to in the text?

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| They(1)..... | Them(1)..... |
| It..... | they(2)..... |
| | Them(2)..... |

5. Answer the following questions according to the text.

1. Are the Americans and the British similar in expressing feelings?
.....
....
2. How do Americans behave when they are upset?
.....
....
3. Why do Americans prefer to show their anger in public?
.....
....
4. Why don't British people show strong emotions in public?
.....
....

6. Find in the text words or phrases closest in meaning to the following .

- emotions=..... Sad= speak=.....
Type=.....

7. Find in the text words or phrases which are opposites to the following.

Similarly #..... strong #.....

Hide #..... more#.....

Old people#.....

8. Transcribe the following words.

Tears places foreign rather hide

.....

.....

9 . Give a short summary to the text in no more than five lines .

Summary

This work tries to focus on the concept of assessment and its significance as a pedagogical instrument in the teaching-learning process. It, mainly, emphasises the assessment of reading comprehension with reference to EFL classrooms in the Algerian secondary School. On the basis of the results obtained from the questionnaires designed for both teachers and learners, this study argued that assessment of reading comprehension is important for ELT and should include multiple strategies and techniques so as to guide and inform accurately EFL teachers about their learners' needs and abilities. Thus, it recommended and suggested some criteria that should be used in this kind of assessment in order to point out these needs and offer useful instruction.

Key words: Assessment- Reading comprehension -Learners' needs - ELT

Résumé

Ce travail essaie de se concentrer sur le concept d'évaluation et son importance comme un instrument pédagogique qui fait partie du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage. Il, met principalement l'accent sur l'évaluation des compétences en lecture de compréhension relative aux élèves dans les lycées algériens. Sur les bases des résultats obtenus à partir des questionnaires conçus pour les enseignants et les élèves, cette étude fait valoir que l'évaluation de la compréhension en lecture est importante pour l'enseignement de la langue anglaise et devrait inclure des stratégies et des techniques multiples de manière pour guider et informer avec précision les enseignants sur les besoins et les capacités des apprenants. Ainsi, il a recommandé et a suggéré des critères qui pourraient être utilisés dans ce type d'évaluation dans le but de souligner ces besoins et de présenter un enseignement efficace.

Mots clés: Evaluation-compréhension de la lecture- Les besoins des apprenants-L'enseignement de la langue anglaise

ملخص

يحاول هذا العمل التركيز على مفهوم التقييم وأهميته كأداة تربوية ضرورية لعملية التعليم والتعلم. هذا وتركز هذه الدراسة بشكل رئيسي على تقييم مهارات القراءة والفهم لدى التلاميذ في المدارس الثانوية الجزائرية. وعلى أساس النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبيان الموجه للأساتذة و التلاميذ على حد سواء، بينت هذه الدراسة أن عملية تقييم القراءة والفهم مهمة لتدريس اللغة الانجليزية بحيث أنها يجب أن تتضمن استراتيجيات وتقنيات متعددة تتيح للأساتذة الوقوف والتعرف على مستوى وقدرات التلاميذ التعليمية. وبالتالي اقترح هذا البحث بعض المعايير التي ينبغي أن تستخدم في هذا النوع من التقييم من أجل تحديد القدرات وتحسينها.

الكلمات المفتاحية التقييم- القراءة والفهم- متطلبات التلاميذ- تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

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**Assessment of Reading Comprehension Skills:
Case of 3 A.S. Students at El Arbi Abdelkader Bouguirat
Secondary School, Mostaganem**

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages
In Candidacy for the Degree of Magister in T.E.F.L and Applied
Linguistics*

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Résumé

This thesis has tried to shed light on the concept of assessment and its importance as a pedagogical tool which makes part of the teaching-learning process. It, mainly, emphasises the assessment of reading comprehension skills with reference to EFL classrooms in the Algerian secondary School. Therefore, a case study of 30 3rd year pupils, and 10 EFL teachers from different schools has been developed. This extended work includes four interrelated chapters. The first one is an introduction to the process of classroom assessment and its tools and techniques and its advantages for both teachers and learners and gives a review to the different types and linear steps of assessment. The second chapter emphasizes the process of teaching the English language in Algerian secondary school. In fact, it intends to give a review of the status of English in Algeria and the considerations given to this language by the Algerian educationalists. Moreover, it states the new approaches and techniques applied to the teaching of English in Algeria. The third chapter is, in fact, the core of the thesis as it includes the research instruments, the findings, and the discussions about the assessment of reading comprehension skills. As for the fourth chapter, it is devoted to give some suggestions and implications about reading comprehension assessment.

