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**STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING
LINGUISTICS: THE CASE OF FIRST-YEAR EFL
LEARNERS AT ABOU BEKR BELKAID UNIVERSITY OF
TLEMCEEN, ALGERIA**

*Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the Master degree in ELT*

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I dedicate this work to:

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Abstract

The current research investigates into first year EFL students' attitudes and perceptions toward Linguistics and the difficulties they face during the course. It is completed at the level of the department of English at the University of Tlemcen. Diverse research instruments were used in the present study, namely: questionnaire, interview and classroom Observation. The analysis of the collected data revealed that most students are aware of the relevance of Linguistics to English language learning. However, the lack of the knowledge about the module and the complexity of the concepts prevent them from learning it successfully. They think also that Linguistics cannot be applied in daily life situations and the module is only a set of needless information. The teachers, however, argued that the students show a kind of negative attitude because they consider the module as just a theory with no clear outcomes in their learning process. Therefore, the significance of the Linguistics module requires providing advantageous strategies to fulfill successful achievement.

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List of Acronyms

EFL: English Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

FL: Foreign Language

LMD: Licence, Master, Doctorate

MOOCs: Massive Open Online Courses

SL: Second Language

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

In today's world, learning a foreign language generally, and English specifically, is a very important task. English is the most commonly used language in the world. In addition to many reasons, learning English opens the door to a lot of job opportunities and communication across different cultures.

At university level, mastering the English language requires hard work and patience. Moreover, the learner needs to be aware of the importance of each module taught in the syllabus. Linguistics, as a module especially and as a field of study generally, is one of the important channels of understanding language from its scientific side. It also aims to collect information about the different levels required to learn English as a foreign language. Thus, it is confirmed that the acquisition of linguistic knowledge is necessary for mastering the language.

However, first year students show negative attitudes toward the Linguistics module. They believe that one can learn a language through the study of its spoken and written forms only. Based on that limited understanding, the present study tries to comprehend the reasons behind such a view and give solutions to deal with negative attitudes.

Therefore, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Why do students display negative attitudes toward the Linguistics' module?
- Therefore, several sub-questions are worth to be examined namely:
- How is Linguistics taught?
- Are the students aware of the importance of Linguistics?
- What are the difficulties facing students in learning linguistics and their sources?

In return, these questions led to put forward the following hypotheses:

- Linguistics is taught through explaining and describing the different linguistics theories.

- Students are not aware of the importance of Linguistics in the language learning process.
- Students consider Linguistics as a very complicated and difficult module due to its complex theories, because they are not shown its importance and how much it is beneficial in English learning.

This research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter reviews English as a lingua franca and its status in Algeria. It also assigns a part for Linguistics concerning its aim, levels, applications, and displays briefly its history. In addition, it deals with some important issues related to the teaching and learning of linguistics. At the end, it concludes with students' attitudes towards learning a language.

The second chapter is the practical part of this research. It deals with the description of the target setting and the selection of the case study as a methodology of research in this work. Besides, it describes the adopted research instruments and lays out the informants' profile. Moreover, it focuses on the analysis of the collected data from the teachers' interview, the students' questionnaire, and classroom observation.

Finally, the third chapter starts with an interpretation of the collected data. Besides, it provides suggestions and recommendations to ameliorate the Linguistics' course taking into consideration the previous findings.

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1.1. Introduction

The present chapter displays the prior works related to the central topic of this study. It starts with a general idea of the English language and its place in the world. After that, it shows the state of the English language in Algeria. Besides, it tries to define the term Linguistics, and offers the main objectives of such science, followed by its development through time. Moreover, this chapter shows the different branches of linguistics along with its multiple sub-disciplines. Furthermore, it briefly presents the implementation of linguistics in the Digital World. The final part of this chapter is devoted to highlighting the relation of Linguistics to foreign language teaching and learning.

1.2. The English Language

English is a West Germanic language and a part of the Indo European languages family. It is the official language in Britain, United States and many other countries.

1.2.1. English as a Lingua Franca

Nowadays, the English language has become the most used language in the world. It is the official language of fifty three (53) countries and it is spoken as a first language by around four hundreds (400) millions of people. Moreover, it is the language of science, international business, information exchange, aviation, diplomacy, tourism, computers, etc. English is considered as a lingua franca; in this sense Jeremy Harmer(2006:13) claims: ‘By the end of the twentieth century, English was already well on its way to becoming a genuine lingua franca, which is a language used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first (or even second) language’ .

Thus, learning English is a very important task. It gives the learners the ability to communicate across cultures and be employable in every country in the world. Besides, it increases their chances of getting jobs in multinational companies and improves their work opportunities.

1.2.2. English in Algeria

By the beginning of the twenty first century, English gained a great spread all over the world and in all domains such as technology, business, education, media, etc. In Algeria, Abdellatif(2013:912) argues that

As a matter of fact, English has been defined as a second foreign language in the beginning of the 90's, and as a first language after the 2000 reform, to gain the status of the langue of science and technology used in lifelong learning in recent years.

Therefore, it was necessary for Algeria to keep pace with this movement and go over the challenges.

In education, English became an important part of the curriculum and achieved tremendous demand in all levels. First of all, it is introduced at the level of the middle school for four years. Then, it is taught for three years in the high school. The courses aim to develop students' competencies and gain awareness of the importance of studying English. However, most students believe that they have to learn English just to pass the exams and get the average, and it is used only in the classroom.

Concerning higher education, English is taught in Algerian Universities under the LMD system (License, Master, and Doctorate) since 2004. According to Khaldi (2014) the main targets of the curriculum selected in English department in Algeria are:

- Supporting learners with the necessary awareness of the English literature and civilization
- Promoting their linguistic competencies for adequate language employ
- Various modules are taught according to each level and field of study, including: Linguistics, Phonetics, Grammar, Written Production, and Oral Production, Literature, Civilization.

1.3. Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language, as stated by Nasr (1984) ‘Linguistics is concerned with human language as a universal and recognizable part of human behavior and of the human abilities’. It deals with people’s ability to acquire and produce language. In other words, Linguistics came to explain language structures and how they are used in different contexts. It has been a very important field of study for many centuries, and has many branches and sub branches.

The sake of Linguistics is to investigate the language competence (i.e., the language knowledge). It tries also to find out appropriate explanation and clarification for language acquisition. Then, it seeks to select the rules to put language on use concerning the performance and the language processing.

1.3.1. Linguistics throughout History

Undoubtedly, the prime concern of linguistics is to identify the nature of human language faculty. Since language is a mean of communication, it has been a remarkable subject for researchers and thinkers for several centuries. Therefore, it is so substantial to know the language science roots.

First, Linguistics emerged at the Babylonian period (1894BC) in southern Mesopotamia. In that period two languages were used: the Sumerian Language which was limited only to religious and legal texts, and the Akkadian language (Afro-asiatic language) for everyday communication. Therefore, people needed to study the form of both languages in order to shift from one language to another. Secondly, it arose in South Asia during the Indian Iron Age (500 BC); remarkably with the grammarian Panini who gave a comprehensive and scientific theory of Sanskrit grammar. Most of his work dealt with phonological and morphological studies of Sanskrit.