Assessment of reading comprehension is one of the most essential practices to both teaching and learning. It includes a number of tools and techniques that should be used in class in order to help teachers better understand their learners' needs, wants, and worries. It is, in other words, a pedagogical and educational task that teachers need to conduct in order to gather information about their learners so as to identify properly the strengths and the weaknesses of their students.

Generally, assessment raises many opportunities for teachers to identify their teaching objectives and to know the extent to which the anticipated goals are reached . Actually, it makes the teaching-learning process more successful and consistent by linking and adjusting the instruction to assessment results .Clearly, assessment can be viewed as a teaching practice that is designed to collect data about students' learning in order to make decisions about the most useful and constructive classroom instruction .

In addition, assessment procedures should have positive impacts on the learning process .In fact, it needs to entail effective techniques and strategies that push learners to demonstrate their real achievements . Indeed, the ways learners are assessed may have different affects on their learning ,and therefore, a well designed assessment is the one which have clear purposes and which makes learners actually show the extent to which they have grasped the classroom instruction .

More importantly, assessment needs to be conducted fairly and adequately so as to improve and monitor learners' progress .Thus, it should be consistent with the previously provided courses in class by taking into account the requirements that help attain a successful learning .Ideally, the ultimate goals of assessment is to provide opportunities to all learners to maximize and improve their learning process. Therefore, skillful teachers are those who implement continuous classroom assessment and use the results to make their students aware about their abilities .This can occur by providing an effective feedback that informs learners about their weaknesses and strengths and offers solutions that help them enhance their learning capacities .

This research study attempts, particularly, to illustrate the process of assessing reading comprehension skills with reference to 3rd year secondary school pupils .In fact, this kind of assessment have put many challenges to both teachers and learners because of its significant importance in language teaching .In this respect, teachers always try to precise the important ingredients that constitute reading comprehension so as to seek the elements

and the tools that truly assess each part of this skill . In addition, it is important to mention that the use of the appropriate means to assess reading comprehension helps effectively teachers not only to discover the weakness of their learners but also the teaching strategies that help them improve their reading comprehension skill .

Furthermore, assessment of reading comprehension is a task that includes various measures and criteria that should provide evidence about how well learners are able to read, understand, and interpret different kinds of texts .Obviously, specific activities can be designed to assess learners' abilities to read and understand words' meanings, sentences , and paragraphs . Moreover, many kinds of comprehension questions can be used to know whether learners have built a reasonable understanding of the whole text or not. Indeed, many approaches to reading comprehension assessment have attempted to introduce interactive activities and tests which include useful comprehension questions that help learners better interact with the text and stimulate them to create appropriate understanding of that text . Therefore, this research tries to mention the effective and the useful techniques and strategies that can be applied in class in order to successfully assess all reading comprehension skills .

One of the purposes of assessment is to discover the reasons that lead to learners' failure in any subject .As for reading comprehension, this study attempts to illustrate the problems that leads to learners' failure in this subject and provides some evidence about the role of assessment in detecting the causes of reading comprehension deficits. In fact , this research focuses ,in some of its parts , on the aspects that lead to poor achievements in reading comprehension and tries to provide some solutions to improve learners' capacities to read fluently and to achieve higher levels of texts' comprehension .

This research work entails four chapters .The first one is devoted to the process of classroom assessment and its role in the teaching-learning process

Precisely, this part of the study attempts to provide a literature review of assessment as it gives some definitions and descriptions to the different types, methods, and benefits of assessment. As for the second chapter, it emphasizes the process of English language teaching in Algeria. Indeed, it focuses on the importance and the need to English in Algeria, and especially, in the Algerian secondary schools. Particularly, this second chapter of the this research highlights the syllabus, the methods, and the objectives of ELT with reference to the 3rd year secondary school students. More importantly, it tackles the process of both teaching and assessing reading comprehension with relation to the pupils' textbook "New Prospects". Moreover, this chapter deals with some other aspects of ELT in Algeria.