Later on, linguistics was covered by Ancient Greece philosophers, such as: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Dionysius Thrax, and even Stoicism school between 427 BC and 175 BC. Their major interests included the source of the language, its

relation with the mind and the society. Additionally, they were concerned with the formation of meaningful and meaningless sentences in the speech act. Finally, they moved to the description of syntax.

Moreover, Romans started characterizing Latin grammar; they focused on morphology and the form of each part in the speech act. Varro (116-27 BC) and Priscian are two of the most recognized linguists in that period. Chinese people, too, adopted traditional studies of grammar from the antiquity to understand the structure of Han language.

By the flourish of the middle age in the 8th century, Arabs as well started analyzing the Arabic language phonetically. Abd Allah ibnAbiIshaq al-Ḥaḍrami (649-735) was one of the known linguists at that time. Another figure was the Persian linguist Sibawayhi (765-796) the writer of ‘Al-kitab fi al-nahw’, a Book on Grammar, where he differentiated between phonetics and phonology.

By the 13th century in the European countries, some grammarians stated the idea of universal grammar, which was established on the basis that all humans share the same language properties. It was later confirmed by the famous linguist Noam Chomsky (1928) and it was developed with the publication of the ‘Port Royal Grammar’ or ‘Grammaire Générale et Raisonnée’ in the 17th Century at the Renaissance period to characterize European vernaculars.

By the late of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Centuries, a revolution in the linguistics field occurred with noticeable changes in language. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), the father of modern linguistics, studied the structure and the system of languages. After that, the Behaviorists believed that language is built on the reaction to the environment. Again, Noam Chomsky emphasized on syntax and that language is basically derived from a set of grammatical rules. Eventually, the Functionalists introduced cognitive grammar and they tried to investigate the relation between the form of the word and its meaning or function.

1.3.2. Branches of Linguistics

Linguistics is a wide domain; many branches are derived from it. Most Linguists’ goal is to provide information about language properties including:

sentence and word structure, patterns of speech sounds, and finally the meaning of the produced language.

1.3.2.1. Morphology

The word morphology is defined as ‘the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed’. Aronoff and Fudeman, (2010: 2). In other words, it is the study of the form of words, and their arrangement in a language. Morphology analyzes the way morphemes, the smallest units of word, are combined in order to convey a meaningful message.

1.3.2.2. Syntax

Linguistics as well has a part which demonstrates the sentence structure. It describes the principles of constructing phrases, and concentrates on the relation between words and their order. In addition, syntax is the set of rules that govern the formation of meaningful sentences. Most of the findings show that the basics of those rules are shared by all languages.

1.3.2.3. Phonetics and Phonology

The two concepts Phonetics and Phonology are related to each other because at those levels the linguists are concerned with the speech sound. Firstly, phonetics gives details of how vowels and consonants are physically articulated, transmitted, and heard. As for phonology, it is about patterns of sounds. It links the pronunciation of word sounds with a specific meaning. Moreover it deals with the rules of sequencing sounds.

1.3.2.4. Semantics and Pragmatics

When it comes to meaning investigation, two branches are responsible for explaining the process of integrating sentences according to the context. Semantics analysis focuses on the conventional meaning of words in isolation, whereas pragmatics is concerned with clarifying the hidden meaning of a language.

1.3.3. Sub-disciplines of Linguistics

Through time, linguists became more interested with language. Linguistics motivated most of them to discover answers to the language element within some major scopes such as: history, science, society and human psychology.

Among the linguistics sub-disciplines there is: Psycholinguistics, one of the most important hybrid disciplines. It deals with the internal mental process of human language. It studies child language acquisition besides to human ability of comprehending and producing language.

Equally important, Sociolinguistics describes the effect of any society's aspect such as economy, culture and region on language. It characterizes the different varieties of the language taking into consideration the continuous changes of language use in the society.

Another discipline which undertakes the relationship between language and human mind is called Neuro linguistics. It examines how the language is presented in the brain. It tries to discover the mind power of controlling the ability of acquiring, producing, and understanding the language.

Computational Linguistics is one of the language studies that try to contribute an understanding of the computer processing of natural language. Machine translation, information retrieval, and artificial intelligence are some of its applied domains.

Again, Anthropological linguistics emerges as an association between anthropology and linguistics in order to study the written language in relation with the spoken form. The anthropological linguists' task is to make assumptions about the language in the past and compare it with the present.

Finally, Applied Linguistics, which is related to all the previous disciplines, gives solutions to the problems of language in real life situations. Equally, it shows the importance of language for communication. Then, it explores children ability of acquiring first language along with the development of second language skills.

1.4. The Applications of Linguistics

Linguistics has lot and various application areas. For instance, the translation machine or the known “Google Translation” website is one of the familiar Linguistics applications. Furthermore, Linguistics is manifested in managing different documents in considerable summation of documents.

1.4.1. Computational Linguistics:

Through time and life experience, human beings acquire the capacity to differentiate between various meanings of one word. For instance, the person understands easily what “charging” battery and “charging” people mean. However, for the computer, it might be an issue; the computer necessitates a huge amount of data to be able to make the distinction. (Dubrow: 2013) Therefore, it is the task of the linguists to provide the computer how to learn the natural language.

1.4.2. Corpus Linguistics

‘Corpus can be defined as a systematic collection of naturally occurring texts (of both written and spoken language)’ Nesselhauf (2005:2) the treatment and the analysis of these texts, which is generally done with the computer, is called Corpus Linguistics.

1.4.3. Translation

Translation is the process of shifting and transferring a linguistic message from one language to another, or from a linguistic system to another. This process requires a fully awareness of the Linguistics knowledge of both the source language and the target language and the target (morphology, semantics, syntax...)

1.5. Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching

There is a debatable relationship between Linguistics and second\foreign language teaching and learning. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. It aims to provide comprehensive and descriptive details and to increase the

realization of the language. Therefore, it pretends to be complicated, technical and irrelevant to non-linguists and people's daily life. However, this scientific study of language is interesting, for the sake that all the theories, data collections, experiments and applications are completed in the everyday life; and merely because that language is purely human.

Haliday (1982:9) claims that 'A child does not need to know any linguistics to use language to learn; but a teacher needs to know some linguistic information if he wants to understand how the process takes place or what is going wrong when it does not'. Evidently, teaching foreign language requires mastering linguistics in order to help the students to learn in a dynamic way. Linguistics simplifies the process of language comprehension then the process of explaining and exemplifying that language to the students because a perfect control of the language is not sufficient for effective teaching.

Moreover, Harmer (1986:42) argues that the chief task of the efficient teacher is to give students the appropriate confidence by providing them with opportunities of success and showing personal belief in their mastery over the linguistic aspects of English (Manasrah: 2013). The learning process is not only the amount of information stored by the learners, but also the comprehension and the application of that knowledge. Again, Lopez (1989:71) asserts: 'The problem lies not only in the amount of information to be mastered but in the organization and application of that knowledge to a practical situation' Therefore, Linguistics supports the teacher with the suitable knowledge to involve his learners in the implementations of the various theories.

1.6. Linguistics and Foreign Language Learning

Studying Linguistics offers the learners the opportunities to recognize the different aspects, structures and uses of the language. It ameliorates their awareness of language performance and competence through the analysis of its theories.

Apparently, Richard Hudson; a supporter of teaching Linguistics; published a collection of essays showing the importance of teaching Linguistics and how to integrate diverse topics in Linguistics into teaching English. Then, he describes how

‘Education needs us’ (referring to the linguists) and he adds ‘Linguistics can be taught successfully at school’ Hudson (2010:48).Batistella (2010:13) says that the students have to study linguistics because it offers ‘perspectives on grammar and writing instruction, history, multiculturalism and diversity, critical thinking, and science instruction’. (Loozen: 2014)

Moreover, Linguistics examines language acquisition and how to use it in interactions in order to develop the understanding of the nature of that language. It provides detailed description and comprehensive explanation of the language structures.

However, learning a language to use it in communication is quite different from learning about the linguistic aspects of that language. Many students enjoy studying Linguistics because they believe that linguistic theories are virtuous and valuable to be studied. However, others do not; they find that these theories are hardly to be connected to daily life applications (Correa: 2014).

The students believe that Linguistics is a highly specialized discipline with little relevance to people daily language. Simply, they are not aware of its connections and applications.

1.7. Students’ attitudes toward learning the language

Attitudes are personality traits often defined as feeling or opinion about something or someone. It refers also to the manner, way of behaving, or the position of the person in a particular situation. Brown (1994: 168) claims that: ‘Attitudes like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings develop early in childhood and are the result of parents’ and peers’ attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience’.

Person’s attitudes may be caused from different life experiences and the interactions with others.

In language learning, attitudes are considered as a fundamental part in the process. They highly affect the learner’s performance and the amount of the acquired knowledge. In fact, the learner who is not mindful and not motivated to

learn the language shows negative attitudes and weak fulfillment; these negative attitudes reduce the chances of reading books or speaking in the target language, for example, to ameliorate him.

Three significances of attitudes can be differentiated. These are:

- ✓ Behavioral attitudes: the way of behaving and responding in specific conditions
- ✓ Cognitive attitudes: language learners attestation of the realization and recognition of language learning progress
- ✓ Affective attitudes: the passionate and the soulful aspects of the learner (Echghinejad, 2016)

Examining students' attitudes toward learning the language support both the learning and the teaching process. Moreover, being aware of their beliefs, expectations, and interests provides the teachers the convenient strategies for successful achievement.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the importance of learning the English language as it dominates all life aspects. Moreover, it presented the English position in Algeria and how it is applied in the educational system. Additionally, it defined linguistics and gave an overview about its history. Equally, this chapter listed the different branches and sub-disciplines deriving from Linguistics. Then, it provided a view of how linguistics contributes in delivering knowledge in teaching a foreign/second language. Likewise, it showed the beneficial extend of linguistics in acquiring a foreign/second language. Yet, most students form a negative reaction toward learning this module based on their beliefs that linguistics is only a set of theories which do not contribute in their learning process enhancement .Consequently, the following chapter seeks to look into details about students' perceptions towards linguistics and the main reasons behind such an attitude.

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2.1. Introduction

This chapter portrays the practical part of the research work. First of all, it displays the study design and methodology through describing the target situation. Thereafter, it represents the research methodology used followed by underlying the research tools, which consist of the questionnaire, the interview as well as classroom observation. Furthermore, it describes the informants' profile. Then, it prescribes the instruments used to collect the information and the analyses obtained from the three means.

2.2. Description of the Target Setting

The research work is conducted at the level of the department of English at the University of Tlemcen. It focuses on first year English students. The participants are selected randomly from different groups, genres and ages. The sample is about 40 students, i.e. it represents 10% of the population.

2.3. The Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this thesis is a 'case study'.

2.3.1. Description of the Case Study

As the name suggests it is 'the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' Stake (1995: xi). However, Dornyei explains that the case here refers to people, and sometimes it indicates program, institution, organization, and community. It usually combines a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observation and document archives.

2.3.2. The Reason of Choosing Case Study

The research relies on the case study in view of the fact that it is designed to illustrate the perceptions of students toward Linguistics via applying multiple data

collection tools and several sources through joining the theoretical process with the practical one in real life situation. In other words, by selecting this methodology the research is given a vivid narrative description to the case.

2.4. The Research Instruments

One way of reporting facts and giving details to the study, is gathering information through the use of multiple instruments. The ones used in this study are: the questionnaire, the interview and the classroom observation.

2.4.1. The Interview

Indeed, the interview is the first instrument applied in this study. Kvale (1996:16) states ‘an interview is a conversation that has a structure and purpose; it goes beyond the spontaneous change of view in everyday conversation’. Thus, in order to obtain more explanations and details, face to face interaction is preferable in this case, ‘if you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?’ Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: xvii). In fact, there exist three types of the interview. Firstly, the structured interview or the formal one, the questions are to be prepared in advance and should be asked exactly as they are written without any modifications or additions. However, the interviewer may clarify orally. Secondly, the unstructured interview is also prepared in advance, but it can be delivered in non-order way with allowed modifications. Finally, the last type is the semi-structured interview, where the researcher is free to bring new ideas and inquiries.

2.4.2. The Questionnaire

As a matter of fact, the questionnaire is the most commonly used instrument to collect data about the situation being studied. Brown (2001: 6) defines it as ‘any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answer or selecting from among existing answers’. Noticeably, there are two types of the questionnaire:

- the structured questionnaire: it contains specific and concrete questions and displays an authoritative investigation (which is the type used in this research).
- The instructed questionnaire: the researcher uses it generally to manage an interview; it is an adaptable more than authoritative instrument.

However, questionnaire can be divided sometimes according to the kind of the questions: open ended questions and close ended questions. The questionnaire used in the recent research offers a set of mixed questions, in order to provide a sort of facility to the respondents to pass their thoughts and points of view.

2.4.3. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is the third data collection tool. It is incited by the benefit of being a real situation to elicit the truth beyond the raised problematic. Hence, the aim of classroom observation as Light (2000:438) clarifies is to 'identify and better understand the roles of the different participants in classroom interaction, the impact that certain type of instruction may have on FL/SL learning, and the factors which promote or inhibit learning'.

2.5. The Sample Population

The study participants were a combination of English language teachers beside to EFL students'. Therefore this part is allocated to the description of these two associates.

2.5.1. Teachers' Profile

The number of teachers taking a role in this investigation is four from both genders.

- Teacher 1: Is a Professor who taught English for more than twenty years, and Linguistics for fifteen years.
- Teacher 2: Holds the Doctorate degree, and has been in this domain for seven years, and taught Linguistics for three years.

- Teacher 3: As well obtained a doctorate degree, and has been teaching Linguistics for about six years.
- Teacher 4: Carries the Magister degree. She has a six years teaching experience and is dealing with Linguistics² for the first time.

2.5.2. Students' Profile

The informants of this study are forty first year EFL students at the University of Tlemcen from different groups. The age of the majority is below twenty years. Most of them have been learning English for seven years.