With respect to the third chapter, it can be considered as the core of the whole study. It, in fact, includes the research methodology and the data analyses of this research work. It contains the two questionnaires of the research and provides the answers and the discussions of both teachers and learners' answers. It is worthy to note that the steps of the research was carried out in the Secondary School of El-Arbi Abdelkader-Bouguirat. This research work included thirty pupils "of 3em AS" from the same secondary school and ten EFL teachers from different secondary schools.

With regard to the fourth chapter, it is aimed to offer some implications to teaching and assessing reading comprehension as far as ELT is concerned. In this sense, this part of the research provides some important strategies and techniques that help teachers better assess reading comprehension skills. Also, it includes some definitions, descriptions, and clarifications about teaching and assessing reading comprehension as an essential skill to the learning of the English Language. Obviously, this chapter is an important part as it concludes and sums up the whole study with significant ideas and suggestions.

This study specifically aims to provide convincing answers to the following research questions:

7. What are the purposes and the advantages of assessment for both teachers and learners?
8. How can reading comprehension skills be appropriately assessed?
9. What are the difficulties that cause reading comprehension failure?

The above mentioned questions are answered in the body of this thesis .In fact, one needs to read all the four chapters in order to get clear answers and explanations. More importantly, these questions are explored on the bases of the following hypotheses:

7. Teachers conduct assessment activities in order to reveal learners' needs and to improve classroom instruction.
8. Assessment of reading comprehension should include multiple techniques and should depend on clear criteria.
9. The lack of vocabulary knowledge leads to major reading comprehension deficits.

Obviously, these hypotheses are tested through the research tools that were used in this study .Indeed, the obtained results were considered and discussed with relation to EFL Algerian classrooms and the suggestions and the perceptions are put in this dissertation according to the views, the worries, and the demands of both EFL teachers and the third year secondary pupils .

In this study , two broad approaches of research were used : qualitative research method and quantitative research method .As for the qualitative research method, it is favoured by many researchers and has been adopted in the field of human sciences .It is an approach which is based on making enquiries ,exploration ,and discovery .As Wiersma (1995) put it : **“Qualitative research investigates the complex phenomenon experienced by the participants by examining people’s words and actions in**

descriptive ways” .Actually, the findings ,in this approach, address and illuminate the “why” and try to find answers and solutions as final results .

In respect to the quantitative research method, it is an approach which is favoured by the fundamental sciences .In fact, it entails the construction of hypotheses that can be assessed by gathering evidence and measuring it in an empirical way .It is based on statistical analyses of large amount of information .In brief, the quantitative research method addresses the “what”, the “where”, and the “when”.

This study is conducted by the use of two questionnaires .The first one is designed to 30 third year secondary school students while the 2nd is administered to 10 EFL teachers from different secondary schools .In fact, the questionnaire is a useful research instrument that allows a wider sampling and gathers different and various responses to the same questions .These responses can be used as evidence in finding facts achieving results .In addition , the questionnaire is considered as an effective tool of research as it provides autonomy to the participants by giving enough time to think about the answers and to illustrate freely their views and thoughts . Besides, the questionnaire is an important instrument that helps the researcher gather evidence by translating the research hypotheses into questions .As Wray and Bloomer (2006 :158) put it : ***“The questionnaire is useful for surveying a lot people in many different locations ”*** . More importantly, questionnaires proved easier to quantify and analyze results .

The main research instruments in this study have been questionnaires .One of these questionnaires was designed to elicit the views of thirty 3rd year pupils from LArbi Abdelkader-Bouguirat Secondary School . The pupils’ questionnaire entails twenty questions that sought to gather data about learners attitudes, beliefs, and needs.The main focus of the pupils’ questionnaire is to achieve an overview and to find out a clear data about the assessment of reading comprehension skills .

The second questionnaire has been administered to ten EFL teachers from different secondary schools .This questionnaire entails twelve questions that have been aimed to collect teachers' opinions, worries, and proposals about teaching and assessing reading comprehension within the application of the Competency-based approach .Moreover, teachers' questionnaire included some questions about the teaching and the learning of the English language in order to detect the problems and seek the solutions from teachers' views .