2.6. Data Analysis Procedures

This section is devoted to describing the three sources of gathering data.

2.6.1. Teachers' Interview

The Linguistics teachers were interviewed face –to-face, on the 5th and 7th of March 2017. It is a structured interview, consists of eight questions. The three first items deal with the informants' profile. The goal of the remaining items is to know teachers strategies in delivering the lessons and their students' reactions toward the module in the class. The final item of the interview seeks for solutions of the highlighted drawbacks.

2.6.2. Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to first year students. It is a oneself contained rubric. The purpose of the questionnaire at first was to check if learners have heard about Linguistics before. Moreover, the questionnaire tests students' personal reactions toward the module. Besides, the items have been used to know students' opinions about linguistics as a part of learning English. Eventually, the questionnaire tries to investigate students' difficulties during the linguistics course, and what changes they want. Additionally, the students are aware that their answers would be treated anonymously.

2.6.3. Classroom Observation

First, a draft was prepared as an outline for the classroom observation in order to note the different stages. Thus, after asking for permission from the teacher the observation process took place before the second term holiday on Tuesdays for two consecutive weeks with first year students' at Linguistics session with one Linguistics teacher.

2.7. Data Analysis

Data analysis is the most significant section since it reports situation outcomes.

2.7.1. Teachers Interview

This section presents the findings of the interview that was addressed to first year EFL Linguistics teachers.

Item 4: The methodology adopted in teaching linguistics.

- All the four informants use the eclectic method which involves explanatory, descriptive, and analytical strategies. Two teachers added that along with the previous strategies they used the reflective one in order to get feedback from students for the betterment of the teaching process.

Item 5: Student's attitudes in the class.

- The teachers' answers conveyed that some students are motivated and have a positive attitude, whereas others shape a kind of negative attitude. One of the teachers added that it is up to the teacher to encourage his students and make them involved in the lecture or not.

Item 6: The extent to which students are interested in learning linguistics.

- Some learners are interested and others not. It depends on the complexity of lectures. The teachers said that their students are interested in the lessons when they are involved through asking questions. Moreover, the students feel bored when they are dictated the lessons.

Item 7: Students' participation and curiosity.

- The teachers claimed that the students do participate only if they are asked to do so, as looking for a quotation as homework. However, they feel anxious for asking for more explanation.

Item 8: Solutions to motivate students during Linguistics courses.

- All teachers agreed that creativity is the key to attract student's attention. Among the suggested ways to motivate learners there is: cooperative learning which is very helpful to get them involved, Creating group work to exchange ideas since they understand from each other more than from the teacher. They try to accommodate strategies to the nature of the group, taking into consideration their levels, needs, and the size. Additionally, teachers attempt to be innovative in the class and bring interesting activities. Besides, they re-explain any ambiguous point in the lecture many times, and provide them with references to encourage them to read. Lastly, one informant said that he tries to show them the importance of linguistics as much as possible.

2.7.2. Students Questionnaire

This part is devoted to highlighting the questionnaire results.

Item 1: learners’ previous knowledge about Linguistics.

- The majority of the students 67.5% said that they had no knowledge of Linguistics prior to the university. The rest 32.5% claimed that they had a previous knowledge about Linguistics. The results are shown in the following Pie Chart.

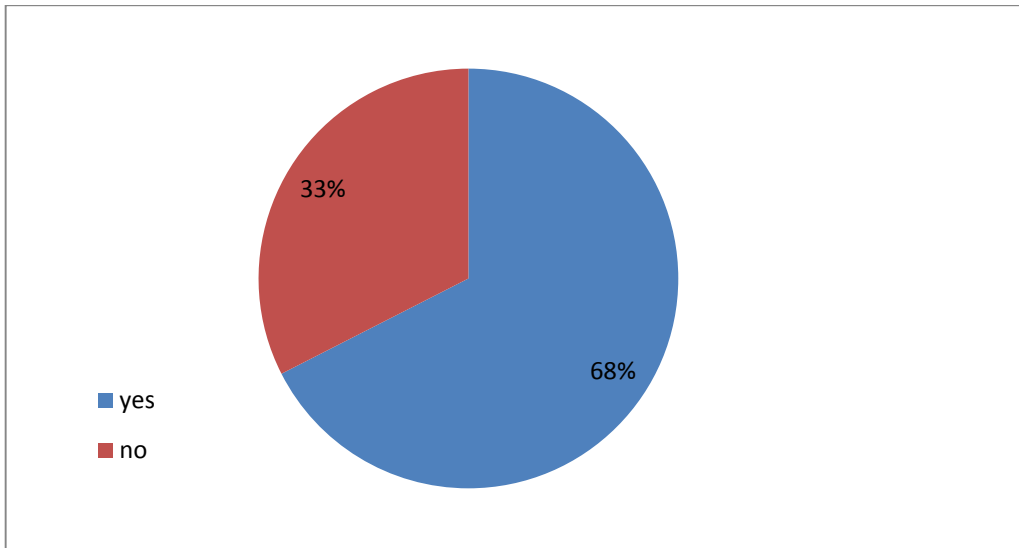


Figure 2.1. Students’ Previous Knowledge of Linguistics

Item 2: Examination of the students’ interest to Linguistics.

- As it can be seen in the Pie Chart 2.2, only 60% of the respondents believe that Linguistics course is interesting, while the 30% of the students find it uninteresting.

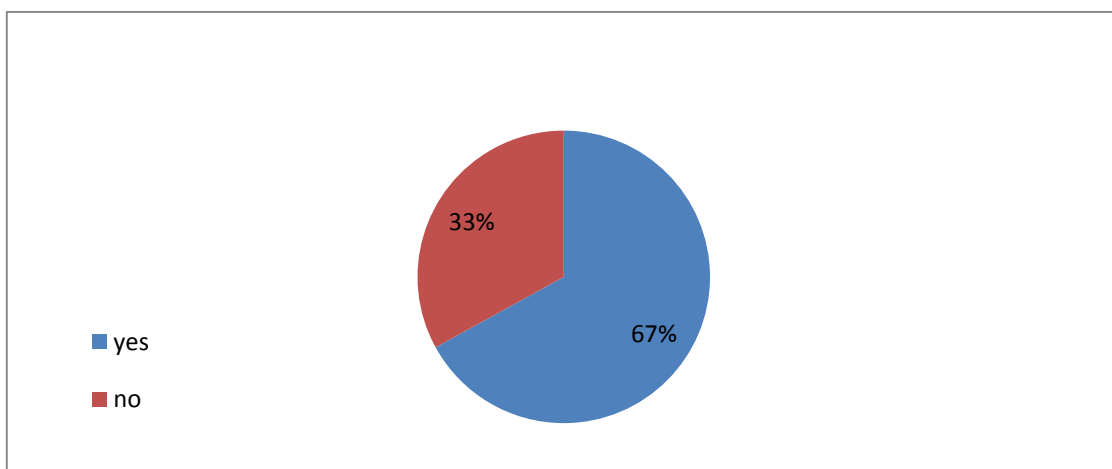


Figure2.2.Students’ Interest to Linguistics

Item 3: Investigation of students' feelings during the Linguistics sessions.

- The questionnaire shows that 50% of the sample population feels motivated, 37.5% reported that they are anxious during Linguistics course while the remaining feels confident. These results are summarized in the table below:

attitude	Number of students
Motivated	20
Anxious	15
Confident	5

Table 2.1. Students' Feelings in The Courses

Item 4: Student's evaluation of their Linguistics course.

- Table 2.2. Shows that 60% of the learners find the linguistics course neither good nor bad (average). However, 20% of the students said that their class is good. 10% of them consider the course bad and 5% convey that the lessons are very bad. Similarly, 5% of the students mention that the sessions are very good.

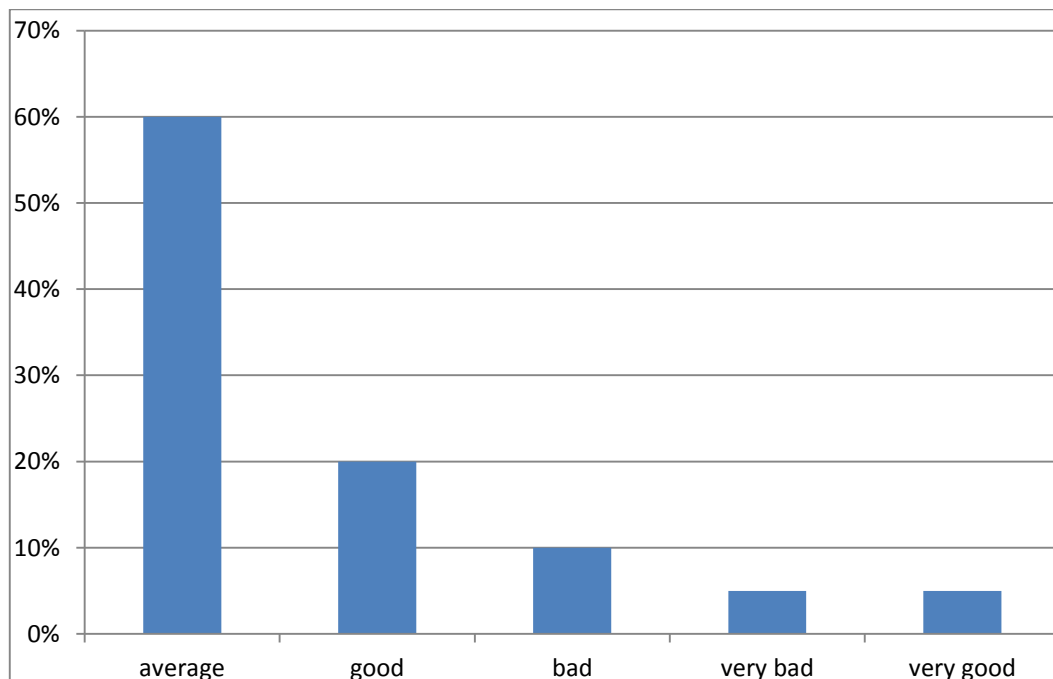


Figure 2.3 Linguistics Course Evaluation

Item 5: students' reaction toward Linguistics as part of learning English as a foreign language.

- The results were proximate between neutral with 45% and agree with 40%. Moreover, 10% disagree with the idea that Linguistics is relevant to learning English. 5% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. However, no one mentioned that he is strongly disagreed.

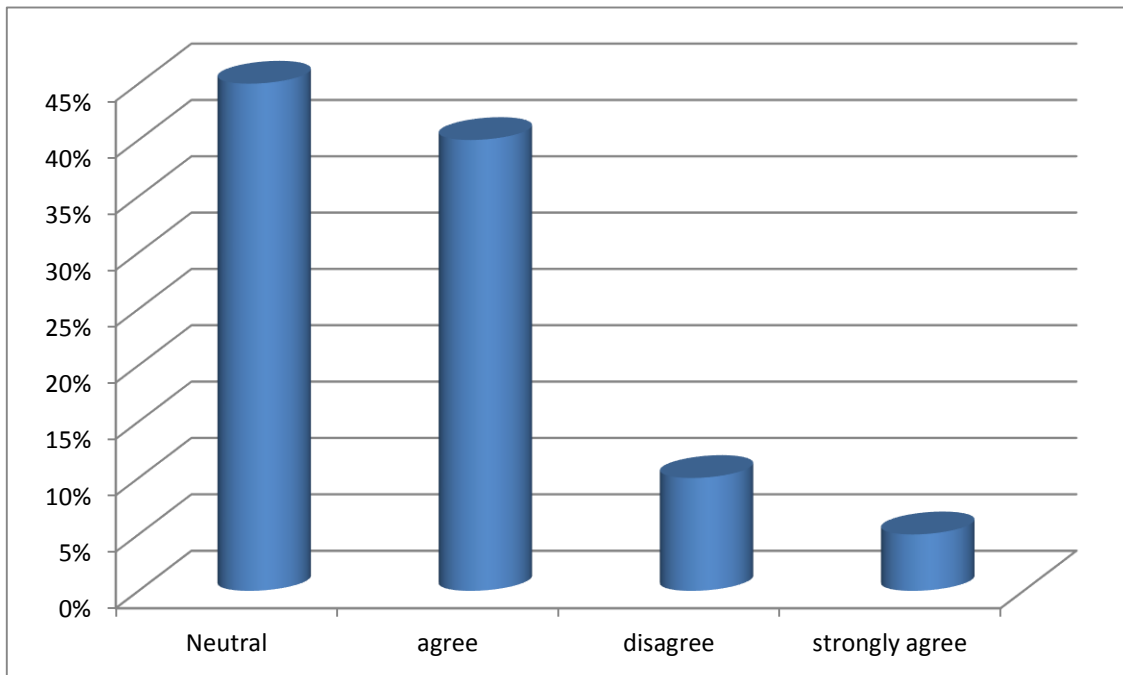


Figure 2.4 Students' reaction towards the importance of learning Linguistics

Item 6: The use of Linguistics in real life situations

- Only 40% of the students reported that Linguistics is beneficial in daily life. Whereas, the rest (60%) do not believe that Linguistics can be used in real life situations.

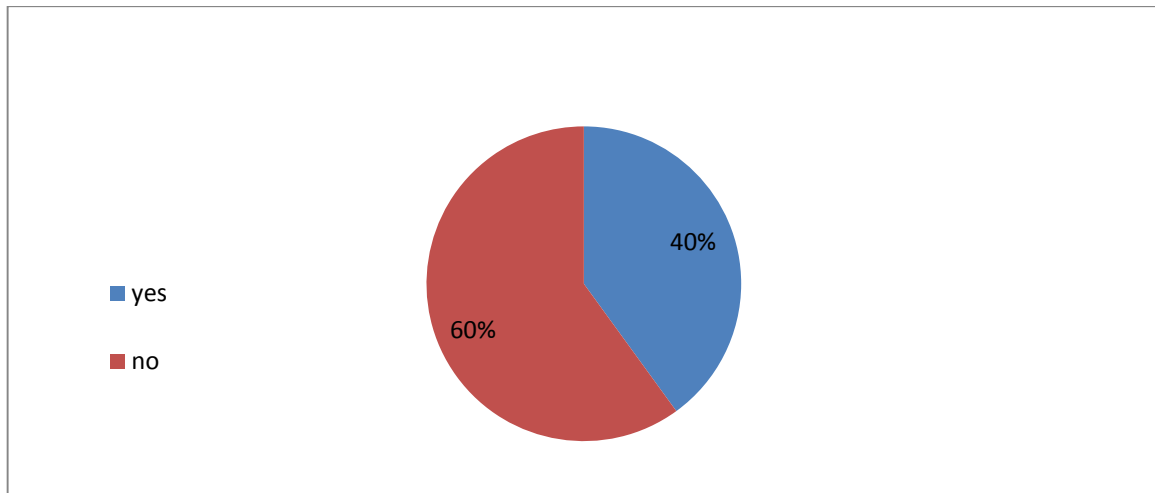


Figure 2.5 Students' thought about Linguistics in real life situation

Concerning the reasons: for 40% who answer with yes they said that as language is the only means of communication it is necessary to study it scientifically. In addition, they replied that it is a huge field which underlines all what they need to study in English such as: phonetics, grammar.... The remaining 60% commented that Linguistics cannot be applied in daily life for many reasons:

- ✓ It is only theories and complex rules thus it takes no place in communication.
- ✓ It is only a course to fill the syllabus and deliver needless information to give them grades.
- ✓ They need to learn only how to write and how to speak because they cannot speak with Linguistics theories.

Item 7: Students 'difficulties during the Linguistics' course.

- The answers were quite similar; they showed a variety of factors which form their negative attitudes. The majority of students consider Linguistics as Philosophy and this de-motivates them. Furthermore, they mentioned that the lectures are too long and complex which make them difficult to memorize. Others said that they don't have even a teacher.

Item 8: Students' suggestions to better the Linguistics' course.

- Students believe that the teacher has to be innovative in the classroom and provide effective activities. Moreover, they suggest that he should be creative by using technological materials. They advise also the teacher to compare it with Arabic Linguistics, to be aware about the equivalence in their mother tongue. Some students added that not only the teacher should make improvements even their peers should read more, and make extra researches.

2.7.3. Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations were carried out to view the whole situation and noting the real environment of Linguistics' courses. It started by looking deeper to the teacher interaction with his entire students. Besides, it considered the strategies used by the teacher to manage the class. Finally, it highlighted the students' performance and the problems they had in the Linguistics course.

- The teacher starts the lesson with greeting.
- Thereafter, she checks the absences.
- Then, she opens the lecture by reviewing the previous lecture.
- Quickly, she checks their homework.
- She gave the latecomers the opportunity to cope with the others but at the same time she punishes them by asking questions.
- After she writes the new lesson title.
- The teacher use blackboard every time while explaining and introducing new concepts.
- She tries to facilitate their comprehension through using simple language.
- She uses L1 in re-explaining and giving examples from MSA.
- Concerning the environment. Students are sitting in a table row.
- The same students are participating each time, they use the English language, and sometimes the mother tongue and French.

- As for the students' interaction they are interfering each time when one makes errors in pronunciation. However, they help each other in solving the homework.
- Whereas, the teacher do not correct their mistakes taking in consideration their levels and differences.
- She tries to motivate them through involving them in the lecture.

2.8. Conclusion

From the present chapter, clear results were achieved. It gave many valuable answers to the research investigation. In addition, basis on the findings the following chapter will underline a discussion to the main findings and some suggestion and recommendation.

Chapter Three: Data Interpretation and Suggestions

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3.1. Introduction

Noticeably, Linguistics is one of the major modules offered for the first year university students. Thus, this chapter attempts to provide some beneficial suggestions for each of the stakeholders: students, teachers, and even the decision makers at the level of the English department to cope with the problems identified. This chapter starts with an interpretation of the results revealed from the analysis of the collected data. The section after is devoted to some ideas that matter the students, whereas the second is assigned for the module teachers. Furthermore, some suggestions that might ameliorate the teaching stream, concerning the teachers' training, the first course and the tutorial sessions are indicated also. Finally, the last part is about the role of the blackboard and the educational technology in the language classroom.

3.2. Data Interpretation

The purpose of this study is to provide an explanatory paper to investigate first year EFL students' perceptions toward learning Linguistics and what factors would lead them to form their attitudes. Hence, this segment undertakes and interprets the result of the analysis.

Generally speaking, the findings of teachers' interview indicate that most teachers adopt the eclectic methods which refer to: explaining, describing, analyzing and reflecting. These prove the first hypothesis; it estimates that Linguistics is taught through explaining and describing the different theories. Then, the majority of learners have a negative attitude toward Linguistics. In the class, they are divided into two types: some are excited and motivated to learning and others are not interested in the module at all.

However, the majority of the students is passive learners and hates the module as they consider it as just a theory with no clear outcome in their learning process. Moreover, they do not participate only if the teacher involves them. They clarified also that it is necessary to adopt interesting methods to engage learners in

the learning process. Besides, they added that being aware of learners' individual differences helps the teacher to deal with them according to their needs. This way helps to attract students' attention because they will feel important.

Finally, they recommended cooperative learning as it plays an important role to push students' thought and it is preferable to create motivating environment through using materials, giving a positive feedback and adopting interesting activities like role-play where each student characterizes a famous linguist, and also encouraging them to read more.

The results of the students' questionnaire show that some students like Linguistics and are motivated in the class. Then, they added that it is important to study Linguistics as it gives them information on how language works. On the contrary, others indicate that linguistics has nothing to do with learning a foreign language as they need to learn only how to write and speak in order to be able to communicate with foreigners.

Therefore, the second hypothesis is partially confirmed since not all of the students are aware of the importance of Linguistics in the language learning process. Moreover, all of the informants agreed that their attitude is formed based on the lack of knowledge about the module and the purpose behind it.

Equally important, their performance is influenced by the complexity of concepts, meanwhile, it was suggested in the last hypothesis that learners face difficulties because they are not shown how much Linguistics is important for them. Eventually, the learners suggest the adaptation of materials in class, enriching the vocabulary by reading, developing the teaching environment by the teacher, in order to help them to practice.

With regard to classroom observation, the data revealed that the teacher was comprehensive and helpful. Moreover, she explains using easy and clear words. As for students just few of them were taking part in the lecture. Therefore, it can be

clearly seen that not only the teacher is responsible of the students' negative attitudes.

On the one hand, it is up to the teacher to facilitate the learning progress and provide the learners with the necessary knowledge, explanation and support to raise their awareness. On the other hand, students definitely should take charge of their own learning. The fact of being university students requires them to work more on their weaknesses in order to improve themselves and achieve preferable results.

3.3. Recommendations and Implications

Improving and facilitating the learning process is the responsibility of the teacher as well as the learner. Therefore, the present section is dedicated to provide a set of suggestions and recommendations for all of: the teacher, the learner and even the decision makers at the level of the university in order to ameliorate the Linguistics course, in particular, and the language learning process in general.

3.3.1. Students' Role

Students' involvement is the most dynamic solution to surpass the module difficulties. Instead of blaming the teachers and the program all the time, they should merely improve themselves and be active learners; as it is pointed out by (Welt man: 7) 'a method of learning in which students are actively or experientially involved in the learning process and where there are different levels of active learning, depending on student involvement.'

Hence, by creating their own strategies and taking the responsibility of their own learning, students can overcome their problems. In other words, they have to increase their repertoire by looking for more information and making extra research outside the classroom, as there are plenty of helpful websites to better understanding the different lectures of the module. They may also join different learning groups and clubs whether at the level of the university or on Facebook and the social media

generally which offer the ability of contact students, teachers and researchers from numerous universities all over the world.

Moreover, the private and the university libraries provide the students with plenty of valuable books of the well-known linguists, rather than being restricted to that limited information and explanations provided during the lecture. Additionally, students must look for strategies to overcome their fears and their negative attitudes in order to raise their self-confidence and self-esteem. Finally, they should keep in mind that errors are not bad habits, but they are a sign of progressing towards a fluent grasp.

3.3.2. Teachers' Role

As a matter of fact, teachers are the starting point to minimize the negative factors that affect the teaching/learning process. Indeed, their performance influences the whole learning process, as Silberstein (1987:32) says 'Combination drill sergeant and orchestra conductor'.

Thereby, teacher has to function differently in the lecture as Harmer (2001: 261-262) explains: a teacher should be 'a motivator, a resource and a feedback provider' the teacher needs to be a motivator by selecting the appropriate materials that suit the delivered lesson and attract students' interest. Then, he integrates those lessons with different types of activities (games, debate, role play, info-gap tasks, etc.).

Similarly, a teacher can also exemplify from real life situations using examples from the students' native language. Adopting different ways and methods in the lecture by asking the student to prepare for their lessons, for instance, and giving home works give them the opportunity to take part in the lectures.

Besides, the teacher has to support cooperation among students through exchanging ideas, difficulties and inquiries in order to benefit from each other. Then, he has to encourage them to ask questions and for more clarification out of

positive feedback to overcome their anxiety and shyness. Again, the teacher must pay attention to every single student in his class taking into consideration their differences and needs; so that they feel important and remarkable

3.3.3. Involving the Students

The linguistics' course seems always to be boring and uninteresting for most students. The teacher is according to them, constantly talking about many things which are very complicated and very hard to understand. Therefore, in order to overcome this issue, the teacher has to involve his students in the lecture. This can be typically done through giving them homework, asking them to prepare the next lecture, dividing them into groups and planning projects.

For instance, the teacher may ask the students to make a research about the different applications of Linguistics. They can also work together to investigate the development of Linguistics or the different linguistics' schools around the world.

3.3.4. The first course

Obviously, most first year Students in the department of English believe that they have chosen or been oriented to English to learn only how to speak and write in the target language. They have definitely no idea about what Linguistics refers to and what is the relationship between Linguistics and English language learning. Thus, it is up to the teacher to deal with their inquiries.

During the first session, the teacher has to explain to his students what Linguistics exactly refers to and then, what are the objectives of the course. He must also show them what is the role of Linguistics as a field of study in mastering English as a foreign language, as Correa (2014:168) concludes:

An ideal introductory course in Linguistics should present not only a basic introduction to the main areas of linguistic inquiry (such as phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics), but also to those areas that are intrinsically related to the former: sociolinguistics, pragmatics

and discourse, first/second/multiple language acquisition, Psycholinguistics... Finally, any other field that makes use of language for its purposes could be included as a final, practical component in the course: language and law, language of politics and advertisement, language and power...

Moreover, the giving definition of Linguistics ‘The scientific study of language’ leaves an ambiguity to the students. They are not aware of what the term scientific study means. Is it the same like biology, geology, chemistry and the other similar sciences? Can language be studied scientifically? And how? Students need clear answers and explanations to all these and many other questions in their minds.

3.3.5. Teachers’ Training

As it is mentioning in the above section, the teacher’s role is influential. Thus, with a view to the obstacles the teachers face, noticeably the novice ones, with their students in linguistics session a training program is suggested.

First, Training is beneficial as it enables them to improve the teaching process and raises the self-awareness of their responsibilities and roles in the classroom. Moreover, it helps to focus on the main causes of students’ both success and failure in fulfilling such knowledge.

Furthermore, it allocates a thought about the reasons behind forming the negative attitudes. As well, the training reviews those reasons, and finds solution and ways to deal with such problems. As a result training program aims at preparing teachers for an effective teaching environment.

3.3.6. Technological Materials

It is noticeable that the world is moving from conventional to digital with the advent of technologies. The learning process is also changing especially for teaching the language. As Graddole says (1997:16) ‘technology lies at the heart of globalization process affecting education work and culture’.

Thus, applying material aids in teaching linguistics helps to create chances for better understanding. From this point, it is recommended that the administration provides technological materials such as: computer, podcast, data show, etc. However, what is important is that those aids should be reachable at any needed point and time.

In addition to the mentioned materials, internet can also be included among the materials since it contains many sources for enhancing students' learning: VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) which are classes conducted online, and dictionary software for example 'merriam-webster', besides to MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) that improve learners' social intelligence. In this way, there will be a chance to raise students' awareness of linguistics.

3.3.7. Conferences

The conference, generally, refers to people meet together to discuss ideas, opinions and issues. In its broad meaning, a conference is an arranged convention to discuss a common interest.

In the teaching learning process, the conferences typically allow teachers and students to better demonstrate their concerns. Since Linguistics is a part of the university curriculum, it grows students' understanding of the ongoing need for learning linguistics. Moreover, attending the conferences support teachers to better meet the needs of their students. It can assist them in developing and planning the course content which should be relevant to their students. It also helps to exchange ideas about the challenges and the issues.

3.3.8. Tutorial Sessions

According to Merriam-Webster, tutorial for English language learners is a class taught by tutor for one student or for small group of students. It is also a book, a computer program, etc., that teach someone how to do something by explaining each stage of a process.

Furthermore, tutorial is session where a meeting takes place between two people or more. In other words, it is a teaching session of an excessive instruction given by a tutor or a supervisor. It can be done by a teacher to an individual student or a small group to explain the course content and material to facilitate their understanding. It can also be done by a teacher to other teachers, more exactly to novice ones to provide a guidance in order to raise their self-awareness about their responsibilities, for example, how to prepare their lectures in a simple way and how to deliver them. However, the tutor should be knowledgeable about the subject, thus it needs to be prepared and delivered by experience teachers.

Additionally, there are different types and manners of tutoring. The most known type is the tutorial class, where the tutor meets with a group of students and gives the attentiveness to every single student in order to transmit knowledge on particular topic or field of study. Tutorial can also be in the form of schools, conferences or through the Internet.

3.3.9. The Importance of the Blackboard

In the last few years, teaching has completely changed. A lot of new techniques and methods have been implemented. Taking into consideration the development of the digital world, teachers adopt many innovative technological materials in order to achieve a successful teaching and learning process.

Teaching Linguistics is often demonstrated in defining and explaining theories. While delivering the lecture, many teachers focus only on explaining orally or rely sometimes on the data show and neglect the blackboard. They consider it as needless traditional teaching tool.

However, many learners especially those who are visuals in their learning style, prefer and benefit more when the teacher uses the blackboard from time to time. For instance, he can use it for spelling the difficult items, writing quotations and scholars' names, and mentioning the titles and subtitles.

3.4. Conclusion

This final chapter presented the interpretation of the data collected in addition to a sum of suggestions that may create a new context for the Linguistics course. The main goal was to improve students' efficiency by surpassing their difficulties, or at least controlling them. The proposed recommendations had been directed to all of the students' and the teachers. Furthermore, different materials and sources were mentioned to increase learners' awareness of the importance of Linguistics and improve the Linguistics' course outcomes.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

The present research was conducted to investigate the common difficulties facing first year EFL learners at the University of Tlemcen concerning the module of Linguistics. The goal was to find out effective strategies to help the learners overcome their difficulties. It tried to answer the following questions:

1. How Linguistics is taught?
2. Are the students aware of the importance of Linguistics?
3. What are the difficulties facing students in learning linguistics and their sources?

These questions led to the following hypotheses:

1. Linguistics is taught through explaining and describing the different linguistics theories
2. Students are not aware of the importance of Linguistics in the language learning process.
3. Students treat Linguistics as very complicated and difficult module due to the complex theories, because they are not shown the importance and how much is beneficial for them.

Therefore, three chapters constituted this research. The first chapter highlighted the English language as a lingua franca and its position in Algeria. Then, it provided an overview about Linguistics dealing with its Definition, history, branches, sub-disciplines, and its applications. It also attempted to review the debatable relationship between Linguistics and English language teaching and learning. Additionally, it reported students' attitudes towards learning language. Furthermore, the second chapter stated a description of the target settings, the research methodology (the case study), and the research instruments (Questionnaire, Interview and Classroom Observation), in addition to the analysis of the collected data. At last, the third chapter showed the interpretation of the previous results, leading to a set of suggestions and recommendations.

Evidently, concerning the first hypothesis, it is partially asserted, since the teachers claim that Linguistics is taught generally through the eclectic method (explaining, describing and analyzing). The teacher may sometimes exemplify to show the students the existence of Linguistics in the real life. Again, it is found that several students are not aware of the importance of Linguistics, while others believe that Linguistics has a great relevance to the language learning process. Moreover, the students believe that their lack of the knowledge about the module and the complexity of the theories give rise to their difficulties in the course.

To conclude, the recent research shed light on a very serious issue that may face the majority of the students. Since Linguistics is a part of the curriculum, they should be aware of its significance to succeed in the learning process and fulfill prosperous outcomes. Furthermore, the research determines a variety of strategies that help the students to control their obstacles and barriers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Teachers' Interview

Teachers' Interview

We are currently conducting a research trying to investigate into the attitudes of First year EFL students toward learning Linguistics at university level. Such an interview aims to shed the light on teachers' reactions toward students' difficulties during this course. We would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions.

1- What is your educational degree?

.....

2- How long have you been teaching English?

.....

3- How long have you been teaching Linguistics?

.....

4- What are the methods and strategies that you adopt in teaching Linguistics?

.....

.....

5- What kind of attitudes have you noticed among your students during the Linguistics course?

.....

.....

6- How far do you think that your students are interested in learning this module?

.....

.....

7- Do your students participate in the class, and do they ask for more explanation?

.....
.....

8- What do you do when your students react negatively toward this module in order to motivate them?

.....
.....

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendix B: Students' Questionnaire

Students' Questionnaire

Dear student

You are kindly required to fill the following questionnaire, which is designed to investigate into first year students' perceptions toward the Linguistics module at the University of Tlemcen. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated.

1- Have you already had a previous knowledge about what Linguistics refers to?

- Yes
- No

2- Do you find the module of Linguistics interesting?

- Yes
- No

3- How do you feel in the Linguistics session?

- Motivated
- Anxious
- Confident

4- Can you evaluate your Linguistics course?

- Very bad
- Bad
- Average
- Good
- Very good

5- Linguistics has a great relevance to learning English as a foreign language.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

6- Can the knowledge acquired from learning linguistics be applied in real life situation?

- Yes
- No

Explain why

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

7- What are the main difficulties that you face in learning Linguistics?

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

8- Can you give some suggestions to improve the efficiency of Linguistics course?

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

Thank you very much for your collaboration.

Appendix C: Classroom Observation

Classroom Observation Grid:

Date: /.../.../2017 Time: 1 hour and 30 minute Class: 1 st year Group: Lesson: Materials:	
Type of the activity: Type of homework:	
What to observe?	Comments:
Teacher performance	
Body language : (gestures)	
The language used: (L1, French, MSA)	
Teacher-students interaction	
Students' perception to the warming up	

Students' reaction to the use of materials (data show, blackboard ...)	
Students' participation	
Students' motivation	
Student-student interaction	
Students' performance	

ملخص:

يسعى هذا البحث إلى اكتشاف موقف طلاب السنة الأولى اللغة الإنجليزية من مادة اللسانيات وقد تم ذلك في جامعة تلمسان في كلية الآداب واللغات وتحديدا في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. الهدف الرئيسي من الدراسة هو تحديد صعوبات الطلاب خلال حصة اللسانيات. وقد وجد ان الافتقار إلى المعرفة بأهمية الوحدة وأهميتها في تعلم اللغة هي الأسباب الرئيسية وراء مواقف الطلبة السلبية. لذلك، يتم تقديم العديد من الاقتراحات والتوصيات المفيدة للتحسين من حصة اللسانيات و بالتالي عملية التعلم .
الكلمات الدالة: طلاب السنة الأولى اللغة الإنجليزية ، مادة اللسانيات, موقف الطلاب.

Résumé

Cette recherche tente d'avoir une idée sur l'attitude des étudiants de première année Anglais envers le module de la Linguistique. L'étude a été faite au niveau de l'Université de Tlemcen, faculté des lettres et des langues étrangères, au département d'Anglais. On constate que le manque de connaissances sur l'importance du module et sa signification dans l'apprentissage des langues sont les principales raisons des attitudes négatives des étudiants. Par conséquent, de nombreuses suggestions et recommandations utiles sont proposées pour améliorer le cours de la linguistique pour un meilleur processus d'apprentissage.

Mots clés: étudiants Première année Anglais, module de la linguistique, attitude des étudiants.

Summary:

The present research seeks to investigate into first year EFL students' attitude towards the Linguistics' module. It takes place at the University of Tlemcen, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Department of English. The main target of the study is to identify students' difficulties during the Linguistics course. It is found that the lack of knowledge about the importance of the module and its significance in the language learning are the main reasons behind the students' negative attitudes. Therefore, many useful suggestions and recommendations are put forward to improve the Linguistics' course for a better learning process.

Key words: first year EFL students, Linguistics' module, students' attitude.