Many questions in both questionnaires have taken the form of multiple choice questions in order to help both teachers and learners discover and select the suitable answers . Besides, some questions included gaps for additional answers and proposals. In fact, teachers were asked to justify some of their answers for the reason of precisising and clarifying the motives behind their choices .

Furthermore, the pupils' questionnaire was discussed in class with the presence of the teacher of English .Indeed, all the questions were explained orally to learners in order to facilitate the task for them and to guide them to express their opinions and to demonstrate their demands. More importantly, the responses of learners were debated and discussed in class with learners so as to receive their real needs and wants and to listen to them about their learning difficulties especially the ones that concern reading comprehension .

The evidence collected from the responses of both teachers and learners have been analyzed and interpreted in way that leads to give convincing answers to the research questions of this study . This evidence has been explored according to the hypotheses mentioned in this research in order to reach the research purpose . In fact, learners and teachers' answers and proposals have been the bases of the findings and the results of this thesis .

Assessment of reading comprehension in EFL classrooms is one of the most important tasks in language teaching .Indeed, teachers need to assess this skill accurately in order to get a clear view about their learners' needs

.Therefore, the assessment practices should depend on clear criteria so as to indicate and inform perfectly both teachers and learners .

This study was aimed to bring some details about the process of assessment and specifically focused on reading comprehension as an essential skill in English language teaching .In fact, it included definitions, explanations, and answers about some challenging questions and problems concerning the assessment of reading comprehension .In this respect, one can say that developing pupils' learning abilities and enhancing their levels of reading and understanding different types of texts involves an adequate integration of many processes .This can occur through seeking and implementing useful assessment strategies that actually illustrate the difficulties that interfere with reading comprehension such as drawing inferences, decoding words, understanding figurative language, and monitoring comprehension .

This study has been designed to include and describe the empirical phase of this research .It defined the specific area of the research and explained the research procedures and the methodological steps that have been the bases of this study.Moreover, it defined the participants in this research and contained the analyses of the two questionnaires and the interpretations of the results .

More importantly, this study is considered as an investigation of the process of assessing reading comprehension .In fact , it sought to emphasize how reading comprehension skills can be adequately assessed and tried to show the importance of this assessment in the development of reading comprehension and language learning.Actually, chapter three checked to find out the appropriate tools and the suitable strategies that teachers use to assess reading comprehension .

In addition, this study entailed the analyses and the interpretations of the responses, the views ,and the opinions expressed by both teachers and learners . In fact, they put significant remarks and explained their needs and demands

not only about the process of assessment but also about the teaching and the learning of the English language .

It is worthy to note that learners and EFL teachers gave important proposals and views to improve the process of assessment and put their recommendations about the role of assessment in enhancing the whole teaching-learning Process .In brief, it can be said that assessment of reading comprehension is a means of developing and increasing learners' capacities in this skill .

Assessing all components of reading comprehension is a task that requires different methods and techniques that lead learners to demonstrate their abilities and needs .It is through the continuous classroom assessment that EFL teachers can inform and adjust their teaching practices .Generally, assessment is aimed to maximize and improve the teaching-learning process by providing copious opportunities for learners to discover their weaknesses and to raise their learning standards .This, also, can be reached by linking assessment results to classroom instruction and by providing a constructive feedback .

Obviously, assessment procedures have significant advantages for both learners and EFL teachers .Indeed, it is considered as a classroom process that helps them focus their attention on the important aspects of any learning subject .Moreover, it encourages the learning strategies, raises opportunities to practice language skills, offers information about the learning outcomes, and consolidate successful learning.Besides, it develops the sense of self evaluation, monitors the learning progress, and increases the learners' performance.

As far as reading comprehension is concerned, there is an increasing demand for thoughtful and adequate assessment plans that include appropriate methods and useful tools that determine the pupils' needs and help them understand the expectations of their learning .In more clear words, this kind of assessment should be considered as a comprehensive approach that is tailored

to the objectives of the classroom instruction .Indeed, reading comprehension is a complex process that gather several inseparable skills which require sufficient time so as to be perfectly taught and assessed .In addition, EFL teachers need to use a wide variety of texts that enhance learners' understanding and provide them with knowledge of various text structure.The following points can be considered as key criteria to reading comprehension assessment :

- . Identifying the main ideas
- . Finding out facts and details
- . Identifying sentence and paragraph sequence
- . Understanding language and vocabulary
- . Recognizing cause and effect
- . Making comparison and contrasts
- . Distinguishing fact from opinion
- . Making predictions
- . Understanding words meanings from context
- . Applying prior knowledge
- . Drawing conclusions and deciding about the final understanding.

Moreover, the explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies can bring effective solutions to many problems such as reading disabilities and poor comprehension .For example, teachers can provide a sort of a reciprocal teaching through which they can provide instructional strategies that lead to interactions and discussions between the teacher and the learner .Of course, the reciprocal teaching allows teachers to explain why, when, and how the reading strategies can be used in order to reach higher learning outcomes .In addition, it engages both teachers and learners in a cooperating work in which they can identify the purpose of the reading task and provide opportunities for useful assessment practices .Furthermore, teaching and assessing reading comprehension through the think aloud procedure is one of the important techniques that help teachers discover their learners' thoughts and ideas during the reading task .In fact, learners are given the chance to control and improve their comprehension by asking questions while reading instead of drawing false conclusions about the text meaning without having got a full

understanding .Besides, it is important to note that ,at the secondary level, the reading comprehension tests should avoid tricky tasks ,cleverly worded questions, or complex sentences so as not to discourage, mislead, or undermine learners .Instead, these tests should include questions and activities that cover all aspects of the text in a clear and an unambiguous way .

In brief, assessment of reading comprehension skills can be conducted through the use of multiple techniques and strategies that provide evidence about learners' real abilities .On these bases, teachers need to modify and enhance their teaching according to the information provided by the assessment activities .In fact, the ultimate goal of assessment is to serve and improve both the teaching and the learning process. This can occur by setting clear objectives, gathering information about learners, and providing constructive and corrective classroom instruction .

Summary

This work tries to focus on the concept of assessment and its significance as a pedagogical instrument in the teaching-learning process. It, mainly, emphasises the assessment of reading comprehension with reference to EFL classrooms in the Algerian secondary School. On the basis of the results obtained from the questionnaires designed for both teachers and learners, this study argued that assessment of reading comprehension is important for ELT and should include multiple strategies and techniques so as to guide and inform accurately EFL teachers about their learners' needs and abilities. Thus, it recommended and suggested some criteria that should be used in this kind of assessment in order to point out these needs and offer useful instruction.

Key words: Assessment- Reading comprehension -Learners' needs - ELT

Résumé

Ce travail essaie de se concentrer sur le concept d'évaluation et son importance comme un instrument pédagogique qui fait partie du processus d'enseignement-apprentissage. Il, met principalement l'accent sur l'évaluation des compétences en lecture de compréhension relative aux élèves dans les lycées algériens. Sur les bases des résultats obtenus à partir des questionnaires conçus pour les enseignants et les élèves, cette étude fait valoir que l'évaluation de la compréhension en lecture est importante pour l'enseignement de la langue anglaise et devrait inclure des stratégies et des techniques multiples de manière pour guider et informer avec précision les enseignants sur les besoins et les capacités des apprenants. Ainsi, il a recommandé et a suggéré des critères qui pourraient être utilisés dans ce type d'évaluation dans le but de souligner ces besoins et de présenter un enseignement efficace.

Mots clés: Evaluation-compréhension de la lecture- Les besoins des apprenants-L'enseignement de la langue anglaise

ملخص

يحاول هذا العمل التركيز على مفهوم التقييم وأهميته كأداة تربوية ضرورية لعملية التعليم والتعلم. هذا وتركز هذه الدراسة بشكل رئيسي على تقييم مهارات القراءة والفهم لدى التلاميذ في المدارس الثانوية الجزائرية. وعلى أساس النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبيان الموجه للأساتذة و التلاميذ على حد سواء، بينت هذه الدراسة أن عملية تقييم القراءة والفهم مهمة لتدريس اللغة الانجليزية بحيث أنها يجب أن تتضمن استراتيجيات وتقنيات متعددة تتيح للأساتذة الوقوف والتعرف على مستوى وقدرات التلاميذ التعليمية. وبالتالي

اقترح هذا البحث بعض المعايير التي ينبغي أن تستخدم في هذا النوع من التقييم من أجل تحديد القدرات وتحسينها.

الكلمات المفتاحية التقييم- القراءة والفهم- متطلبات التلاميذ- تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية