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**DEVELOPING VOCABULARY STRATEGIES IN  
LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITY  
LEVEL: FIRST-YEAR L.M.D STUDENTS**

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Applied Linguistics

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To my wife and my children for their unflagging  
support, understanding, and patience.

To the memory of my father and my brother

To my dear parents

To my sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews

To all my family

To all my colleagues and friends especially Hakou, Djamel, Moncef, Souheil and Rebecca

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## **ABSTRACT**

We can never overstate the power of words. Perhaps the greatest tools we can give students, not only in their education but more generally in life, is a large, rich vocabulary. This research reports on the importance of vocabulary to reading achievement. Providing vocabulary instruction is one of the most significant ways in which teachers can improve students' reading comprehension. Readers cannot understand what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. A large vocabulary is more specifically reflective of high levels of reading achievement.

The aim of the study is to investigate and analyse the different problems encountered by students when learning with specific reference to reading and vocabulary. The general questions are about how learners process new information and what kind of vocabulary strategies they employ to understand and learn the information.

The educational setting in which this study takes place is the Foreign Language Department, Faculty of Letters and Languages, University Mentouri Constantine.

Our investigation was carried out through a students' test and an interview which revealed students' areas of difficulty while reading and the importance of vocabulary acquisition. The results obtained in the four exercises constituting the test reveal that students received low scores in three of them (Exercise N° 1, 2 and 4). These results were confirmed by the interview.

On the basis of the results obtained, some recommendations have been proposed to help students overcome their difficulties in order to improve their reading skill, and others to help teachers in their task of developing the reading ability and vocabulary improvement in their students.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

A.F: Année Fondamentale

C.L.T: Communicative Language Teaching

E.F.L: English as a Foreign Language

E.S.L: English as a Second Language

E.S.P: English for Specific Purposes

F: Form

G.S.L: General Service List

H: High

L.M.D: Licence, Master, Doctorat

L: Low

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

M: Meaning

N.A : No Answer

Nb.: Number

P: Productive Knowledge

R: Receptive Knowledge

R: Right

S: Sentence

W : Wrong

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## **1- INTRODUCTION**

Reading and vocabulary are central to knowing a language and using a language. It is of critical importance to the typical language learner. Nevertheless, the teaching and learning of reading and vocabulary were up to the 1970's and the 1980's undervalued in the field of second / foreign language learning. Researchers (Nation, 1990; Courtillon, 1989) started to claim the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. Studies (Laufer, 1997; Carter, 1987) confirm that learners feel the lexical deficit as the major problem in particular when they are learning to read and that the need to understand can explain their fascination towards lexis. Therefore, the acquisition of lexis has become a question of interest to applied-linguists since then. Reading ability and vocabulary knowledge are two of the most important components of both performance and competence in a foreign language, especially in academic settings. Each depends on the other, as both competence and vocabulary knowledge is the single most important factor in reading comprehension, while reading is the single most important means by which intermediate and advanced learners acquire new words. However, building vocabulary through reading is a fruitful but complex activity that needs better understanding and more careful guidance.

## **2- AIM OF THE STUDY**

In the process of learning a foreign language, vocabulary is of crucial importance. It is obvious that the acquisition of a language cannot take place without the knowledge of the vocabulary of the language in question.

The teaching of vocabulary is increasingly recognized as being a crucial aspect of reading comprehension. Through our experience as a teacher, we noticed that the most significant problem encountered by Algerian foreign language learners (English) is vocabulary. The specialists in reading comprehension maintain that to be a mature reader, it is necessary to go beyond the identification of the words to understand a text.

The students always put their lack of comprehension of a text down to the words which they do not understand in the text. Their wish is to master a maximum of vocabulary to be able to reach comprehension.

The principal objective of the thesis is to examine how Algerian Foreign Language Department students of English build their vocabulary in this language. We are more specifically concerned with the vocabulary strategies students resort to when they read a text in English, reading being the main means for the development of vocabulary.

Our goal is to try to find the most suitable strategies which adapt to the context of our learners so as to introduce adequate learning strategies in order to develop their vocabulary and their comprehension. These aspects will be thoroughly investigated through a data collected in a test and an interview.

Our aim is then to come up with a set of recommendations that could help the students overcome their problems in learning and improve their reading skill by the introduction of reading and vocabulary strategies, adequate types of reading, tasks of vocabulary development and reinforcement of grammatical structures. Our hope is to contribute to the improvement of this learning and to develop it in order to give much

more chance to our students to have access to the literature of English expression in all the fields.

### **3- STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In the course of our career as a teacher of English at the Department of Foreign Languages, we noticed that advanced Algerian students are confronted with various problems. They have difficulties in reading a text and comprehending the message therein. When reading a text, students tend to identify their difficulties in terms of the words they do not understand and hope that if they are taught enough vocabulary, all their problems will be solved. This explains their habit to refer to the glossary immediately when they face a difficulty. Furthermore, students have difficulties understanding the relation between the different parts of a text. We suppose that this is due to the lack of mastery of lexical cohesive devices. Moreover, students are greatly influenced by their mother tongue and translation, which can, sometimes, be a hindrance in comprehension; they generally think in Arabic and want to have a word-for- word translation. In addition to Arabic, Algerian students can also be influenced by the French language which they master to a certain level, especially when the target words have more or less the same spelling or the same phonology. This can obviously be an obstacle for the development of their vocabulary and the learning of English. The last problem noticed with these students is the slow reading speed which can be a hurdle for comprehension. One possible explanation is that students do not know the language very well and that they tend to read word by word because they are afraid they will not understand if they speed up.

On the basis of the observations we made, we formulated the general hypothesis that what impedes most reading comprehension is the vocabulary strategies used by students. To help them cope with this problem, we may use different techniques such as guessing the meaning from context, to interpret the meaning by word analysis and to check the meaning of a word in a dictionary. We therefore aim to identify the difficulties by a series of tests, to enable us to deduce the appropriate methods of solving them.

#### **4- RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

Considering the observation that a rich vocabulary is crucial for reading comprehension and that both comprehension and fluency are affected by vocabulary knowledge, we come to the following general hypothesis: students' reading speed and vocabulary strategies could be what impedes most reading comprehension.

The general questions are about how learners process new information and what kind of vocabulary strategies they employ to understand and learn the information. The scarcity of research in that domain encouraged us to investigate these strategies in the light of the following questions underlying our hypotheses:

- 1- What are the strategies most frequently used in understanding new vocabulary?
- 2- What is the importance of the mastery of textual reference in reading comprehension?
- 3- Does the lack of syntactic and semantic cues impair comprehension?



- 4- Is translation an efficient strategy for our students?

On the basis of the above research questions and in the direction of our general hypothesis, we built up the following sub-hypotheses:

- 1- The lack of mastery of vocabulary strategies would result in poor comprehension.
- 2- The lack of mastery of syntactic and semantic cues of English would impair comprehension.
- 3- The lack of mastery of textual reference in English would result in poor comprehension.
- 4- Students would tend to read word by word and use translation as a strategy for understanding English vocabulary.

## **5- METHODOLOGY**

In the course of our research, we carried out a test to find out about the difficulties encountered by Algerian advanced students of the Department of Foreign Languages when learning English, with specific reference to reading, and to highlight the different strategies used by these students to understand vocabulary. The test is composed of four different exercises where students may adopt different strategies namely Deducing Meaning from Context (exercise N° 1), Matching (exercise N° 2), Rephrasing (exercise N° 3), and finally Inference (exercise N° 4). The contents of the test are presented in each section of the concerned chapters.

## **6- STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis is divided into nine chapters, five theoretical constituting the state of the art of reading and vocabulary, three chapters constituting the practical part (the test and the interview), and finally the last chapter which provides a set of recommendations.

Chapter one deals with the approaches and methods advocated and used in the teaching of foreign languages. It gives a historical overview about the place of reading and vocabulary in the different methods, allows the readers to gain a better understanding of the place of vocabulary in the different approaches and methods advocated, and indicates likely development in lexical pedagogy in the future. In fact, every method emphasizes one aspect of language learning rather than another depending on the theoretical priorities which have always been changing. Although vocabulary has always been argued to be central to language acquisition, little emphasis has been placed on it. Nowadays, it seems almost impossible to overstate the importance of vocabulary since reading power heavily relies on continuous growth in word knowledge.

Chapter two discusses the place of the reading skill which has long been considered as a passive skill. Reading is an important skill to acquire because of the importance the English language was taking as an international means in communication, especially in academic fields where it holds a prominent place. It's only through the emergence of E.S.P that reading was given significant importance and was considered as an active and creative mental process because of the interaction that

exists between the reader and the text. The fact that the reader guesses, predicts, and asks himself questions is a mental activity where the reader interacts with the text. This chapter also deals with the different models of reading. Reading research in the 1970's was characterised by a search for accurate models which represent the reading process as appropriately as possible. This gave rise to the emergence of the Bottom-up model, the Top-down model, and the Interactive model. The interest given to reading led researchers (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Carrell, 1984; Coady, 1979) to carry out studies in order to answer the question of what goes on in the reading process. This in turn led to a detailed explanation of the different stages of the reading process.

Chapter three discusses reading in a foreign language. It considers the two main components of the act of reading, i.e. the reader and the text, and the interaction that exists between them. It also considers learners' difficulties in recognizing cohesive ties. Certain researchers (Saragi, Nation & Meister, 1978) comment on the difficulties posed by discourse markers, and advise that much more attention should be given to this category of ties in teaching reading. As far as learners' strategies are concerned, strategies have been classified under three headings as learning strategies, production strategies, and communication strategies. According to researchers, readers whose reading is content based and facing a comprehension difficulty would certainly try to overcome it using a strategy of some sort. The last point discussed relates to cohesion in reading comprehension. There is no doubt that cohesion is an important aspect of a written text, and it would be difficult to imagine the existence of any piece of a written text which is more than a couple of sentences long without cohesive ties. The conclusion reached in that chapter is that reading comprehension and vocabulary are highly correlated. Students who have vocabulary deficits have problems understanding

texts. Textual relationship and reference are other important aspects to be considered if we want students to improve reading comprehension.

Chapter four has the ambition to analyse the place of vocabulary in learning foreign languages. It is only around the 1980's that researchers (Gairns & Redman, 1986; Wallace, 1982) started to claim the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. Studies (Lewis, 1997; Ellis, 1994) confirm that learners feel the lexical deficit as the major problem during their reading and that the need to understand can explain their fascination towards Lexis. Reading ability and vocabulary knowledge are two of the most important components of performance in a foreign language especially in academic settings. This chapter deals also with the fundamental character of foreign language learning and the psychological aspects that characterize it. Moreover, the lexical approach to language teaching which concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and words combinations and the new role for lexis are discussed.

Chapter five deals with the major characteristics of structural semantics. Different aspects of knowing a word are presented and some basic issues on vocabulary are treated; they include lexemes and words, grammatical and lexical words, and finally morphemes and morphology. In addition, students have great difficulty grasping collocations and idioms. They are related to the cross linguistic aspects of the mental lexicon which suggests that learners made frequent use of connections between the two lexicons, i.e. Arabic and French mastered. Learners' strategies are discussed because they represent the individuals' approach to the task of learning and because different

learners exhibit different strategies in response to lexical problems. The last part of this chapter deals with the choice of words and usage errors produced by the learners and paves the way to the test we are going to present in the next chapter.

Chapter six, chapter seven (the test) and chapter eight (the interview) have the ambition to shed light on certain of the difficulties Algerian students face when learning English, with specific reference to reading, and to highlight the different strategies used by these students to understand vocabulary. The setting where the test was held is Constantine Mentouri University, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Department of Foreign Languages. The aim of the test is to highlight the vocabulary strategies used by 1<sup>st</sup> year L.M.D students to grasp information given in written form, such as short texts, and to determine their areas of difficulty as far as vocabulary is concerned. However, before moving to that, one has first to have more background knowledge of the place of English in the Algerian educational system in addition to a background knowledge of students and their experience with the English language i.e. how many years of English?, and how many hours instruction?

Through the literature on vocabulary learning, researchers (Zimmerman, 1997; Prince, 1996) have investigated sensitivity to syntactic structure; they have shown that, rather than using the syntactic and semantic cues in a text to integrate the meanings of the individual words, learners seem to treat each word separately, and fail to identify its function. The test we are going to present will check how our students will deal with complex lexical units which are idiomatic to some degree. Translation, which we believe is one of the most important strategy used by our learners, will also be investigated.

Finally, chapter nine is a set of recommendations reached on the basis of the results obtained in the test and confirmed by the interview. In view of the existing literature, the different findings reached will obviously be taken into account in order to improve the learning and the teaching situation prevailing.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **APPROACHES TO TEACHING LANGUAGE SKILL**

#### **1.1- Introduction**

Vocabulary is central to language and of critical importance to the typical language learner. Nevertheless, the teaching and learning of vocabulary were up till the 1970's and the 1980's undervalued in the field of second / foreign language learning. Researchers and teachers had given priority to syntax and phonology as "more serious candidates for theorizing" Richards (1976: p.77) more central to linguistic theory and more critical to language pedagogy.

The aim of this historical overview is to build a better understanding of the place of vocabulary in the different approaches and methods advocated and to indicate likely development in lexical pedagogy in the future.

Many approaches/methods have been advocated and used in the teaching of foreign languages. A great deal of research has been carried out in this area by linguists and educationalists in order to solve the different problems that face people learning a foreign language. In the course of time, this has given rise to different approaches and methods to language teaching such as the Grammar Translation Approach/Method, the Direct Approach/Method, the Reading Approach/Method, the Audio-lingual Approach/Method, the Situational Approach/Method, and the Communicative approach. However, before we go any further, we must first distinguish between

"approach", "method", and "technique", three terms which have often been used one for the other.

## **1.2- Definition of “Approach”, “Method”, and “Technique”**

Language teaching is discussed in terms of three related aspects which are "approach", "method", and "technique". In an attempt to clarify the difference between the three terms, the American linguist Edward Anthony (1963), proposed a scheme in which he identified three levels of conceptualisation and organisation: "approach", "method", and "technique". He argued that the arrangement is hierarchical and that the organisational key is that techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach.

According to Anthony (1963:64), “An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught”.

Defining method, he writes that “It is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language materials, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural”.

As regards technique, he argues that

*“It is implementational - that which actually takes place in the classroom. It is a particular stratagem or contrivance used to*



*accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well”.*

According to Bell (1981:75), an "approach" is

*“An orientation to the problem of language learning which derives from an amalgam of linguistic and psychological insights into the nature of language and the nature of the learning process. Well-articulated, an approach is a theory of applied linguistics which seeks to explain the phenomenon of language learning in terms which assist the learner to achieve his goal”.*

A method is

*“The application of the insights which constitute the approach to the problem of language learning. Typically, method will have a pedagogical grammar - or grammars - associated with it and principles which guide the creation of such grammars, the selection of elements to be taught and of techniques for teaching them”.*

A technique involves

*“Lectures, exercises, projects and assignments, case studies, discussions, role play and simulations”.*

Richards, J. Platt, and H. Platt (1992:20 / 238) define the same terms as follows:

*a- Approach: This term is related to the different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (p.20).*

*b- Method: This term is concerned with the different ways of teaching a language, which is based on principles and procedures, i.e. which is an application of a view on how a language is best taught and learned (p.238).*

*c- Technique: It deals with the different kinds of classroom activities used in teaching such as drills, dialogues, role play, and so forth (p.20).*

We may, therefore, say that an approach is a theory about the nature of language and language learning, a method, a particular way of presenting a language to the students, and technique, what happens during the class session.

### **1.3- Language Approaches / Methods**

#### **1.3.1- The Grammar Translation Method**

The Grammar-Translation approach is an extension of the approach used to teach classical languages, Greek and Latin. The assumptions underlying this approach are that instruction is given in the native language of the students with a focus on grammatical rules, and early reading of classical literature. Its aim is the mastery of the

general rules governing the written language and translation from and into the foreign language.

In the method derived from this approach, students have to learn by heart grammatical rules and tables of conjugations and have to translate with the help of a dictionary. In such a situation, the pupils' role is largely passive because the functional/social nature of the language is disregarded. In fact, the training is carried out by exercises taken from classical texts which more often than not have little to do with learners' interests and needs. This method neglects authentic spoken communication.

Richards and Rodgers (1986:3) state that “Grammar translation is a way of studying a language through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences into and out of the target language”.

They explain that with such a method, students are supposed to memorize rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language. According to them, this amounts to a tedious process of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary, and attempting to produce perfect translations of literary prose.

Krashen (1987:128) says that

*“It can only be claimed that grammar translation provides scraps of comprehensible input. The model sentences are usually comprehensible, but the focus is on the form and not meaning. Students are forced to read word by word, and consequently rarely focus completely on the message”.*

According to him, the exercises used in that method are designed to provide a conscious control of structure through the practice of grammar and vocabulary of the lesson. The latter also includes translation from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) and vice versa.

As far as vocabulary is concerned, in Grammar Translation Method, great store is set by the learning of many foreign language words. Lessons typically consisted of a reading selection, two or three long columns of new vocabulary items with native language equivalents, and a test. Language skill was judged according to one's ability to analyse the syntactic structure, primarily to conjugate verbs. Lexis is not presented in context, but in bilingual lists that are to be memorised; the arrangement of these lists and the classification of lexis follows the grammatical ordering of word classes. Textbooks, following this method, begin each lesson with very long bilingual vocabulary lists. The students are to learn these lists by heart and try to translate these words from the foreign language or vice versa into very complicated sentences which are most of the time beyond their grasp. However, it should also be noted that the vocabulary learned from one unit is not reinserted in other units, and as a result,

students rapidly forget a great amount of it. In addition, vocabulary teaching through the Grammar Translation Method does not allow the learners to get the meaning of words easily or at all because they are not put in any context. However, this method can, at least, help the learners have their equivalents in the mother tongue or target language.

Rivers (1981:45) states that

*“Students using the Grammar Translation Method studied literary language samples that used primarily archaic structures and obsolete vocabulary that was selected according to its ability to illustrate grammatical rules, and direct vocabulary instruction was included only when a word illustrated a grammatical rule”.*

The Grammar Translation Method was used well into the twentieth century as the primary method for foreign language instruction in Europe and the United States, but it has received challenges and criticism for many years. The primary objection to the method was the neglect of realistic, oral language. This objection had implications for the role of vocabulary in language instruction.

The main criticism which can be voiced in relation to the Grammar Translation Method is that it focuses on a grammatical sequence. However, this can be of use in certain teaching contexts.

### **1.3.2- The Reform Movement**

Although Grammar Translation dominated language teaching as late as the 1920's, it had been challenged on many fronts. In the 1880's, its challengers had enough consensus they needed from linguists such as Henry Sweet in England to establish the Reform Movement. The reformers emphasized the primacy of spoken language and phonetic training. Fluency took on a new meaning: the ability to accurately pronounce a connected passage and to maintain associations between a stream of speech and the referents of the outside world.

Howatt (1984) states that "The curriculum developed by Sweet is considered representative of the time"

His system began with the Mechanical stage, where students studied phonetics and transcription, continued to the Grammatical stage, where they studied grammar and basic vocabulary, and then to the Idiomatic stage, where they pursued vocabulary in greater depth. Sweet's lessons were based on carefully controlled spoken language in which lists of separated words and isolated sentences were avoided; only after thorough study of the complete text should grammar points or vocabulary items be isolated for instructional purposes

Sweet (1899 / 1964:97) points out that "Although language is made of words, we do not speak in words, but in sentences. From a practical as well as a scientific point of view, the sentence is the unit of language, not the word. From a phonetic point of view words do not exist".

Perhaps the reformers' most significant departure from the past in the area of vocabulary instruction was that words came to be associated with reality rather than with other words and syntactic patterns. To this end, vocabulary was selected according to its simplicity and usefulness.

### **1.3.3- The Direct Approach / Method**

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Direct Method, the best known of several "natural" methods which benefited from the debate ensued during the Reform Movement was introduced. Its name came from the priority of relating meaning directly with the target language without the step of translation. The Direct approach principles were based on the rejection of the teaching of grammar rules which are thought to be acquired rather unconsciously through practical use and of the learner's mother-tongue. Reading and writing were deferred in the fear that the sight of the written symbols would confuse learners in their use of the sounds. It focused, in fact, on the active involvement of the learner in speaking and listening to the foreign language in realistic, everyday situations. A great deal of emphasis was placed on good pronunciation and on introducing students to phonetic transcription.

According to the German scholar Franke (1884:9), "A language could best be taught by using it actively in the classroom rather than using analytical procedures that focus on explanation of grammar rules in classroom teaching".

He argues that teachers must encourage direct and spontaneous use of the foreign language with a systematic attention to pronunciation. Concerning grammatical rules, they have to be induced by the learners.

Krashen (1987:135) argues that “This method focuses on inductive teaching of grammar. The goal of the instruction is for the students to guess, or work at, the rules of the language. It insists on accuracy and errors are corrected in the class. The rule is discussed and explained in the target language”.

In the Direct method, the main stress is on the oral skills, and language is to be taught in natural situations by extensive listening, imitation and speaking. In that respect, many techniques and procedures such as question/answer exchanges between teacher and students, and vocabulary teaching through demonstration, objects, and pictures were developed. Concrete vocabulary was explained with labelled pictures and demonstration, while abstract vocabulary was taught through the associating of ideas. Charts and pictures were used during this period, first in the classroom and then in language textbooks to make this method more effective in foreign language teaching and learning. However, in order to fulfil the criterion of authentic spoken language, this method requires teachers who are native speakers of the language.

The Direct Method posited by Berlitz by the twentieth century, whose basic tenet was that second language learning is similar to first language learning, involved the students in the learning of words referring to many objects about which they can talk, and to many actions they can perform. In other words, the method focuses on the learning of every day vocabulary. The words students learn are combined not with first



language equivalents but with pictures, or actions. This combination is used relying on the exclusive use of the target language.

### **1.3.4- The Reading Method**

The 1920's and the 1930s, saw the birth of the Reading Method in the United States and Situational Language Teaching in Great Britain. The principle underlying this method is the development of reading skills. Similarly, in Great Britain, West (1930:514) stressed the need to facilitate reading skill by improving vocabulary skills. In his thesis at Oxford in 1927, he criticized the direct methodologists for stressing the importance of speech without providing guidelines for selecting content. He stated that "The primary thing in learning a language is the acquisition of vocabulary, and practice in using it. The problem is what vocabulary; and none of these modern textbooks in common use in English schools have attempted to solve the problem".

Reading is viewed as the most usable skill to have in a foreign language. This method aims at developing an intensive reading for the purpose of comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and grammatical rules. The teaching of grammatical rules is principally based on the structures found in the reading passage, and comprehension is assessed through questions on the contexts of the reading materials. The method is also concerned with extensive reading where learners read on their own.

Concerning the method, the teaching of grammatical rules is principally based on the structures found in the reading passage, and comprehension is assessed through questions on the contexts of the reading materials.

Coleman (1929:11) stated that “A more reasonable goal for a foreign language course would be a reading knowledge of a foreign language, achieved through the gradual introduction of word and grammatical structures in simple reading texts”.

In other words, the goal of language teaching is restricted to the training in reading comprehension.

For the first time, vocabulary was considered one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning and a priority was placed on developing a scientific and a rational basis for selecting the vocabulary content of language courses.

The emphasis on reading was a source of criticism both at the time the method was advocated and during the Second World War when speaking languages became a priority and has been abandoned since.

### **1.3.5- The Audio-Lingual Method**

From the 1950's on and as a reaction to the traditional methods i.e., the Grammar-Translation method, the Reform Movement, the Direct method, and the Reading method, which were judged to be ineffective, the Audio-lingual method was developed by American structural linguists during World War II. This approach suggested that most problems experienced by foreign language learners concern the conflict of different structural systems. With grammar or “structure” as its starting point and the belief that language learning is a process of habit formation, the audio-lingual method paid systematic attention to pronunciation and intensive oral drilling of basic

sentence patterns. Students were taught grammatical points through examples and drills rather than through analysis and memorization of rules.

With the major object of language teaching being the acquisition of structural patterns, vocabulary items were selected according to their simplicity and familiarity. New words were introduced through the drills, but only enough words to make the drills possible.

We therefore notice that the movement of Structuralism relegated the learning of vocabulary behind the scene and downgraded it to a secondary level in the learning and the teaching process a foreign language. The belief, at that time, was that in learning a new language, it is more important to master its sounds and its grammatical structures than learning its vocabulary. All learners need, at first, is just enough elementary vocabulary to practise the syntactic structures. At that time, different views and orientations in Linguistics and Psychology from Structuralism to Behaviourism helped the progress of the Audio-Lingual Method, which was primarily for the mastery of structure. Vocabulary learning in this method is given a minor role until the students achieve a complete mastery of the elementary structural patterns and are able to express themselves freely within a limited area of language. Vocabulary teaching is contextualised; but while pronunciation and intonation are given high credit, meaning is largely disregarded.

Rivers (1968:23) specifies the aims of this method as “Developing listening and speaking skills first, as the foundation on which to build the skills of reading and writing”.

In other words, foreign language learners are brought to proficiency in aural and oral use of structures before being taught how to read and write. We have to point out that this is where the language labs came in.

This method is based on the belief that language is essentially acquired through habits, and that responses must be drilled until they become automatic and natural. This process reflects the behaviourist view of language learning influenced by the psychologist, Skinner.

Applied to language instruction, and often within the context of the language laboratories, this means that the instructor would present the correct model of a sentence and the students would have to repeat it. The teacher would then continue by presenting new words for the students to sample in the same structure. In audio-lingualism, there is no explicit grammar instruction—everything is simply memorized in form. The idea is for the students to practice the particular construct until they can use it spontaneously. In this manner, the lessons are built on static drills in which the students have little or no control on their own output.

According to Finnochiaro and Brumfit (1983:7)

*“The fashion now was for long dialogues, usually centred on one or more carefully graded structures. Mimicry and memorization of the dialogue became the slogan for too many years, perfect pronunciation was sought often at the expense of anything else, and lexical meaning was considered unimportant”.*

This method encouraged learners to repeat incomprehensible material without communication and without interaction. In fact, the learners were not allowed to use linguistic forms they have not been drilled in. It is also to be noted that grammar was banned in many school systems, and that pattern practice drills were the main activity of the lesson.

Critics of the Audio-lingual method have pointed out that students become bored by the repetition of patterns in addition to the production of strings of sounds mechanically without a thought for the meaning of what is being said. The relevant interests of the learners, real communicative use of language, were ignored. In spite of the critics, however, Nunan (1991:229) wrote that “Audio-lingualism was, in fact, the first approach which could be said to have developed a 'technology' of teaching as a reaction against more traditional methods”.

We, therefore, note that for Nunan, audio-lingualism was a basis for the foreign language teaching methods that followed.

The view that saw vocabulary as mainly a problem of grading and selection in the teaching of foreign languages largely dominated up to the 1960's. At that time, the emergence of different works dealing with word lists knew a large success, for example “A General Service List” (GSL), a book produced by West in 1953 which proposed a list of 2000 words that offers the opportunity of comprehension of 80 % of any written text. The main figure associated with this work is Palmer, who was Director of the Institute of English Language Teaching in Tokyo from 1923-1936. The history of their association and academic collaboration on the development of vocabulary and other

teaching materials has been charted by Howatt (1983). The main criteria of West, Palmer and others for the selection of vocabulary for learning are that:

- 1- The frequency of each word in written English should be indicated.
- 2- Information should be provided about the relative prominence of the various meanings and uses of a word form.

Both these criteria provide particularly useful guidance for teachers deciding which words and which meanings should be taught first. Other criteria adopted in the selection of words include their universality, their utility, and their usefulness.

Lehr (1984:656) claims that “The word list is probably the most widely used approach to vocabulary development in formal settings, and most textbooks, particularly those used in foreign language settings, provide chapter word lists, end glossaries, or both.”

This approach is closely connected to the first step of vocabulary learning. The basic technique is to give students a list of words to be learned. A more likely way to get word lists is to have the learners make their own lists from materials they use. Huff (1992), in his studies, found vocabulary lists in all of the current university foreign language texts he examined.

However, Carver (1998) states that

*“West can be criticized for not giving adequate consideration to the notions of “availability” and “familiarity” of words though no current research was available to him at that time. The GSL is not without its disadvantages, but it was a considerable advance on any previous word lists and remains one of the main innovative examples of foreign language pedagogy and lexicometrics research this century.”*

This vocabulary learning method thus may or may not be effective, depending on what activities and techniques are included as part of the method. Particular activities and techniques can enhance motivation, interest, word usefulness, and acquisition of vocabulary learning strategies.

The decline in emphasis on vocabulary learning was accelerated by movements in linguistics that concentrated on Phonology, Morphology and Syntax with a corresponding neglect of Semantics. However, an inspiration seemed to emerge with the advancement of notional syllabuses: notions, topics and settings seemed to bring a new life for the word. Wilkins (1972:111) deplored the neglect of vocabulary in the period dominated by the Audio-lingual Approaches, and wrote that if “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”.

Therefore, around the 1970’s, we started to take care of the word and insist that it has to be learned in “context”. Semantics started to play a very important role in the teaching of vocabulary; we have even started to regard vocabulary as a skill that should not be subsumed by other aspects of language.

### **1.3.6- The Situational Approach / Method**

In situational language teaching, language was taught by practising basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities. In situational teaching, actions are simulated to illustrate the utterances; numerous pictures and other real objects are used. Such a contextual teaching, therefore, attempts to teach the structures of the language in everyday situations where they are likely to occur. The basis of this method is the use of dialogues dealing with specific social situations such as "At the Supermarket", "Visiting a Friend", and so on. So, contextualization is a vital component in situational language teaching.

In this approach/method, the teacher's role is central and active. He has to vary drills and tasks and choose relevant situations to practise structures. Language learning, in this method, is seen to result from active verbal interaction between the teacher and the learners. In fact, the teacher serves as a model; learners are required to listen and repeat. In order to check whether learning has taken place the teacher uses questions and commands.

There are many similarities between the Situational method and the Audio-lingual method. They both introduce language skills in the same order, listening, speaking, reading, writing, and focus on accuracy through drills and the practice of the basic structures and sentence patterns of the target language. Richards and Rodgers (1986:61) argue that similarities between the two methods reflect similar views about the nature of the language and of language learning, though these views were in fact



developed from quite different traditions. However they add: “Situational language teaching was a development of the earlier direct method and does not have the strong ties to linguistics and behavioural psychology that characterize audio-lingualism”.

Just as the linguistic theory underlying audio-lingualism was rejected in the United States in the 1960's, British applied linguists began to question the theoretical assumptions underlying situational language teaching, i.e., that speech and structure are regarded as the basis of language, and that the knowledge of structures must be related to situations in which they could be used.

Howatt (1984:280) states that

*“By the end of the sixties, it was clear that the situational approach run its course. There was no future in continuing to pursue the chimera of predicting language on the basis of situational events. What was required was a closer study of the language itself and a return to the traditional concept that utterances carried meaning in themselves and expressed the meanings and intentions of the speakers and writers who created them”.*

In spite of this reservation, it is to be noted that the technique of creating situations in the classroom is crucial for effective use of certain functions and notions. The teacher should be sensitive to the individual needs of the students in the matter, which was the basis of the emergence of the communicative approach.

### **1.3.7- The Communicative Approach**

In the early 1970's, there was a widespread reaction against the methods that stressed the teaching of grammatical forms and paid little attention to the way language is used in everyday situations. A concern developed to make foreign language teaching 'communicative' by focusing on learners' knowledge of the functions of language and their ability to use them in specific situations.

The communicative approach grew out of the work of anthropological and Firthian linguists such as Hymes (1972) and Halliday (1973) who view language first and foremost as a system of communication. This approach assumes that learning a second language requires the acquisition of the linguistic means to perform different kinds of functions. It was primarily designed to meet the needs of adult learners and people engaged in academic, cultural, technical, and economic activities.

Another theorist who shares the belief in the communicative nature of language is Widdowson (1978). He presented a view of the relationship between linguistic systems and the communicative values in discourse. He focused on the communicative acts underlying the ability to use language for different purposes.

Hymes (1972:281) considers that "A person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use."

He makes a distinction between "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence". The first refers to the unconscious knowledge of language structures and

the second to the knowledge of how to use language appropriately in a given social situation. His view has been very useful to language teaching and applied linguistics.

Littlewood (1984) considers the acquisition of communicative competence in a language as a skill. This view encourages an emphasis on practice as a way of developing communicative skills. He notes that communicative language teaching aims at providing meaningful tasks for practice to encourage natural learning and to create a context that supports learning. According to Littlewood (1984:74)

*“The cognitive aspect involves the internalization of plans for creating appropriate behaviour. For language use, these plans derive mainly from the language system - they include grammatical rules, procedures for selecting vocabulary, and social conventions governing speech. The behavioural aspect involves the automation of these plans so that they can be converted into fluent performance in real time”.*

The basic principle underlying the communicative approach is that the goal of language teaching is mainly concerned with the learners' ability to communicate in the target language. The communicative approach also assumes that the content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions, not just linguistic structures. With the communicative approach, students often engage in role play to adjust their use of the target language to different contexts, and classroom activities are often authentic to reflect real life situations and demands.

In fact, this approach states that the main concern of language teaching should no longer be the knowledge an ideal speaker-hearer has about a language but the use of this knowledge in concrete situations to achieve a communicative goal. The implication of this is that we are concerned with what people do with language rather than with what they know about it.

The essential insight that emerged from this period is that communicative competence incorporates linguistic competence in the sense of linguistic creativity and that language learning is quite different from the previously held model of habit formation. The result was a complete change in the direction for language instruction; the focus in language teaching changed to communicative proficiency rather than the command of structures.

Rivers (1983:43) described her perception of this shift when she referred to the insufficiency of the skill-getting practices of the Audio-lingual Methods alone without the skill-using opportunities of real communication. She points out that “One failure in the past has been in our satisfaction with students who performed well in pseudo-communication. We have tended to assume that there would be automatic transfer to performance in interaction”.

Similarly, Widdowson (1978) claimed that “Native speakers can better understand ungrammatical utterances with accurate vocabulary than those with accurate grammar and inaccurate vocabulary”.

Wilkins summarized his view of the role of vocabulary in language instruction directly in his 1974 (p.19) work:

*“The ability to refer to concrete and conceptual entities is as fundamental to language as is the capacity provided by the grammar to relate such entities to one another. Knowledge of a language demands mastery of its vocabulary as much as of its grammar.....Just as the grammatical meaning of a linguistic form can be established only by reference to the grammatical system of which it is a part, so lexical meaning is the product of a word’s place in the lexical system”.*

By the 1980’s, came the time to assert, as Wallace (1982) stated “If we have the vocabulary we need, it is usually possible to communicate, after a fashion”.

Following the development of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), many researchers such as Wallace supported the teaching of vocabulary in relation with situations and contexts, encouraging inferences and activation of learners’ previous knowledge. Allen (1983) was for the introduction of the social and cultural components; Rivers (1983), and Gairns and Redman (1986) stressed the importance to make learners learn by themselves.

Thus, vocabulary, which suffered neglect in the teaching of foreign languages for a long time, started to benefit from theoretical advances in the linguistic study of the lexicon. Nevertheless, it is not always given the consideration it deserves in the teaching programmes.

## **1.4- Conclusion**

All language approaches/methods have some elements in common. They are all language teaching proposals that see content variables as crucial to successful language teaching. Every new approach/method is suggested to do the job more efficiently than the other methods. However, despite the amount and scope of what has been written about approaches/methods, the need to develop a more rigorous basis for educational practice still exists.

Theoretical priorities have changed throughout language teaching history. In the past, there has been little emphasis placed on the acquisition of vocabulary; although the lexicon is argued to be central to language acquisition / learning and use, vocabulary instruction has not been a priority in language learning research or methodology. As a consequence, researchers started to claim the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. Studies confirm that learners feel the lexical deficit as the major problem during their reading and that the need to understand can explain their fascination towards lexis. Therefore, the acquisition of lexis has become a question of interest to applied-linguists since then.

The position in the early 1990's is that Lexis has been unduly neglected in the past, and is due for a re-evaluation, but as yet, this re-evaluation did not go very far. The situation of the research about the importance of vocabulary will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO.**

# **IMPORTANCE OF READING**

### **Introduction**

The focus on reading is a relatively new trend in teaching and is partly linked to the growing field of E.S.P where, as it has been remarked by linguists, it is the most important skill to teach. In this respect, Mc Donough (1984: 70) says: "It will come as no surprise to most people to discover that in E.S.P terms, by far, the most significant skill is that of reading". As stated by Mc Donough, reading is given significant importance; it is becoming the most prominent skill in language teaching.

It is, in fact, in the 1980's that researchers started to consider that reading is an important skill to acquire because of the importance the English language was taking as an international means in communication, especially in academic fields where it holds a prominent place. From that period on, the view on the reading skill changed and researchers started to emphasize the fact that it is among the most important skills to teach.

Reading has often been considered a passive skill as opposed to the active skills (speaking and writing). Widdowson (1978:57) does not share this view. He points out that "The main emphasis in language teaching has always been on the so-called active skills which are speaking and writing whereas reading and listening are said to be passive."

According to him, this dichotomy - active/passive - is erroneous. Certain reading specialists like Goodman (1971:135) support the notion that “reading can be understood as an active, purposeful and creative mental process where the reader engages in the construction of meaning from a text”. Reading as an active process is partly based on relevant prior knowledge, and opinions that the reader brings to the task of making sense of the words on the page. Grellet (1981:8) describes reading as “an active skill which involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions”. Grellet views reading as an active skill where the reader is an active part of the process. The fact that the reader guesses, predicts, and asks himself questions is a mental activity where the reader interacts with the text. Nowadays, reading specialists agree that reading is an active and creative mental process. In the latter, the focus is on understanding what readers do when they read. This situation led to a change in language research which contributed to the proliferation of studies on reading.

## **2.1. Definition of Reading**

To give a general definition of reading is not an easy task. A number of writers gave different definitions expressing what they think of the process of reading.

Nuttal (1982:4) states that “In reading, the main purpose is the extraction of meaning from writing. Our business is with the way the reader gets a message from a text.”

In her opinion, what is important is the reader's ability to decode the message transmitted by the writer. This is related to the understanding a reader arrives at, and



more importantly, to the understanding of how he gets and grasps messages, i.e., the understanding of the reading process.

In psycholinguistic terms, reading is concerned with the interrelation between thought and language. It is a process whereby a reader tries to understand what has been written and grasp the message. In other words, the readers will have to make sense of the text in order to extract the information they need from it. Goodman (1975:12) states that "There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought."

We then notice that reading is a process by which the writer encodes a linguistic surface representation which later on the reader decodes in order to construct his meaning. According to Goodman, reader proficiency depends on the semantic background the reader brings to any given reading task.

Widdowson (1979:56) views the reading process "As not simply a matter of extracting information from the text. Rather, it is one in which the reading activates a range of knowledge in the reader's mind that...may be refined and extended by the new information supplied by the text".

According to Widdowson, reading is a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text, and the reading process is an interaction between both of them.

Reading is now looked at as a cognitive activity which implies a certain amount of thinking on the part of the reader. There should be a kind of involvement and interaction of the reader with the piece of written discourse in order to get the meaning out.

## **2.2- The Difference between First, Second, and Foreign Language.**

The development of English as an international language gives it a different status depending on the situation where it is taught and learned. Therefore, we have to distinguish between English as first, second or foreign language. This distinction is important in the domain of teaching and learning because the setting and the objectives are quite different.

Asher and Simpson (1994: pp. 1120/1121) define them as follows:

**2.2.1- English as a First Language:** This refers to native speakers of the English speaking world who acquire the language as their mother tongue. English exists, in those countries, in different forms and varieties. For example, British English has distinctive aspects of pronunciation and usage compared with American English. Even within these varieties, many dialects may be found.

In a first language situation, a child usually internalizes the system of its mother tongue at an early stage. The process of learning is natural and full of variety. Motivation is strong in the young learner as he is prompted by inner drive. Language is a key to the discovery of the outside world and to his cognitive development. The

language he acquires surrounds him from birth and this linguistic environment constantly reinforces his learning.

**2.2.2- English as a Second Language:** A second language is one which has some specific functions within a multilingual society or minority groups, and is learned after the mother tongue. As a second language, English is taught in conditions where there is some reinforcement from the child's immediate environment and the language is used extensively in everyday life. The language usually functions as a lingua franca, i.e. the normal medium of instruction and communication. It is also used as the official language of the government institutions, of commercial and industrial organizations and of the mass media. It is thus essential that the individual learns the target language in order to be equipped with an instrument of communication between members of different communities.

**2.2.3- English as a Foreign Language:** A foreign language is one which has no internal function in the learner's country. It is learnt in order to communicate with native speakers or inter-language users of the foreign language. In this setting, as in the Arab world, English has no official status. Learning of the foreign language is confined to the classroom. That is the language is taught and used in schools. Normally, there is little, if any, reinforcement outside the school. The language is learnt like the other subjects in the school curriculum for operational purposes. Unlike the first two language situations, motivation for learning the target language is not high. This is especially the case in the early stages because young children are still unaware of their individual needs and interests. Motivation depends largely on the teacher, the method, the language activities, the textbooks and the classroom situation.

### **2.3- The Teaching and Learning Situation in the Algerian Context.**

In order to understand the Algerian situation as far as the learning and status of languages are concerned, one has first to determine what type of speech community Algeria is.

The terms “speech community” and “linguistic community” are widely used by linguists and other social scientists to identify communities on the basis of their languages. Speech communities comprise idiolects and dialects. An idiolect is the total speech repertoire of a single person and a dialect marks a person’s membership in a particular group.

According to Asher and Simpson (1994:4177) speech communities are classified into four major types on the basis of their linguistic composition:

**Multilingual:** A ‘multilingual’ community officially recognizes more than two languages. The recognition of linguistic pluralism does not mean that in terms of functional range and societal depth of use, all the recognized languages have identical status. A multilingual country generally adopts a contact language, often with an official status.

**Bilingual:** A ‘bilingual’ community has two languages with an official status.

**Diglossic:** Originally, ‘diglossic’ community was used in the specific sense of two varieties of one language which are functionally complementary. In a diglossic situation, there are two varieties of a language, High (H) and Low (L). The H variety is used in formal contexts. For example, Arabic speaking communities make a distinction between Classical and colloquial varieties of the language. In these countries, children learn the formal variety of Arabic in school.

**Monolingual:** A ‘monolingual’ community essentially recognizes one language. However, the term is misnomer, since monolinguals have a verbal repertoire which includes various dialects, styles, and registers. Switches in styles and registers often entail special efforts in learning and education.

In view of the different definitions stated, we can consider that Algeria is a ‘multilingual’ and a ‘diglossic’ community. The Algerian diglossic situation is characterized by the use of standard Arabic and French as high varieties used in formal and public domains, and colloquial dialects, namely Algerian Arabic and Berber, as low varieties for informal and intimate situations. In public domains, standard Arabic is present virtually everywhere and used (especially at the written level) in varying degrees. In some domains, such as education, standard Arabic dominates; in other domains such as the economy, standard Arabic is used in parallel with French.

### **2.3.1-Presentation of the Problem:**

Algerian society, whose true identity had been denied for 132 years, could not begin to reconstruct itself without restoring the bedrock of that identity, namely the Arabic language, which remains a vivid symbol of Arabic identity and Islamic values. The Algerian National Constitution stipulates that Standard Arabic is the only official language of the nation, supposedly used by all members of the speech community. The Arabisation process then was intended to change a heavy linguistic heritage of 132 years. Arabisation, as the term is understood in the Maghrebi regions, means restoring the Arabic language (Grandguillaume 1997a: 3). Several laws, decrees and ordinances aimed at implementing Standard Arabic and strengthening its position in all public domains were duly enacted, reinforced and applied.

The educational profile of the Algerian society changed dramatically with independence, when most French and other Europeans left. As the majority of technicians and administrators were Europeans, Algeria was left with a shortage of highly-skilled and educated people. In the educational system, the first reform, adopted right after independence, was to teach Standard Arabic starting from the primary level. French became a second language (1964), and then a foreign language with the application of the Foundation School system in 1976. In reaction to this change, within the Foundation School System, a political attempt was made to reconcile the restoration of the national language Standard Arabic with the retention of French, an essential medium for the acquisition of technology and modern science. Grandguillaume (1983:55) states that “The Arabisation campaigns did not mean the elimination of the French language”. [author’s translation].

It should be noted, however, that Arabisation was not evident and its implementation strategies were not easy to realise in various domains such as education.

According to Saada (1983:7) “The process of cultural decolonization, the languages and their semantic support play a role of foreground. Thus, teaching is done in two school languages of different nature: Standard Arabic or "fasha" and French”.

In the context of Algeria, bilingualism is a product of the colonial situation. Memmi (1973:137) points out that “Colonial bilingualism cannot be assimilated to any linguistic dualism because the possession of the two languages is not only the possession of two tools; it is the participation to two psychic and cultural kingdoms. However, here, the two universes symbolized by the two languages are in conflict”.

In this case, it is not a question of “*bilingualism*” itself, i.e. the control of two languages of which the alternative use conveys identical or different contexts, but rather an “*undergone bilingualism*”, by colonial imposition of the French language juxtaposed with Arabic, then preserved by “*loan*”. In fact, it is, in the Algerian context, a multilingualism made up of two school languages (Standard Arabic and French) and the language of the social background: the Spoken Arabic and the Berber one and more commonly “*pidgin*”<sup>1</sup> (“*sabir*” or Arab/French mixed language). We can, thus, conclude that the approach of the bilingualism in question

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<sup>1</sup> Pidgin: Phenomenon of dependent linguistic interference has the predominance of conflict universes. Use of a lexicon and a syntax combined in the two languages (loan of lexicon and syntax). In E.H SAADA (1983), op. cit. P.28.

here is not that of the study of the processes of acquisition of a first and a second language.

### **2.3.2- The Language in the Social / Family Environment:**

Initially, it should be stressed that the language of communication of the Algerian population is Arabic known as dialectal Arabic, a living language having an oral prevalence. We will distinguish the Standard Arabic language from dialectal Arabic. It is thus dialectal Arabic which conveys, in Algeria, the whole of the daily communication and the social / family relationships. It also constitutes the whole of verbal and educational life of children in an exclusive way up to the entry at school (at the age of 6) in a parallel way, since it remains the only language of the family.

### **2.3.3- Some Points of Comparison between the Three Linguistic Systems: Standard Arabic, French and Spoken Arabic:**

In order to better understand the difficulties encountered by the bilingual learners, it is necessary to outline a non-exhaustive table of certain differences between the two linguistic systems concerned. According to Saada (1983:53), the major differences lie in the following:

*1- The alphabetical differences and graphs between Arabic and French, when, at first sight, the reader compares the writings. Indeed, the difference of the two alphabets, of which only certain letters correspond phonetically, but several do not have their phonetic equivalent in the other language; the marking of the vowels by signs supplementing the consonant letters in Arabic*



*(becoming the use of the long vowels) whereas the consonants and the vowels are French letters (graphic change of status of the vowels), but especially the complexity of the graphics of the letters in each of the two languages and the direction of writing, constitute as many disturbing factors in the training and the control of their writing and their reading.*

2- *The phonetic difference is also contrasted between the two languages. The consonants "p" and "v" do not exist in Arabic; they have their equivalent in the Arabic letters "b" and "f". Several Arabic consonants such as "th", "h" strongly aspirated, do not exist in French. Thus, the word "Paris" becomes "barriz", "bag" becomes "falisa", and "pedagogy" becomes "bidagougia". There is, thus, a phenomenon of interference between the two linguistic systems, the French one being often deformed according to former receipts of the standard Arabic. The Arabic-speaking learner reorganizes his French speech and writing starting from his Arabic phonetic support.*

3- *The morpho-syntactic differences between the two linguistic systems are also significant. With regard to the structure of the sentence, it is formed, in Arabic, by the verb placed initially, the subject, and finally the complements, whereas in French, the subject generally precedes the verb. In Arabic, the tense of the verbs is formed starting generally from a root including three syllables. The auxiliary verbs (to be and to have) do not exist in Arabic, and contrary to the variety of French tenses, Arabic has two great tenses: the accomplished one (past) and the unaccomplished one (present) whereas the future is formed with the present tense plus the letter "s" at the beginning of*

*the verb. By means of the rules of transformation, Arabic can compose words starting from the root of the verbs: thus, from "kataba" (to write), one obtains "el-katib" (the writer), "el-maktab" (the office), "el-maktaba" (the library or the bookshop).[author's translation]*

As we have just seen, the morpho-syntactic differences are significant; they constitute probably large difficulties for the learner of standard Arabic, creating a source of confusion and conflicts in the procedures of acquisition. (Verbal and cognitive).

*4 – The lexical and semantic differences between standard Arabic and French are all the more marked that there is often not direct equivalence between the traditional and spoken vocabulary of the two systems. Thus, the learners of the two languages are brought to proceed in permanent manner through "translations" to understand the texts while reading. The socio-cultural universes subjacent with the two school languages being very contrasted, the pupils base their learning on supports of "empty meaning" of real physical and social contents.*

In order to reinforce the idea about the difficulties of Arabo-French bilingualism Moatassime (1992:63) points out that

*“The contradiction of Arabic-French "bilingualism" appears in the semantic contact between two different systems and under the conditions where bilingualism is exerted. The "cultural context" introduces an unquestionable number of unmatched notes difficult to prevent. Those go from contradictions*

*which appear at the stage of writing up to the true "dualism" while passing by the interferences of any kind that one often notes, in the reasoning, in the school behaviour, or in the teaching relation of the subjects concerned".*

First of all, at the stage of writing, the simultaneous introduction of two opposite codes – Arabic characters and Latin characters, led on the left and led on the right – often disconcert the learner.

Concerning “*interferences*”, they often appear at the level of “*reasoning*”, in particular at the pre-logical age (12-14 years), by the pure and simple transfer in French of the structures of different thoughts and vice versa. The young teenager is often torn between the contradictory requirements of his teachers. The Arabic professor teaches, for example, that a sentence must always start with the verb: “*dakhala Mohamed*” (word for word: entered Mohamed). For the French professor, it is the opposite. Under these conditions, the pupil manages with difficulty to seize the range of “*another logic*”: that of the foreign language which he also needs as an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge.

These interferences also appear at the level of the “*teaching relation*” and, therefore, with that of the “*behaviour*” and “*socialization*”. They start initially at the stage of civic, religious, and moral education. For example, the Moslem, since his earliest childhood, learns that the sign of respect to enter a mosque is to expose himself by keeping his hairstyle carefully. In a course of civics in French, the young person learns the opposite. In addition, a “*well mannered*” child according to the

Moslem tradition must lower the eyes to speak to his teacher. At school, the French professor teaches his pupils to "*look at people straight in front*". This shows the difficulties felt by a personality in formation to find the way of its development. This situation does not only affect the pupil / teacher relation, but also the individual and social behaviour of the child.

Piaget (1972: 100) writes that: "The full blooming of the personality under its most intellectual aspects is in-dissociable of the whole of the emotional, social and moral ratios which constitute the life at school". [Author's translation].

The social and moral life of the child is, at least by its emotional aspects, entirely or almost apart from the school life. This emotional and intellectual disturbance weighs heavily on his psychological and individual life.

Moreover, the problem of a young person in a multilingual situation is not limited solely to the teaching difficulties examined for each of the two languages, Arabic and French. It is a question for him of being able to dominate an unequal cultural confrontation between two civilizations and thoughts, and two ways of life.

#### **2.4-The Place of English in the Arab World:**

English holds a prominent place in most of the Arab countries owing to the traditional relationship maintained with the English-speaking world. There are extensive commercial, cultural and other interdependent activities with the United Kingdom and the United States. This results in a favorable attitude towards the language and

consequently a strong drive to learn it. This status has recently been enhanced by the rapid growth of science and technology.

There is, however, a paradox in the use of English. Although its position seems pre-eminent across the Arab world, the language remains superficial or even irrelevant to the majority of the population, especially in the rural areas where Arabic is the sole medium of communication. Culturally, Arabic is used as the vehicle of writing, instruction and correspondence both in government and civic institutions.

## **2.5- Reading in a Foreign Language: A Reading Problem or a Language Problem?**

In many parts of the world a reading knowledge of a foreign language is often important to academic studies, professional success, and personal development. This is particularly true of English as so much professional, technical, and scientific literature is published in English today. A reading ability is the most important skill needed by learners of English as a foreign language. Yet, despite this specific need for the foreign language, most students fail to learn to read adequately. Very frequently, students reading in a foreign language seem to read with less understanding than one might expect them, and read considerably slower than they reportedly read in their first language.

Considering the Algerian situation, we may say that reading is both a reading and a language problem. Taking into account what has already been stated<sup>2</sup>, the Algerian foreign language learning situation is specific because of the differences that

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<sup>2</sup> See pages 45 & 46.

exist between the mother tongue and the foreign languages learned, and the historical and cultural background learners have. These latter may explain the difficulties Arabic learners in general, and Algerian learners in particular may encounter when learning a foreign language. In addition to that, the scarcity of research on foreign language learning of Arab students does not allow the identification of the problems faced and the suggestion of probable solutions to overcome them.

However, the results of research also support the view that reading in a language which is not the learner's first language is a source of considerable difficulty. MacNamara (1970:114) found that "the French / English bilingual students he studied were reading at a slower rate and with lower comprehension than students reading in their first language". Besides taking considerably longer to read their second language, students who understood the words and structures of the texts under study were still unable to understand what they read in the second language as well as in their first language. MacNamara also found certain differences between reading in the native language and reading in the second language – "in the rate at which individual words are interpreted, in the rate at which syntactic structures are interpreted and in the ability to anticipate the sequence of words".

The conclusion to be drawn is that, on the one hand, subjects have difficulty understanding text despite knowing the words and structures, and on the other hand the interpretation of words and syntactic structures i.e. grammar and vocabulary, seems to be the main factor in poorer reading performance in the second language than in the first language.

The conclusion MacNamara came to is that students cannot read adequately in English because they cannot read adequately in their first language, in the first place. If only they learned properly in their first language, he said, the problems of reading in English would be vastly reduced.

Jolly (1978) claims that success in reading a foreign language depends crucially upon one's first language reading ability rather than the student's level of English. He asserts that "Reading in a foreign language requires the transference of old skills not the learning of new ones".

Therefore, students who fail to read adequately in the foreign language fail because they either do not possess the 'old skills', or because they have failed to transfer them.

This view is shared by Coady (1979:12), who asserts that foreign language reading is a reading problem and not a language problem. "We have only recently come to realize that many students have very poor reading habits to transfer from their first language, and thus, in many cases, we must teach reading skills which should have been learned in first language instruction".

Coady is supported by Goodman (1973:19) who claimed that "The reading process will be much the same for all languages".

Concluding the ideas stated above, Clarke (1979) states: "If the reading process is basically the same in all languages, we would logically expect good native language readers to be good second language readers. Furthermore, we would

expect good readers to maintain their advantage over poor readers in the second language”.

Yorio (1971:168) takes a contrary view. He claims that the reading problems of foreign language learners are due largely to imperfect knowledge of the language and to native language interference in the reading process. According to him, the process is made considerably more complex for the foreign learner because of new elements:

*“The reader’s knowledge of the foreign language is not like that of the native speaker; the guessing or predicting ability necessary to pick up the correct cues is hindered by the imperfect knowledge of the language; the wrong choice of cues or the uncertainty of the choice makes associations more difficult: recollection of previous cues is more difficult in a foreign language than in the mother tongue; and at all levels and at all times, there is interference of the native language”.*

Yorio’s view backs up what has already been stated concerning Arabic learners. The lack of knowledge of the foreign language learned, in addition to the differences that may exist between the two languages<sup>3</sup>, may really be a hindrance for the learners. These facts may explain the difficulties Arabic learners of a foreign language have in the process of learning.

## **2.6- The Nature of Reading Competence**

Reading competence is perhaps the most fundamental construct in reading research. The term *competence* is used inclusively in reference to linguistic knowledge,

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<sup>3</sup> see E.H. Saada, page 47 & 48.



processing skills, and cognitive abilities. Conceptualised in several different ways, diverse definitions exist, but all stem from the same basic assumption that successful comprehension emerges from the integrative interaction of derived text information and pre-existing reader knowledge. Put simply, comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already know.

The cognitive view posits that reader – text interaction can be subdivided into three processing clusters. First, in decoding, linguistics information is extracted directly from print. Next, in text information building, extracted ideas are integrated to uncover text meanings. Finally, the situation model construction, the amalgamated text information is synthesized with prior knowledge. Thus, in this view, reading success is governed by three competency groups: visual information extraction, incremental information integration, and text meaning and prior knowledge consolidation.

From a developmental perspective, Cough and his associates (Hoover and Cough 1990) suggest a different way of defining reading competence. Their contention is that, although learning to read entails the mastery of two basic operations, namely decoding and comprehension, they do not develop in parallel. Both reading and listening share similar processing requirements, and learners amass comprehension skills in the course of oral language development. By the time they begin to read, therefore, their listening comprehension ability is already well developed.

Reasoning from a functional perspective, Carver (2000) proposes yet another way of conceptualising reading competence. He believes the purpose for which text are read determine the manner in which their information is processed. He describes five

reading “*gears*”, serving different purposes, on a continuum of cognitive complexity. Consider for example, three goals in text reading: locating lexical information, i.e. scanning which occurs when a reader goes through a text very quickly in order to locate a specific information of a particular interest to him, i.e., the reader is on the look-out for a particular item(s) he believes is (are) in the text. It is a fairly fast reading with instant reaction to all irrelevant data, perhaps most of the text. When scanning, the reader searches for a specific piece of information such as a date or a name. Scanning is similar to skimming in the sense that the reader is going through a selection; however, the difference lies in the fact that in scanning, the information needed is very specific, and in skimming the information needed is general, detecting main ideas, i.e. skimming which is used when we are looking for the main idea of a passage for which it is unnecessary to examine a text thoroughly. When we skim, we glance at the text to discover its gist. The reader, in fact, is not reading in the normal sense of the word, but is setting his eye over the print at a rate which makes him to take in only, perhaps, the beginning and end of paragraphs where information is generally summarized. This allows the reader to keep himself informed about matters that are of great importance (basic comprehension), and acquiring new concepts (learning). Cognitively, reading for lexical information (scanning) is at least challenging, involving simple lexical access. Reading for basic comprehension is somewhat more taxing because it necessitates, beyond lexical access, syntactic analysis for information integration. Acquiring new concepts in learning is the most demanding of the three. According to Carver, processing requirements increase as the “reading gears” shifts upwards and as a consequence of greater task complexity, the reading rate decreases. Hence, he concludes that the indices of comprehension success vary in accordance with reading purposes. In the less demanding, lower gears (scanning and skimming), competence implies speedy

information extraction. In the higher gears, however, accurate and complete text understanding is more important than speed. The clear implication is that why and how texts are read must be considered in determining reading competence.

To sum up, then, reading competence can be defined from multiple perspectives. **The cognitive view**, reflecting the interactive nature of reading, emphasises three operations as the critical core of competence: decoding, text meaning construction, and assimilation with prior knowledge. **The developmental perspective**, in contrast, highlights sequential mastery of two operations (decoding and comprehension) and their functional interdependence. **The reading gear theory**, moreover, suggests a third factor, reading purpose, to be incorporated in defining the core construct.

## **2.6.1- Models of Reading**

### **2.6.2- Sequential Models**

Reading research in the 1970's was characterised by a search for accurate models which represent the reading process as appropriately as possible. This gave rise to the emergence of the bottom-up model, the top-down model, and the interactive model.

#### **2.6.2.1- THE BOTTOM-UP MODEL**

The interest given to reading led researchers to carry out studies in order to answer the question of what goes on in the reading process. This in turn led to a detailed explanation of the different stages of the reading process.

Cough (1972:58) represented the reading process as a bottom-up view. “The sequence of processing is from letters to sounds, to words, to sentences, and finally to meaning”. He characterised reading as a letter by letter progression through text, with letter identification followed by the identification of the sounds of the letters. His model is a phonic approach. The evidence on which Cough based his model was drawn from laboratory studies of adult readers engaged in letter and word recognition tasks. However, more recent research does not support Cough's view of the reading process. Smith (1971:60) states that “One of the weaknesses of phonic-based approaches is that they do not account for the fact that there are at least 166 different grapho-phonetic rules covering the regular spelling-to-sound correspondences of English words and that these are not easy to teach.”

According to Smith, one of the weaknesses of Cough's model is that it focused on the spelling-to-sound correspondences of English words, and these are not easy to teach.

Reading is referred to as the ability to decode written words, which includes essentially the mechanics of reading based on visual processing - eye movements, perceptual span, letter shape, and finally words. In this model (Bottom-up), reading is viewed as a process of reconstructing the writer's intended message through the recognition of printed letters and words and building up the meaning of a text from the smallest textual units at the “bottom” - letters and words - to larger and larger units at the “top”, phrases, clauses, and inter-sentential linkages. This means that the bottom-up processing is decoding individual linguistic units - phonemes, graphemes, and words, and building textual meaning from the smallest units to the largest ones.

The Bottom-up model is also concerned with the identification of grammatical and lexical forms which can assist second language decoding skills. Concerning grammar, emphasis is laid on the identification of cohesive devices such as substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and their functions across sentences. At the level of lexis, vocabulary development and word recognition have long been recognized as crucial to successful bottom-up decoding skills.

The Bottom-up view also suggests that successful listening is a matter of decoding the individual sounds we hear to derive the meaning and thence utterances; and the Top-down view, which suggests that the use of discursal and real-world knowledge to construct and interpret aural messages. These two competing models of language processing have also had a central place in the debate on the nature of reading comprehension.

According to Cambourne (1979), the Bottom-up approach was the basis of the vast majority of reading schemes. The central notion behind the Bottom-up approach is that reading is basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents. Cambourne, who uses the term “*outside-in*” rather than bottom-up, provides the following illustration of how the process is supposed to work:

Print----- Every letter discriminated ----- Phonemes and graphemes matched
----- Blending -----Pronunciation ----- Meaning.

According to this model, the reader processes each letter as it is encountered. These letters or graphemes are matched with the phonemes of the language, which it is assumed the reader already knows. These phonemes, the minimal units of meaning in the sound system of the language, are blended together to form words. The derivation of meaning is thus the end process in which the language is translated from one form of symbolic representation to another. So, when we read, letters do represent sounds, and despite the fact that in English twenty-six written symbols have to represent over forty aural symbols, there is a degree of consistency. In fact, it seems more logical to teach readers to utilise the systematic correspondences between written and spoken symbols than to teach them to recognise every letter and word encountered by memorising its unique configuration and shape.

According to Asher and Simpson (1994), the phonic method proceeds from the conventionalized “*sound values*” of letters. “The main advantage of this approach is that it enables learners to build up by saying aloud, and hopefully recognising words that they know but have not previously met in printed form. One obvious disadvantage is the lack of consistency letter-sound relationship in English”.

In second / foreign language pedagogy, the selection of a particular approach to initial reading is complicated by the fact that learners may be readers in their own language which has a different script from the second / foreign language (Arab learners of English). In those instances, where learners are literate, but in a script that differs from that of the second / foreign language, there is generally a systematic attempt to teach the conventional sound-letter relationships of the target language. This is typically followed by the reading aloud of words and sentences.

However, a number of criticisms have been made of the Phonic approach. Much of this criticism is based on research into human memory. In the first place, with only twenty six letters to represent over forty phonemes in English, spelling-to-sound correspondences are both complex and unpredictable. Research into human memory also provides counterfactual evidence. It has been shown that the serial processing of every letter in a text would slow reading up to the point where it would be very difficult for meaning to be retained.

Smith (1978) has pointed out that the serial processing operations underlying the phonics approach are also contradicted by the fact that it is often impossible to make decisions about how upcoming letters and words ought to sound until the context provided by the rank above the one containing the item has been understood. Thus, in order to assign a phonemic value to a grapheme, it is often necessary to know the meaning of the word containing the grapheme.

#### **2.6.2.2. THE TOP-DOWN MODEL**

In the top-down model, and as it has been called by Goodman (1971:2), the reading process is viewed as a "*psycholinguistic guessing game*". The idea is that the reader does not decode in a sequential way, but instead attacks the text with expectations of meaning developed before and during the act of reading. In this model, the emphasis is on the reader's knowledge of the world. According to Goodman, reading is a process of "predicting", i.e., expectation of what is coming next, "sampling", i.e., testing and revising the prediction and "confirming", i.e., relating the information to past experience. The reader interacts with the text by combining information he

discovers there with the knowledge he brings to it, thus constructing a comprehensive meaning of the text as a coherent structure of meaning.

Another reading expert, Stanovitch (1980:34), has characterized the top-down model as conceptually-driven in which “higher level processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through lower-level processes”. This model is founded on the making of predictions about a text based on prior experience or background knowledge, followed by the checking of the text for confirmation or refutation of those predictions. However, and in order to make predictions, one has to refer back to his background knowledge, which is considered as a very important factor in this model. This was claimed by Kant as long ago as 1781 when he stated that “new information, new concepts, new ideas can have meaning only when they can be related to what the individual already knows”.

Sharing the same idea, Anderson et al. (1977:369) propound that “Every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well”. As added emphasis on the importance of background knowledge, Anderson (1977) says that “Without some schema into which it can be assimilated, an experience is incomprehensible, and therefore, little can be learned from it”.

According to Anderson, schema is an important aspect in reading comprehension. He defines it as being the reader's knowledge already stored in memory which functions in the process of interpreting new information and allowing it to enter and become part of the knowledge store. He explains that there is an interaction between old information (reader's knowledge already stored) and new information



(what the text brings). According to schema theory proponents, any text, either spoken or written, does not by itself carry meaning. It provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should construct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge, also called background knowledge. In fact, the term schema refers to the mental organisation of an individual's past experience and is based on the psycholinguistic model of reading which views reading as an interaction between the reader's background knowledge and the text.

The number of major criticisms has led to the postulation of an alternative to the Bottom-up, phonic approach. This has become known as the Top-Down or psycholinguistic approach to reading. As with the bottom-up model, there are a number of variations in this approach, but basically all agree that the reader rather than the text is at the heart of the reading process. Cambourne (1979:65) provides the following schematisation of the approach:

Past experience, language -----selective aspects ----- meaning ----- sound pronunciation ----- intuitions and expectations of print if necessary.
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From the diagram above, it can be seen that this approach emphasises the reconstruction of meaning rather than the decoding of form. The interaction of the reader and the text is central to the process, and readers bring to the interaction their knowledge of the subject at hand, knowledge of and expectations about how language works, motivation interest and attitudes towards the content of the text. Rather than decoding each symbol, or even every word, the reader forms hypotheses about text

elements and then samples the text to determine whether or not the hypotheses are correct.

Oller (1979) also stresses the importance of taking into consideration psychological as well as linguistic factors in accounting how people read. He points out that the link between our knowledge of the linguistic forms and our knowledge of the world is very close, and that this has a number of implications for discourse processing. Firstly, it suggests that the more predictable a sequence of linguistic elements, the more readily a text will be processed. Even foreign language learners, despite their limited knowledge of linguistic forms, should be assisted by texts which consist of more natural sequences of elements at the levels of word, clause and text. A second way of exploiting the relationship between linguistic and extra-linguistic worlds is to ensure not only that linguistic elements are more predictable but also that the experiential content is more familiar and therefore more predictable.

### **2.6.2.3- BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN VIEWS ON READING**

Any analysis of the task facing the non-native speaker has to recognize that there are many aspects to the problem. For example,

- identification of word meaning
- recognition of grammatical cues
- recognition of print and orthographic cues
- use of contextual information
- use of background knowledge
- discrimination of author's intention

- discrimination of main and supporting details
- reconstruction of the argument
- recognition of the type of text.

All of these require both recognition features of the text and appropriate interpretation, using knowledge brought to the task by the reader. A very broad distinction is commonly made between these two kinds of activity:

Bottom-up, or text driven, processes

Vs

Top-down, or concept driven, processes

Eskey (1988:98) has argued persuasively for an interactive model, “in which both of these kinds of processing complement each other, and in which reading by less than proficient non-native speakers is represented by relatively strong bias towards text-driven or bottom-up processes.”

Fluent reading entails both skillful decoding and relating the information so obtained to the reader’s prior knowledge of the world. Thus, the fluent reader is characterized by both skills at rapid, context free word and phrase recognition, and, at higher cognitive levels, the skillful use of appropriate comprehension strategies. For the proper interpretation of texts the latter skills are crucial, but such lower level skills as the rapid and accurate identification of lexical and grammatical forms are not merely obstacles to be cleared on the way to higher-level “guessing game” strategies, but skills to be mastered as a necessary means of taking much of the guess work out of reading

comprehension. An interactive model of reading provides the most convincing account of this reciprocal perceptual/cognitive process.

Eskey is arguing essentially for a balanced view of two trends in reading research and exercise design which have evolved in the last few years. One perhaps inherited from earlier psycholinguistic theorizing, emphasizes the use of language-specific knowledge to decode language elements: recognition of syntactic structure, lexical cohesion, word meaning, punctuation, morphology and so on. The other, also deriving in part from psychology, emphasizes the use of pre-existing knowledge of text structures and content to enable prediction and anticipation of events and meanings, and of inference of meaning from wider context. This approach is often referred to as *schema-theoretic*, following Carrell (1984). The first trend explored the bottom-up process; the second trend investigated top-down processes. Eskey is, of course, arguing that a second language reader needs skills at both kinds of processing in order to be a successful reader.

#### **2.6.2.4- SCHEMA THEORY AND READING**

Schema theory suggests that the knowledge we carry around in our head is organised into inter-related patterns. These are constructed from our previous experience of the experiential world and guide us as we make sense of new experiences. They also enable us to make predictions about what we might expect to experience in a give context. Given the fact that discourse comprehension is a process of utilising linguistic cues and background knowledge to reconstruct meaning, these schemata are extremely important, particularly to second and foreign language learners.

Frame Semantics is a program in empirical semantics which emphasizes the continuities between language and experience. A frame is any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one concept it is necessary to understand the entire system. The frame notion used in frame semantics can be traced most directly to case frame (Fillmore 1968). In his latter works, Fillmore (1982:115) points out that “Case frames were understood as characterizing a small abstract ‘scene’ or ‘situation’, so that to understand the semantic structure of the verb, it was necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes”.

In the early papers on frame semantics, a distinction is drawn between ‘*scene*’ and ‘*frame*’, the former being a cognitive, conceptual, or experiential entity and the latter being a linguistic one. However, in his later works (1985 a), Fillmore ceased to use the term ‘*scene*’, and a ‘*frame*’ is a cognitive structuring device, parts of which are indexed by words associated with it and used in the service of understanding.

According to Miriam (2006:6)

*“Research shows the different realms in which frame semantics has been used to provide accounts of a variety of lexical, syntactic, and semantic phenomena. Other areas that might benefit from the frame semantics approach to the study of meaning include first language acquisition, foreign language learning and teaching, as well as diachronic studies”.*

Widdowson (1983:12) reinterpreted schema theory from an applied linguistic perspective. He postulates two levels of language: a systemic level and a schematic level. The systemic level includes the phonological, morphological and syntactic elements of the language, while the schematic level relates to our background

knowledge. In Widdowson's schemes of things, this background knowledge exercises an executive function over the systemic level of language. In comprehending a given piece of language, we use what sociologists call interpretive procedures of achieving a match between our schematic knowledge and the language which is encoded systematically.

A number of studies have been conducted into the influence of schematic knowledge on the comprehension processes of second or foreign language readers. Aslanian (1985:69) set out to discover what interpretive processes went on in her learner's heads as they completed a multiple choice / gap test of a reading passage. Aslanian study shows that schematic knowledge structures can either facilitate or inhibit comprehension according to whether they are over or under utilised.

*“If readers rely too heavily on their knowledge and ignore the limitations imposed by the text, or vice versa, then they will not be able to comprehend the intended meaning of the writer. Whether one has understood the text or not depends very much on text variables such as sentence structure and length, vocabulary intensity, number of new concepts introduced, the difficulty and novelty of the subject matter, etc..... To understand the reader and the nature of the act of reading more clearly and comprehensively, one needs also to find out and describe the reader's strategies and reactions with regard to the reading tasks, and to see how the reader copes with the reading tasks and solves the problems”.*

In a rather different study, Nunan (1989) set out to test whether the perception of textual relationships is affected by readers' background knowledge. As it will be seen

later<sup>4</sup>, both background and intrinsic knowledge are important in comprehension. Schema theory suggests that reading involves more than utilising linguistic and decoding skills; that interest, motivation and background knowledge will determine, at least in part, the success that a reader will have with a given text. This study showed that background knowledge was a more significant factor than grammatical complexity in determining the subject's comprehension of the textual relationship in question.

This study has a number of pedagogical implications. The first of these stems from the fact that reading skills are not invariant i.e., they do not depend solely on a knowledge of the linguistic elements that make up a text. Reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text; in this case most particularly with the reader's knowledge of the experiential content of the text. This suggests that there is a need to relate the language being taught to the context which carries it.

Another study into the perception of textual relationships in a cross cultural context is reported by Steffensen (1981:71). She concluded that when readers are exposed to texts which describe aspects of a culture foreign to the reader, there will be a breakdown in the perception of textual relationships. A breakdown in relationships at the linguistic level reflects a breakdown in comprehension at the experiential level i.e. at the level of content. Her findings, therefore, support the contention that the process of reconstructing meaning is one of mapping the linguistic content onto extra-linguistic context. Steffensen suggests that “What, at first sight, is a linguistic problem may in fact be a problem of background knowledge.”

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<sup>4</sup> See page 71, ‘The Interactive Model’ and page 73, ‘Rumelhart’s Interactive Model’.

A constant difficulty posed by learning to read in a second / foreign language is that the texts are usually written within the cultural assumptions of the speakers of that language, not within those of the reader's first language. Knowledge of cultural values, customs, and assumptions is clearly a kind of "background knowledge" and, as such, is knowledge that the reader may or may not bring to the task of interpreting the text in a top-down fashion; but often the problem lies in recognizing the cultural significance of particular words, and belongs therefore to the domain of bottom-up processing, at least for the culturally fluent.

The "cultural problem" in learning to read in a second / foreign language has a number of aspects. First, it is normal to think of it in a purely negative way: lack of cultural information makes the task more difficult; it is difficult to see how it could be facilitative. Second, most learners do not want to have to master massive amounts of cultural information about the society or societies where the language is spoken, and yet they need that information to avoid incomprehension. As yet there is little or no research on what learners do about this problem, how they recognize it, or least of all solve it.

#### **2.6.2.5- THE INTERACTIVE MODEL**

Under the impact of the work of psycholinguists like Goodman (1970) and Smith (1971), and the development of schema theory (Bartlett 1932; Rumelhart 1977; Anderson 1977), a new model of the reading process emerged, namely the interactive one.

Researchers argue that lower level and higher level processes work together interactively as parts of the reading process. Stanovitch (1980:31) states that



*“An interactive model of reading appear to provide a more accurate conceptualisation of reading performance than do strictly top-down and bottom-up models. They provide a better account of the existing data on the use of orthographic structure and sentence context by poor and good readers.”*

According to the Interactive model of reading, the reader starts with the perception of graphic cues, and as soon as these are recognized, schema of the world as well as linguistic knowledge are brought into play. However, it is to be noted that the proportion of graphic cues perceived varies with individual texts and individual readers. In fact, it depends on the difficulty of the text and the knowledge and capacity of the reader.

Weber (1984:113) notes that “The interactive model of reading gives emphasis to the interactions between graphic display in the text, various levels of linguistic knowledge and processes, and various cognitive activities.”

Weber's view reinforces Stanovitch's idea about reading as a psycholinguistic process where higher and lower level processes interact.

Carrell, Devine, and Eskey (1978:224) argue that “An interactive model of reading assumes that skills at all levels are interactively available to process and interpret the text. Such a model subsumes both top-down and bottom-up strategies”.

They explain this by the fact that such a model incorporates the use of background knowledge, expectations and context. It also incorporates:

- i) Notions of rapid and accurate recognition of letters and words,
- ii) Spreading activation of lexical forms which concerns the choice of appropriate lexis for meaning and comprehension selection, and
- iii) Concepts of automaticity in processing linguistic forms.

Generally speaking, the automaticity of this processing involves the recognition of linguistic units and the interpretation of lexical items which depend on context. It allows for the concentration on comprehension rather than on selection or prediction of words.

As proponents of the interactive model maintain, successful reading entails a balanced interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing skills.

#### **2.6.2.6- RUMELHART'S INTERACTIVE MODEL**

Unlike bottom-up and top-down models, the interactive model does not predict any predetermined direction for, or sequence of, processing. Instead, the reader is seen to be able to draw simultaneously, but selectively, upon a range of sources of information: visual, orthographic, lexical, semantic, syntactic and schematic.

In contrast to top-down models, however, the model does pay considerable attention to visual information, and like bottom-up models, incorporates a feature

analytic mechanism for the processing of visual information. For Rumelhart (1977:573), the process of reading

*“Begins with a flutter of patterns on the retina and ends (when successful) with a definite idea about the author’s intended message. Thus, reading is at once a “perceptual” and “cognitive” process. Moreover, a skilled reader must be able to make use of sensory, semantic and pragmatic information to accomplish his task. These various sources of information appear to interact in many complex ways during the process of reading”.*

The process starts with graphemic information being registered in a visual information store. Here, the graphemic input is operated on by a feature extraction device. These features are then fed into the pattern synthesizer, which has access simultaneously to information about orthography, syntax, lexis and semantics. Thus, all sources of knowledge come together at one place and the reading process is the product of the simultaneous joint application of all knowledge sources.

In subsequent studies, Rumelhart (1984) amplified the 1977 model by paying greater attention to the role of the semantic level of processing, proposing a “schema-theoretic” account of the comprehension process. The focus here is on higher levels of processing rather than on lower-level processing of visual information, although it should be noted that lower-level processing is not ignored. The basic construct proposed is a “schema”, defined as a unit of knowledge. The function of schemata is to provide frameworks for interpreting the world, including in reading, the world of the text. The fundamental assumption is that we can only interpret visual information and words by

relating these to our prior knowledge and experience; and our prior knowledge and experience is seen to be “packaged” into an infinite number of either general and specific units or schemata. Furthermore, an individual’s schemata may change over time and with experience. From this, it should be clear that schemata should not be thought of as fixed and stable but rather as fluid and constantly subject to modification.

This links in with the work done by Fillmore who was one of the first people to introduce the concept of frames in linguistics. According to Fillmore (1977:63) “A frame is any system of linguistic choices – the easiest being collections of words, but also including choices of grammatical rules or linguistic categories – that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes”.

Later on, Fillmore takes on a broader, more cognitive point of view stating that

*“In semantic theories founded on the notion of cognitive frames or knowledge schemata, a word’s meaning can be understood only with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs or practices, constituting a kind of conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning”.*

In view of that, we can deduce that one can know the meaning of a word only by understanding the background frames that motivate the concept that the word encodes.

To sum up, we can say that the evidence suggests that no single model of reading accounts for the complex range of reading behaviours which are observable in

different contexts. However, each of the different models can contribute in different ways to our understanding of reading behaviour in different contexts.

### **2.6.3- Componential Models**

As far as the components of reading are concerned, it is clear that readers need to engage in a large variety of cognitive operations in order to extract meaning from text.

#### **2.6.3.1- RESOLVING ANAPHORIC RELATIONS**

To form a coherent representation of discourse in the mind, the reader constantly needs to resolve anaphoric references by means of pronouns, repeated or new noun phrases, and ellipsis to previously mentioned nouns. Although assigning anaphoric reference is often a matter of making inferences, the difference is that in contrast to inferences, resolving anaphora is a prerequisite for comprehending discourse. Doing so entails a complex combination of grammatical rules, discourse conventions, and knowledge of the world.

#### **2.6.3.2- ACTIVATING SCHEMATA**

Schemata, the abstract memory structures in which knowledge is organized, have been shown to play a crucial role in comprehension. As investigating recall protocols have shown, readers who do not possess, or who are unable to activate, an appropriate schema, often interpret a text according to their own schemata, reach false conclusions about it, and store a misrepresentation of the text. Schema theory

and schema oriented research thus emphasize the active contribution the reader makes to understand the text, and are on a reader-driven end of the scale.

### **2.6.3.3- INFERENCE**

At this stage, two points must be made. First, making inferences is an essential part of comprehension. Writers cannot possibly make all the information in a text explicit; they must rely on the reader to make the necessary inferences that can usually be drawn. Second, the number of inferences that can usually be drawn even from one or two sentences is extremely large; readers cannot possibly make all of them. Thus, a mechanism must exist for the reader to make only those inferences that are necessary and sufficient for comprehension of the text.

To understand a text, it is necessary to establish connections between the ideas in the text and to be able to express them in a different form. Since texts leave many things implicit, inferences are crucial to this process of connecting ideas, since they are required to fill in the missing information.

Another way of thinking about inference is to say that inference making is the incorporation of prior knowledge, memories and personal experience into the mental representation of a text.

## **2.7- Conclusion**

As a conclusion, we can say that reading is not considered any more as a passive skill but rather as an active and cognitive process. According to the published literature, the reading skill is given great importance and is taken into account in every foreign language teaching situation. As far as the teaching of reading is concerned, teachers must help students to read different texts at different rates, for different purposes. They may also have to teach students to read critically. The teacher's role in fact is to create a reading habit in the students, keeping in mind that reading is often a preliminary activity to other language activities such as writing. The act of reading is, according to literature, the only way to improve one's vocabulary. When reading, we need to perceive and decode letters in order to read words, and we need to understand all the words in order to understand the meaning of a text. Teachers can also provide their students with opportunities to do as much reading as possible, including varied types of reading (fast, slow, skimming, and scanning). The aim is to encourage the recognition of common words and word combinations, this being in general the contributory factor to reading speed.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **READING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: LEARNERS' STRATEGIES AND READING COMPREHENSION.**

#### **3.1- Introduction**

Reading in a foreign language is not an easy task. Moreover, when reading in an unfamiliar language, learners exhibit individual differences. Reading success depends on conceptual processing and strategic manipulations as it is an interactive process between the readers and their prior background knowledge, on the one hand and the text itself, on the other. In addition, the strategies used in the native language may differ from the strategies used for reading in the foreign language.

#### **3.2- Reading in a Foreign Language**

Reading involves two necessary elements: the reader and the text.

##### **3.2.1- The Reader**

Traditionally, reading researchers focusing on the reader have attempted to analyze the reading into a series of sub-skills. Teachers are familiar enough with approaches that distinguish between the ability to understand or recall details from the passage, or facts from a text, and the ability to understand the main idea of a passage, i.e. to get the gist of a text. Research has attempted to discover whether reading is composed of different sub-skills that might relate to one another within a taxonomy of skills. The usual approach is to give learners a series of passages to



understand, and ask them a variety of questions afterwards. These questions are then subjected to factor analysis, to see whether identifiable factors emerge. Much different taxonomy have been drawn up over the years, varying in content from three to four, up to the outstanding 36 drawn up by the New York City Board of Education, quoted in Lunzer and Gardner (1979:42). Typical of such taxonomies is that of Barrett (1968). Barrett reportedly distinguishes five skills: literal comprehension, reorganization of the ideas in the text, inferential ability, evaluation, and appreciation. Davies and Widdowson (1974) come up with a similar list of types of reading comprehension questions, relevant to the testing of reading ability: direct reference questions, inference, supposition and evaluation questions. However, the problem that may arise is the fact that the levels of understanding do not relate to the “process” of understanding but to the “product”, what the reader has got out of a text. A description of what a student has understood of a text is not the same as description of how he arrives at such an understanding. The product of reading may vary in terms of levels of meaning and comprehension, but it does not follow that the levels of comprehension reflect different skills. It is at least possible that readers use similar processes for getting at different products. The product of reading will vary according to the reader. Different readers will arrive at different products because they start off from different positions. Steffensen refers to the effect of what might generally be termed background knowledge on the product of reading. She clearly demonstrates the effect of cultural knowledge on the product of comprehension. This relevant knowledge is important to processing, but it also needs to be activated before it can contribute to understanding. Then, it is possible to view reading both as product and as process. Research has tended to focus upon the product rather than the process. However, knowing the product does not tell us

what actually happens when a reader interacts with a text. It is this latter knowledge which is essential in teaching of reading. The basic rationale behind attempts to describe process is that an understanding should lead to the possibility of distinguishing the processing activities of successful and unsuccessful readers. This, in turn, should lead to the possibility of teaching the strategies, or process components, of successful readers to unsuccessful ones, or at least making the latter aware of the existence of other strategies, which they might then wish to try for themselves.

### **3.2.2-Text**

The principal sources of texts for second / foreign language learners are: texts in the language course book, which are generally intended to improve the learner's language by exemplifying particular structures or vocabulary items; texts in reading comprehension books, often aimed at improving both language and reading skills.

As far as language difficulties are concerned, research into text difficulty has looked at the contribution of both structure and vocabulary. To pose the question of whether vocabulary is a greater problem than structure is misguided. The answer will depend upon the relationship between texts and readers, and vary from case to case. There are broadly speaking two ways of tackling readers' language difficulties. One is to teach more language, the other is to teach strategies to cope with language difficulties.

### **3.2.3- Interaction of Reader and Text**

The term *reading style* is now reasonably well established as a descriptive label for the reader's behavioural response to text. The reading style is motivated by the reader's purpose, and mediated by the accessibility of the text to the reader. As already discussed in the introduction of section 3, the style most commonly identified in current works in second / foreign language reading are *skimming* (rapid reading to establish the general content of a text), *scanning* (rapid reading to locate a specific point), *intensive reading* (slow reading directed at complete understanding), and *extensive reading* (relatively rapid reading, typically carried out for pleasure).

### **3.3- Text Linguistics**

A text is a stretch of language, the structure of which is constituted in accordance with purely linguistic criteria in such a way that the "textuality" of a text results from the correctedness or cohesion of individual textual units. Cohesion concerns the ways in which the components of a text, i.e., the words and the sentences are mutually connected within a sequence by grammatical dependencies, anaphoric and cataphoric references, and connectives. Text linguistics studies focus on the regularities of inter-sentential linkage, eg: reference, substitution, and ellipsis, conjunctions and lexical cohesion, and further on semantic relations which enable one part of text to function as context for another.

### **3.3.1- Towards a Definition of Text**

Whatever the reading process, the reader must engage with text which is the second element in the interaction. A considerable research in that domain exists; it has examined the text in detail and related its nature to the reading process.

One of the most influential definitions of “text” is that provided by Halliday and Hasan (1976:1): “A text is a unit of language in use...and it is not defined by its size... A text is best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning. A text has texture and that is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. It derives this texture from the fact that it functions as a unit with respect to its environment.”

Later, in Halliday and Hasan (1985/89), the criterion of texture is supplemented by that of structure: “Texts are characterized by the unity of their structure and the unity of their texture”.

In both definitions, the centrality of individual writer’s purpose (a text is for the expression/communication of meaning) and the cohesion, which is what contributes to texture, is fundamental. In the second definition, the inclusion of the criterion of structure suggests that for a text to be a text, it should somehow be complete.

### **3.3.2- The Component Elements of Cohesion**

The principles and practices of textual cohesion that will be described will have relevance in teaching reading in any foreign language. A major advance in our understanding of how cohesion operates in English text is Halliday and Hasan’s *Cohesion in English* (1976). An outline of the system they describe is:

	collocation	
( 1 ) lexical cohesion		repetition
	Reiteration	synonym
		Superordinate
		General noun
	( Personal )	
(2) reference	( demonstrative)	Anaphoric
		Cataphoric
	( comparative )	
Cohesive ties		
(3) substitution		Nominal
Grammatical		Verbal
		Clausal
(4) ellipsis		
		Additive (the “and” type)
		Adversative (the “but” type)
(5) conjunction		Causal (the “so” type)
		Temporal (the “then” type)

Most of the examples cited in Halliday and Hasan are of cohesion across sentence boundaries. But, as Halliday and Hasan themselves say, “Since cohesive

relations are not concerned with structure, they may be found just as well within a sentence as between sentences” (1976: 8).

### **3.4- Learners’ Difficulties in Recognizing Cohesive Ties**

Our knowledge about the learners’ difficulties is sparse; but the existing information comes from both controlled studies and experience-based reports, in L.1 and L. 2 situations. The L. 1 reader’s difficulties with cohesive ties are important in that such difficulties will be even more pronounced with foreign language / L. 2 readers.

Garrod and Sanford (1977 b:80), in experiments with adults L. 1 subjects, report readers difficulties in identifying the preceding, more explicit co-referent to certain anaphoric items. In another experiment, they show that the time taken to read a sentence containing the second half of a lexically-conjoined tie is largely determined by the semantic distance between the two halves of the tie. In other words, all other content remaining constant, a pair of sentences containing a super-ordinate / subordinate lexical tie will take longer to read i.e., is more difficult, than a pair containing a lexical tie involving repetition.

The E.F.L. literature also contains numerous experience-based reports of learners’ difficulties in recognising cohesive ties. For example, Pierce (1975) and Ewer (1980) both comment on the difficulties posed by discourse markers, and advise that much more attention should be given to this category of ties in teaching reading. Further, Mackay and Mountford (1976: 171) comment: “A knowledge of reference,

equivalence and connectives... when mastered by practice... provide the advanced student with a strategy of comprehension which he can apply to any text”.

We thus have a growing body of evidence pointing to the important role played by cohesive ties in the process of reading. It is now necessary to examine, in turn, the five categories of tie and to investigate major potential sources of difficulty to the foreign reader.

### **3.4.1-Lexical Cohesion**

The following text from Williams (1983:39) illustrates the various categories of lexical cohesion:

*“Until fairly recently, nearly all waterworks in both industrialized and developing countries were originally built with one particular objective in mind. It might have been hydroelectric power, irrigation, swamp drainage or some other purpose. A secondary benefit, such as flood control in the case of a river in the monsoon area, might have accrued when a large dam was built, but would not have been a primary consideration in the matter”.*

Lexical cohesion in this text may be summarized in the following way:

Collocation ( *industrialized/developing* )

1.2 repetition ( *built / built* ).

Reiteration 1.3 synonym ( *objective / purpose* ).

1.4 super-ordinate ( *waterworks / dam* ).

1.5 general noun ( *when a large dam was built / the matter* ).

Richards claims that collocation refers to the regular co-occurrence of certain words. For example, *disease / illness, evening / dark, arid / fertile* and *doctor / hospital* regularly co-occur in the same context.

### 3.4.2-Reference

Personal ( *I, me, mine, my; they, them, their, theirs, etc.* )

Anaphoric

Demonstrative ( *this, these; that, those; then, etc.* )

Cataphoric

Comparative ( *such, so, likewise, equally, same, etc.* )

The two types of textual reference are *anaphoric* and *cataphoric* ones. The anaphoric reference in text is frequent; however, cataphoric reference is much rarer.

In the case of anaphoric reference, there are two common problems: divorcement and ambiguity. Williams (1983: 42) explains “By divorcement I mean the



considerable distance between the two elements of the cohesive tie. This may take the form of the explicit word or phrase being separated from its co-referent by three or four clauses or phrases, or even by one or two sentences”.

In terms of the process of reading, what happens is that the explicit word or phrase is stored by the reader in short-term memory, and is recalled for linkage when the anaphoric end of the tie is read. But the greater the distance between the explicit end of the tie and its co-referent anaphoric item, then the more likely it is that the explicit item will have faded from short-term memory, thus reducing the chance of linkage. The foreign learner may be unable to make the tie required.

With regards to cataphoric reference, the problem is less than that of divorcement or ambiguity. Rather, it is a question of rarity, i.e. the reader is not accustomed to searching forward for the end of the tie, and so may take more common step of searching backward.

The two types of reference (anaphoric / cataphoric) may be seen in Williams’ (1983:41) example:

*In 1969, work began on the construction of a vast dam across the Zambesi River, near the border with Zambia. When complete, the **Caborra Bassa dam** ( named after the rapids at which **it** is sited ) will irrigate 1.6 million ha of land and produce 2200 mW of electric power. But since **then**, and particularly since **its** independence, **Mozambique** has become increasingly worried about the cost of completing and operating the project. Quite apart the Mozambicans’ natural unease at cost, fierce*

*controversy has surrounded the project from the earliest planning stages. At the heart of the controversy lies the question of who this investment of hundred of millions of dollars was designed to benefit. **They themselves** will not be directly affected, at least for many years, since **it** will not materially change their life style to any appreciable extent.*

The instances of *it* and *then* are anaphoric and cohere respectively with the previously-mentioned, more explicit *Caborra Bassa dam* and *1969*. Conversely, *its* is cataphoric and links with the about-to-be-mentioned, more explicit *Mozambique*. The example of distance can be clearly seen in *then* and *they themselves* in the text. The co-referent of *then* is marked. But what is the preceding co-referent of *they themselves*?

The problem of ambiguity can be seen in *it*. What does *it* cohere with- *investment?* *Controversy?* *Project?* Referential ambiguity of this nature can cause serious difficulty.

### **3.4.3-Substitution**

Nominal (one / s, the same)

Verbal (do / did...)

Clausal (so, not)

A substitute is an item used in text to avoid unnecessary and intrusive repetition of the more explicit item.

### 3.4.4-Ellipsis

Nominal (1)

Verbal (2)

Clausal (3)

Ellipsis is substitution by zero. That is to say, rather than being substituted in order to avoid unnecessary and intrusive repetition, an item is “*left unsaid*”. This ‘*unsaidness*’ is ellipsis.

### 3.4.5-Conjunction: (discourse markers)

A conjunction is a marker that signals the logical organisation of the text. The cohesive relation is that it is not its form which indicates cohesion but the meaning carried by its presence, i.e., a conjunction is semantic in terms of cohesion. Conjunctions are divided into four categories:

- Additive: *and, moreover, in addition...*
- Adversative: *but, yet, however...*
- Causative: *so, hence, consequently...*
- Temporal: *then, to start with, next...*

### 3.5- Approaches to Learners' Strategies

A final aspect of learner language which bears on variability and of which L.2 researchers have been aware for a number of years is the use of strategies. Strategies have been classified under three headings (Ellis, 1985a:7) *learning strategies, production strategies, and communication strategies*. The distinction between these three categories on a common sense basis appears evident: learning strategies are deployed by learners to ensure that they learn, production strategies to ensure that the language can be produced rapidly in a number of situations, and communication strategies to compensate for the lack of knowledge of an L.2 by going around the problem in some way. In fact, it has proved difficult to disentangle the three common sense categories.

#### 3.5.1- Definition of Skill, Process and Strategy

This group of terms needs some clarification, since they are used in a variety of senses in every day language and in the language teaching literature. Mc Donough (1995:2-4) defines them as:

- **Skill:** If someone is skilled at something, we tend to think of them as being able to do whatever it is faster and more successfully than someone who is unskilled. Skills, therefore, have a number of general features:

1- Performance skills are about doing things.

2- Specific application: one can be skilled at particular kinds of performance and not others.

- 3- They are amenable to learning and possibly instruction.
- 4- There are individual differences in level of achievement.
- 5- Performance is smooth, sensitive to feedback, integrated in time.
- 6- Most of the time, skills lead to success.

- **Process:** A process is the mechanism by which a set of information is transformed: thus, the writing process is the mechanism by which ideas are transformed into characters on a page. Cognitive processes occur through time, for example in the activation of vocabulary and vocabulary associations such as synonyms and antonyms.

- **Strategy:** The term is currently enjoying a vogue in language learning circles, with a variety of implications. There are four broad categories of meaning:

- An organising principle or policy: strategy is an articulated plan for meeting particular types of problems, not a piece of problem solving in itself.
- An alternative to calculation by rule: Psychologists occasionally speak of strategies when referring to human mental ploys which appear to be used when alternative method entails penalties of cognitive overload, memory or knowledge.
- Compensation: A large part of the literature in second / foreign language studies has focused on the use of strategies for overcoming communication breakdown.
- Plans: A fourth way of conceiving strategies is to think of them as plans for action. In the literature of learning strategies, there have been a number of attempts to set up general principles which may describe the kinds of plan that successful language learners use.

To summarise, we can say that:

First, strategies are effective: they are related to solutions in specific ways, and they are productive in solving the problem for reasons which theorists can articulate. Second, strategies are systematic: learners do not create the best strategy for solving a problem and employ it systematically. Third, strategies are finite: a limited number of strategies can be identified.

### **3.5.2- Reading Strategies**

Considerable research has also been conducted into the strategies employed by good readers. This research has been selectively used to justify various proposals for pedagogical action. Walters (1982:71) says that

*“Good readers utilise the following strategies when encountering a difficulty in a text. First of all, they read the text slowly, pausing to consider what they have read. They then reread the text, looking from one part of the text to other parts in order to make connections between these different parts, and to make a mental summary of what they have read. Walters claims that most of the people who read in this way remember both the general points and the details of what they have read better than those who use other strategies”.*

As already stated in section 3, any reader whose reading is content based and facing a comprehension difficulty would certainly try to overcome it using a strategy of some sort.

### **3.5.2.1-SKIMMING:**

The reader reads quickly and at the same time tries to get the gist of what is being read. For example, the reader would read three or four sentences at one go and then try to paraphrase them in his own words.

### **3.5.2.2-SCANNING:**

After establishing the purpose of reading, the reader establishes what kind of information that he or she is looking for in the reading task.

### **3.5.2.3-RECOGNIZING TEXT STRUCTURE:**

Here, the reader is supposed to be at least partially aware about the rhetorical structure displayed in the text in the sense that for instance, first and last paragraphs often contain valuable background, summarizing, or concluding information. The reader is also supposed to differentiate between the supporting details and the key information.

### **3.5.2.4-ASSESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION:**

The reader expresses whether information encountered is important or otherwise, based naturally on the purpose of reading.

### **3.5.2.5-RELIANCE ON BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:**

The reader processes a kind of top-down analysis referring to his past experience and his background knowledge about the content area of the text being read as a strategy to comprehension.

The findings in terms of text reading comprehension strategies used by our students reflect that the E.F.L. Teaching even at a quite high university level is still concentrating solely on the local effects of grammar, treating inadequate word recognition skills, insufficient meaning and the ability to decipher sentence structure as a major obstacle to fluent, mature reading. This restriction on the part of E.F.L. practitioners, especially at intellectual adult level excluded those teaching aspects which operate at schemata and embedded background experience to facilitate a more conceptually – driven, top-down processing whereby the learner is no longer seen more as a knowledge seeker but as an active participant in the reading process and exchanger of information with the text.

At sentence level, the use of devices and logical connectors at both inter-sentential and intra-sentential levels is an effective skill. Its mastery usually results in a further ability, that of looking at sentences within a text as semantic units assigned the role of a link in a chain, and whose significance lies in its relationship with the other links backwardly and forwardly.

At vocabulary level, reference to context is a strategy which learners find of high importance. Translation and dictionary use are also important revealing word complexity learners face during their reading as serious impediments to understanding.

The bottom-up approach apparent from learners' exclusive reliance on the text to process the mass of lexical items it includes underlies the fact that the correct use of vocabulary items presumably indicates that the learners have accurately grasped the concept. It also indicates that a limited lexical knowledge has an adverse effect on the overall reading comprehension task. In the case of a limited lexical knowledge, a reader operating at text level may try to compensate the lack of a conceptual basis for



unfamiliar words by referring to other co-existing terminology to infer the meaning. Some text-linguists agree on the fact that lexical items can be learned in their habitual common environment, learners thus, become more sensitive to ways lexical items adjust their meaning according to their context. They also add that learners learn more effectively through discovering different meaning of the same lexis for themselves. However, if inference is interrupted by a complete deficiency in words identification and association, comprehension is interrupted and reading is doomed unsatisfactory.

In terms of reading difficulties, lexis is recognized by learners as the most constraining area for them to understand text. This legitimate recognition stems from the habit learners develop along their previous learning situations whereby lexical and grammatical components of language were viewed as the building blocks of meaning. This results in an “atomistic” approach to text which requires a thorough understanding of every occurring lexical item an absolute condition to grasping the meaning of text.

### **3.6- Reading Comprehension**

In view of what has been stated previously and if ever students manage to master the use of reading strategies in order to tackle the difficulties encountered in texts, in addition to the mastery of lexical knowledge, comprehension may be facilitated.

#### **3.6.1- The Development of Comprehension Skills**

When students have learned to decode words in text reasonably efficiently, comprehension may follow automatically. Since students learning to read have, for some years, been understanding spoken language, one would expect the skills they

have learnt to transfer to understanding language in written form. However, this does not always seem to be the case. A second problem is that learners may be so engrossed in the word-decoding aspect of reading that they do not have the cognitive capacity to simultaneously carry out comprehension processes. In addition, the rapid loss of information from short-term memory makes it difficult for slow readers to « hold » information from early in a sentence so that they can integrate it with what comes later. If word recognition is slow and labored, much of the prior context may have been forgotten by the time the current word has been recognized. Decoding skills will obviously improve with practice. When students' word recognition skills become relatively fast and automatic, they are able to give their full attention to comprehending the content of the text.

Understanding a text results in a mental representation of the state of affairs the text describes – a mental model of the text. Even after the individual words have been identified and grouped into phrases, clauses, and sentences, a number of other skills will also be necessary to construct such models. The meaning of individual sentences and paragraphs must be integrated, and the main ideas of the text identified. In many cases, inferential skills will be needed to go beyond what is explicitly stated, since authors necessarily leave some of the links between parts of the text implicit. In the case of expository texts, the skills include identifying the topic, differentiating between important and trivial information, following the argument, and extracting the gist meaning of the passage.

### **3.6.2- Understanding the Structure of a Text**

Many recent theories of comprehension have drawn attention to the fact that information in a text is hierarchically structured. This structure arises because each text is focused round one or more main ideas, with subsidiary ideas and trivial details subordinated to the main ones. Proper understanding of a text depends on an understanding of the main point, and on sensitivity to the relative importance of the other ideas.

### **3.6.3- Making Inferences from Text**

Inference has many roles in comprehension. In particular, inferences are crucial to the process of connecting up ideas in a text, since many things are left implicit. The emerging mental model of the text will indicate where such gaps arise and, therefore, which of the multitude of possible inferences need to be made.

A related important question is whether inferences are drawn as a text is understood, or only later. It is quite feasible that learners make optional inferences during comprehension, but that they are superior at answering inferential questions because they are able to recall a greater proportion of the explicit information in the text, from which they can make inferences retrospectively.

### **3.6.4- Theories of Poor Comprehension**

When reading in a foreign language, even skilled readers exhibit many of the same problems as unskilled readers. Alderson (1984:4) advocates systematic examinations of reading competency differences. For him, two primary hypotheses stem from such a situation:

- *Poor foreign language reading is due to incorrect strategies for reading that foreign language, strategies which differ from the strategies for reading the native language.*
- *Poor foreign language reading is due to reading strategies in the first language not being employed in the foreign language, due to inadequate knowledge of foreign language. (1984 : 4)*

In his query, Anderson identifies two significant variables, L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency, as the principal factors accounting for L2 reading ability variance.

According to Oakhill and Garnham (1988), three main types of theory have been advanced to account for learners' comprehension difficulties. The first is that learners have problems at the level of single words. One obvious possibility is that poor comprehenders have inadequate vocabularies i.e. they may or not be able to decode many words whose meanings they do not know. In general, vocabulary size is a good indicator of reading comprehension skills perhaps, in part, because both

depend on general linguistic experience. However, procedures that are effective in increasing vocabulary do not necessarily improve comprehension. Another potential problem at the level of words is that poor comprehenders' word recognition, though accurate, is not automatic. Some authors such as Perfitti (1985) have shown that “good comprehenders recognize words more rapidly than poor comprehenders and he argues that this lack of automaticity creates « a bottleneck » in the working memory”. On this view, poor comprehenders have less capacity available for comprehension processes not because they have smaller working memory but because they make less efficient use of them. Some work such as Gardner (1987) has suggested that “Good comprehenders make also great use of context in reading. In general, good comprehenders are better at using context as a check on their decoding, but they do not make so much use of context as poor comprehenders to speed word recognition”.

A second view is that comprehension problems arise at a higher level of text processing. One hypothesis is that poor comprehenders fail to make use of the syntactic constraints in text. Work to explore this idea has shown that poor comprehenders tend to read word-by-word, and do not spontaneously group text into meaningful phrases. K. Koda (2005: 39) points out that “Studies (Cziko, 1980; Horiba 1990) confirmed that low-proficiency readers are more heavily influenced in word-level processing than in discourse-level processing”.

Others studies (Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999; Clarke, 1980) have investigated sensitivity to syntactic structure more directly; they have shown that, rather than

using the syntactic and semantic cues in a text to integrate the meanings of the individual words, poor comprehenders seem to treat each word separately.

The third view is that poor comprehenders' problems arise beyond the sentence level i.e. at the level of text integration and inference. Many studies indicate that good and poor comprehenders differ in the extent to which they integrate the information in the text, and in their use of inferences. According to Brown and Yule (1983:265) "Inferences are connections people make to reach an interpretation of what they read or hear". Such studies show that the making of inferences not only helps the skilled comprehenders to understand the text, but also to remember it. If poor comprehenders make fewer inferences than good ones, one must always ask whether it is because they have poorer inferential skills, or whether they cannot remember the information on which the inferences are based.

In general, though, it seems that learners with specific comprehension deficits have particular difficulties in making inferences from and integrating the ideas in text. Poorer readers also have meta-cognitive deficits. They often have inadequate conceptions of reading, and may not realize that the primary purpose is to make sense of the text, focusing on reading as a decoding, rather than a meaning getting process.

### **3.7- Text in the Process of Reading Comprehension**

Regardless of whether the text is written in one's native language or in a foreign language, the process of comprehending it is a highly complex one. This complexity is attributed to the ways in which the text can be viewed and processed. It can be seen as a

hierarchy of units at different levels of analysis – from word to sentence to paragraph to discourse, or as a whole mass which needs to be decomposed into constituent elements to be understood. Demel (1990) indicates that “knowledge of how a passage is structured is an important factor in the process of reading comprehension”. The target learners are assumed to possess a linguistic knowledge corresponding to the levels beyond the sentence – that is paragraph and text. Therefore, tasks like identifying the inter-sentence relations (cohesive ties), knowing aspects of text coherence and the presentation of text structure will be focused. The reason for this emphasis is to highlight the importance of co-referential ties in the understanding of written discourse. Although a limited amount of meaning is conveyed by these devices, their use along side referent reading skills would widen the learner’s field of understanding.

### **3.7.1-Components of a Text**

Chapman (1981) suggests that “The text is composed of three elements which are sentence-structure, cohesion and levels of text-structure. These components will be discussed respectively”.

### **3.7.2-Sentence Structure**

Traditionally, the sentence is regarded as the largest structural unit of which a full grammatical analysis is possible. Grammarians have been aware that once they go beyond the sentence, they will get entangled in a heterogeneous mass of confused facts, however, language cannot be thought of only in terms of a random string of sentences which are logically unrelated. Language is rather a combination

of semantical units which are inter-related to form coherent and meaningful larger stretches of language. This move beyond the sentence gives rise to a new branch of linguistics which is called “Text-linguistics”. One of its main contentions is to move the linguistic study beyond the sentence. Wienold (1977:133) defines the principle aim of text-linguistics as “the study of the production of meaning in text”. As a decoder of the message, looking beyond the sentence is significant because that will enable the reader to distinguish the component parts of the text. As a result of that, the reader can look for and recognize central ideas, enhance the reading efficiency by utilizing clues such as grammatical and lexical links, and transitional words or phrases. Knowledge of the sentence grammar forms the basis upon which text grammar depends. Both of them are involved in text processing. Levenston, Nir and Blum-Kulka (1984:203) mention that: “studies in text processing have shown that in the overall understanding of a text, the reader processes information both on the micro-level of single propositions (realized in words and sentences) and on the macro-level of discourse units (realized in inter-sententially connected stretches of text)”.

Therefore, the emphasis on text grammar does not mean the replacement of sentence grammar by text grammar. In fact, the two aspects complete each other and without the mastery of the former, comprehending the latter is impossible. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) processing the property of texture is the distinguishing feature of a text from arbitrary unrelated sentences. Texture is the technical term used to refer to the fact that the lexico-grammatical units representing text hang together – that there is cohesion in the passage.



### **3.7.3- Cohesion**

There is no doubt that cohesion is an important aspect of a written text, and it would be difficult to imagine the existence of any piece of a written text which is more than a couple of sentences long without cohesive ties. Neither could one claim to be analyzing discourse without taking into account these devices. The perspective advocated here is that cohesion is only part of the “structuration” beyond the sentence, an important part but by no means completely satisfying perception of patterning, in that there is no one standard organization of text to be followed.

### **3.7.4- Cohesion in Reading Comprehension**

It is maintained that the relationship between successful reading comprehension, the presence of specific reading skills and familiarity with linguistic features is very effective for non-natives who need to be equipped in both areas in order to be able to read and comprehend. Chapman (1982) pointed out in a research project undertaken in the Open University that the perception of cohesion is an important factor in reading development. The critical importance for learners to understand how cohesion functions has been the concern of several studies. Maclean and Chapman (1989) believe that understanding how cohesion functions will help the readers in the reading process by facilitating and promoting comprehension.

Following the same idea, Mackay and Mountford (1976:171) suggest that:

*“Knowledge of reference, equivalence and connectives together appears to make up the overt grammatical cohesion of a text. Knowledge of connectives, plus*

*knowledge of expository techniques or rhetorical acts make up what we call the rhetorical coherence of discourse. Together, when mastered by practice, they provide the advanced student with a strategy of comprehension which he can apply to any text he is required to read”.*

#### **3.7.4.1- COHESION AS SEEN BY HALLIDAY AND HASAN**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define cohesion as:

*“ Cohesion occurs where interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another the one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text”*

As Halliday and Hasan consider cohesion as the basis of coherence in a text, they are being placed into the “Bottom-up” camp, whereas for schema theorists, the coherence of a text comes first, and cohesion is a linguistic consequence (Flucher, 1989). These theorists deal with the idea of cohesion beyond the sentence. They consider that a sequence of sentences is glued by means of a number of cohesive ties and form a semantic unity, not a structural one. According to them, there are no structural links between sentences; structural links exist only within sentences. This is of course undisputable if by structure they mean syntactic structure. They suggest that there are various devices intelligibility linking ideas and sentences. These devices are classified into two groups. The first and most important one is the inter-sentential links which connect one sentence to another. The second is the intra-

sentential links used to connect one part of a sentence to another part of the same sentence, such as clauses, word groups and morphemes.

#### **3.7.4.2- COHESIVE TIES**

Halliday and Hasan identify and comprehensively develop five types of cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The ability to identify devices and their referents helps to promote reading comprehension. Demel (1990) claims that: “The reader’s ability to link a pronoun with the concept referred to by the author is a critical component of the reading process”.

Cohesive ties are explicitly stated in texts which can be used to train students to recognize the explicit relationship hoping that at a later stage, they will be qualified to realize the implicit relationships found in texts common to their study field.

Recognition of these cohesive devices means the improvement of student’s ability to cope with units larger than sentences in texts.

#### **3.7.4.3- REFERENCE**

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976:32), words like *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* (demonstratives), *it* and *them* etc. (pronouns) seem very easy, but to know what these words refer to is essential for text comprehension. This feature is called reference. It is semantic although expressed by grammatical units, the point being that: “Since the relationship is on the semantic level, the reference item is no way

constrained to match the grammatical class of the item it refers to. What must match are the semantic properties”.

Reference is the fact of using certain items in order to interpret something else, i.e. the information is to be retrieved from elsewhere in the text. This is achieved by the use of pronouns, such as personal (*he, she, they, her, him...*), possessive (*mine, yours...*), demonstrative (*this, that, these...*) and comparative (*similarly, likewise, such...*). The information required may either be preceding or following in the text. This distinction of reference is a basis for a subdivision into:

- i) **Anaphoric Reference:** when the pronoun refers back to a noun which has previously appeared in the text.

Eg: Mr. Smith lives in London. He is a friend of mine.

- ii) **Cataphoric Reference:** When the pronoun precedes the noun it replaces.

Eg: I asked him to come with me, but John refused, arguing a work to finish.

Both anaphoric and cataphoric forms are endophoric reference, a reference to items in the text. Here, the reference is textual. Sometimes, however, the information required is not expressed in the text but is present in the context of situation. This is known as exophoric reference, i.e. the reference is situational.

#### **3.7.4.4- SUBSTITUTION**

Substitution is a relationship on the lexico-grammatical level, i.e. the level of grammar and vocabulary. This relationship is essentially confined to the text. The substitute item has the same grammatical function as that which it substitutes. A substitution item may function as a verb (*do*), a nominal (*one, ones, same*) and as a substitute for a clause (*so, not*). These substitute items replace other items which can be recovered from the text.

#### **3.7.4.5- ELLIPSIS**

Halliday and Hasan (1976:142) state that ellipsis differs from substitution in that it is a substitution by zero. This means: “Something is left unsaid without the implication that what is unsaid is not understood, on the contrary, ‘unsaid’ implies but understood nevertheless”.

It is an anaphoric relation, as indeed most cohesive ties are. Its cohesive effect lies in the fact that it recovers an element from a preceding sentence and uses it to fill in an empty slot in a following sentence.

#### **3.7.4.6- CONJUNCTION**

Conjunction is a different type of semantic relationship from those mentioned above in the sense that there is no particular order according to which two sentences linked by a conjunction may occur. Halliday and Hasan (1976:227) clarify this kind

of relationship by stating that: “Two sentences may be linked by a time relation, but the sentence referring to the event that is earlier in time may itself come later”.

They divide conjunctions into four simplified categories namely, “additive” typified by the word *and*, “adversative” typified by the word *yet*, “causal” typified by the word *so* and “temporal” typified by the word *then*.

### **3.7.5- Lexical Cohesion**

The last type of cohesive ties equally important in terms of the role they play to elucidate semantic difficulties at text level are those labeled by Halliday and Hasan (1976:278) as lexical cohesion. It is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary. Lexical cohesion involves repetition or reiteration (reiteration is a wider term than repetition).

*“A reiterated item may be a repetition, a synonym or near synonym, a super-ordinate, or a general word and in most cases it is accompanied by a reference item, typically **the**”.*

To sum up what has been said about cohesion, we can say that the relations found between cohesive ties provide texture to the text. Recognizing these relations will help the reader to recover the texture of the text and promote a better level of understanding.

### **3.7.6- Text Structure**

As a result of the communicative and linguistic approach integration, the notion of textual structure emerges as the text element configuration, that is, the text in respect of form and content is sequentially and hierarchically structured. Consequently, the idea that understanding segments larger than the sentence as an addition of sentence bound structures integration is hardly to be adopted by linguists nowadays.

### **3.8- Types of Reading**

Reading is generally done with a purpose. For foreign language students, the authentic purposes of reading are often submerged by the purpose of language improvement. According to one's purpose in reading, this can be achieved through skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading. Skimming and scanning have already been discussed in details in section 3. However, as far as intensive and extensive reading are concerned, they can be defined in what follows:

Intensive reading, also called study reading, involves close study of the text and careful analysis of each sentence including the study of vocabulary, syntax (punctuation clues and cohesive elements) and discourse (topic sentence and supporting details, and cohesion). Intensive reading includes Critical reading which is concerned with learning to read a text with the purpose of making critical judgements about it, as when one reads in his native language. In critical reading, students are supposed to offer their own interpretation of texts. This is a more sophisticated form of reading and is also known as

reading between the lines. Here, the reader looks for meaning behind the author's own words.

In Extensive reading, the learner reads for his own pleasure, to broaden his general knowledge and reinforce previously learned items. Extensive reading involves the ability to read quickly, concentrating on the understanding of the main idea(s), but not necessarily every word. Another purpose of such reading is to develop the habit of reading and foster fluency in reading. Nuttall (1982) supports the idea that extensive reading contributes to improve our knowledge of a foreign language. Extensive reading is recommended if we want to improve our knowledge of a foreign language.

### **3.9- Conclusion**

The conclusion that can be drawn is that reading comprehension skill and vocabulary development are highly correlated. Teachers should provide opportunities for extensive reading and independent strategy development which involves practicing guessing from context and training learners to use dictionaries. Explicit instruction is also important in that it involves diagnosing the words learners need to know and developing fluency with known words. In addition, they have to link spelling instruction to reading and vocabulary instruction. Spelling knowledge underlies students' ability to decode words during the process of reading. It is a powerful foundation for their reading and their vocabulary development because the spelling / meaning relationship among words allows students to learn how the structure of familiar words can be clues to the spelling and the meaning of unknown words.



Students who have vocabulary deficits have problems understanding texts. Multi-meaning words may need to be taught and discussed. Direct instruction in vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms, idioms, parts of speech, and uses in phrases and sentences is essential. Textual relationship and reference are other important aspects to be included in the syllabus if we want students to improve reading comprehension.

In addition, reading comprehension is closely related to listening comprehension. It helps develop awareness skills or sensitivity to the sounds in language. As English is a morphophonemic language, the structure of this language is based on both sound-symbol correspondences and on the use of meaningful parts (morphemes) whose structure is directly tied to their meaning. Most reading experts and researchers agree that good readers use phonological awareness, phonics and morphology to figure out the meaning and the sound of new words.

Considering all what has been stated above, certain aspects are going to be investigated in the following chapter to see to what extent they can be applied with our students in order to improve their reading comprehension. In addition, certain aspects such as multi-meaning words, parts of speech, textual relationship and phonological awareness are to be incorporated in the test. This will contribute to better grasp the areas of difficulty of our students and will give us the possibility to suggest a certain number of recommendations to improve the learning situation prevailing.

## CHAPTER FOUR.

# VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1- Introduction

This part has the ambition to analyse the place of vocabulary in learning foreign languages. Much research has been carried out on syntax and phonology whereas the word has been relatively neglected. However, teachers and learners recognize the fact that to effectively use a language, knowledge of vocabulary is necessary. Around the 1980's, researchers started to claim the importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning. Studies confirm that learners feel the lexical deficit as the major problem during their reading and that the need to understand can explain their fascination towards Lexis.

Courtillon (1989:147) said: *"The lexicon is the pivot of the acquisition from which syntax is organized and, later, the morpho - syntax. That is easily explained by the fact that the lexicon, important carrier of information contributes, with the intonation, to give learners a quick access to communication"*.<sup>5</sup> [author's translation].

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<sup>5</sup> J.Courtillon (1989) “ *Le lexique est le pivot de l'acquisition a partir duquel s'organise la syntaxe et, plus tard, la morpho-syntaxe. Cela s'explique aisément par le fait que le lexique, haut porteur d'information contribue, avec l'intonation, a donner rapidement aux apprenants l'accès a la communication*”.

## **4.2- Introduction to Reading and Vocabulary Learning**

Reading ability and vocabulary knowledge are two of the most important components of performance in a foreign language especially in academic settings. Each depends on the other, as both competence and vocabulary knowledge are the most important factors in reading comprehension, while reading is the single most important means by which intermediate and advanced learners acquire new words. However, building vocabulary through reading is a fruitful but complex activity that needs better understanding and more careful guidance.

The acquisition of Lexis has only become a question of interest to applied-linguists since the 1980's. The position in the early 1990's is that Lexis has been unduly neglected in the past, and is due for a re-evaluation, but as yet, this re-evaluation has not got very far.

Two basic questions about the acquisition of Lexis will be addressed both in this chapter and in the experiment. The first is: What strategies do learners use to acquire words, and which of these strategies are efficient? The second question changes the focus of enquiry from the learners' acquisition of words, and asks instead: What happens to a word once it is acquired? How is it integrated into a learner's existing stock of words?

### **4.2.1- How Do Learners Acquire Words?**

Research on the strategies that learners use to acquire new words suggests that in any group of learners, a wide variety of strategies will be found. On the whole, however, better learners adopt a wider range of strategies for learning than less successful learners. Good language learners tend to take responsibility for improving their own vocabulary, while less successful learners do not. Within this general framework, there are two main types of acquisition strategies: Conscious learning and Incidental learning.

A rather different approach to the acquisition of Lexis is to study the way real language learners acquire the meaning of new words in context. The preferred method for studying this process is to use the “think aloud techniques” where learners, usually in pairs, discuss the possible meanings of unknown words that they have found in texts. These discussions are tape recorded and transcribed, and then analysed for evidence of inferencing. In general, the best work in this area shows that learners are able to infer the meaning of a sizeable proportion of the unknown words they meet in texts. Good learners are able to use a wide range of contextual clues to work out what an unknown word must mean. Less adept learners tend to stick with surface phonological or orthographical clues, and are less able to use clues provided by discourse structure, sentence structure and so on. Nation (1990:32) has argued that “It is possible to teach learners good guessing strategies which can improve the number of words they can guess correctly”.

Teaching this kind of strategy is important because it is now recognized that no language course can cover all the vocabulary that a learner needs to know by overt

instruction, and that some method other than overt instruction must account for most of the words a learner acquires in a second or foreign language.

This leads to the question of whether Lexis can be acquired incidentally rather than consciously. This question will be discussed in more details in section 5.8.1. However, concerning L1 research, some good literature is available. Nation (1990) reports research showing that there is fairly high probability of L1 learners picking up new words after hearing them read aloud in stories. The pick up rate was even higher if the reader was able to gloss new words as they occurred.

Nagy and Herman (1987:246) suggest that “Passive exposure to L1 via reading is able to account for almost all the new words acquired in the teens”.

Their arguments goes as follows: given the available information about the amount of material that typical teenagers read in the course of a year, and the proportion of words in this material that they are not likely to know, it is possible to estimate how many unknown words a typical reader is likely to meet in the course of a year's reading. It is also possible to determine empirically the likelihood of a reader being able to infer the meaning of one of these unknown words, and the likelihood of this meaning being retained beyond the immediate context. When all these figures are put together, the prediction is that an average reader will acquire about 1000 new words each year. It would be relatively easy to replicate this work in an L2, and to do a systematic study of the factors that affect the take up rate of L2 words encountered in meaningful contexts. One would expect learners to be less good at inferring word meanings, but better at retaining those that were inferred successfully. It is not known how this prediction agrees with what actually happens. Some of Nation's (1990) recent work on estimating vocabulary size looks as though it might provide standard tools for assessing vocabulary

growth. Nagy and Herman suppositions will be clarified later, in section 5.3 which deals with learner's vocabulary size.

#### **4.2.2- Acquired Words: Their Integration and Use**

So far, the learner has been the focus of attention of the research reviewed: what the learner did to acquire words; the effectiveness of the method. It is possible to shift the focus of the question, however, and to concentrate instead on the thing that is learned. This shift produces a completely different set of questions – questions that have typically been asked by psychologists rather than by language teachers and applied linguists. These questions concern the structure of the lexicon, and they have typically been investigated by comparing the way bilinguals and monolinguals behave on simple psychological tasks involving word skills. This research enables the development of tentative answers to questions such as: Do bilinguals have a single integrated lexicon, or two more or less separate ones? And more generally, how is the L2 speaker's lexicon structured relative to that of his L1?

Many applied linguists will be familiar with a distinction that used to be made between compound bilinguals and coordinate bilinguals. Compound bilinguals were typically learners, often children, who had acquired two languages in a single situation. Coordinate bilinguals were learners, often adults, who had acquired their two languages at different times and in different settings. It was sometimes argued that compound bilinguals had a single, integrated lexicon, while coordinate bilinguals had two largely separate lexicons. This distinction is not now widely used, but still informs about the way some applied linguists think about Lexis.

#### **4.3-The Fundamental Character of Foreign Language Learning**

This section will briefly discuss the fundamental characteristics of adult foreign language learning. It will be useful to compare foreign language learning with child language development on the one hand and general adult skill acquisition and problem solving on the other.

#### **4.3.1- Lack of Success**

The lack of general guaranteed success is the most striking characteristic of adult foreign language learning. Normal children inevitably achieve perfect mastery of the language; adult foreign language learners do not. This is so because perfect mastery is a characteristic of general adult learning in the fields for which no domain-specific cognitive facility is thought to exist. Any model which entails uniform success, as child first language acquisition models must, is a failure as a model of adult language learning. Lack of guaranteed success in adult foreign language learning would, of course, follow from a theory which holds that this learning is controlled by general human cognitive learning capacities rather than by the same domain-specific module which guarantees child success in first language acquisition. Therefore, frequent lack of success in adults, against uniform success in children, is a serious obstacle to the view that the same process underlies child and adult language acquisition.

#### **4.3.2- Variation in Success, Course, and Strategy**

Among adults, there is substantial variation in degree of success, even when age, exposure, instruction, and so forth are held constant. In foreign language acquisition, different learners also “*follow different paths*”, as Meisel, Clahsen, and Pienemann

(1981) put it in their study of the stages of learning German. There is also variation in what one might call “*learning strategies*”.

### **4.3.3- Variation in Goals**

There is not only variation in degree of attainment; there is also variation in what one might call type of attainment. For example, some adult learners seem to develop systems that have rudimentary grammatical devices but seem nonetheless to be quite successful in fulfilling the communicative needs of the speaker. Others seem concerned about grammatical correctness, even though fluency may suffer. This variation in aim follows naturally from the hypothesis that adult foreign language acquisition is a type of general problem solving. Cognitive models of general problem solving involve setting goals. It is to be expected that different people will view the problem to be solved in different ways and will set different goals in a given domain. Different goals require setting different sub-goals, involving perhaps different learning strategies.

### **4.3.4- Fossilization**

It has long been noted that foreign language learners reach a certain stage of learning and that learners then permanently stabilize at this stage. Development ceases, and even serious conscious efforts to change are fruitless. The learner slides to the stable state. Selinker (1972) called this phenomenon “*fossilization*”. Fossilization often seems to be observed in learners who have achieved a level of competence that ensures communicative success, even though the grammar may be unlike that of a native speaker.



### **4.3.5- Role of Affective Factors**

Success in child language development seems unaffected by personality, socialization, motivation, attitude, or the like. This is consistent with the view that the process is controlled by the development of an innate domain-specific faculty, and it contrasts strongly with the case of general adult skill acquisition, which is highly susceptible to such affective factors. There is a universal consensus among second language acquisition researchers, as well as among language teachers and students, that such factors are essential in foreign language learning. Since the early 1970s, beginning with the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972), numerous empirical studies have shown significant correlations between affective factors and proficiency.

## **4.4- Psychological Aspects**

Considering the psychological aspects in foreign language learning, we may say that the most important ones are motivation and inhibition.

### **4.4.1- Motivation**

According to educational psychologists, language learning situations are characterized by a very important factor which is motivation. The latter is defined as being the reason or the cause that stimulates someone to do something.

Corder (1967:148) says that “Given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a language if he is exposed to the language data”.

Richards, J. Platt and H. Platt (1992:238) define motivation as “The factors that determine a person's desire to do something. In second and foreign language learning, learning may be affected differently by different types of motivation”.

They say that two types of motivation are sometimes distinguished:

a- Instrumental motivation, defined as wanting to learn a language because it will be useful for certain “instrumental” goals such as getting a job, reading a foreign newspaper, or passing an examination.

b- Integrative motivation, defined as wanting to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture.

In the case of our students, motivation is instrumental. The main aim in learning English for these students is, in fact, to pass examinations and to read books and documents written in English. The latter aim concerns students who wish to undertake post-graduate studies. Their interest in learning English is important, but their level and the different problems they encounter in learning this language weaken that interest. Through a discussion with them, we found that one of the reasons to which they relate their weaknesses in English is motivation. They also think that the teachers do not motivate them enough to learn the language, and that the lectures are sometimes boring. It is not anymore to be proved that the role of the teacher is to motivate and create interest in his students as a class manager. The teaching method can also be of great support in developing the interest of students. Another way of making the students

interested in learning English is to tell them about the objectives of the course. To this effect, Nuttal (1982:4) says: “A teacher has to draw students' attention to the sort of purposes for which they might conceivably find foreign language reading useful”.

As stated by Nuttal, reading can be a way of stimulating the interest of the students. In learning a foreign language, one of the most important skills is reading. Therefore, the teacher has to improve the interest in that skill to help the students develop their background knowledge and raise their motivation in learning English.

Motivation is, indeed, a very important factor in any learning situation, and as it has been mentioned by Skehan (1989:49) “Motivation would be the inherent interest of learning”.

In view of that, we may say that psychological conditions are important to help reach the learning goal. Motivation and interest are important enabling conditions. Without the engagement and aroused attention of the learners, there can be little opportunity for other learning conditions to take place. Teachers need to watch their learners carefully and check their learners' interest.

#### **4.4.2- Inhibition**

One of the psychological problems encountered by our students is inhibition. The majority of students are afraid of speaking, and therefore, do not participate in discussions in the classroom. This is often explained by the fear of making mistakes. Another possible explanation to inhibition is the fact that the students have a low

proficiency in English. Although these students studied English for a number of years, they have been educated in Arabic and therefore exhibit great difficulty in dealing with English. This can be described by the fact that they are not familiar with the target language. The students' low proficiency in English leads students to avoid speaking; this results in an anxious situation and in a passive role of the students who will get nervous because they are afraid of being asked questions and inevitably make mistakes. Such a reaction leads to a blockage which consequently impedes the learning process. The teacher's role is very important in helping the students overcome such hindrance; they should advice and encourage them to speak and participate. This will, at the same time, ease the teacher's task, allowing him to correct his students' mistakes and therefore help improve their confidence and thus their competence.

Concerning the reading skill, Cooper (1984:124) makes the distinction between “practiced” and “unpracticed” readers. Practiced readers are those who pursued much of their education in English and demonstrated the ability to cope with university level texts in English, whereas unpracticed readers are non-native readers of English who have been educated in their native language. In his study, Cooper examined possible sources of reading difficulties such as the meaning of affixes, word meaning in context, syntactic meaning, and inter-sentential relationships and concluded that

*“Unpracticed readers differ primarily from practiced readers in their ability to use the linguistic clues in the larger context to determine meaning. They found it especially difficult to deduce word meaning from context, to understand lexical cohesion and to understand the meaning relationships between sentences”.*

According to this definition, our students are unpracticed readers in the sense that they students have been educated in their native language and have difficulties understanding texture and vocabulary.

## **4.5- The Logical Problem of Foreign Language Learning**

These general characteristics of foreign language learning tend to lead to the conclusions that the domain-specific language acquisition system of children ceases to operate in adults, and in addition, that adult foreign language acquisition resembles general adult learning in fields for which non domain-specific learning system is believed to exist. However, even if many fail miserably, there are many who achieve very high levels of proficiency, given enough time, input, and effort, and given the right attitude, motivation and learning environment.

### **4.5.1- The Role of the Native Language**

Adult's knowledge of a language gathers a set of well-formed sentences, but also the full range of subtle intuitions native speakers possess. The learner will have reason to expect that the language to be learned will be capable of generating an infinite number of sentences; the learner will expect that the foreign language will have syntax, semantics, a lexicon which recognizes parts of speech, a morphology which provides systematic ways of modifying the shape of words, a phonology which provides a finite set of phonemes, and syllables, phonological phrases and so forth. Universals of this sort are available to the foreign language learner merely by observing the most obvious large scale characteristics of the

native language, and by making the assumption that the foreign language is not an utterly different sort of thing from the native language.

#### **4.5.2- Interference**

The idea that inference from the first language is the major obstacle to adult foreign language learning was dominant in applied linguistics from the 1940s through the late 1960s. Here is a classic statement of the position in Lado (1957): “The basic problem of foreign language learning arises not out of any essential difficulty in the features of the new language themselves, but primarily out of the special “set” created by the first language habits”.

The clear advantage to this explanation is that it relies on a very obvious and uncontroversial difference between adults and children. Children do not know a language yet, while adults do. Other explanations rely on differences which are much more difficult to specify. In the interference hypothesis, it is previous knowledge of a language, not some factor related to age which impedes foreign language learning.

In the case of our students, and in addition to motivation and inhibition, which may cause embarrassment in learning, students face mother tongue interference problems. Mother tongue interference has long been the object of discussion in the literature of language learning and has been regarded as one possible cause of learning problems. This gave birth, in the 1950's, to Contrastive Analysis. Contrastive Analysis believed that almost all errors had their origin in mother tongue interference, and was seen as a contribution in helping linguists provide

structural descriptions of languages which could be compared and contrasted. On the basis of that, Abbot and Wingard (1981:30) argued that it would be reasonable to suppose that “Whenever the structures of the mother tongue and target language differed, there would be problems in learning and difficulty in performance and that the greater the differences were, the greater the difficulties would be”.

Considering that the English and Arabic structures are different, we may say that students have great difficulties and that they are heavily influenced by their mother tongue, generally in the case of vocabulary. Indeed, when students try to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words, they rely on the teacher's explanations in English, then, to check that they have understood correctly, they give the equivalent in Arabic.

Another problem which may be pointed out, and which already been stated before, is the fact that Algerian students have been exposed to two languages, namely Arabic and French used as a medium of communication in daily life, before starting the learning of English. In that context, students adopt another strategy to understand the meaning of words, language switch, which relates to the introduction of a word or phrase in a language other than the target language. This is either done in the native language or in French.

The difficulty facing our students in learning may be explained by the fact that they are exposed to three languages, Arabic, French and English. The medium of instruction being Arabic, these students are heavily influenced by Arabic. They are also influenced to a lesser extent by French. We suppose that the difficulty

encountered in learning English is due to the already established structure which they will use when learning English. However, as Krashen (1988:64) states

*“For many years, it had been presumed that the only major source of syntactic errors in adult second language performance was the performer's first language. However, empirical studies of errors made by second language students are not traceable to the structure of the first language, but are common to second language performers of different linguistic backgrounds”.*

In conclusion, we may say that the first language influences learners in their second language learning resulting in making errors as in the case of our students where Arabic is a source of errors. However, not all errors are to be attributed to first language interference. For our students, word for word translation of phrases into / from Arabic to French, and word order of the English language may be viewed as a source of errors.

#### **4.6- Lexical Approach to Second / Foreign Language Teaching**

The lexical approach to second / foreign language teaching has received interest in recent years as an alternative to grammar-based approaches. The lexical approach concentrates on developing learners' proficiency with lexis, or words and words combinations. Lewis (1993: 95) state that

*“The lexical approach is based on the idea that an important part of language acquisition is the ability to comprehend and produce lexical phrases as unanalysed*



*wholes, or “chunks” and that these chunks become the raw data by which learners perceive patterns of language traditionally thought of as grammar”.*

This part provides an overview of the methodological foundations underlying the lexical approach and the pedagogical implications suggested by them.

#### **4.6.1- A New Role for Lexis**

Lewis (1993), who coined the term lexical approach, suggests the following:

- 1- Lexis is the basis of language.
- 2- Lexis is misunderstood in language teaching because the assumption that grammar is the basis of language and that the mastery of the grammatical system is a prerequisite for effective communication.
- 3- The key principle for lexical approach is that *“language consists of grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar”*.
- 4- One of the central organizing principles of any meaning-centred syllabus should be lexis.

#### **4.6.2- Types of Lexical Units**

The lexical approach makes a distinction between vocabulary – traditionally understood as a stock of individual words with fixed meanings – and lexis, which includes not only the single words but also the word combinations that we store in our mental lexicons. Lexical approach advocates argue that language consists of meaningful

chunks that, when combined, produce continuous coherent text, and only a minority of spoken sentences are entirely novel creations.

The role of formulaic, many-word lexical units have been stressed in first, second and foreign language research. The existence and importance of these lexical units has been discussed by a number of linguists. For example, Cowie (1988:136) states that “the wide spread fusion of such expression which appears to satisfy the individual’s communicative needs at a given moment, and is later reused, is one means by which the public stock of formulae and composites is continuously enriched”.

Lewis (1997 b:256) suggests the following taxonomy of lexical items:

- 1- Words (e.g., book, pen)
- 2- Polywords (e.g., by the way, upside down)
- 3- Institutionalized utterances (e.g., I’ll get it; we’ll see; would you like a cup of coffee?)
- 4- Sentence frames and heads ( e.g., That’s not as .....as you think, The fact/suggestion/problem/danger was....), and even text frames ( e.g., In this paper we explore...; Firstly....; Secondly....; Finally....).

Within the lexical approach, special attention is directed to collocations and expressions that include institutionalized utterances and sentence frames and heads.

Lewis (1997a:204) maintains that “Instead of words, we consciously try to think of collocations, and to present these in expressions. Rather than trying to break

things into even smaller pieces, there is a conscious effort to see things in larger, more holistic ways”.

For Lewis (1997a:8), collocation is “The readily observable phenomenon whereby certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency”.

He states that collocation is not determined by logic or frequency, but is arbitrary, decided only by linguistic convention. For him, some collocations are fully fixed, such as “*to catch cold*” and “*drug addict*”, while others are more or less fixed and can be completed in a relatively small number of ways as in the following examples:

- blood / close / distant / near(est) **relative**.
- **Learn** by heart / by doing / by observation / from experience.
- Badly / bitterly / deeply / seriously / severely hurt.

#### **4.6.3-Lexis in Language Teaching and Learning**

In the lexical approach, lexis in its various types is thought to play a central role in language teaching and learning. Nattinger (1980:341) suggests that

*“Teaching should be based on the idea that language production is the piecing together of ready made units appropriate for particular situations. Comprehension of such units is dependent on knowing the patterns to predict in different situations. Instruction, therefore, should center on these patterns and the ways they can be pieced together, along with the ways they vary and the situations in which they occur”.*

He suggests activities used to develop learners' knowledge of lexical chains.

They include the following:

- 1- Intensive and extensive reading in the target language.
- 2- First and second/foreign language comparisons and translation – carried out chunk-for-chunk, rather than word-or-word- aimed at raising language awareness.
- 3- Repetition and recycling of activities, such as summarizing a text orally one day and again a few days later to keep words and expressions that have been learned active.
- 4- Guessing the meaning of vocabulary items from context.
- 5- Noticing and recording language patterns and collocations.
- 6- Working with dictionaries and other reference tools.

To conclude this section, we may say that this new point of view is an important overhang. Zimmerman (1997:17) suggests that “The work of Nattinger and Lewis represents a significant theoretical and pedagogical shift from the past”.

He explains that their claims have revived an interest in a central role for accurate language description. In addition, they challenge a traditional view of word boundaries, emphasizing the language learner's need to perceive and use patterns of lexis and collocation. Most significant is the underlying claim that language production is not a syntactic rule-governed process but is instead the retrieval of larger phrasal units from memory.

Considering the activities proposed, certain of them (guessing the meaning from context and translation) are going to be tested with our students to check to what extents do they use them.

#### **4.7- Foreign Language Vocabulary Learning**

When learning vocabulary, the most ambitious goal is to know all the language. However, this goal is really hard to reach because even native speakers do not know all the vocabulary of the language. As stated by Nation (2001:6), it not an easy question to resolve because there are other numerous questions which affect the way we answer it. These questions are as follows: “What do we count as a word? How many words do native speakers know? How much vocabulary do you need to use another language?”

To answer the first question, Nation (2001) states that the foolish and brave attempts to answer this question and the major one “*How many words are there in English?*” have counted the number of words in very large dictionaries. *Webster’s Third International Dictionary* is the largest non-historical dictionary of English. It contains around 114,000 word families excluding proper names (Goulden, Nation and Read 1990). This is a very large number and is well beyond the goals of most first and second or foreign language learners. A number of researchers say that there are several ways of deciding what words will be counted. They divide them in different kinds: Tokens, Types, and Lemmas.

- **Tokens:** It is the fact of counting every word form in a spoken or written text even if the same word form occurs more than once. For example, the sentence “*It is not easy to say it correctly*” would count eight words even though two of them are the same word form, *it*. Words which are counted in this way are called ‘token’ and sometimes ‘running words’.

- **Types:** We can count the words in the sentence “*It is not easy to say it correctly*” another way. If we see” the word again, we do not count it again. So, the sentence of eight tokens consists of seven different words or “*types*”.

- **Lemmas:** According to Francis and Kucera (1982:461), a lemma consists of a headword and some of its inflected and reduced (n’t) forms. Usually, all the items included under a lemma are the same part of speech. For Bauer and Nation (1993), the English inflections consist of plural, third person singular present tense, past tense, past participle, comparative, superlative and possessive. For other researchers, however, one problem in forming lemmas is to decide what will be done with irregular forms such as *mice, is, brought, beaten* and *best*. The question that arose is: Should the irregular forms be counted as a part of the same lemma as their base word or should they be put into separate lemmas?

Sinclair (1991:41) asks another question. He states that “An additional problem with lemmas is what is the headword- the base form or the most frequent form?”

According to Sinclair, using the lemmas as a unit of counting greatly reduces the number of units in a corpus. Sharing the same idea, Bauer and Nation (1993) calculate

that the 61,805 types in the Brown Corpus (recent computerised count produced by Francis and Kucera, 1982) become 37,617 lemmas which is a reduction of almost 40%.

#### **4.8- Frequency of Words**

In view of the different researches carried out in that field (Nation,1990; Meara,1997;Horst,Cobb, and Meara, 1998), researchers came to the conclusion that the number of exposures needed for the mastery of a new word hinges on many other factors such as the salience of the word in context, the richness of contextual clues, the learner's interest and the size of his/her existing repertoire of vocabulary. Others researchers have been fascinated by lexical phrases (Lewis, 1993; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992), multiword units and collocations (Arnaud & Savignon, 1997) and their respective frequency of use. Arnaud and Savignon (1997: 168) note "two kinds of strategies associated with complex lexical units: awareness strategies and retention strategies". As far as vocabulary strategies are concerned, the good learners were found to be more aware of what they could learn about new words and were more conscious of contextual learning. By contrast, the underachieving learners refused to use the dictionary and almost always ignored unknown words. They were generally characterized by their apparent passiveness in learning. They also took each word as a discrete item unrelated to previously learned words.

### **4.8.1- High Frequency Words**

High frequency words are very important because they cover a very large proportion of the running words in spoken and written texts and occur in all kinds of uses of the language. Nation (2001:14) states that “The usual way of deciding how many words should be considered as high frequency word is to look at the text coverage provided by successive frequency-ranked groups of words”.

He points out that the 2,000-word level has been set as the most suitable limit for high frequency words. The works are based on West famous “*General Service List*” which contains 2,000 word families. About 165 word families in this list are function words such as *a, some, because* and *to*. The rest are content words, i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. He highlights that high frequency words are so important that anything that teacher and learners can do to make sure they are learned is worth doing.

### **4.8.2- Low Frequency Words**

There is a very large group of words that occur very infrequently and cover only a small proportion of any text. However, it is to be noted that the boundary between high frequency and low frequency vocabulary is an arbitrary one. Nation (2001:19) states that low frequency words are of different kinds:

- 1- *Many low frequency words are proper names. In some texts, such as novels and newspapers, proper nouns are like technical words- they are of high frequency*



*in particular texts but not in others, their meaning is closely related to the message of the text and they could not be pre-taught because their use in the text reveals their meaning.*

- 2- *One person's technical vocabulary is another person's low-frequency word. This ancient vocabulary proverb makes the point that, beyond the high-frequency words of the language, people's vocabulary grows partly as a result of their jobs, interests, and specialisations. The technical vocabulary of our personal interests is important to us. To others, however, it is not important and from their point of view is just a collection of low frequency words.*
  
- 3- *Some low-frequency words are simply low-frequency words. That is, they are words that almost every language user rarely uses, for example: eponymous, gibbous, bifurcate, plummet, ploy. They may represent a rarely expressed idea; they may be similar in meaning to a much more frequent word or phrase; they may be marked as old-fashioned, very formal, belonging to a particular dialect, or vulgar, or they may be foreign words.*

In view of what has been stated above, we can say that a very important distinction is made between high-frequency words and low-frequency words. This distinction is made on the basis of the frequency, coverage and quantity of these words. Arnaud and Savignon (1997:160) emphasize complex lexical units acquisition which are more numerous than the simple ones. They state that

*“There are, in English as in French, 6,000 adverbial expressions compared with 2,000 adverbs, 300,000-400,000 compound nouns versus 80,000 simple nouns”.*

They also point out that the knowledge of rare words is a valuable goal as it enables an L2 reader to access the meanings of utterances without difficulty. The acquisition of masses of vocabulary by learners is a serious argument as the threshold in reading ability is 3,000 word families which corresponds to approximately 4,800 words. This idea is reinforced through the results obtained in the study they carried out with four different groups of French advanced learners (91 first-year students studying English, 75 third year students, 36 teacher trainees, and 34 secondary school teachers). Arnaud and Savignon (1997:166) conclude by saying that “The statistics show, somewhat unsurprisingly, a continuous increase in the knowledge of the two lexical unit samples, but also, and more interestingly, that the acquisition of complex units trails behind that of single words, and the gap increases with time”.

They conclude by saying that it is at university that the acquisition of words beyond the 2,000 really begins. Therefore, teachers should deal with these two kinds of words, concentrating on expanding and refining the learners’ control of vocabulary learning. (These complex units are going to be tested). Learners, however, should continue to learn new words. We point out that this idea will be dealt with in more details later, in this chapter<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> See section 5. 3. Learner’s vocabulary size.

## **4.9- Knowing a Word**

The most important question to ask in learning vocabulary is: “What is meant by to know a word?”. Words are not isolated units of language, but fit into many interlocking systems and levels. From that point of view, one should explore the relationship and boundaries between learning individual items and learning systems of knowledge. A second important idea to be explored is the receptive / productive scale of knowledge and how it applies to each aspect of vocabulary knowledge.

### **4.9.1- Learning Burden**

In the vocabulary learning literature, it is well known that in order to learn a word, learners have to produce a certain amount of efforts. This is what is known as the ‘learning burden’. Nation (2001:23) says that “The general principle of learning burden is that the more a word represents patterns and knowledge that learners are already familiar with, the lighter its learning burden”.

According to him, the learning burden depends on the learners’ familiarity with patterns and knowledge, i.e., patterns and knowledge can be from the first language, or from previous knowledge of other languages. He explains that if a word shares sounds that are in the first language, follows regular spelling patterns, fits into roughly similar grammatical patterns as in the first language, then the learning burden will be very light and the word will not be difficult to learn. However, for

learners whose first language is not related to the second / foreign language, the learning burden will be heavy.

We may, therefore, conclude that foreign language vocabulary learning is determined by the similarities that may exist, at different levels, between the first language and the second or foreign language learnt.

#### **4.9.2- The Receptive / Productive Distinction**

In the literature on vocabulary learning, a distinction between receptive and productive types of knowledge should be made. A number of researchers (Palmer, 1921; West, 1938; Crow, 1986) have dealt with this dichotomy. Palmer (1921:118) states that “Receptive carries the idea that we receive language input from others through listening or reading and try to comprehend it, productive that we produce language forms by speaking and writing to convey messages to others”.

It is to be noted that a synonymous dichotomy has been used in the literature. The term “passive” was used for ‘listening’ and ‘reading’ and the term ‘active’ was used for ‘speaking’ and ‘writing’.

Corson (1995:44) uses the terms active and passive to refer to productive and receptive vocabulary. According to him “Passive vocabulary includes the active vocabulary and three other kinds of vocabulary- words that are only partly known,

low frequency words not readily available for use and words that are avoided in active use”.

For him, the three kinds of vocabulary overlap to some degree. His description is based on the idea of use and not solely on degrees of knowledge. He argues (1995:179) that for some people the Greco-Latin vocabulary of English may be passive for several reasons. Firstly, Greco-Latin words are generally low-frequency words and thus require more mental activation for use. Secondly, the morphological structure of Greco-Latin words may be opaque for some learners, thus reducing the number of points of activation for each of these words. Thirdly, some learners because of their social background get little opportunity to become familiar with the rules of use of the words.

He concludes by saying that the lexical barrier is the result of lack of access to the academic meaning systems strongly reinforced by the morphological strangeness of Greco-Latin words.

#### **4.9.3- The Scope of the Receptive / Productive Distinction**

In view of vocabulary learning literature, the terms receptive and productive apply to a variety of kinds of language knowledge and use. When they are applied to vocabulary, these terms cover all the aspects of what is involved in knowing a word. From the point of view of receptive knowledge and use, Nation (2001:26) says that knowing a word, for example, ‘*underdeveloped*’ involves:

- Being able to recognise the word when it is heard.
- Being familiar with its written form so that it is recognised when it is met in reading.
- Recognise that it is made up of parts *under-*, *-develop-*, and *-ed* and being able to relate these parts to its meaning.
- Knowing that *underdeveloped* signals a particular meaning.
- Knowing what the word means in the particular context in which it has just occurred.
- Knowing the concept behind the word which will allow understanding in a variety of contexts.
- Knowing that there are related words like *overdeveloped*, *backward* and *challenged*.
- Being able to recognise that *underdeveloped* has been used correctly in the sentence in which it occurs.
- Being able to recognise that words such as *territories* and *areas* are typical collocations.
- Knowing that *underdeveloped* is not an uncommon word and is not a pejorative word.

From the point of view of productive knowledge and use, knowing the word *underdeveloped* involves:

- Being able to say it with correct pronunciation including stress.
- Being able to write it with correct spelling.

- Being able to construct it using the right word parts in their appropriate forms.
- Being able to produce the word to express the meaning ‘underdeveloped’.
- Being able to produce the word in different contexts to express the range of meanings of *underdeveloped*.
- Being able to produce synonyms and opposites for *underdeveloped*.
- Being able to see the word correctly in an original sentence.
- Being able to produce words that commonly occur with it .
- Being able to use or not to use the word to suit the degree of formality of the situation (At present, *developing* is more acceptable than *underdeveloped* which carries a slightly negative meaning).

The receptive / productive aspects involved in knowing a word can be summarized in the following table:

**Table 1: What Is Involved in Knowing a Word.**

From I. S. P. Nation (2001:27).

<b>Form</b>	Spoken	R	What does the word sound like?
		P	How is the word pronounced?
	Written	R	What does the word look like?
		P	How is the word written and spelled?
	Word parts	R	What parts are recognisable in this word?
		P	What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
<b>Meaning</b>			
<b>Meaning</b>	Form and meaning	R	What meaning does this word form signal?
		P	What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	Concept and referents	R	What is included in the concept?
		P	What items can the concept refer to?
	Associations	R	What other words does this make us think of?
		P	What other words could we use instead of this one?
<b>Use</b>			
<b>Use</b>	Grammatical functions	R	In what patterns does the word occur?
		P	In what pattern must we use this word?
	Collocations	R	What words or types of words occur with this one?
		P	What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	Constraints on use (register, frequency...)	R	Where, when, and how often would we expect to meet this word?
		P	Where, when, and how often can we use this word?

Note: In column 3, R= receptive knowledge, P=productive knowledge.



In view of what precedes, and if we say a word is part of someone's receptive vocabulary, we are making a very general statement that includes many aspects of knowledge and use, and we are combining the skills of reading and listening. In general it seems that receptive learning and use is easier than productive learning and use, but it is not clear why receptive use should be less difficult than productive use. There are in the literature several explanations which are probably complementary rather than competing. Ellis and Beaton (1993:548) provide three different explanations:

- 1- *The 'amount of knowledge' explanation: Productive learning is more difficult because it requires extra learning of new spoken or written output patterns. This will particularly be noticeable for languages which use different writing systems from the first language and which use some different sounds or sound combinations. For receptive use, learners may only need to know a few distinctive features of the form of an item. For productive purposes their knowledge of the word has to be more precise.*
  
- 2- *The 'practice' explanation: In normal language learning conditions, receptive use generally gets more practice than productive use, and this may be an important factor in accounting for differences in receptive and productive vocabulary size. There is some evidence that both receptive learning and productive learning require particular practice to be properly learned.*

- 3- *The 'access' explanation: A new foreign language word in the early stages of learning has only one simple link to its first language (L1) translation (the receptive direction).*

***The receptive direction***

*Foreign word ----- L1 translation*

*The L1 word, however, has many competing associations (the productive direction) and thus productive recall is more difficult than receptive because there are many competing paths to choose from, and the ones within L1 lexical system are likely to be stronger.*

***The productive direction***

*L1 word ----- Foreign word*

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***(inside the L1 lexical system)***

*----- collocates of word*

*----- synonyms of word*

*----- opposites of word*

*----- etc.*

- 4- *The 'motivation' explanation: Learners are not motivated, for a variety of reasons including socio-cultural background, to use certain kinds of knowledge productively. Although some vocabulary may be well known and could be used productively, it is not used and remains in the learners' passive vocabulary.*

In view of that, they say, it seems important, if the receptive / productive distinction is seen as a knowledge scale, that there be one scale for oral use (listening and speaking) and one for written use (reading and writing).

Koda (2005:50) states that “Word knowledge is multifaceted. Although central to this knowledge is a word’s meaning information, syntactic and grammatical properties are also important in conceptualizing what it means to know a word”.

He explains that what Nation (2001) means is that the grammar, morphology and phonology of the intended message are determined by the particular words chosen. Therefore, knowledge of a word’s morpho-syntactic properties is thus equally important to its semantic information in language production, and, by logical extension, comprehension.

The properties stated by Koda are important for word knowledge. Students’ problems with vocabulary may closely be related to them. The negligence of aspects like word class and perception of textual relationship may make it difficult to students to grasp the meaning of a given word. These are going to be tested with our students to check their importance in determining the meaning of a word.

#### **4.9.4- Aspects of Knowing a Word**

Learning a foreign language draws on research in experimental psychology and language acquisition. Ellis (1994:212) distinguishes the form learning aspect of vocabulary which he calls 'Input / Output aspects' and the meaning aspects of vocabulary. He argues for "A dissociation between explicit and implicit learning where formal recognition and production rely on implicit learning but the meaning and linking aspects rely on explicit conscious processes".

According to him, implicit learning involves attention to the stimulus but does not involve other conscious operations and it is strongly affected by repetition. However, explicit learning is more conscious. He states that the learner makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure. This learning can involve a search for rules, or applying given rules which is strongly affected by the quality of the mental processing.

Ellis stresses the fact that, especially for high-frequency words, teachers should explain the meaning of words, and learners should do exercises, look up in dictionaries, and think about the meanings. Then, after brief attention to spelling and pronunciation, experience in meeting and producing the word form should be left to encounters in meaning focused use.

Aitchison (1994:170) who worked on children acquiring their first language vocabulary considers that "The learners perform three connected but different tasks: a labelling task, a packaging task and a network building task".

In fact, these correspond to the three divisions in the ‘Meaning section’ of the preceding table (table 1): form and meaning, concept and association.

Ellis and Sinclair (1996:236), on the other hand point out that “The grammar and collocation aspects of use involve pattern recognition and production and thus are more effectively the goal of implicit learning. The constraints on vocabulary use are more closely related to meaning and would benefit more from explicit learning”.

In view of what has been stated above, we may say that teachers should emphasize both implicit and explicit learning depending on the aspects to be learned if they want learning to occur.

#### **4.10- Conclusion**

The conclusion which flows from this chapter has implications both for research and for teaching. On the one hand, we can observe that an increasing interest in lexical matters seems to be fully justified by the evidence of the importance of lexis in the functioning of language. In view of the different research carried out in the field of foreign language vocabulary acquisition and foreign language learning, a number of conclusions have been reached. Researchers now agree that L2 lexical acquisition closely resembles the L1 lexical acquisition; however, it is recognised that L2 lexical development differs from L1 lexical development because it takes place against the background of an already acquired lexicon, but it is also noted that L2 learners confront

many of the same kinds of difficulties as L1 learners in both the formal and the semantic domain.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **STRUCTURAL SEMANTICS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR VOCABULARY LEARNING.**

#### **5.1- Introduction**

Language teachers and applied-linguist researchers now generally recognize the importance of vocabulary learning and are exploring ways of promoting it more effectively.

It seems that improving vocabulary knowledge of the foreign language is necessary since it is acknowledged that words are the building blocks of language, the units of meaning from which larger structures such as sentences, paragraphs and whole texts are formed. Even at an advanced level, learners are aware of limitations in their knowledge of foreign language words. They experience lexical gaps, i.e. words they read which they simply do not understand. For learners, the acquisition of vocabulary is a demanding task.

#### **5.2- Major Characteristics of Structural Semantics**

Originally, as a reaction against the pre-structural tradition of historical semantics, the structural approaches in lexical semantics share the following characteristics. First, the semantic value of any particular item cannot be described in isolation, but can only be properly demarcated by contrasting the item with related items semantically. Second, the vocabulary of a language is not an unordered list of elements, but should be conceived of as a structured network. The semantic relations

among words constitute one of the most fundamental types of associative link in the network. Also the structure of the vocabulary is language specific; it is not a direct reflection of an extra linguistic reality. Third, the synchronic analysis of semantic structures methodologically precedes the diachronic analysis of structural change. Fourth, the semantic analysis of natural language has to proceed in a methodologically autonomous, i.e. language immanent way. This can be achieved precisely by restricting the semantic analysis to what is technically sometimes called the “sense” of an item, i.e. the structurally relevant aspects of meaning that show up in the semantic relations that an item entertains with other words.

### **5.2.1-Types of Structural Lexical Semantics**

The different types of structural semantics can be classified primarily in terms of the kind of semantic relations on which they concentrate. The basic distinction is that between “paradigmatic” and “syntagmatic” relations. Semantically speaking, the latter involve the semantic affinity between an item and the words that it can be combined with (In its literal meaning, for instance, “to drink” presupposes that the direct object it occurs with refers to something liquid). Violation of this restriction, as in “he drank the wall” leads to awkwardness to say the least. Paradigmatic semantic relations, however, are being studied in two overlapping research traditions. On the one hand, there is a relational approach which restricts the analysis of a limited set of semantic relations (synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and hyperonymy). The lexical field approach studies groups of words that belong together under the same conceptual heading.

In addition and as already explained in the previous chapter, section 2.6.2.4, schema theory suggests that the knowledge we carry around in our head is organised into inter-related patterns which enable us to make predictions about what we might expect to



experience in a given context. Frame Semantics is a program in empirical semantics which emphasizes the continuities between language and experience. A frame is any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one concept it is necessary to understand the entire system. The frame notion used in frame semantics can be traced most directly to case frame (Fillmore 1968). In his latter works, Fillmore (1982:115) points out that “Case frames were understood as characterizing a small abstract ‘scene’ or ‘situation’, so that to understand the semantic structure of the verb, it was necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes”.

In the early papers on frame semantics, a distinction is drawn between ‘*scene*’ and ‘*frame*’, the former being a cognitive, conceptual, or experiential entity and the latter being a linguistic one. For Fillmore (1985a:232), “A ‘frame’ is a cognitive structuring device, parts of which are indexed by words associated with it and used in the service of understanding”.

Fillmore, who was one of the first people to introduce the concept of frames in linguistics, explains (1977:63) “A frame is any system of linguistic choices – the easiest being collections of words, but also including choices of grammatical rules or linguistic categories – that can get associated with prototypical instances of scenes”.

Later on, Fillmore takes on a broader, more cognitive point of view stating that in semantic theories founded on the notion of cognitive frames or knowledge schemata, a word’s meaning can be understood only with reference to a structured background of experience, beliefs or practices, constituting a kind of conceptual prerequisite for understanding the meaning.

In view of that, we can deduce that one can know the meaning of a word only by understanding the background frames that motivate the concept that the word encodes. This idea will be considered in the test we are going to carry out with our students and see to what extent it can help improve vocabulary learning.

## **5.2.2- Vocabulary Learning Theory**

If in the domain of grammatical structures, a lot of theories have been proposed, the ones concerning lexical acquisition are still too lacking. We know, however, that without theories, no scientific progress is possible: in view of vocabulary importance, hypotheses concerning its development in learners must be emitted.

### **5.2.2.1-COMPREHENSION**

The process involved in comprehension are hypothesized to include extracting word meaning, apprehending syntactic structures, making links within and between sentences and ultimately building a mental representation of the content of a sentence or a text.

Sentence understanding is based on the mechanisms which carry out structural analyses which specify the relation among words. **(Reference)** The perception of textual relationship seems to be syntactically difficult for students. A good reader should use a certain number of strategies when encountering a difficulty in a text. The student may read slowly, pausing to consider what ha has read. Then, he has to reread the text or the sentence in order to make the right connection between the different parts. On the other hand, textual cohesion is a semantic concept. It is concerned with semantic relations within a text i.e. both within and between sentences, such that the

reader's ability to interpret a particular textual element depends on his ability to interpret another element. The elements are tied.

Another essential element is textual reference (anaphoric / cataphoric). In the case of anaphoric reference, there are two common problems: divorcement and ambiguity. By divorcement, we mean a considerable distance between the two elements of the cohesive tie. This can take the form of the explicit word being separated from its co-referent. The foreign learner may be unable to make the tie required. The problem of ambiguity can clearly be seen in "it". Referential ambiguity can cause serious problems. The central semantic issue is how the interpretation of an anaphoric element is related to the interpretation of its antecedent. Investigations of this issue have raised many difficult theoretical questions regarding the nature of meaning and semantic representation. The central pragmatic question is what factors determine which antecedent is chosen for a given anaphoric element, when more than one is syntactically and semantically permissible. With regards to cataphoric reference, however, the problem is less than of divorcement or ambiguity. Rather, it is a question of rarity i.e. the reader is not accustomed to searching forward, and so may take the more common step of searching backward.

#### **5.2.2.2- INFERENCES:**

Inferring refers to the reader coming to conclusions that are not explicitly stated in the text, but for which the text provides evidence. Inferring is usually practised through a question such as: What does **this** refer to? Since texts leave many things implicit, inferences are crucial to the process of connecting ideas, since they are required to fill in the "missing information".

### **5.2.2.3-ELLIPSIS:**

Ellipsis is “substitution by zero” i.e. Rather than being substituted in order to avoid unnecessary and intrusive repetition, an item is “left unsaid”. The fact that something has been left unsaid simply adds to his problems with the result that the sentence doesn't make sense. A particular common problem with ellipsis is that the immediate context of the ellipsed item persuades the learner to make sense of the dislocated syntax concerned. Thus, the learner “understands” that sentence in a different manner than the writer intended. The reliance on ellipsis may run counter to the reader's textual expectations. The presence of ellipsis may simply put more strain on a system already struggling with an unfamiliar syntax.

## **5.3- Learner’s Vocabulary Size**

In the domain of foreign language teaching, native speaker-like competence is neither a very realistic nor necessarily a desirable goal for adult foreign language learners. However, if the performance of foreign learners is rare at the level of pronunciation, lexical performance displays apparent native characteristics. So how “*passive*” knowledge of rare words and complex lexical units of advanced learners increases with the level of study?

In order to understand that, one first has to determine “*what it means to know a word?*”. According to Arnaud and Savignon (1997:157) the passive knowledge can best be described by considering what happens when an utterance is comprehended:

*“Using phonetic clues present in the speech continuum, the phonological representation (significant) of a lexeme is accessed, which in turn permits access to the representation of meaning (signifié)”.*

According to them, the ultimate aim of comprehension is that the hearer should form a representation of the speaker’s communicative intent. They state that this calculus of meaning is interactive and it takes place automatically and unconsciously. This is explained by the fact the fact that a lexeme present in a subject’s passive vocabulary can be accessed and combined to form overall representations.

Recent research by Goulden, Nation and Read (1990) with improved methodology has lead to an estimate of 17,000 word families for the vocabulary of an average native-English-speaker university student. On the other hand, the L 2 vocabularies acquired by secondary school learners are far inferior. Takala (1984) has found that the average “*comprehensive school*” graduate in Finnish school system has acquired a passive English vocabulary of approximately 1,500 words over seven years of study.

Nation (1990:16) states that “a passive vocabulary comprising the 2,000 most frequent words will cover 87% of the tokens in an average text”. According to her, these 2,000 words should be taught intensively, whereas infrequent words are not worth teaching as class time is limited. However, a number of objections (Engels, 1968; and Honeyfield, 1977) can be raised. They point out that “it is precisely those few tokens of rare types that carry the highest information load in any text”. According to them, this

can cause hindrance in the reading process when unknown and that the lack of lexical knowledge still constitutes a major obstacle to comprehension.

On the other hand, Francis and Kucera (1982) point out that “A learner who knows 1,000 different words would have to read or listen to 10,000 running words in order for a word at the 1,000-word level to be repeated”.

In fact, according to their point of view, the larger the vocabulary size, the greater the quantity of language that needs to be processed in order to meet the words to be learned again.

Laufer (1997:23) asks the question about the number of words one must know in order to comprehend. In her study (1991a) with adult students of E.F.L. tested on vocabulary level and reading comprehension, she came to the conclusion that “The turning point of vocabulary size for reading comprehension is about 3,000 word families. If we represented the same number (3,000 word families) in terms of lexical items, the result would be 4,800”.

She explains that the level at which good L1 readers can be expected to transfer their reading strategies to L2 is 3,000 word families or 5,000 lexical items. Until they have reached this level, such transfer will be hampered by an insufficient knowledge of vocabulary. Moreover, she cites Nation and Coady (1988) concerning their claim that successful guessing in context occurs when about 98% of the lexical items in a text are already known. She points out that this implies knowing about 5,000 word families or about 8,000 lexical items.

In view of the literature, both earlier frequency counts and later empirical studies of L2 vocabulary and reading suggest a similar minimum, which is 3,000 word families, or 5,000 lexical items.

One way to ensure the learning of a word is by repetition. Nation (2001:74) says that “Repetition is essential for vocabulary learning because there is so much to know about each word that one meeting with it is not sufficient to gain this information”.

He explains that vocabulary items must not only be known but they must be known well so that they can be fluently accessed. For him, repetition adds to the quality of knowledge and also to the quantity of strength of this knowledge.

## **5.4- Some Basic Issues on Vocabulary**

This part aims at introducing some basic terms and concepts in the analysis of vocabulary. The main emphasis is on the exploration of what constitutes a word.

### **5.4.1- Some Definitions:**

Everyone knows what a “word” is. However, a closer examination reveals the usefulness of every day common-sense notions of a word.

An **orthographic** definition of a word, quite simply, is any sequence of bounded letters. However, in written context, there are potential theoretical and practical problems with an orthographic definition. For example, if *bring*, *brings*, *brought* and

*bringing* are separate words, would we expect to find each word from the list separately in a dictionary? The other question that may be raised is: What about words which have the same form but different meanings? For example, *line* in the sense of railway *line*, fishing *line* or straight *line*. Are these one word or several? Others have more extended meanings and even embrace different grammatical categories; examples of such polysemic words are: *fair*, *flight*, *mouth*. Knowing a word, therefore, involves knowing the different meanings carried by a single form. We may therefore conclude by saying that an orthographic definition of a word is only formalistic because it is bound to the form of a word but it is not sensitive to distinctions of meaning or grammatical function. It may be thus more accurate to define a word as the *minimum meaningful unit* of language because it allows differentiating the separate meanings contained in the word *fair* in so far as they can be said to be different semantic units.

In view of all what precedes, we can state that it is really difficult to define a word. Carver's (1998:6/7) tried to summarize the main problems in the following points:

- 1- *Intuitively, orthographic, free-form or stressed-based definitions of a word make sense. But there are many words which do not fit these categories.*
- 2- *Intuitively, words are **units of meaning** but the definition of a word having a clear-cut "meaning" creates numerous exceptions and emerges as vague and asymmetrical.*
- 3- *Words have different forms. But the different forms do not necessarily count as different words.*



- 4- *Words can have the 'same' forms but also 'different' and, in some cases, completely unrelated meanings.*
- 5- *The existence of 'idioms' seems to upset attempts to define words in any neat formal way.*

According to him, one theoretical notion which may help to resolve some of the above problems is that of the “*lexeme*”.

### **5.4.2- Lexemes and Words**

Carver (1998:7) defines a lexeme as being the abstract unit which underlines some of the variants observed in connection with “words”. He gives the example of “*BRING*” as a lexeme which underlies different grammatical variants namely “*bring, brought, brings, bringing*” and which he refers to as “*word-forms*”. He states that lexemes are the basic, contrasting units of vocabulary in a language. Therefore, when we look up words in a dictionary, we are looking up lexemes rather than words i.e. “*brought*” and “*bringing*” will be found under an entry for “*BRING*” which realizes different word forms.

The term lexeme also embraces items which consist of more than one word form. Into the category come “*lexical items*” such as multi-word verbs (*to catch up on*), phrasal verbs (*to drop in*), and idioms (*kick the bucket*). This latter is a lexeme and would appear as such as a single dictionary entry even though it is a three word form.

It is also to be noted that the notion of lexeme helps represent the “*polysemy*” i.e. the existence of several meanings in individual words. As an example, we can give the word “*fair*”: it can be a noun, an adjective (as in good, acceptable), and (as in light colour, especially for hair). Therefore, the word “*fair*” would have three different lexeme meanings for the same word form.

### **5.4.3- Grammatical and Lexical Words**

In view of what has been stated above, a distinction between grammatical words and lexical words is necessary. Grammatical words comprise a small and finite class of words which include pronouns, articles, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. They are, most of the time, known as “*function words*”. On the other hand, lexical words are also known as “*content words*” and include nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. They carry higher content information and are syntactically structured by the grammatical words. We have also to note that while there are a finite number of grammatical words, there is a potentially unlimited number of lexical words. This is mainly characterized by changes in form or meaning over a period of time. According to linguists, it is lexical words which are subject to that and call this diachronic change. This gives them ground to refer to lexical words as an “*open class*” of words while grammatical words constitute a “*closed class*”.

#### **5.4.4- Morphemes and Morphology**

A morpheme is the smallest unit of meaning in a word. Each morpheme has its own meaning. Morphemes can be a single orthographic letter and yet still change meaning as for example “s” in “cats”; the “s” changes the first morpheme “cat” from singular to plural. Other examples would be the “ed” past marker, “in” when added to “expensive” giving the sense of “not”.

Morphemes convey semantico-syntactic information. There are two classes of morphemes: morphemes which occur independently as words and are co-terminous with specific word forms, and morphemes which occur only as part of a word and which could not stand on their own. The first class is called “*free morphemes*” and the second class is called “*bound morphemes*”. It is to be noted, however, that some morphemes can have the same form but still be different morphemes. These variants are usually termed “*allomorphs*”.

#### **5.4.5- Word Formation**

The term “*root*” is an important concept in word formation. Morphemes may be generally divided into the category “*root*” and “*non-root*”, depending on whether they are primarily lexical or grammatical in function. Non-roots have important grammatical functions but belong to a relatively closed class of items and do not have particularly specific meanings. Roots are more open categories; they are usually lexical words and have more easily specifiable meanings. Examples of non-roots are *by, of, to, s, er, ist*, and of these, the last three items would be termed bound non-roots since they have to be attached to a free morpheme or free root if they are to make a word form. A more

generally known term for bound non-roots is “*affix*”. Affixes (prefixes and suffixes) are added to roots to produce inflections and derivations. A general distinction between these two categories is that “inflection” produces from the root or roots of a given lexeme all the word forms of that lexeme which are syntactically determined; on the other hand, derivation is a process which results in the formation of different lexemes. As an example, if we consider the word or lexeme “adapt”, we may have “*adapts*”, “*adapting*”, and “*adapted*” as inflections whose characteristic is to signal grammatical variants of a given root. They do not form new lexemes or change the grammatical class of a given item (all the word forms are verbs). However, derivations signal lexical variants of a given root; they change nouns into verbs, verbs into nouns and so on. This will result in “*adapt*”, “*adaptor*”, “*adaptability*”, “*adaptation*”.

## **5.5- Structural Semantics and Words**

The basic principle of a structural semantics approach to word meaning is that words do not exist in isolation: their meanings are defined through the sense relations they have with other words. According to Carver (1998:19) “Such relations have psychological validity for individuals are indicated by the degree of uniformity unravelled by responses to word association tests”.

He explains that in these tests, students are given a word and asked to record the word with which, for them, it is most immediately associated. The typical responses are as follows:

<i>Stimulus</i>	<i>Typical response</i>
Accident	Car
Alive	Dead
Baby	Mother
Born	Die
Cabbage	Vegetable
Table	Chair
Careless	Careful

From Deese (1965)

He states that such associations are organised structurally in a rather less incoherent way than may at first appear. In view of this, some of the main networks between words can be classified. For example, Slobin (1971) classified them as follows:

- Contrast or antonymy                      *wet-dry*
- Similarity or synonymy                      *blossom-flower*
- Subordinate classification                      *animal-dog*
- Coordinate classification                      *apple-peach*
- Superordinate classification                      *spinach-vegetable*

However, according to Carver (1998:20), these relationships can be more fully classified along the following lines:

### **5.5.1- Synonymy:**

*This is essentially a bilateral or symmetrical sense relation in which more than one linguistic form can be said to have the same conceptual or propositional meaning. This does not mean that the words should be totally interchangeable in all context; but where synonyms are substituted changes in the propositional meaning of the sentence as a whole do not occur.*

### **5.5.2- Antonymy:**

*There are different kinds of contrast in meaning, but basic to antonymy is a notion of semantic opposition or unrelatedness. Demarcations within antonymic sense relations can be made as follows:*

**5.5.2.1- COMPLEMENTARITY:** *This is where the presence of one sense component excludes another. For example, the relationship between ‘alive’ and ‘dead’ is such that to use one logically entails the denial of the other. Other examples would be single-married; male-female.*

**5.5.2.2- CONVERSENESS:** *There are contrastive lexical relations where there is a measure of logical reciprocity such as **husband-wife**; the sentence “he is her husband” can be ‘reversed’ to produce the reciprocal correlate “she is his wife”. Converseness contrasts with complementarity in that there is interdependence of meaning.*

**5.5.2.3- INCOMPATIBILITY:** *This refers to relational contrasts between items in a semantic field (words which co-occur with reference to a familiar topic). It*

*occurs in such sets as seasons, days of the week, cycles, generic types, and so on. For example, red, blue, and yellow are incompatibles. The house is blue excludes that it is any other colour.*

**5.5.3- HYPONYMY:** *Reference above to super and subordinate relations leads to consideration of what have generally been termed ‘inclusive’ sense relations. Hyponymy is a relationship existing between specific and general lexical items in that the meaning of the specific item is included in, and by, the meaning of the more general item. Hyponymy is a kind of asymmetrical synonymy; its basic organisation is hierarchical. Tulips and roses are co-hyponyms, for example, and are linked by their common inclusion under a **super-ordinate** (or **hyperonym**) flower in whose class they belong.*

To conclude, we can say that even a very ordinary word and widely used word can have a complex relationship with its ‘referents’ and with the other words with which it exists in a structural semantic network.

## **5.6- Words and Patterns**

Now that the structure of words and the structural relations between words have been examined, this part will deal with lexical patterning and includes discussion of collocation, idiomaticity, and the complex issue of fixed expressions. The study of such patterning and the most significant work has been achieved in the construction of learner’s dictionaries, especially dictionaries of idioms. However, this can be important for applied linguists in that it may help understand the mistakes made by second and

foreign language learners in the use of words in different kinds of lexical patterns. Considering the difficulty our students have with vocabulary, we will test lexical words, semantic variance, role of morphology and syntactic markers in order to understand their areas of difficulty.

### **5.6.1- Collocation**

According to R. Carver (1998:51) “Collocation is a term used to describe a group of words which occur repeatedly in a language”.

These patterns of co-occurrence can be ‘*grammatical*’ in that they result primarily from syntactic dependencies or they can, be ‘*lexical*’ in that, although syntactic relationships are involved, the patterns result from the fact that in a given linguistic environment certain lexical items will co-occur.

Studies of collocation in English have tended to be within two distinct traditions: one oriented towards specifically grammatical and one towards specifically lexical patterning. Linguists working in the tradition of ‘lexical collocation’ have produced studies (Hasan, 1987; Berry, 1977; Sinclair and Jones, 1974) which have contributed substantially to the understanding of lexis. Their starting point was to seek to study lexis in the same way as grammar i.e. with reference to patterns of chain (syntagmatic relation) and choice (paradigmatic relation). Carver (1998:51) explains that “The relation to grammar is an analogical one: the aim is to examine lexis as a linguistic level in parallel with and overlapping grammar as a level which is separate and independent”.



According to him, the questions asked by linguists working within the lexical-collocation tradition are important ones especially for the study of lexis in larger stretches of text. They are interested in the company words keep and in the places where they keep such company. Theoretically, it is possible for any lexical item of English to co-occur with any other lexical item. However, for any particular lexical item, there are certain other items which have a high probability of being found near it. The total list of words which are found to collocate with a particular lexical item is called the '*cluster*' of that word. Some members of the cluster will be more central than others, in that their probability of co-occurrence is high.

### **5.6.2- Collocation and Grammar**

The study of collocation is that which views lexical and syntactic patterning as distinct but interrelated levels of structure. Lexical particularities are considered to derive their formal meaning not only from contextual extension of a lexical kind but also from the generalised grammatical patterns within which they appear.

Sinclair (1996:76) states that

*“Words enter into meaningful relations with other words around them, and yet all our current descriptions marginalise this massive contribution to meaning. The main reason for this marginalisation is that grammar is always given priority and grammars barricade themselves against individual patterns of words”.*

Sinclair recognizes that there are crucial interdependencies between grammar, lexis and semantics and that the preoccupation of many linguists with the formal properties of grammar runs constant risks of ignoring lexis and lexico-grammar as the doorway to the creation of meaning.

An apparently straightforward example of Sinclair's point is the word 'eye', which behaves differently if it is in singular or plural form. He gives the example of the plural patterns with adjectives such as *blue*, *attractive* and *dishonest*; in singular form, however, the word *eye* is only rarely used to refer to the visual organ (except when there is an injury, or during an optical test). More commonly, both singular and plural forms are used metaphorically and in different fixed phrases such as *rolling his eyes*, *all eyes will be on the match*, *keep an eye on something* or *turn an eye blind*. We may therefore conclude that not only different words but different grammatical forms of the same word have different distributions and meanings.

Corpus data can also identify the co-occurrence of particular words with particular grammatical patterns. For example, Francis (1994) in Carver (1998:63) points out that two verbs *find* and *make* occur in 98 per cent of cases in the extraposed structure with it in clauses such as: *I find it amusing that he never replies to my faxes*. *Can you make it more exciting?* and *I owed it to you that I passed the final exam*.

In a paper on patterns of grammar and vocabulary, Hunston, Francis and Manning (1997:209) basing their evidence on 320 million word corpus at the University of Birmingham (the COBUILD Bank of English) assert:

*"There are two main points about patterns to be made: firstly, that all words can be described in terms of patterns; secondly, that words which share patterns, share meaning"*.

In a volume entitled *Grammar Patterns: I- Verbs* (COBUILD 1996), a work involving Francis and Hunston, a grammar of verb is presented in groups which share

the same pattern and therefore frequently the same or a closely related meaning. For example, about 20 verbs in English have the pattern ‘*V + by + -ing*’, where the verb is followed by the preposition *by* and an *-ing* clause. Most of the verbs in this group fall into two main groups, one group meaning ‘start’ or ‘finish’, the other group meaning ‘to respond to’ or ‘compensate for something’: for example, *They started off by collecting money for unfortunate children, She ended by singing three songs in Italian* (group 1); *They reacted to the news by cutting off all communication with the outside world, He compensated for the bend by breaking sharply* (group 2).

### **5.6.3- Idioms: Fixed Expressions and Language Structure**

This part will deal with those fixed expressions which can most obviously cause difficulties for non-native speakers of a language. Idioms present particular difficulties because they are restricted collocations which cannot normally be understood from the literal meaning of the words which make them up. For example, the expression “*To let the cat out of the bag*” (= to reveal a secret) cannot be decoded if only the meanings of *let, cat, bag* and *out* are known as separate items. The same can be said of the idiom “*it’s raining cats and dogs*”.

This situation can be attested by the experience we have with our learners. The latter have a real difficulty grasping idioms and idiomatic expressions. In the test we plan to carry, this aspect is going to be considered in order to check its evidence and confirm it.

There are aspects of the meaning that cannot be predicted from the parts and the grammatical combination rule. Such a word is at least partly idiomatic. Idiomaticity is the tendency of phrases to take on meanings that go beyond the meanings of their parts. That is, idiomaticity is in opposition to compositionality, and it is a matter of degree. But in all cases, the aspects of meaning that are not derivable from the parts of the phrase and that speakers and hearers are expected to know must be stored in the lexicon.

The recognition of fixed expressions owes much to psycholinguistic work on the phrasal lexicon. Carver (1991:66) suggests that “Language production consists of piecing together such ready-made ‘prefabricated’ units appropriate to a situation, and that lexical acquisition may involve the learning of complete collocational chunks of language”.

According to him, the designations refer to units which come in various shapes and sizes with varying degrees of fixity and opacity.

## **5.7- Psychological Conditions for Vocabulary Learning**

In view of the literature on vocabulary learning, there are three important general processes that may lead to a word being remembered. These comprise noticing (through formal instruction, i.e. definition), retrieval and creative or generative use.

### **5.7.1- Noticing**

The first process encouraging learning is noticing, that is to give attention to an item. This means that learners need to notice the word, and be aware of it as a useful language item. This process also occurs when learners look up a word in a dictionary, study a word, guess from context, and have a word explained to them.

One of the major factors stimulating motivation and interest is the choice of content. Teachers should take that into account if they want their learners to be interested in what they are teaching. Elley (1989:185) tried the experience with a group of learners and found quite different results from the same learners listening to two different stories. He states that “This seemed to have been due to the lack of involvement of the learners in one of the stories because of its strangeness, lack of humour, low levels and so on”.

He came to the conclusion that there is some evidence that teachers views of what will be interesting do not match with what learners find interesting.

Another important aspect to consider as far as noticing is concerned is decontextualisation. Nation (2001:64) defines this latter as being the fact that “The word is removed from its message context to be focused on as a language item”.

He explains that learners need to consciously see language items as parts of the language system rather than only as messages. As a matter of fact, this can occur in a variety of ways:

- *While listening or reading, the learner notices that a word is new or thinks, ‘I have seen that word before’, or thinks, ‘That word is used differently from the ways I have seen it used before.*
- *The teacher highlights a word while writing it on the blackboard.*
- *The teacher explains a word for the learners by giving a definition, a synonym, or a first language translation.*

According to some studies (Elley, 1989; Brett, Rothlein and Hurley, 1996) show that vocabulary learning is increased if vocabulary items are briefly explained while learners are listening to a story. Another study (Knight, 1994) of reading similarly indicates that looking up words in a dictionary increases learning.

### **5.7.2- Retrieval**

The second process that may lead to a word being remembered is retrieval. According to Baddeley (1990:156) “A word may be noticed and its meaning comprehended in the textual input to the task, through teacher’s explanation or dictionary use. If that word is subsequently retrieved during the task then, the memory of that word will be strengthened”.

He explains that retrieval can be receptive or productive. If receptive retrieval involves perceiving the form and having to retrieve its meaning when the word is met, in listening or reading, productive retrieval involves wishing to communicate the meaning of the word and having to retrieve its spoken or written form.

As far as repetition is concerned, Baddeley (1990:156) suggests that “It is not simply repetition which is important, but the repeated opportunity to retrieve the item which is to be learned”.

He explains that when learners hear or see the form of the word, they need to retrieve what they know of its meaning. In fact, for him, each retrieval of a word strengthens the path linking form and meaning and makes subsequent retrieval easier.

### **5.7.3- Creative or Generative Use**

The third major process in word remembering is generation. There is an increasing number of studies (Joe, 1995; R. Ellis, 1995) that show that generative processing is an important factor in language vocabulary learning. Nation (2001:68) states that “Generative processing occurs when previously met words are subsequently met or used in ways that differ from the previous meeting with the word”.

This process is mainly concerned with the different meanings a word may have according to context. For example, if a learner has met the word ‘*cement*’ used as a verb as in ‘*We cemented the path*’, and then meets ‘*We cemented our relationship with a drink*’, the learner will need to rethink the meaning and uses of ‘*cement*’ and this will help firmly establish the memory of this word.

Baddeley (1990:160) shares the idea and adds that “The accompaniment of a text by a picture can lead to a form of mental elaboration that deepens or enriches the level of processing of a word and thus enhances learning”.

To conclude this third process, we may say that generative uses of vocabulary are those where meeting the word in new context forces learners to reconceptualise the meaning that they previously had for that word.

## **5.8- Vocabulary Acquisition from Extensive Reading**

During the last two decades, a number of studies ( Paribakht and Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997) have confirmed that second language learners can acquire vocabulary through reading. At the same time, Meara (1997) comments that most of these studies do not contribute to the understanding of the acquisition process, since they do not investigate the factors that lead to word retention.

In an attempt to further this understanding, Pigada and Schmitt (2006:2) carried a study to investigate the relationship between incidental vocabulary acquisition and extensive reading, with a particular focus on a variable that is commonly assumed to affect the retention of words, i.e. the number of times a word occurs in the text. They state that

*“Reading and vocabulary studies have almost exclusively focused on word meaning to determine vocabulary acquisition. However, it has been acknowledged by a large number of lexically-minded researchers that knowing a word involves much more than just understanding its meaning”.*



The objective of the study is to examine the effects of text frequency on the acquisition of word meaning, spelling and grammatical behaviour.

Considering the literature on extensive reading, Grabe and Stoller (2002:259) point out that “Extensive reading exposes learners to large quantities of material within their linguistic competence”.

This idea is shared by a number of researchers who consider that there are several reasons why it is so attractive to develop language knowledge, and more specifically vocabulary, through extensive reading. Huckin and Coady (1999:182) consider extensive reading as “A pedagogically efficient approach, as two activities – vocabulary acquisition and reading- occur at the same time”.

According to them, this approach facilitates learner autonomy, provides learners with the opportunity to meet words in their context of use, increases sight vocabulary, and could theoretically result in substantial vocabulary learning, which seems difficult to achieve with explicit teaching during the short period of time spend in the classroom.

Later, Nation (2001:155) argues that “The use of reading and other output sources may be the only practical options for out of class language development for some learners, especially in EFL contexts”.

Considering the above, we may say that extensive reading is an important approach in the teaching of vocabulary.

### **5.8.1- Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition**

This approach to vocabulary acquisition is known as the exposure to readings texts which can contribute to vocabulary growth both in L2 and L1. Schmitt (2000) defines incidental vocabulary learning as “Learning through exposure when one’s attention is focused on the use of language, rather than on learning itself. Context, then, plays a very important role in assisting such learning”.

However, most L2 incidental vocabulary acquisition studies (Saragi & al., 1978; White and Krashen, 1989; Day, Omura, and Hiramatsu, 1991) have been criticized for a number of limitations, most of which are also acknowledged by the researchers themselves. Saragi and al. (1978:76) concluded that “Repetition affects learning but the relationship is considerably complicated by other factors”.

Among the limitations stated are the measuring instruments, the control of text difficulty and the number of target words which was considered quite small. In addition to that, the participants were given only one text to read which might not have been interesting or motivating enough for them. Day and Bamford (1998:29) comment “In the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible”.

Later studies (Horst and al., 1998; Horst and Meara 1999) tried to overcome these limitations by expanding the reading treatment and adding new measuring instruments. In Horst and Meara (1999), the need for multiple encounters with the word was emphasized.

Following these principles, Horst and Meara (1999: 309) suggested “A combination of long input texts and more sophisticated testing”.

This study will involve a one-month period of extensive reading in a language other than English. The test battery will cover a relatively high number of target words (133), and will include measurement procedures that are sensitive to partial knowledge of words.

Nation (2001: 155) states that “This is important because vocabulary learning is not an all-or-nothing piece of learning, but is rather a gradual process of one meeting with a word adding to or strengthening the small amounts of knowledge gained from previous meetings”.

Likewise, Nagy, Anderson and Herman (1987) argue that any meaningful encounter with a target word could contribute to its acquisition, even though this contribution might be very small. One likely reason why many previous studies fail to show much vocabulary growth from reading is that the measurements utilized required “full” knowledge of a word (usually its meaning) in order for it to be counted as being positively affected.

Furthermore, the study adds a new dimension to extensive reading research by examining types of word knowledge other than meaning. As mentioned in the introduction, different criteria for a broadly based view of vocabulary knowledge have been proposed (Aitchison, 1994; Laufer, 1997; McCarthy, 1990; Nation, 1990; Nation, 2001).

Zimmerman (1997:122) points out that “Lexical competence is far more than the ability to define a given number of words”.

Moreover, Read (2004:201) suggests that “This comprehensive word knowledge approach involves not only the semantic features of a word, but also its orthographic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, collocational and pragmatic characteristics”.

It has been recognised that reading tasks contribute to multiple aspects of vocabulary knowledge; however, it has been rare for studies to measure aspects of knowledge apart from meaning. Webb (2005: 48) states that “This is problematic because studies that measure only meaning may be unable to find a significant result when there have in fact been significant gains in other aspects of vocabulary knowledge”.

Read (2004: 217) emphasizes the fact that

*“For practical reasons and due to the lack of suitable measures for several word knowledge components, studies should focus on three word knowledge components, which were selected from each of Nation's (2001) three categories in his analysis of what is involved in knowing a word: form (spelling), meaning (form-meaning relationship), and use (grammatical functions).”*

To sum up, the literature provides good evidence that vocabulary is learned incidentally from reading, at least to some extent, but there are gaps in the knowledge of

this learning. The question is still open to discussion and researchers are still investigating the field.

### **5.8.2- Implicit Vs. Incidental Learning**

In the field of vocabulary acquisition, it seems that the debate about implicit/explicit learning and vocabulary acquisition has frequently been difficult to distinguish. This can be illustrated by the diverse terminology used, contrasting ‘*incidental*’ vs. ‘*intentional*’ learning, or ‘*implicit*’ acquisition vs. ‘*explicit*’ directed learning. Among these terms, particularly the notion of incidental vocabulary acquisition constitutes a central research focus in L2 pedagogy which is insufficiently distinguished from the concept of implicit learning in psychology.

In an attempt to clarify these two terms, we will try to investigate through the literature in how far incidental vocabulary acquisition can be said to correspond to implicit (and/or explicit) learning. Yet, a preliminary clarification of terminological issues seems to be required due to the inconsistent uses and definitions of the basic terms in the literature.

Current definitions of implicit and explicit learning originate in the field of psychology; these definitions generally focus on the absence or presence of conscious operations as a crucial distinguishing factor. According to Ellis (1994b:1)

*“Implicit learning is typically defined as the acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by a process which takes place*

*naturally, simply and without conscious operation, while explicit learning is characterized by more conscious operation where the individual makes and tests hypotheses in a search for structure”.*

In vocabulary acquisition as it is discussed in L2 pedagogy, a distinction is frequently made, which superficially appears to correspond to the implicit/explicit debate: that of incidental vs. intentional vocabulary acquisition. Hulstijn (2001:271) defines incidental vocabulary acquisition as “The learning of vocabulary as the by-product of any activity not explicitly geared to vocabulary learning, while intentional vocabulary learning is any activity geared at committing lexical information to memory”.

The fact that incidental vocabulary acquisition takes place in second/foreign language learning is generally acknowledged among researchers. Most scholars agree that except for the first few thousand most common words, L2 vocabulary is predominantly acquired incidentally (Huckin and Coady 1999). However, as for an exact definition and characterization of the processes and mechanisms involved in this phenomenon, many questions remain not resolved.

A general problem with the operational definition of incidental vocabulary acquisition given above is that it seems to suggest that incidental learning occurs unconsciously. The fact that learning occurs as a by product of reading does not automatically imply that it does not involve any conscious processes. The seeming equation of ‘*incidental*’ with ‘*unconscious*’ is also criticized by Ellis (1994a:38), who states that “Incidental vocabulary acquisition is non-explicit in so far as it does not

involve an explicit learning intention (the overall goal of the learner is text comprehension), but that neither the process nor the product of such learning is necessarily implicit in the sense of non-conscious”.

Even in cases where the notions of implicit and incidental second language learning are brought together in L2 pedagogy, the distinctions and definitions frequently remain vague. In Hulstijn’s article (1998:49) on implicit and incidental second language learning, for instance, implicit learning is initially defined as “*without teaching*” and “*without conscious inductions*”, while it is also stressed that “implicit lexical learning does, in fact, require the learner’s attention to word form and meaning”.

In view of the literature on vocabulary acquisition, the question in how far the notion of consciousness relates to that of attention, however, remains unanswered. Incidental learning, in turn, is defined as “learning without intention”, and does not appear to form a contrast to implicit learning here. Rather, both terms are used side by side, jointly referring to the process of ‘picking up’ a language. As these observations suggest, the terminological confusion largely seems to be caused by ambiguities in the interpretation of the term consciousness itself. As Schmidt (1994:168) points out, “The term unconscious in definitions of implicit learning can be interpreted in two ways: firstly meaning that implicit learning is unintentional and thus incidental, and secondly meaning that it involves induction without awareness”.

These multiple interpretations appear to be symptomatic of a general indecision in the debate about the role of consciousness in second language learning: the unclear definition and operationalisation of the term consciousness itself.

### 5.8.3- Concepts of Consciousness in Second Language Learning

The inconsistent use and unclear status of the term consciousness in the literature have been noted by various researchers (Marcel and Bisiach 1988; McLaughlin 1990). In the context of second language learning, there appear to be no less than five basic definitions of consciousness (Schmidt 1990:138-149; Ellis 1994a:38):

- \* *Consciousness as **intentionality** (incidental vs. intentional learning),*
- \* *Consciousness as a product of **attention** (attended vs. unattended learning),*
- \* *Consciousness as **awareness** (learning with/without online awareness).*
- \* *Consciousness as **instruction** (implicit acquisition vs. explicit instruction),*
- \* *Consciousness as **control** (implicit vs. explicit memory).*

As a result, studies on the role of consciousness in second language learning are too diverse in their scope and claim to be compared, or remain unclear in their statements due to insufficient clarifications of the object under discussion. As far as the definition of consciousness in the implicit/explicit learning debate is concerned, Reber (1993:12) states that “The notion of consciousness is commonly equated with awareness in this context. Explicit learning is characterized as involving the learner’s online awareness, whereas implicit learning is seen as an automatic process without awareness of either the acquisition process or the resulting knowledge”.

This tradition is also reflected in Ellis’ (1994a, b, c) definitions of implicit and explicit learning, where the terms consciousness and awareness are used synonymously.



With regard to the relation between attention and consciousness, Schmidt (2001: 11) notes that “The two phenomena are not to be equated, but related in so far as attention controls access to consciousness”.

If we furthermore consider Schmidt’s claim that attention to input is a prerequisite for any learning to take place (Schmidt 1994, 2001), we can thus conclude that implicit learning does involve attention to the stimulus but does not involve conscious operations. In view of what has been stated above, the term implicit will be equated with ‘*non-conscious*’ in the sense of unaware, while incidental will be equated with ‘*un-intentional*’, without any restrictions as to the role of awareness. This terminological clarification may finally enable us to relate the terms *implicit* and *incidental* by viewing incidental vocabulary acquisition as being composed of implicit learning processes which happen without the learner’s awareness and/or of explicit learning processes which take place without learning intention but nevertheless involve awareness and hypothesis formation.

#### **5.8.4- Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition and Implicit/Explicit Learning**

In view of what has been presented above, we can now try to see the relation of incidental vocabulary acquisition and implicit/explicit learning. As stated in section 5.8.2 (Implicit VS Incidental learning), incidental vocabulary acquisition can be regarded as non-explicit in so far as it does not involve an explicit learning ‘*intention*’ i.e., the overall goal of the learner is text comprehension and not vocabulary acquisition. With regard to the role of ‘*consciousness*’, however, two complementary viewpoints

can be distinguished. An implicit viewpoint would hold that incidental vocabulary acquisition takes place without awareness, involving implicit learning processes only. However, this viewpoint fails to take into account the fact that learners are active and information processors. An explicit viewpoint would, thus, argue that incidental vocabulary acquisition also involves explicit vocabulary acquisition, i.e., conscious learning processes, and would consequently characterize it as primarily explicit learning. Considering the literature, and according to researchers, the most comprehensive account of implicit/explicit learning processes in incidental vocabulary acquisition available up to now is that of Ellis (1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1997). According to Reider (2003) “Ellis develops a theory for L 1 as well as L 2 vocabulary acquisition, and bases his arguments on an extensive body of experimental psycholinguistic research in the fields of vocabulary and intelligence, implicit memory and global amnesia”.

She explains that Ellis’s claims are that both implicit and explicit learning mechanisms are involved in incidental vocabulary acquisition: while the acquisition of a word’s form, collocations and grammatical class information are said to involve implicit processes, acquiring a word’s semantic properties and mapping word form to meaning are claimed to result from explicit learning processes. Furthermore, Ellis argues for a complete dissociation of implicit, i.e., formal aspects and explicit, i.e., semantic aspects of vocabulary acquisition.

However, other authors investigating the issue appear to build on Ellis’ model and provide comments and reactions to Ellis’s claims rather than presenting original viewpoints of their own. Singleton (1999:153), for instance, criticises Ellis’ notion of dissociated processes, stating that “Even if learning forms and meanings of unknown

words are initiated by different mechanisms, this does not necessarily imply that they are managed separately at all stages”.

Instead, Singleton would argue for a possible interaction between implicit and explicit systems. Another researcher, Börner (1997: 61-64) in turn stresses “The need for a modification and differentiation of Ellis’ model in the sense of integrating different degrees of explicitness and allowing for both explicit and implicit learning of form features”.

Although modifications and refinements have been suggested, the basic validity of Ellis’ theory still appears to be generally acknowledged.

In her paper, Reider (2003) aimed to provide a terminological clarification of the notions under discussion, and a framework for analysing the relationship between incidental vocabulary acquisition and implicit/explicit learning processes. According to her, the vocabulary acquisition model proposed by Ellis constitutes an apt starting point:

*“The case study results correspond with his claims in so far as incidental learning of meaning aspects appears to be characterized by explicit learning, whereas form learning may occur through implicit learning with simple attention to input only. However, the empirical observations only partly match Ellis’ model, clashing in particular with the claim that implicit and explicit learning processes are dissociated and with the simple implicit-explicit dichotomy”.*

To conclude the relationship discussed, there appears to be some confusion in research on language learning with regard to the notions of implicit vs. incidental learning, which is partly due to the ambiguity of the term consciousness.

As regards meaning-learning, a more refined specification of the actual nature of the processes involved would have to be provided. As far as we are concerned, we believe that both implicit / explicit learning are important and should be included in syllabuses in order to improve vocabulary learning. One of the most important weaknesses with our learners is the fact that they rarely read. This fact is attested by the students themselves when asked about it. Therefore, incidental learning can be a good means for them to overcome their vocabulary problems.

## **5.9- Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary**

According to our experience, and as many teachers of F.L reading comprehension will attest, when students are faced with an unfamiliar text in the foreign language, the first challenge seems to be its vocabulary. When the text has many new words, students quickly despair and are discouraged. The connection between vocabulary knowledge and success in reading comprehension tests has been shown in many studies, such as Bossers (1992), Coady (1993), and Grabe and Stoller (1997). When the vocabulary of the text is more familiar, students are more likely to continue with the reading task.

Laufer and Sim (1985a, 1985b) show that F.L learners seem to rely more on word meaning than on knowledge of the subject or syntax. This means that a certain size of vocabulary has to be known to the learners before they approach a text comfortably.

Furthermore, in order to comprehend a text, readers should be familiar with 95 per cent of the words in the text at any level (Hirsch & Nation, 1992). The 'bottom line' for reading English at an academic level is 3,000 words, or 5,000 lexical units, according to Laufer (1992a, 1992b). Therefore it makes sense to assume that F.L teachers should do everything they can, to ensure that their students enlarge the size of their vocabulary.

There are many methods teachers use to teach vocabulary or to encourage vocabulary self-learning by their students. Hulstijn (1992) and Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus (1996) distinguish between incidental and intentional vocabulary learning. They claim that both approaches are present in F.L learning, since students learn vocabulary intentionally as part of course requirements but also gain knowledge of words incidentally through their reading. Still, these authors show that intentional vocabulary learning is more effective for retention. In other words, words learnt intentionally through reading are better retained than words learnt incidentally. This distinction is made about reading, but in fact it could also be applied to other aspects of F.L learning, such as speaking. Yet, the type of learning would be different in each case: learning words through reading would mainly apply to passive understanding and retention of meaning, whereas learning of words through speaking may apply to a correct active use of the words, which is more demanding, but indicates a better knowledge.

Intentional vocabulary learning, by definition, is intended learning of vocabulary. All other activities that deal with vocabulary are categorized as incidental learning. When students want to increase their vocabulary or have to learn new words for a test, they invest the necessary mental effort and memorize the words until they know their meanings. Incidental learning, on the other hand, does not involve a conscious effort to

learn words. This learning "just happens" (but not often). In other words, the number of new words learnt incidentally is relatively small compared to the number of words that can be learned intentionally.

Before continuing, it seems necessary to explain the meaning of "knowing" or "learning" words in a F.L. The usual distinction is between active knowledge (knowing how to use the word) and passive knowledge (understanding the meaning of the word). More sophisticated distinctions among different types of knowledge of words are made by several authors. One type is presented by Paribakht and Wesche (1997:181), who list five different stages or types of knowledge of words:

1. The word is not familiar at all.
2. The word is familiar but its meaning is not known.
3. The meaning is known - the student can supply a correct synonym.
4. The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.
5. The word is used with semantic appropriateness plus grammatical accuracy in a sentence.

On the other hand, Grabe and Stoller (1997:111) suggest another type of categorization of word knowledge in seven stages:

1. Words that are totally unfamiliar.
2. Words where a degree of familiarity can be sensed.
3. Words that must have been in the environment.
4. Words that are familiar and understandable.
5. Words that were familiar and understandable but which presented a need for better, more accurate meanings.

6. Words that had multiple meanings and the most appropriate meaning could be accessed at the time of reading.

Thus it can be seen that 'knowing words' is a subjective concept that depends on the learner's purposes, standards, situation (extensive reading, testing, active usage etc.), teacher or tester's requirements and so on. Still, many researchers claim that incidental vocabulary learning is less efficient in acquiring word knowledge, whatever that is, than intentional learning. Watanabe (1997:288) claims that "Although incidental learning of vocabulary through context is possible, it is not always efficient".

Not all E.F.L teachers are aware of the limited efficiency of incidental vocabulary learning. Many of them, especially those who teach at the university, focus on teaching various kinds of reading skills or practicing comprehension questions, and take for granted that their students will somehow learn word meanings.

### **5.9.1- Dictionary use, Inference and Glossary**

Dictionaries can be used for a wide range of purposes. They are a good source of information and can also be aids to learning.

In order for students to understand the meaning of a new word, they usually have to look up the word in the dictionary, or infer it from context, or from its structure. Hulstijn (1993) found evidence that the amount of dictionary consultation depends on the task. At the same time, he showed stronger evidence that look-up behaviour depends on the relevance of the words. When the subjects in his research deemed words relevant for their reading goal, they looked them up more frequently than words that they considered irrelevant. Hulstijn's subjects were assigned two types of goals in their reading: half of them were required to summarize what they read, and the other half to

answer comprehension questions. The results showed that, contrary to expectations, there was no difference in the look-up behaviour of the two groups. However, in one paragraph, which was relevant to the comprehension questions' group but irrelevant to the summary group, there was a significant difference in look-up behaviour. Subjects in the comprehension questions' group consulted the relevant words much more often than those in the summary group.

The advantage of using the dictionary is that the dictionary use aids retention. Grabe and Stoller (1997:112) describe a successful case study of L2 learning by a highly motivated learner, who used the bilingual dictionary to study vocabulary both intentionally as well as incidentally. The dictionary not only helped the learner get the accurate meanings of words: "The conscious thought involved in deciding whether or not to look up a word was useful for vocabulary retention".

Knight (1994:290) found that students using the dictionary remembered more word meanings than those who had not. In her study, two groups of students, divided according to their level of verbal ability in Spanish (the F.L they were studying) were given Spanish texts in the computer and were asked to read them for a recall test. Half of the students in each group had access to an on-line dictionary and half were told to guess meanings from context. All the students were given as much time as needed for their reading. When they finished reading, they got an unexpected vocabulary test on the new words from the texts. It was found that those who used the dictionary spent more time on their reading. Yet, their results were significantly higher than those who had no access to a dictionary. The students with low verbal ability benefited from the dictionary more than those with high verbal ability. Knight's study shows that incidental



vocabulary learning occurs. Therefore dictionary use should be encouraged, especially for low-level students, who have poorer inferential skills of guessing from context.

As can be seen in Knight's study, a common alternative to dictionary look-up is inference, which has the advantage, according to Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus (1996:331) that "Inferred meanings are remembered slightly better than given meanings".

Yet, according to certain researchers in the field (Bensoussan and Laufer, 1984; Hulstijn, 1992, Laufer, 1997), the problem with inference is that "Readers often make erroneous inferences and as a result learn words incorrectly".

Laufer (1997:25/26) explains why these erroneous inferences take place: some words either have a deceptive morphological structure or multiple meanings, 'synforms' (similar lexical forms), to use Laufer's expression. She divides these 'synforms' into two categories: those which are similar in sound such as '*cute/acute, available/valuable, conceal/cancel, price/prize*' and those which are morphologically similar such as '*economic/economical, industrious/industrial, reduce/deduce/induce*'. Others are idioms or false cognates. She gives examples such as '*sit on the fence, a shot in the dark, miss the boat*', and states that "The learner's assumption is that the meaning of the whole was the sum of the meanings of its parts".

In addition, there are of course words that cannot be inferred or guessed. As a matter of fact, inference is not only an alternative to dictionary look-up: it is also used in the dictionary look-up process, in those cases when the dictionary supplies a list of possibilities with no context or clue that guides the student, and at the same time the context of the word in the text is such that the choice is not easy. Here, too, we can say

that the reader has to use his or her inferential skill to decide which meaning is correct, based on their understanding of context.

Another way students can learn vocabulary is by using a glossary, provided one is available to them, of course. This is the easiest way to understand the meanings of words as they appear in context, since it does not even demand the effort of searching and then choosing the appropriate meaning out of several possible ones, which is required by dictionary look-up. But it is doubtful whether using a glossary leads to retention of word meanings in memory. Hulstijn (1992:113) explains this by proposing “A ‘mental effort’ hypothesis, which predicts that the retention of an inferred word meaning will be higher than the retention of a given word meaning”.

Another problem with glosses is that they have to be especially prepared by the teacher or writer for each text, or found in specific textbooks, contrary to the dictionary look-up method, which can be done independently by the students. Moreover, a student who constantly depends on a glossary in order to be able to read a text is not likely to become an independent reader. He or she will always need a text especially prepared for them. In this light, a glossary can be a means or a stage in the learning process, but the skilled use of the dictionary as well as good inferring skills should be the next step.

To summarize, we may say that the gap between the inferred and the glossed words use different approaches concerning the retention of words (words that the students have dealt with either by using the dictionary or by putting in mental effort to understand them and words that they have not dealt with) as attested by a certain number of researchers (Hulstijn, 1992; Knight, 1994; Grabe and Stoller, 1997) who think that the incidental approach is insufficient. Therefore, intentional teaching should be preferred.

In other words, as shown by the literature, incidental vocabulary learning is not particularly efficient. Therefore, intentional learning should rather be encouraged. This view is shared by Paribakht and Wesche (1997:197), who claim that “Systematic vocabulary instruction, in addition to learning through reading, is a more successful approach”.

In view of the pressing need to help the students enhance their vocabulary, it seems that teachers cannot rely on incidental learning and must teach and use strategies that force the students to learn words.

### **5.9.2- Vocabulary Learning Strategies and Guessing from Context**

In learning a foreign language, learners do generally use strategies in order to overcome the problems they may face while learning. Vocabulary learning strategies are a part of language learning strategies. Learners not only need to know about these strategies, but need to have skill in using them. There have been a number of attempts to develop taxonomy of vocabulary learning strategies, usually as part of a piece of research into learners’ strategy use.

In order to cope with new vocabulary when it occurs and to learn unfamiliar vocabulary, learners have to be able to get information about the words. It is generally agreed that this information may include all of the aspects involved in knowing a word which can come from the word form itself, from the context in which the word occurs, from a reference source, or from drawing on analogies and connections with other languages.

As already stated in section 5.4.5 (Word formation), learners have to be familiar with common word parts which can provide a useful basis for seeing connections between related words as a large proportion of English words are derived from French, Latin and Greek.

A second strategy learners have to be familiar with is the use of context. This strategy provides the various kinds of cue that the learners could draw on, including background knowledge and linguistic cues.

A third strategy learners can use is consulting a reference source. In fact, there are a variety of sources available for gaining information about vocabulary. Among these sources, and as already explained in section 5.9.1, we can name dictionaries of various kinds, glossaries, and lists. As for more spontaneous sources, learners can ask teachers or other learners for information.

The fourth strategy that may be used is using parallels with other languages. This is mainly related to the similarity that may exist between patterns and items that the learner already knows from previous studies of the second language, from the first language, or from other languages. Swan (1997:166) presents several versions of 'equivalence hypothesis' that second language learners might use when drawing on L1 patterns to use in L2. As an example, he states

- *“Foreign words look different from mother tongue words but work in the same way semantically and grammatically”.*
- *“Regard everything as the same unless you have a good reason not to”.*

In addition to all that, and in order to establish vocabulary knowledge, learners should use a set of strategies which involves ways of remembering vocabulary and making it available for use. These relate to the conditions for vocabulary learning already described in section 5.7, mainly noticing, retrieving and generating.

### **5.9.2.1- GUESSING MEANING FROM CONTEXT**

One of the most important strategies investigated and on which an extensive literature (Huckin, Haynes and Coady, 1993; Nation, 1990; Nagy, Herman, and Anderson, 1985) exists is “guessing from context”.

The reading strategies commonly recognized today in both L1 and L2 reading, arguably the most widely studied and encouraged is the guessing of the meaning of unknown words from context. It has a long history of research relative to L1 reading in English, with the great majority of studies demonstrating its value. Justification for applying it to L2 reading has come from cognitive science models of reading and schema theory, which are now widely accepted in ESL/EFL circles. This is especially true of models that emphasize top-down processing, with Goodman's (1967) famous characterization of "reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game" as probably the most influential.

The fact that the guessing strategy is often encouraged is not surprising considering the enormous number of words in the English language, the size of the average adult's working vocabulary, and the number of words one needs to know to

recognize a reasonably high percentage of words on the average written page. Denning and Leben, (1995:3) state that “Webster's Third New International Dictionary, for example, contains 460,000 words, and this number does not include plural forms of nouns, different present and past tenses of verbs, neologisms, and some technical terms”.

In the same context, Nation (1990:11) points out that “Although estimates of the size of the working vocabulary of the average English-speaker vary widely, commonly accepted figures hover around 20,000 words”.

Word frequency counts indicate that this number is more than sufficient for understanding the vocabulary of most non-technical texts, although estimates again vary. However and as already stated in previous sections, Nation's (1990:16) claim that “The 2000 most frequently occurring words account for 87% of the average text, and that 2800 will account for 95%, is widely accepted today”.

Regardless of the exact size of a native speaker's vocabulary, it is clear that the average second or foreign language learner faces a major challenge in trying to match it. Therefore, it is not surprising that the main reason given for encouraging use of the guessing strategy is the perception that it is the only reasonable way for L2 learners to learn enough words to form suitably large active and passive vocabularies.

Considering what is stated above, it is believed that the most important way to improve vocabulary is incidental learning from context especially free reading. This will allow learners to meet the words and therefore learn them.

Nagy, Herman and Anderson (1985:53) argue that “Incidental learning from context during free reading is the major mode of vocabulary acquisition during the school years, and the volume of experience with written language, interacting with reading comprehension ability, is the major determinant of vocabulary growth”.

The notion that we could learn a lot, or most, of our vocabulary through reading, or more particularly comprehensible written input, is now acknowledged within second and foreign language teaching.

In recent years, a lot of research and studies have been carried out in order to establish the relationship between vocabulary learning and reading. For example, we have learned something about how many words we need to know in order to read effectively in a foreign language; the number of meetings it takes to learn a word; and the retention of recently learned words. Roy and Nation (2004:1) state that

*“The most striking examples of the positive effects of extensive reading come from the ‘Book Flood studies’ (Elley, 1991). These involved spending a large proportion of the English programme on extensive reading where learners chose from a wide range of interesting texts. The Fiji book flood study lasted eight months and brought about dramatic improvements in a wide range of language skills including reading comprehension, knowledge of grammatical structures, word recognition, oral repetition, and writing”.*

They point out that the study did not include a measure of vocabulary growth, but it is clear that the improvement on the various measures used could not have occurred without substantial vocabulary growth.

Elley (1991:378-379) saw the success of the 'book flood' being due to five factors.

- 1- Extensive input of meaningful print.
- 2 -Incidental learning.
- 3 -The integration of oral and written activity.
- 4 -Focus on meaning rather than form.
- 5 -High intrinsic motivation.

It is likely that these same factors will be important in an extensive reading programme with vocabulary learning goals.

The most basic question is whether learners can learn from reading at all. Clearly they can, as the millions of learners who have learned English from text books and natural reading can attest. The common-sense notion that we can learn new words from reading has led some to suggest that conducting research to determine if learners can learn from their reading is rather futile. However, There have been quite a number of studies (Pitts, White and Krashen (1989); Day, Omura and Hiramatsu (1991); Horst, Cobb and Meara (1998); Zahar, Cobb and Spada (1999) which have looked at how much vocabulary is learned from reading in a foreign language.

Research trying to ascertain the rate new vocabulary is learned from reading must be answered in specific terms. It is clearly very difficult to ascertain the level of knowledge of all aspects of word knowledge. Vocabulary gains from reading are



assessed by form-meaning type tests such as multiple-choice or translation tests that assess only the first level of word knowledge. The general picture from these studies shows that learners do learn vocabulary from their reading, which is, of course, to be encouraged. On average, however, the returns are somewhat low. It seems that of the items tested about one tenth of the target words will be learned. These data, of course, do not cover any other words that were met in the texts that were not tested. If a word was met only once, there is a much less likelihood that it would be learned compared to one that had been met often. Obviously not all the words in the studies were met the same number of times and each study could have had a different ratio of frequently met items compared to the number of items met only once. Moreover, some of the words would have been concrete and thus easier to learn, whereas others were more abstract and probably harder to learn. Waring and Nation (2004:3) state that “Whether a word has been learned or not depends a lot on what one considers learning to be, and defining the learning of a word is no easy task”.

They explain that we can broadly assume that there are two levels, or stages, of word learning. The form-meaning relationship is the first of these which involves matching the spelling of a word with its meaning. The second one refers to the additional knowledge of a word that a learner will need in order to have full command of it. This deeper knowledge may include its inflections and derivations, the shades of meanings of the word, its collocations or colligations, and the knowledge of its restrictions of use, whether it is formal or informal, pejorative or not, its frequency of use, whether it is more common this is certainly of value, it understates the importance of other types of word knowledge and possibly overstates the importance of the form

meaning relationship type of word learning when conducting incidental reading research.

In addition to that, further meetings with a word will strengthen this knowledge i.e. form-meaning relationship. Similarly, the ability to recognize which words occurred in the text, and which did not, indicates that some familiarity with the form of a word has been achieved. This is an important step in vocabulary learning, and there is some evidence that learning to accurately recognise the form of a word is quite a substantial undertaking. Once a form is familiar, working out what it means is the next obvious step. Thus, in research on incidental learning from reading, the use of several tests is necessary to gain a more accurate picture of learning.

There is no best way to test learning. Each test reveals another facet of information about the kinds of learning that can take place. The number of times we need to meet a word to learn it from reading i.e. guessing a word from context and remembering it are two different things. In studies of incidental vocabulary learning, it is thus important to see what conditions help learning. The subjects in the Saragi, Nation and Meister (1978) study learned 93% of the words that had been presented to them six times or more but words presented to learners fewer than six times were learned only by half their subjects. Jenkins, Stein and Wysocki (1984) discovered that only about 25% of their learners had learned a word after 10 meetings. Nagy, Herman & Anderson (1985) showed that the likelihood that a word would be learned after one meeting was 0.15. Swanborn and Gloppe (1999) in a meta-analysis of 20 incidental learning experiments in L1 generalized that the chances of an unknown word being learned were also about 15%. In other words, only one in seven of the target words were

likely to be learned in one meeting. In a replication experiment, however, Herman, Anderson, Pearson and Nagy (1987) only found a rate of .05 (1 in 20) for authentic texts. Rott (1999) also concluded that six encounters was an adequate number. Other studies (Waring and Takaki, 2003) have shown the value of higher repetition rates. Zahar, Cobb and Spada (2001) found that weaker learners needed more encounters to learn a word than more proficient learners. This seems to fit the maxim that the more you know, the easier it is to learn. The exact rate of this would need to be identified empirically as well.

Clearly, from a pedagogical point of view, this implies that an effective reading programme which has included vocabulary learning as one of its goals must provide repeated encounters with the same words over reasonably short time periods.

### **5.10- The Foreign Language/ L2 Mental Lexicon**

One of the most important fields investigated concerning foreign language/ L2 learning is the mental lexicon. An individual may have lexical knowledge relative not just to one language but to a given number of languages. The question that has, in fact, been investigated is “How do we acquire, organise, and process our lexical knowledge when more than one language is involved?”. From that question, two controversial dimensions appear, both of which have to do with the relationship between the L2 mental lexicon and the L1 mental lexicon. On the other hand, the view is concerned with the receptive roles of form and meaning in the L2 lexicon considered qualitatively different from their roles in the L1 mental lexicon. Moreover, it examines the question

of whether the L.1 mental lexicon and the L.2 mental lexicon develop and / or function separately or in an integrated manner.

The question of the receptive roles of form and meaning in the acquisition and processing of L.2 lexis has been a prominent theme of recent debate.

Laufer (1989a:17) considers that “While in the native’s speaker mental lexicon there are strong semantic links between the words, the connections between words in additional languages are primarily phonological”.

According to her, the basis of the operations of the L.2 lexicon is phonological rather than semantic. This idea is also shared by a number of researchers (R. Carter, 1987; Gass and Selinker, 1994; Harley, 1995b) who support the ‘phonological’ view of L.2 lexical operations.

Another important work was carried by Meara (1984b:233) who considers that “The L2 mental lexicon is quite different from that of the native speaker”.

Meara carried a test with native speakers of English based on word association founded on the use of very common L.2 items as stimulus. The analogy provoked guesses based on connections with the sound of known words. An example of the test is as follows:

Table 2: *Associations made by native English speakers to French stimulus words. All these associations illustrate some sort of phonological or orthographic confusion (Meara, 1984b:233).*

<b>Stimulus</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Source of confusion</b>
béton	Animal	Bête
béton	Stupide	Bête
béton	Orchestre	Baton
béton	Normandie	Breton
naguère	Eau	Nager
semelle	Odeur	Smell
émail	Letter	Mail

A further example, Hatch and Brown (1995:378) report some clear examples of such misidentification from an L.2-L.1 translation task where the L.2 was English and the L.1s were Spanish and Japanese.

Table 3: Extracted from Hatch and Brown, (1995:379), Table 15.1

<b>English stimulus</b>	<b>L.1 translation</b>	<b>Misidentification</b>
Happened	Felices (Sp.)	Happy
Worth	Palabra (Sp.)	Word
Still	Estilo (Sp.)	Style
Each	Dono (Jap.)	Which
Incurred	Fukumu (Jap.)	Include
explosion	Setsumei (Jap.)	Explanation

In view of the two tables above, we may acknowledge that the misinterpretation is really related to orthographic or phonological confusions as far as the relation form and meaning is concerned.

Other researchers dealt with the L2 vocabulary learning difficulties presented by L2 internal factors. Hulstijn and Tangelder (1991, 1993) investigated the extent to which English word pairs similar in form and / or meaning were confused by learners of English. On the other hand, Laufer (1990b, 1991a) investigated lexical confusions based on formal similarities.

As far as Hulstijn and Tangelder are concerned, three experiments were carried out. Thirty-six English word pairs were used in these experiments, 12 involving similarity of form alone (F+M-) (e.g., *adulthood*, *adultery*), 12 involving similarity of meaning alone (F-M+) (e.g., *medium*, *moderate*), and 12 involving similarity of form and meaning (F+M+) (e.g., *historic*, *historical*). In the first experiment, a cued recall task, one member of the pair had to be written into a blank situated in a context (one or

two sentences), the first letter of the word and its grammatical class being supplied. The format of the test is illustrated by the following pair of test items:

- A- Don't underestimate these small revolutionary groups. What we are talking about was a h.....(A[for adjective] change and these people played a major part in it. (important events with great influence over the years).
- B- At first people believed the newly discovered papers, allegedly written by Chaucer, false but later they proved to be autographs and manuscripts of h.....(A[for adjective] interest. (concerned with events of the past).

Four types of responses were possible (1) a correct response (e.g., *historic* in A); (2) an incorrect response involving the other item in the pair (e.g., *historical* in A); (3) an incorrect response with no connection to the correct response (e.g., *huge* in A); and (4) no response.

The task was performed by two groups of advanced (university level) learners of English and also by a group of English native speakers. For both the advanced learners and the native speakers, the incidence of interference in the F+M- condition was at a significantly lower level than in the F+M+ condition, and interference in the F+M+ condition was at a significantly lower level than in the F-M+ condition.

The other two experiments deployed the same word pairs and test sentences as the first, but set recognition tasks where target words had to be selected from a number of alternatives. The second experiment, which was conducted with the same two groups of advanced learners who were involved in the first experiment, provided a choice of three

possibilities for each test slot. One of these alternatives was the correct member of one of the 36 word pairs in question, the second was its 'counterpart'- the other member of the pair in question- and the third was related to the word pair concerned in different ways depending on the experimental condition, i.e., formally and semantically in the F+M+ condition, formally but not semantically in the F+M- condition, and semantically but not formally in the F-M+ condition. The test format for this second experiment is illustrated by the examples below:

A- Don't underestimate these small revolutionary groups. What we are talking about was a ..... change and these people played a major part in it.

A-historiated

B- historic

C- historical

B- At first people believed the newly discovered papers, allegedly written by Chaucer, false but later they proved to be autographs and manuscripts of h.....interest.

A-historiated

B- historic

C- historical



The outcome of the experiment was that ‘counterparts’ were chosen significantly less frequently in the F+M- condition than in the F-M+ condition, and significantly less frequently in the F-M+ condition than in the F+M+ condition.

These results coincide with the results of the first experiment in so far as purely phonological interference (F+M-) occurred least often in both, but there is a difference between the two experiments in respect of relative amounts of interference in the F-M+ and F-M+ conditions.

The design of the third experimental task differed from the second only to the extent that it (1) provided a choice of just two alternatives (the correct target word and the other member of its pair) and (2) required subjects to indicate how certain they were of their choice in each instance. Thus:

A- Don't underestimate these small revolutionary groups. What we are talking about was a ..... change and these people played a major part in it.

- a- historic
- b- historical

How certain are you about your choice?

- A- very certain
- B- reasonably certain
- C- not so certain

B- At first people believed the newly discovered papers, allegedly written by Chaucer, false but later they proved to be autographs and manuscripts of h.....interest.

a- historic

b- historical

How certain are you about your choice?

A- very certain

B- reasonably certain

C- not so certain

In this case, the test was administered to some intermediate learners (secondary-school pupils in the fifth year) as well as to advanced learners. A group of native speakers also took this version of the multiple choice test. The results show a striking difference in error patterns across conditions between intermediate learners on the one hand and advanced learners and native speakers on the other. For the advanced learners and the native speakers, it was again the F+M- condition that generated the lowest level of interference, while for the intermediate learners, all three conditions produced roughly similar amounts of confusion. There was also a difference in degrees of certainty across conditions: whereas advanced learners and native speakers felt 'not so certain' about their responses more often in the F+M+ condition than in the two others, the intermediate learners felt 'not so certain' in all conditions equally often. This latter difference was not, however, statistically significant.

To summarize, Hulstijn and Tangelder found that meaning similarity caused more interference than form similarity for native speakers of English and for advanced

learners of English as an L2 but not for intermediate learners of English as an L2. They argue that this difference can be explained in terms of the number of English words that had been integrated into the lexicons of the respective groups of learners and in terms of the extent of integration of particular items. Their view is that the task of acquiring the semantic characteristics of a word takes much longer than acquiring its formal characteristics; this, according to them, accounts for the fact that native speakers and advanced L2 learners continue to be susceptible to semantic interference while being less prone to formal confusion. In fact, for them, semantic integration is the more challenging component of the acquisition of any word in any language, and in inferring that until semantic integration is properly under way, the learner is bound to rely heavily on formal cues when dealing with the item in question.

Laufer (1990a, 1991b, 1993-1994, 1997) has reviewed a number of studies investigating a whole range of problems inherent in the nature of target words themselves. “Her discussion of such ‘intra-lexical’ difficulties, as she terms them, ranges over both the formal realm and the area of meaning”.

Formal intra-lexical difficulty factors explored by her include pronounceability, length, grammatical category and morphological complexity.

In relation to pronounceability, she points out that language learners are often observed to avoid words that they find difficult to pronounce (Levenston, 1979), and she argues that such difficulty also affects comprehension. Laufer bases this conclusion on a series of experiments (Gibson and Levin, 1975) in which subjects of different backgrounds were tested on their pronunciation and also their perception of a range of pseudo-words. The results of these experiments showed that those words which were

easier to pronounce were also more accurately perceived. Such a result indicates, according to her, that pronounceability is a facilitation factor in the absence of meaning.

With regards to word length, Rodgers (1969) did not find length to be a significant variable in his experiment. Stock (1976) found that English speaking learners of Hebrew memorized one-syllable words more easily than two-syllable words, but also found that three-syllable words had a higher retention rate than one-syllable words. In the light of these somewhat divergent findings, there are two major methodological problems which may help to account for the evidence relating to word length:

1- Word length can be variously calculated- in phonemes, graphemes, syllables or morphemes.

2- It is difficult to disentangle length from other variables.

The third difficulty raised by Laufer relates to the grammatical category. The question of whether some L2 parts of speech are more difficult to learn than others is also not easy to answer in the light of the available evidence. Rodgers (1969) subjects found nouns and adjectives more readily learnable than verbs and adverbs. Philips' (1981) subjects apparently had fewer problems learning nouns than learning verbs or adjectives. Laufer points out that some of these findings can be accounted for in terms of the degree of morphological difficulty.

As far as morphological complexity is concerned, Laufer cites Stock's (1976) observation that among the most conspicuous problems of English speaking learners of Hebrew are the inflectional paradigms of verbs, nouns and adjectives. She also refers to derivational complexity noting, for example, indications from her own work (Benoussan and Laufer, 1984; Laufer and Benoussan, 1982) that L2 learners often

misinterpret combinations of morphemes by virtue of assimilating them to what look to them like similar usages and combinations- equating *outline* with *out of the line*, *falsities* with *falling cities*.

Laufer come to the conclusion that, on the one hand, there is clearly a cross-linguistic dimension to the morphological problems posed by an L2. She states that a major component of coming to grips with the morphology of an L2 is the processing of the similarities and differences between the target system and the L1 system. On the other hand, she states that problems with morphology also characterize L1 acquisition. She explains that by a large scale study of the mastery of Dutch derivational morphology by L1 acquirers of Dutch between 7 and 17 where Smedts (1988) found that the 7-year-olds were able to demonstrate knowledge of just 14% of the derivational relationships tested and that even the 17-year-olds knew no more than 66% of the derivational relationships in question.

Another important aspect of vocabulary relating to multiple meaning as an impediment to L2 vocabulary learning was studied by Benoussan and Laufer (1984). Their subjects were Hebrew learners of English as an L2 who failed to realize that the most frequent and familiar meanings of '*since, while, and abstract*' did not fit the context of the passage in which the words occurred, where they had the meaning of, respectively, '*because, in spite of the fact that, and summary*'. They noted that in production, these subjects preferred to express such concepts using the expression '*because, in spite of the fact that, and summary*' rather to deploy polysemous words.

According to them, the cross-linguistic factor obviously plays a role in such cases, L1-L2 differences in the range of meanings associated with individual items irritating any difficulties arising from polysemy itself.

Other studies concerned with lexical difficulties arising from semantic opacity with certain idiomatic and metaphorical usages of words have been carried out by Dagut and Laufer (1984) and Kellerman (1978). Dagut and Laufer looked at Hebrew speakers' avoidance patterns in respect of phrasal verbs in English. They report that the most frequently avoided items were phrasal verbs characterized by metaphorical extension and by the semantic fusion of the individual components of the verb- *let down*, *show off*, *put up with*, and so on. Kellerman, for his part, found that Dutch learners of English were disposed to translate literally and deploy in English translation equivalents of Dutch expressions which involved what they perceived as the core meanings of the participating lexis.

In view of the discussion above, and considering the different studies carried, we can say that in relation to lexical aspects of L2 acquisition and use, cross-linguistic influence is particularly noticeable, affecting both formal and semantic aspects of the words involved. Learners constantly seek to make connections between new words they encounter in their target language and languages they already know.

## 5.11- A Psychological Model of Vocabulary Acquisition in L2

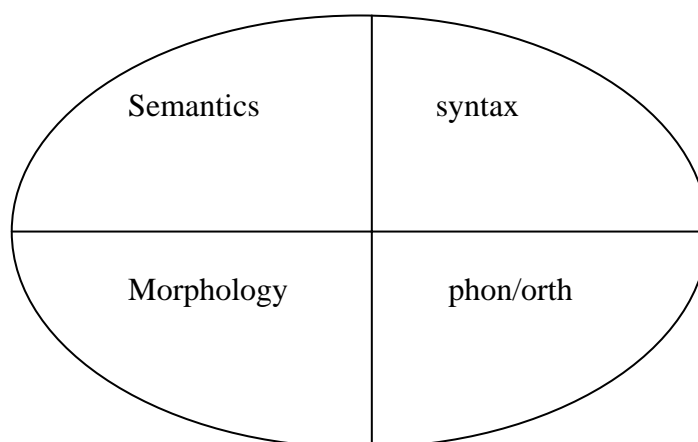
### 5.11.1-The internal Structure of the Lexical Entries

Before describing lexical representation in a second language, it is necessary to see what lexical representation is like in the first language. According to literature, a lexical entry in L1 is generally considered to contain semantic, syntactic, morphological and formal (phonological and orthographic) specifications about a lexical item. These different types of information are believed to be represented in the two components that make up a lexical entry: the lemma and the lexeme.

Jiang (2000:48) explains the idea stating that “The lemma contains semantic and syntactic information about a word, for example, word meaning and part of speech, and the lexeme contains morphological and formal information, for example, different morphological variants of a word, spelling, and pronunciation”.

The following figure provides a graphic description of a lexical entry.

Figure1 : The internal structure of the lexical entry adapted from Levelt 1989



These different types of information are highly integrated within each entry so that once the entry is opened, all the information automatically becomes available. According to certain studies (Van Orden, 1987; Perfitti, 1988), it was found that phonological information is automatically activated in visual word recognition, even in languages such as Chinese where phonological information is unlikely to assist visual word recognition.

However, and as far as foreign language learning is concerned, the first constraint is the poverty of input in terms of both quality and quantity. Therefore, it is extremely difficult for a foreign language learner to extract and create semantic, syntactic, and morphological specifications about a word and integrate such information into the lexical entry of that word. The second constraint is the presence of an established conceptual/semantic system with an L1 system closely associated with it. Adult learners tend to rely on this system in learning new words in the foreign language.

### **5.11.2- Word Choice and Usage Errors in L2 Production**

Lexical errors due to L1 interference often appear in the form of incorrect word choice as the following examples will demonstrate (Jiang, 2000:61)

- 1- I go to the oven (bakery) in the morning to buy bread.
- 2- My father is a long (tall), thin man.
- 3- There are many works (jobs) in the city.(Zughloul, 1991)
- 4- To count (take) someone's pulse (Biskup, 1992).



These errors are often categorized as interference errors in the L2 literature. Indeed, L1 interference has been found to be a major cause of lexical errors in L2/ foreign language production. In a study by Zughloul (1991), for example, more than 73 per cent of the 691 lexical errors found in the written texts of 128 university ESL students can be traced to the interference from L1. These interference errors in word choice suggest that L2 words are selected on the basis of the semantic information of their L1 translations.

### **5.11.3- Morphological Errors in L2 Production**

As pointed out earlier, due to the lack of morphological specifications within the lexical entry, the generation of morphologically appropriate forms becomes a conscious process, and when attentional resources are available, morphological errors occur.

According to Jiang (2000:62), “Morphological errors are abundant in the speech and written texts of ESL users even advanced users”.

To illustrate that, he gives the following examples:

- 1- We become (became) close friend (friends).
- 2- He see (saw) one car from back of his bike (Long, 1997).
- 3- TV is one of the form (forms) of media (Aaronson and Ferres, 1987).

He explains that when morphological specifications are not an integral part of the lexical entry, morphologically related words may be represented individually with connections built among them. He states that “As the root form is often the focus of

instruction when a word is first introduced, what is represented in lexical entry is often the root form such as ‘leave’, which is linked to its morphologically related words ‘leaves, left, leaving’”.

He explains that the links are directional, i.e. from a root form such as *leave* to inflected forms such as *leaves* and *left*, rather than the reverse. According to him, morphological errors take the form of using an incorrect root form when an inflected form is required.

More convincing support is presented in a study by Mukkatesh (1986), a situation in which an inflected form is introduced as a basic form in language teaching. In such a situation, an opposite pattern would occur, i.e. more errors would occur in which inflected forms were incorrectly adopted in situations where, according to him, an inflected form was required. Mukkatesh (1986:191) states that “The root form of Arabic verbs is generally translated by Arab teachers into the English simple past (for example, ‘kataba = wrote’)”.

He points out that the most frequent error in his Arabic students of English involved the incorrect use of the simple past tense when the simple present should be used.

According to our experience, such a situation is frequent with our students. What is important to note is the fact that students are able to self correct the errors made when the errors are pointed out to them. They are even able to state the rule regarding the inflection if they are asked to. This works both in production and reception. In the test,

we plant morphological forms which need to be taken account of for correct interpretation of a text.

In view of the literature, the occurrence of such grammatical errors while relevant rules are known to the learner provides an argument for the distinction between lexical information represented within the lexical entry and that outside the lexical entry. This suggests that much of the lexical information obtained by means of other than contextualized extraction is represented outside the lexical entry and thus is part of the attentional rather than automatic process.

## **5.12- Conclusion**

One basic requirement for any work on vocabulary is good quality information on the units that we are dealing with. Researchers come to the conclusion through the evidence highlighted by the studies carried that L1 and L2 lexis may be separately stored, but that the two systems are in communication, and that the relationship between a given L2 word and a given L1 word in the mental lexicon will vary from individual to individual, and will depend on the degree to which resemblances are perceived between the L2 item and the L1 item in question. Other findings shed light on, respectively, form and meaning and cross-linguistic aspects of the mental lexicon. The evidence presented suggests that learners made frequent use of connections between the two lexicons, which pointed to an essential similarity between L2 lexicon and L1 lexicon.

Another important aspect that was revealed is related to the fact that L2 learners exhibit different strategies in response to lexical problems and that these strategies are closely linked to the way in which individuals approach the task of learning.

In view of what has been presented through this chapter, we will try to consider certain of the aspects rose as far as foreign language learning and teaching are concerned and check whether these findings fit our students.

The test we are going to present in the next chapter has the ambition to shed light on certain of the difficulties our students face when learning English, with specific reference to reading, and to highlight the different strategies used by these students to understand vocabulary. Through the literature on vocabulary learning, researchers have investigated sensitivity to syntactic structure; they have shown that, rather than using the syntactic and semantic cues in a text to integrate the meanings of the individual words, poor comprehenders seem to treat each word separately, and fail to identify its function. In addition to that, we will check how our students will deal with complex lexical units which are idiomatic to some degree. Translation, which we believe is one of the most important strategy used by our learners, will also be investigated. The results obtained will allow us to relate this to the existing literature and the different findings reached, and will obviously be taken into account in order to improve the learning and the teaching situation prevailing.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE TEST- PART ONE

### IDENTIFYING LEXICAL PATTERNS.

#### 6.1- Introduction

In the course of our research, we carried out a test to find out about the different problems encountered by advanced students in English ( B1 level on the Council of Europe global scale )<sup>7</sup> of the Department of Foreign Languages when learning English, with specific reference to reading and to highlight the different strategies used by these students to understand vocabulary. We have hypothesized that vocabulary is the most important aspect as far as the reading skill is concerned and which students will have to tackle and develop to an acceptable level in order to be able to use English efficiently in their studies. We have also hypothesized that what most impedes reading comprehension is their reading speed. The analysis of the students' test may enable us to confirm these hypotheses.

The setting where the test was held is Constantine Mentouri University, Faculty of Letters and Languages, Department of Foreign Languages. The aim of the test is to highlight the vocabulary strategies used by 1<sup>st</sup> year L.M.D students to grasp information given in written form, such as short texts, and to determine their areas of difficulty as far as vocabulary is concerned. However, before moving to that, one has first to have more background knowledge of the place of English in the Algerian educational system

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<sup>7</sup> The Council of Europe Global Scale is divided into three different classifications (Proficient User, Independent User, and Basic User). Each of these classification is respectively divided into two levels (C2, C1; B2, B1; and A2, A1) taking into account the four language skills. According to the criteria of classification, we consider that our students belong to the B1 Independent User Level.

in addition to a background knowledge of students and their experience with the English language i.e. how many years of English?, and how many hours instruction?

## **6.2- Overview of the Place of English in the Algerian Educational System**

The Algerian society is multilingual. In addition to the mother tongue, which consists of a variety of Arabic and Berber dialects, students study classical Arabic when they start their education at the age of six. Concerning French, it has long been considered a second language in Algeria. Nowadays, although it has the status of a foreign language, it is still used, to a certain extent, in everyday life as a medium of communication. English, on the other hand, is regarded as a true foreign language. It is confined to the classroom.

Nowadays, English plays a vital role in the Algerian educational system. This importance is due to the fact that the prominence of English as a means of communication is no longer to be proved. In addition to that, English is the tool that gives access to the scientific and technological development. It is now the most important foreign language taught in Algeria.

In the educational system, the teaching of foreign languages starts in the fourth year Fundamental (4e A.F.)<sup>8</sup> where pupils have the choice between English and French.<sup>9</sup> At secondary school level, the stream of study, i.e., literary, scientific, management, and technological, will determine the importance, and thus the time

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<sup>8</sup> A.F.: Année Fondamentale (educational system prevailing when we started or research).

<sup>9</sup> This will be explained in 6.2.2."The Fundamental School", p.229.

allocated to English. At the tertiary level, English is taught as a module in the majority of the institutes, and as a degree in the institute of Foreign languages.

### **6.2.1. The Educational System**

After Algeria became independent in 1962, and with the introduction of reforms in the educational system (1970's), English started challenging French, which replaced Arabic during the period of colonization. During the first decade after independence, the reforms concerned the contents of the courses rather than the organisation of the school itself, inherited from the French school organisation: six years of primary school, four years of intermediate school, and three years of secondary school. In the 1980's, however, the Algerian authorities introduced a new educational system: the Fundamental school. This new system has replaced the former primary and intermediate schools and lasts nine years. In this new system, the teaching of foreign languages, mainly English, is given great importance.

### **6.2.2. The Fundamental School**

In the Fundamental school, the pupils are aged between six and fifteen. On the 6th September 1993, the Ministry of Education published a decree (029/M.D/93) (1993 reforms)<sup>10</sup> which gave pupils' parents the right to choose the foreign language, French or English, for their children, to be studied between the fourth and the eighth year. Whatever language is chosen as a foreign language, in the eighth and ninth year, pupils study both languages. This means that the pupils will study English or French for four

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<sup>10</sup> Official Journal of the Algerian Republic, 1993, p.7.

years and both languages for two years. Concerning the time allocated to English, the number of hours per week is represented in the table below.

**Table 4: Time Allocated to English in the Fundamental School.**

<b>Year of study</b>	<b>Number of Hours per Week.</b>
4e A.F	5
5e A.F.	5
6e A.F.	5
7e A.F.	5
8e A.F.	4
9e A.F.	6

### **6.2.3. The Secondary School**

At secondary school level, the pupils are aged between 15 and 18. The Ministry of Education officials say that “*pupils are supposed to have attended at least 200 hours of foreign language classes.*”<sup>11</sup> According to the stream and the year of study, English is allotted the following time per week.

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<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education, (1993) Syllabus for English: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Years, all streams, p.7.



**Table 5: Time Allocated to English in  
the Secondary School**

Streams		Years of study		
		1 A.S <sup>12</sup>	2 A.S	3 A.S
<b>Literary</b>	Arabic language and literature	3	4	4
	Human and Islamic Sciences	3	3	3
	Arabic and foreign languages	3	3	3
<b>Scientific</b>	Natural Sciences	2	3	3
	Technology	2	3	3
	Exact Sciences	2	3	3
<b>Management</b>	Economy & Management	2	3	3
<b>Technical</b>	Mechanics	2	2	2
	Electrical	2	2	2
	Chemistry	2	2	2
	Civil Engineering	2	2	2

#### **6.2.4. Concluding Remarks on Level of English**

As already stated above, we may conclude that as regards the time allocated to English, our pupils are supposed to have had enough exposure to English to enable them to cope with English lectures at university level, and that their background knowledge in English is supposed to be acceptable. In spite of that, however, the level remains low. This matter will be analysed in this chapter, where we will investigate the vocabulary

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<sup>12</sup> A.S.: Année Secondaire

strategies used by first year L.M.D students who study English at Constantine University.

### **6.3- Administration of the Test**

The test annexed was handed out to a sample of 109 first year L.M.D students in the Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of Letters and Languages at the University of Constantine out of a population of four hundred and nineteen (419) students divided into thirteen (13) groups of thirty two (32) / thirty three (33) students. Fourteen (14) male participants and ninety five (95) female took part in the test. The participants were chosen randomly according to Fisher's table. All the tests were completed in the presence of the author to make sure that students understood the questions and answered them appropriately.

According to our experience in this department, we hypothesize that:

- 1- The lack of mastery of vocabulary strategies would result in poor comprehension.
- 2- The lack of mastery of syntactic and semantic cues would impair comprehension.
- 3- The lack of mastery of textual reference would result in poor comprehension.
- 4- Students tend to read word by word and use translation as a strategy for understanding English vocabulary.

The test is composed of four different exercises where students may adopt different strategies namely Deducing Meaning from Context (exercise N° 1), Matching (exercise N° 2), Rephrasing (exercise N° 3), and finally Inference (exercise N° 4). The contents of the test are presented in each section of the concerned chapters (4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7).

## **6.4- Exercise N°1: Words in Context**

### **6.4.1- Introduction**

To gain an idea on the performance of our students, we analyse and comment on the answers to exercise N° 1 (Words in context) provided by the students and highlight the areas of difficulty as far as vocabulary and reading comprehension are concerned.

The first exercise deals with words in context. We notice that the words proposed (*head, foot, finger, hand, chair, room, door, and book*) are all common, and that students are supposed to know all of them. However, will they be able to determine the appropriate meaning of the word if it changes function?

Most of the time, students have difficulties to choose the right word that goes with the meaning expressed by the sentence. This may also be related to the lack of cultural background of the language being learned. In this exercise, the students have to identify which words go together. They must think of these words as one idea, and deduce the meaning and grammatical function from context. Students may possibly “know” all the individual words in a sentence, but may not understand the meaning of what they are reading. Most of the time, this is due to the fact that a word may have a different meaning according to the context and syntactic role it plays. Moreover, students will have to determine the function of the word in the sentence. The aim is to check students’ awareness of the function of words and the context of use.

EXERCISE N° 1								
WORDS IN CONTEXT								
	S.1	S.2	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.6	S.7	S.8
R.	10	41	23	69	10	05	54	11
W.	99	68	86	40	99	104	55	98

This table represents the answers provided by the students who participated in the test (109). R stands for the right answers and W. the wrong.

**EXERCISE N° 1.**

**Look at the simple words below.**

Head, Foot, Finger, Hand, Chair, Room, Door, Book.

All of them have more than one meaning. For example:

What's your **head** of department like? (= your boss)

When we last saw them, they were **heading** for the coast. (= going there)

Dinner there will cost you £ 50 a **head**. (= for each person)

**I-Use one of the words on the list to fill the gap in each sentence.**

Head, Foot, Finger, Hand, Chair, Room, Door, Book.

- 1- There isn't enough ..... for 12 students in there.
- 2- Please don't ..... the fruit unless you're going to buy some.
- 3- He walked out of the café and left me ..... the bill.
- 4- Could you ..... me those papers, please?
- 5- We've asked Professor PLUM to .....the meeting.
- 6- You'll have to ..... early or there'll be no tickets left.
- 7- I don't much like the people who live next .....to me.
- 8- With your .....for figures, you ought to be an accountant.

## 6.4.2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°1.

1-There isn't enough ..... for 12 students in there.

**Table 6: Exercise N° 1- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 1**

There isn't enough <b>room</b> for students in there.						
<b>R</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>00</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>09.17</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>90.82</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>00</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Chair					<b>63</b>	<b>57.79</b>
Book					<b>32</b>	<b>29.35</b>
Finger					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>
Hand					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

### 6.4.2.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 1:

The answer expected in this sentence is “There isn't enough **room** for twelve students in here”. In this sentence, the majority of the students answered "*chair*" (63) representing 57.79 % instead of “*room*” which is the right answer. The second answer that was used is the word "*book*" (32) representing 29.35 %. Finally, two other students opted for other answers which are “*finger*” and “*hand*” (01 answer for each representing 00.91 %).

### 6.4.2.2- COMMENTS:

The two first answers may be explained by the environmental situation of students. The first answer may be justified by the fact that there are not always enough “**chairs**” in the classrooms. Most of the time, students are asked to bring a chair from

another classroom. The same comment may be made concerning the second answer. Students are always complaining about the lack of “**books**”. The total number of the two answers combined is 95 out of 109 representing 87.15 %. This may explain the fact that only 10 students (09.17 %) managed to find the right answer. Students do not take into account the syntactic relation singular / plural or rather do not respond to syntactic clues because the majority of them spelled “*chair*” with “s” (plural form) instead of “*chair*” (singular form). Here, we can say that the choice of the answer may be influenced by many factors among which the environment where the students study, in addition to the syntactic relation singular / plural which shows students’ lack of awareness about what they read or the lack of mastery of morphological rules i.e. the application of the inflectional rule of the English plural “*chair / chairs*”. This inflectional rule yields variant forms of the same word (lexeme). In that respect, researchers posit that metacognition plays an important role in reading. Metacognition has been defined as “*having knowledge and having understanding, control over, and appropriate use of the language*” (Tei and Steward, 1985:49). Thus, it involves both the conscious awareness and the conscious control of one’s learning. Research suggests that learners must first become aware of their own characteristics such as background knowledge, interest, skills and deficiencies before becoming successful students.

### 6.4.3- Students Answers to Sentence N°2.

2-Please don't ..... the fruit unless you're going to buy some.

**Table 9: Exercise N° 1- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 2**

Please, don't <b>finger</b> the fruit unless you're going to buy some.						
<b>R</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>05</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>37.61</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>57.79</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Foot					<b>22</b>	<b>20.18</b>
Hand					<b>14</b>	<b>12.84</b>
Door					<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
Book					<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
Chair					<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
Head					<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
Room					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>

#### 6.4.3.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 2:

In this sentence, the answer expected is “Please don't **finger** the fruit unless you are going to buy some”. Only 41 students (37.61 %) out of 109 managed to find the right answer. 14 other students representing (12.84 %) answered "*hand*"; other students proposed other answers such as "*door*" (09 students representing 08.25 %), "*book*" , "*chair*", and "*head*" (05 students representing 04.58 % for each proposal), and finally "*room*" with 03 answers representing 02.75 %. The number of students who failed is 63 representing 57.79 % and 05 students (04.58 %) did not answer the question. Among the 63 students who failed, 22 (20.18 %) answered "*foot*", with 03 students spelling "*foot*" with "d" which gives "*food*".

#### 6.4.3.2-COMMENTS:

The probable explanation for this latter answer is at the phonological level "t / d" which influenced the students and made them associate the word "fruit" with "food". This may be related to the association of "finger" with "hand" and obviously the act of touching. The other conclusion that can be drawn from students' answers is that they probably do not know the verb "to finger"; they obviously know the noun. In addition to that, we can also add the differences that exist between the two linguistic systems (English / Arabic) as already stated in Chapter 2, page 33. One other possible explanation is at the morpho-syntactic level. By means of the rules of transformation, Arabic can compose words starting from the root of the verbs: thus, from "kataba" (to write), one obtains "el-katib" (the writer), "el-maktab" (the office), "el-maktaba" (the library or the bookshop). Students may have probably translated the word "finger" into Arabic which gives "sob oun", but which does not work in that situation. The most appropriate word that goes with the context (act of touching) is rather the verb "lamassa" (to touch); applying the morpho-syntactic rules, the derived noun will be "lamss". So, students may have been influenced in their choice by the fact that there is no equivalent word for "to finger" in Arabic and therefore opted for another choice. We may say that the failure may be justified by the Arabic morpho-syntactic rules (transfer) applied to the target language. As we have just seen, the morpho-syntactic differences are significant; they constitute probably large difficulties for the learner of classical Arabic, creating a source of confusion and conflicts in the procedures of acquisition. Concerning the remaining answers, they are not really significant.



### 6.4.4- Students' Answers to Sentence N°3.

3- He walked out of the café and left me to ..... the bill.

**Table 10: Exercise N° 1- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 3**

He walked out of the café and left me to <b>foot</b> the bill.						
<b>R</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>09</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>21.10</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>70.64</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>08.25</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Door					<b>20</b>	<b>18.34</b>
Head					<b>15</b>	<b>13.76</b>
Finger					<b>13</b>	<b>11.92</b>
Chair					<b>10</b>	<b>09.17</b>
Hand					<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
Room					<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
Book					<b>04</b>	<b>03.66</b>

#### 6.4.4.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 3:

The expected answer here is “He walked out of the cafe and left me to **foot** the bill”. In this sentence, only 23 students (21.10 %) managed to find the right answer. The number of students who failed is 77 representing 70.64 % and among which 20 students (18.34 %) answered "*door*". 15 other students (13.76 %) used "*head*" as an answer and 13 others representing (11.92 %) used "*finger*". The other answers suggested are as follows: chair received 10 answers representing 09.17 %, "*hand*" received 9 answers representing 08.25 %, and "*book*" received 4 ones representing 03.66 %. It is to be noted that 9 students (08.25 %) did not answer the question.

#### 6.4.4.2- COMMENTS:

The set phrase “*to foot the bill*” means “*to pay for something, especially something expensive that you do not want to pay for*”. Concerning the probable explanations to justify students’ answers, we may say that the choice of “*door*” may be explained by the association of the words that constitute the sentence namely “*walk out*”, “*café*”, and “*door*”. Concerning the choice of “*head*” and “*finger*”, these answers may be explained by a semantic derivation at a combinatory level “*foot*”, “*head*”, and “*finger*” associated to the “*human body*”. This can be considered as a case of “hyponymy” which is a relationship existing between specific and general lexical items. In structural semantics, words do not exist in isolation: their meanings are defined through the sense relations they have with other words. In this case, we can consider that “*human body*” is the “*super-ordinate term*” and that “*foot*”, “*head*” and “*finger*” are “*basic level terms*”. The choice of “*chair*”, on the other hand, may be explained by the fact that the students imagined the situation in a cafe where one of the friends left the cafe without putting back the “*chair*” in the right place and, therefore, his friend has done it for him. What can be drawn from students’ answers is the fact that they probably do not know the expression “*to foot the bill*” which reflects the lack of cultural background. Arabic learners of English will never associate the word “*foot*” with the act of paying; they may associate it with an act that may be achieved by using “*the foot*” but not with something else. As already stated in Chapter 2, page 78, reading is a dynamic process in which the text elements interact with other factors outside the text; in this case, most particularly with the reader’s knowledge of the experiential content of the text. Steffensen (1981:71) suggests that “*what, at first sight, is a linguistic problem, may in fact be a problem of background knowledge.*” This suggests

that there is a need to relate the language being taught to the context which carries it. Knowledge of cultural values, customs, and assumptions is clearly a kind of “background knowledge” and, as such, is knowledge that the reader may or may not bring to the task of interpreting the text; but often the problem lies in recognizing the cultural significance of particular words.

Another possible way to try to grasp the meaning of an expression is through the use of “*compositionality*”. According to M. Gasser (2003), the Principle of Compositionality is that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its constituent expressions and the rules used to combine them. It is frequently taken to mean that every operation of the syntax should be associated with an operation of the semantics that acts on the meanings of the constituents combined by the syntactic operation. However, in the case of the expression “*to foot the bill*”, our students seem not to be aware of that because if they did, taking into consideration the place where the action happens (“*the café*”, context of situation) in addition to the fact that “*my friend left*”, they may have probably reached the right meaning of the expression because the normal rule states that “*after finishing our drinks, we have to pay*”. We can therefore deduce that there is a non-compositionality in this case because the word “*foot*” only has this meaning in this set phrase.

In addition to that, and if we try to correlate between students’ answers to question N° 2 (to finger) and that of question N° 3 (to foot), we notice that as parts of speech, “*finger*” and “*foot*” may either be a noun or a verb; so, there is no significant difference between them as “action verbs”. However, in view of the results obtained (“*finger*” received only 37.61% and “*foot*” received only 21.10%), we can deduce that

our students know both words as nouns but not as verbs. Students probably associated the two words (as nouns) with the human body and probably do not know that they can also be used as verbs. In view of this, we may say that our students focus more on the semantic aspect rather than the syntactic one. Therefore, since vocabulary involves not just the acquisition of the meaning of individual words but also learning the relationships among words and how these words relate to each other, it would be appropriate to include the instruction of that aspect in the syllabus. The teaching of parts of speech and the different functions they may have in the sentence may help overcome the difficulty.

Moreover, if we consider the study carried out by Arnaud and Savignon (1997:169) which aimed at determining how “passive” knowledge of rare words and complex lexical units by advanced learners increases with level and study and eventually compares with that of native speakers, we notice that they came to the conclusion that the expression “*to foot the bill*” included in the appendix “C” related to the list of complex lexical units tested was not attained. We may therefore conclude that, in view of the results obtained in Arnaud and Savignon’s test, the results obtained in ours are largely justified.

#### 6.4.5- Students' Answers to Sentence N°4.

4-Could you ..... me those papers, please ?

**Table 11: Exercise N° 1- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 4**

Could you <b>hand</b> me those papers, please?						
<b>R</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>04</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>63.30</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>33.02</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>03.66</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Book					<b>15</b>	<b>13.76</b>
Finger					<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
Head					<b>04</b>	<b>03.66</b>
Chair					<b>04</b>	<b>03.66</b>
Room					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>
Foot					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

##### 6.4.5.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 4:

The expected answer in this sentence is “Could you **hand** me those papers, please?”. 69 students (63.30 %) out of 109 succeeded in finding the right answer. The number of students who failed is 36 representing 33.02 % of the whole. Among these students, 09 (08.25 %) answered "*finger*" (association of hand / finger). The other answers proposed are "*head*" and "*chair*" with 04 answers representing 03.66 % for

each, 03 answers (02.75 %) for “*room*”, and 01 answer (00.91 %) for “*foot*”. It is to be noted that 04 students (03.66 %) did not answer the question.

#### **6.4.5.2- COMMENTS:**

The right answer to this sentence can be explained by the association of the words “*hand / paper*” inferred from context (semantic and paradigmatic relation). Concerning the students who answered “*finger*”, the same comment concerning the association of words (*hand / finger*) can be made. This can also be considered as a case of hyponymy. Sometimes, the meaning of a word can be included in the meaning of another one, “*hand*” being the super-ordinate and “*finger*” the basic level term. We can imagine these words (finger, nails) as the members of one family and the super-ordinate as the family name. Moreover, if we compare the results obtained with that of sentence N° 2, we once again notice that students associate the words, in this case, “*finger*” / “*hand*” related to the act of touching. What is important to note here is the fact that among the 41 students who got the right answer to sentence N° 2, i.e. “*finger*”, 36 of them got the right answer to sentence N° 4, i.e. “*hand*”. This reinforces the fact that our students emphasize the semantic relation between words (hyponymy), “*finger*” (basic level term) being a part of “*hand*” (super-ordinate).

## 6.4.6- Students' Answers to Sentence N°5

5-We've asked Professor Plum to ..... the meeting.

**Table 12: Exercise N° 1- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 5**

We've asked Professor Plum to <b>chair</b> the meeting.					
<b>R</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>09.17</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>86.23</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>
<b>Other answers</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Head				<b>54</b>	<b>49.54</b>
Book				<b>11</b>	<b>10.09</b>
Room				<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
Door				<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
Hand				<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
Finger				<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
Foot				<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>

### 6.4.6.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 5:

The expected answer here is “We've asked Professor Plum to **chair** the meeting”. The response to this question is a complete failure. Only 10 students (09.17 %) out of 109 managed to find the right answer. The number of students who failed is 94 representing 86.23 % of the whole. 11 students (10.09 %) out of 109 answered “*book*”, and the other answers proposed are as follows: 09 students (08.25 %) answered “*room*”, 06 students (05.50 %) answered “*door*”, 06 others (05.50 %) answered “*hand*”, 05 students (04.58 %) answered “*finger*”, and finally 3 students (02.75 %) answered “*foot*”. The 05 remaining students (04.58 %) did not answer the question.

#### 6.4.6.2- COMMENTS:

What is important to note is the fact that among the students who failed 94 representing (86.23%), 54 students (49.54%) out of 109 answered “*head*”. The probable explanation of that choice is that students proceeded by a semantic derivation between “*chair and head*”. Here, we notice that both words are ‘nouns’; however, if we consider the word “*chair*”, it can be both considered as a noun and as a verb. As a noun, it means “*the officer who presides at the meetings*” and as a verb it means “*act or preside as chair*”. This is what is meant in this context. So, we can deduce that our students were not aware of the verb “*to chair*” and just considered the noun “*chair*”. This can also be explained by the “*back-formation*” of the word “*chairman*”. The process is the creation of a word by reinterpreting an earlier word as a derivation and removing apparent affixes, or more generally, by reconstructing an “original” form from any kind of derived form. This can result in an erroneous understanding of the morphology of the longer word. We can stress here the importance of morphological knowledge because the many of English words have been created through the combination of morphemic elements, i.e. prefixes and suffixes with base words and word roots. As expressed in sentence N°1, the application of morphological rules is important to understanding. If in sentence N°1, the morphological rule is “*inflectional*”, in this sentence, the morphological rule is a “*word formation*” which is divided into “*derivation*” and “*compounding*”. So, here, “*chairman*” is a process of word formation (compounding) that involves complete word forms (chair and man) into a single compound form (chairman). The other explanation and the most probable one, is mother tongue interference, more precisely the translation of the word “*head*” into Arabic which gives “*raas*” and then deriving the verb from it “*yar asou*” which is the equivalent of “*to chair*” in Arabic. This choice may also be explained by the lexical



motivation of the word “*chairman*” in English and that once again, students do know the noun “*chair*” and not the verb “*to chair*” as stated in the comment on sentence N° 2 concerning “*finger / to finger*”. Students have probably associated the word “*head*” with the word “*professor*”.

#### 6.4.7- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°6

6-You’ll have to ..... early or there’ll be no tickets left.

**Table 13: Exercise N° 1- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 6**

You’ll have to <b>book</b> early or there’ll be no tickets left.						
<b>R</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>06</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>89.90</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>05.50</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
			Foot		<b>45</b>	<b>41.28</b>
			Head		<b>14</b>	<b>12.84</b>
			Finger		<b>13</b>	<b>11.92</b>
			Room		<b>08</b>	<b>07.33</b>
			Chair		<b>08</b>	<b>07.33</b>
			Door		<b>07</b>	<b>06.42</b>
			Hand		<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>

##### 6.4.7.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 6:

The expected answer is “You’ll have to **book** early or there’ll be no tickets left”. The response to this sentence was the most difficult to find. Only 05 students (04.58 %) out of 109 managed to find the right answer. The other answers were not really significant: “*head*” obtained 14 answers (12.84 %), “*finger*” obtained 13 (11.92 %),

“*room*” and “*chair*” received 08 answers (07.33 %) for each, 07 answers (06.42 %) for “*door*”, and finally 03 answers (02.75 %) for “*hand*”. The number of students who did not answer the question is 06 representing 05.50 % of the whole.

#### **6.4.7.2- COMMENTS:**

This failure may be explained by the fact that students focused more on the lexical rather than on the grammatical aspect of the word “*book*”. We may say that the semantic distance heavily influenced the choice. Among the other answers suggested by the students who failed (98 ones representing 89.90 %), the most important one proposed for this sentence is the word “*foot*”. 45 students (41.28%) out of 109 used that answer. Once again, the choice is probably motivated by the socio-cultural background of the students. The fact of using “*foot*” associated with “*early*” in the sentence may mean “*to leave home early in the morning to catch the bus*”, and because the means of transport are always late, the choice may have been motivated by that specific situation. We can also add that the students analyzed the situation semantically. What we mean is that, once again, students do probably know the meaning of “*to foot*” as a verb which is equivalent to “*to walk*” (informal) but not “*to foot*” meaning to pay for something. Moreover, we can deduce that students do only know the meaning of “*book*” as a noun and not as a verb which means “*to engage in a performance, or to register*”. We can also add that from a cultural point of view, the notion of “*booking*” is not widely spread in Algeria apart from a certain category of people with a specific status who usually use this means when travelling (plane, hotel, theatre...). The results obtained in that sentence join the ones obtained in sentence N° 2, sentence N°3, and sentence N°5; the conclusion that can be drawn is that students know the “*noun*” but they are not aware

that these words can also be used as “verbs” (change in from lexical to grammatical status). Through our experience as a teacher, we may say that when reading a text, students tend to identify their difficulties in terms of the words they do not understand and hope that if they are taught enough vocabulary, all their problems will be solved. We may therefore conclude by saying that our students focus more on the lexical rather than on the grammatical aspect of words. So, in this case, it is not the meaning of the word which is difficult to understand but it is rather its function in the sentence which is difficult to grasp. We may therefore conclude that the difficulty for our students does not only lie in “meaning” but in “syntax” as well.

#### 6.4.8- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°7

7- I don’t much like the people who live next ..... to me.

**Table 14: Exercise N° 1- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 7**

I don’t much like the people who live next <b>door</b> to me.						
<b>R</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>01</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>49.54</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>49.54</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>00.91</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Room					<b>53</b>	<b>48.62</b>
Finger					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

#### **6.4.8.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 7:**

The expected response is “I don’t much like the people who live next **door** to me”. In this sentence, 54 students (49.54%) managed to find the right answer “*door*”. However, we notice that the same number of students (54 representing the same percentage) failed in their answer. Concerning the other answers, one student (00.91 %) answered “*finger*” and another one (00.91 %) did not answer at all.

#### **6.4.8.2- COMMENTS:**

What is significant is the fact that among the students who failed (54), 53 representing 48.62 % opted for the answer “*room*”. This latter choice can be explained by the combinatory level *door / room*. The second explanation may probably be the fact that the majority of our students live in a hall of residence and the choice of “*room*” may have been opted for to explain the difficult situation of collocation (disliking people who live next door / room). Once again, the social situation may heavily influence the choice of the answers. Another possible explanation is the fact that students may have imagined the situation in their specific situation / context and, therefore, translated the word into Arabic or French which will give / *zamili fi el beit* / equivalent to / *copain de chambre* / (room). In view of that, we may say that the notion of “*door*” is very specific to the English language / culture; however, the notion of “*room*” exists both in Arabic which is the mother tongue and French which is the second language and which is mastered by the majority of Algerian people. The other explanation is that our students are using a “*metonymy*” which is one of the basic characteristics of cognition. It is extremely common for people to take one well-

understood or easy-to-perceive aspect of something and use that aspect to stand either for the thing as a whole or for some other aspect or part of it. In fact, in rhetoric, metonymy is the substitution of one word for another with which it is associated, in the case of our students, the door representing the “*the house / the room*”.

#### 6.4.9- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°8

8-With your .... for figures, you ought to be an accountant.

**Table 15: Exercise N° 1- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 8**

With your <b>head</b> for figures, you ought to be an accountant.						
<b>R</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>06</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>10.09</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>84.40</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>05.50</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Book					<b>34</b>	<b>31.19</b>
Finger					<b>28</b>	<b>25.68</b>
Hand					<b>15</b>	<b>13.76</b>
Foot					<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
Door					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>
Chair					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>

##### 6.4.9.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 8:

The expected response to this sentence is “With your **head** for figures, you ought to be an accountant”. The response to that sentence is also a complete failure. Only 11 students (10.09 %) succeeded in answering the sentence. The number of students who failed is 92 representing 84.40 % of the whole. Among these latter, 34 students (31.19%) opted for the word “*book*”. The second answer selected is “*finger*”;

28 students (25.68%) chose it. Finally, the remaining answers opted for by students are as follows: “*foot*” received 09 answers (08.25%), and “door” and “chair” received 03 answers (02.75%) each.

#### **6.4.9.2- COMMENTS:**

The comment that may be made concerning this failure is the lack of mastery of idiomatic expressions by our students. What is meant in that context is “*to be good at doing calculations*”. In fact, there are aspects of the meaning that cannot be predicted from the parts and the grammatical combination rule. Idiomaticity is the tendency of phrases to take on meanings that go beyond the meanings of their parts, i.e. it is in opposition to compositionality. But in all cases, the aspects of meaning that are not derivable from the parts of the phrase and that speakers and hearers are expected to know must be stored in the lexicon.

Here, we can also emphasise the lack of cultural background of the language learned. When a foreign learner does not understand a word, he can use different options to solve the problem such as look it up in a dictionary, ask someone who knows its meaning, or try to guess it from context. This, in fact, presupposes that the learner is aware of the fact that he is facing an unknown word. However, in this case, our students think they know the word and assign the wrong meaning to it. What can be added is the fact that, once again and as it has been stated in the previous comment (sentence N° 7), there is another case of metonymy which is the substitution of one word for another with which it is associated. This choice may be related to the association of the words “*book / figure / accountant focusing on calculation / accounts*”. Concerning the choice

of “*finger*” as an answer (28 answers) may be explained by the phonological level of both words / *fɪŋɡə* /. The sounding of the two words is nearly the same. The phonological representation may have influenced the choice. Although the most widely recognized objective of word recognition is retrieving context-appropriate word meanings, theorists contend that phonological decoding is also important. Torgesen and Burgess (1998) in K. Koda (2005:33) state that “The processes involved in accessing, storing, and manipulating phonological information is as important as semantic access”. According to them, the ability to obtain phonological information is vital to successful comprehension and is causally related to reading proficiency. The same comment can be made as far as students who opted for the word “*hand*” (15 answers representing 13.76 %) are concerned (*hand / head*). The sounding of both words is approximately the same / *hænd* /. The last explanation that can be added is that the words “*figure / accountant*” are not frequent words according to Frequency lists.

#### **6.4.10- Conclusion:**

The conclusion that can be drawn from the comments that precede is that our students really need specific instruction in vocabulary. This is revealed by the results obtained which highlight the fact that our students do not really lack vocabulary per se but they do not have sufficient knowledge of the functioning of English lexis. Moreover, the results also show that clearly when the words are known and if ever they change function (semantic / syntactic), students have problems using them. In fact, this highlights students’ lack of awareness of the function of words in the sentence in addition to the lack of mastery of inflectional rules. This is revealed by students’ answers to sentence N°1 (*chair/chairs*; singular/plural), sentence N° 2 (*finger / to*

*finger*), sentence N°3 (*foot / to foot*), sentence N° 5 (*chair / to chair*) and finally, sentence N° 6 (*book / to book*).

In addition, the different aspects of vocabulary and the areas of difficulty revealed by the test should be taken into account and introduced in the syllabus. This may help our students overcome the different problems they encounter when learning. As previously stated, the need for a vocabulary instruction is necessary to help students cope with the difficulties they face when reading. We believe that this instruction is very important in that it could contribute to help our students tackle texts and comprehend. Indeed, the mastery of lexical and grammatical patterns, text organisation and vocabulary will certainly result in the improvement of comprehension. The areas of difficulty highlighted are the use of syntactic clues, function of words in the sentence (parts of speech), compositionality, metonymy, idiomatic expressions and finally lack of cultural background. This, in fact, confirms the second sub-hypothesis stated in our introduction; it states that “the lack of mastery of syntactic and semantic cues would impair comprehension”.



## **6.5- Exercise N° 2: Matching**

### **6.5.1- Introduction:**

The aim of the exercise is to determine to what extent students master collocations. There may seem to be no logical reason why certain words are combined to make an expression with a particular meaning. It will make students more aware of the kind of phrase which can cause problems in their reading. They are supposed to match the two parts of some common expressions to give the meanings shown on the right. The exercise focuses partly on reading skills but also on language processing.

As already explained in chapter two (Reading), comprehension problems arise at a higher level of text processing. One hypothesis is that poor comprehenders fail to make use of the syntactic pointers contained in text. Work to explore this idea has shown that poor comprehenders tend to read word-by-word, and do not spontaneously group text into meaningful phrases. Other studies (Chamot and El-Dinary, 1999; Clarke, 1980) have investigated sensitivity to syntactic structure more directly; they have shown that, rather than using the syntactic and semantic cues in a text to integrate the meanings of the individual words, poor comprehenders seem to treat each word separately, and fail to identify its function.

Arnaud P.J.L. and S.J. Savignon in J. Coady and T. Huckin (1997:160) state that “*Quantitative data on the learning or use of complex (or multiword) lexical units are less advanced than the data on simple units*”. Complex lexical units, according to them, are difficult to classify since several parameters, such as syntactic nature,

idiomaticity and pragmatic function, are involved. Most complex lexical units are idiomatic to some degree; therefore, to grasp their meaning does not only result from the simple combination of those of its constituents. It is, thus, clear that the acquisition of a large stock of complex lexical units is necessary for our students in order to improve their receptive competence. However, this involves considerable difficulty.

**Exercise N° 2.**

**II-Match the two parts of some common expressions to give the meanings shown on the right:**

- |                     |                           |   |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1- Put up           | a- of the past            | = it's no longer true, doesn't exist now. |
| 2 - Make            | b- the battle             | = you've solved 50% of the problem.       |
| 3- It's got nothing | c- in your notice         | = say you intend to leave your job.       |
| 4- Hand             | d- with something         | = tolerate something.                     |
| 5- For the time     | e- in the right direction | = a (small) improvement.                  |
| 6- A thing          | f- a mess of it           | = do something very badly.                |
| 7- That's half      | g- time off               | = be away from work.                      |
| 8- Pick up          | h- to do with me          | = I have no interest or responsibility.   |
| 9- Take             | i- where you left off     | = start again in the same situation.      |
| 10- A step          | j- being                  | = temporarily.                            |

**6.5.2-Table 16: Exercise N° 2- Global Table (Right / Wrong Answers).**

	S.1	S.2	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.5	S.6	S.7	S.8	S.9	%
<b>R.</b>	26	35	47	12	24	45	40	09	26	34	27.33
<b>W.</b>	83	74	62	97	85	64	69	100	83	75	<b>72.67</b>

**6.5.3-Table 17: Exercise N° 2: Students' Answers Statistics.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>A</b>	02	02	11	01	03	<b>45</b>	14	04	06	13
<b>B</b>	09	07	00	12	02	03	<b>40</b>	15	07	04
<b>C</b>	18	16	06	<b>12</b>	00	05	04	15	16	08
<b>D</b>	<b>26</b>	07	10	07	03	13	03	13	07	07
<b>E</b>	14	14	02	10	02	05	02	09	07	<b>34</b>
<b>F</b>	16	<b>35</b>	06	07	01	01	03	07	18	02
<b>G</b>	06	09	03	05	15	01	16	07	<b>26</b>	08
<b>H</b>	01	02	<b>47</b>	18	11	08	00	02	03	04
<b>I</b>	07	03	04	09	32	03	05	<b>09</b>	05	17
<b>J</b>	03	09	05	11	<b>24</b>	13	09	11	03	06
<b>N.A</b>	07	08	15	17	15	12	13	17	11	06
<b>Total</b>	109	109	109	109	109	109	109	109	109	109

This table represents the different propositions made by students in answering.

The bold numbers represent the right answers.

## 6.5.4- Students' Answers to Sentence N°1

**Table 18: Exercise N° 2-Students' Answers to Sentence N°1.**

1- Put up            a- of the past            = it's no longer true, doesn't exist now.

Right matching	Put up with something.		Nb. Of answers	%
<b>1a</b>	Put up	Of the past	02	01.83
<b>1b</b>	Put up	The battle	09	08.25
<b>1c</b>	Put up	In your notice	18	16.51
<b>1d</b>	<b>Put up</b>	<b>With something</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23.85</b>
<b>1e</b>	Put up	In the right direction	14	12.83
<b>1f</b>	Put up	A mess of it	16	14.67
<b>1g</b>	Put up	Time off	06	05.50
<b>1h</b>	Put up	To do with me	01	00.91
<b>1i</b>	Put up	Where you left off	07	06.42
<b>1j</b>	Put up	Being	03	02.75
No answer			07	06.42

### 6.5.4.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 1:

In this sentence, the right matching is “*put up with something*” which means “*tolerate something*”. It is the combination of 1 (column 1) with “d” (column 2). Here, 26 students (23.85%) managed to find the right answer. The second answer suggested by students is the combination of “put up” (1) with “in your notice” (c); 18 students (16.51%) used that answer. The third answer proposed is the combination “*put up*” (1)

with “*a mess of it*” (f); 16 students (14.67%) opted that answer. Finally, the fourth answer suggested by students is the combination “*put up*” (1) with “*in the right direction*” (e); here, 14 students (12.84%) proposed that answer. The other answers did not really receive significant scores. It is to be noted, however, that 07 students (06.42 %) did not answer.

#### **6.5.4.2- COMMENTS:**

The probable explanation of the second answer (“*put up / in your notice*”) is that students combined the sentence keeping in mind “*the presentation of an idea*” (1) with “*information*” (c, notice). Concerning the students who opted for the third answer, they may have combined “*put up*” with the meaning of “*to build, to construct*” with “*mess*” which is, in French, the building where members of the armed force have their meals (le mess des officiers). Here, we notice that both spelling and pronunciation are the same. On the other hand, the students who opted for the fourth answer may have been influenced by the translation into Arabic, ignoring “*up*”, which will give “*put in the right direction*” equivalent to “*ouad ala et tarik es salim*”. These are the main intriguing answers suggested by students.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that students do not pay enough attention to their choice and to the meanings expressed by the combination of words to reach the right expression. This may explain the failure because in spite of the fact that the third column represents the right expression and serves as a guide to students, only 26 of them managed to find the right combination. Once again, and as was noted in Exercise N°1, the non-compositionality of “*put up*” is certainly another factor. This is,

in fact, a phrasal verb where the meaning of the individual words may not help students to understand the word combination. Here, the verb “*put*” is combined with the preposition “*up*” which completely changes its meaning; these two words make one unit of vocabulary. Since much of English vocabulary is made of this sort of compound, we may deduce that our students will have difficulties grasping these combinations and determining their meanings. This will obviously be an obstacle for comprehension.

### 6.5.5- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°2

**Table 19: Exercise N° 2- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°2**

2 – Make                      b- the battle                      =    you’ve solved 50% of the problem.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>Make a mess of it.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>2a</b>	Make	Of the past	02	01.83
<b>2b</b>	Make	The battle	07	06.42
<b>2c</b>	Make	In your notice	13	11.92
<b>2d</b>	Make	With something	07	06.42
<b>2e</b>	Make	In the right direction	14	12.84
<b>2f</b>	<b>Make</b>	<b>A mess of it</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32.11</b>
<b>2g</b>	Make	Time off	09	08.25
<b>2h</b>	Make	To do with me	02	01.83
<b>2i</b>	Make	Where you left off	03	02.75
<b>2j</b>	Make	Being	09	08.25
No answer			08	07.33

#### **6.5.5.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 2:**

The right combination in this sentence is “*make*” (2) with “*a mess of it*” (f). The number of students who managed to find the right combination is 35 (32.11%). The second suggestion made by 14 students representing 12.84 % is the combination of “*make*” (2) with “*in the right direction*” (e). The third combination used by students is “*make*” (2) with “*in your notice*” (c) which results in “*make in your notice*”. The number of students using that combination is 13 (11.92 %). However, it is to be noted that 08 students (07.33 %) did not answer the question.

#### **6.5.5.2- COMMENTS:**

The probable explanation for the second choice is that students may have confused between “*make*” and “*do*” due to their semantic proximity. For them, when translated into Arabic, the expression means “*to do something right*” which may have different meanings such as morally good, justified, or required by law or duty. We may say that the probable explanation to the third combination is that in the minds of our students, in Arabic, this means “*to make a notice*” meaning “*to inform people through a notice*”. This can be the case because in the Department of Foreign Languages, as it is surely the case everywhere, the rule is to inform students through notices concerning all what is related to pedagogy. So, this choice may have been opted for under the influence of such a situation. This links in with the different explanations made in Exercise N°1, sentence 1 (use of the words “*chair*” and “*book*”) where students were heavily influenced by the situational context (lack of chairs, books...). Apart from these two combinations, the others are not really significant.

## 6.5.6- Students' Answers to Sentence N°3

**Table 20: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°3**

3- It's got nothing c- in your notice = say you intend to leave your job.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>It's got nothing to do with me.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>3a</b>	It's got nothing	Of the past	11	10.09
<b>3b</b>	It's got nothing	The battle	00	00.00
<b>3c</b>	It's got nothing	In your notice	06	05.50
<b>3d</b>	It's got nothing	With something	10	09.17
<b>3e</b>	It's got nothing	In the right direction	02	01.83
<b>3f</b>	It's got nothing	A mess of it	06	05.50
<b>3g</b>	It's got nothing	Time off	03	02.75
<b>3h</b>	<b>It's got nothing</b>	<b>To do with me</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>43.11</b>
<b>3i</b>	It's got nothing	Where you left off	04	03.66
<b>3j</b>	It's got nothing	Being	05	04.58
No answer			15	13.76

### 6.5.6.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 3:

In this sentence, the right combination is “*it's got nothing*” (3) with “*to do with me*” (h) meaning “*I have no interest or responsibility*”. Here, 47 students (43.11 %) succeeded in finding the right combination. What is important to note is that 15 students (13.76 %) did not answer the question. The two other combinations proposed by students are “*it's got nothing*” (3) with “*of the past*” (a), 11 students (10.09 %), and 10



students (09.17 %) combined “*it's got nothing*” (3) with “*with something*” (d). The remaining combinations are not really significant.

#### **6.5.6.2- COMMENTS:**

The former combination “*It's got nothing to do with the past*” may have been influenced by the translation into Arabic, giving “*la ala:ka bil ma:di*”, meaning “*not related to the past*” whereas the latter is really difficult to explain. The point to be raised here is that our students generally translate into Arabic to try to understand what they read; in fact, most of the time, students tend to think in Arabic to reach the intended meaning; however, this generally ends up with erroneous interpretations. Therefore, we can consider that mother tongue interference is a hindrance for students because it works as an obstacle in comprehension.

## 6.5.7- Students' Answers to Sentence N°4

**Table 21: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°4**

4- Hand                      d- with something    =    tolerate something.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>Hand in your notice.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>4a</b>	Hand	Of the past	01	00.91
<b>4b</b>	Hand	The battle	12	11.00
<b>4c</b>	<b>Hand</b>	<b>In your notice</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11.00</b>
<b>4d</b>	Hand	With something	07	06.42
<b>4e</b>	Hand	In the right direction	10	09.17
<b>4f</b>	Hand	A mess of it	07	06.42
<b>4g</b>	Hand	Time off	05	04.58
<b>4h</b>	Hand	To do with me	18	16.51
<b>4i</b>	Hand	Where you left off	09	08.25
<b>4j</b>	Hand	Being	11	10.09
No answer			17	15.59

### 6.5.7.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 4:

The combination needed to obtain the right expression in that sentence proved difficult for students. Only 12 students (11.00 %) out of 109 managed to reach the right combination (“*hand*” (4) with “*in your notice*” (c)).

The most important combination suggested by students is “*hand*” (4) with “*to do with me*” (h); 18 students (16.51 %) used that combination. The other combinations proposed by students are as follows: “*hand*” (4) with “*the battle*” (b) which received the same score as the right combination (12 students representing 11.00 %) and “*hand*”

(4) with “*being*” (j) where 11 students (10.09 %) opted for that combination. The other suggestion made is the combination “*hand*” (4) with “*in the right direction*” (e) proposed by 10 students (09.17 %). The other combinations suggested are not really significant. What is to be noted, however, is that 17 students (15.59 %) did not answer the question.

#### **6.5.7.2- COMMENTS:**

The most probable explanation to that failure is that students do not know the expression “*hand in your notice*” which means “*say you intend to leave your job*”. This is, in fact, an idiomatic expression comparing two relatively rare lexical items: “*hand in*” and “*notice*”; the latter a “false friend” compared with the comment made in sentence N° 9 where students have been influenced by the phrasal verb “*take something in*” meaning “*to note something with the eyes, or to observe something*”. It seems that some students have indeed identified “notice” as “observe”. When trying to understand, students generally combine the constituent elements of the expression and then try to get the meaning. However, and as it has been stated in Exercise N°1, sentence N° 8, idiomaticity is the tendency of phrases to take on meanings that go beyond the meanings of their parts. Therefore, we can deduce that the meaning of such an expression will really be very difficult to grasp.

In addition to idiomaticity, one more important thing to consider is the cultural aspect of the target language. Generally, to understand and interpret the meaning of an expression, one has to be imbued with the culture of the language learned. These two aspects, unfortunately, are cruelly lacking.

Moreover, in the explanation (“*say you intend to leave your job*”) of the expression (“*hand in your notice*”), we remark that there is an ellipsis; the word “*notice*” is not apparent. Ellipsis is “substitution by zero” i.e. rather than being substituted in order to avoid unnecessary and intrusive repetition, an item is “left unsaid”. The fact that something has been left unsaid simply adds to the learners’ problems with the result that the sentence doesn't make sense. A particular common problem with ellipsis is that the immediate context of the ellipsed item persuades the learner to make sense of the dislocated syntax concerned. Thus, the learner “understands” that sentence in a different manner than the writer intended. The reliance on ellipsis may run counter to the reader's textual expectations. This fact may explain students’ difficulty grasping the meaning of the expression.

The most important combination suggested by students (18 representing 16.51%) is “*hand*” (4) with “*to do with me*” (h); this choice is really hard to explain. This may have been opted for by chance because there is no plausible explanation for it. However, the choice “*hand*” (4) with “*in the right direction*” (e) may be explained by the fact that students have had in mind “*the act of showing direction*”, with the “*hand*” or rather “*the finger*” directed to “*the right direction*”. The same comment may be made as far as the other combinations are concerned.

### 6.5.8- Students' Answers to Sentence N°5

**Table 22: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°5**

5- For the time e- in the right direction = a (small) improvement.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>For the time being.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>5a</b>	For the time	Of the past	03	02.75
<b>5b</b>	For the time	The battle	02	01.83
<b>5c</b>	For the time	In your notice	00	00.00
<b>5d</b>	For the time	With something	03	02.75
<b>5e</b>	For the time	In the right direction	02	01.83
<b>5f</b>	For the time	A mess of it	01	00.91
<b>5g</b>	For the time	Time off	15	13.76
<b>5h</b>	For the time	To do with me	11	10.09
<b>5i</b>	For the time	Where you left off	32	29.35
<b>5j</b>	<b>For the time</b>	<b>Being</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22.01</b>
No answer			15	13.76

#### 6.5.8.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 5:

The right expression in that sentence is the combination “*for the time*” (5) with “*being*” (j). The number of students who managed to find the right combination is 24 representing 22.01 % of the whole. The following combination suggested by students is “*for the time*” (5) with “*time off*” (g). 15 students representing 13.76 % opted for that combination. The same number of students (15) did not answer the question. The last quite important solution suggested is the combination of “*for the time*” with “*to do with me*”. This choice was opted for by 11 students representing 10.09 %. The remaining suggestions proposed are not really significant.

#### 6.5.8.2- COMMENTS:

What is intriguing is the number of students who opted for the combination of “*for the time*” (5) with “*where you left off*” (i) representing 29.35 % of the whole (32 students). This choice may probably be explained by the confusion between “*for*” and “*from*”, a common situation with our students, which will result in “*from the time where you left off*” meaning “*since you left*”. If we consider this confusion and try to translate the sentence in Arabic, we will come up with a word for word translation giving “*moundou an ghadarta*”. Studies carried out about learners’ notions of the relations between one L1 and two different L2s (L1=Arabic; L2s=French and English) predicted that all informants will make considerable use of the L1 as the knowledge source. This evidence may probably explain students’ choice. The same comment may be made concerning the second suggestion made by students; here, the combination is “*for the time*” (5) with “*time off*” (g). 15 students representing 13.76 % opted for that combination. The meaning expressed by this combination, according to our students, is “*time is up*” generally used in examinations to tell people that there is no more time left. The compound “*time off*” means the time when you are officially allowed not to be at work or studying. Here, we notice that students have a problem with compound words because they are not able to understand the combination time + off. The last suggestion made by students is the combination of “*for the time*” with “*to do with me*” (11 students). This choice is difficult to explain because there is no plausible answer to it.

## 6.5.9- Students' Answers to Sentence N°6

**Table 23: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°6.**

6- A thing                      f- a mess of it                      = do something very badly.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>A thing of the past.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>6a</b>	<b>A thing</b>	<b>Of the past</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>41.28</b>
<b>6b</b>	A thing	The battle	03	02.75
<b>6c</b>	A thing	In your notice	05	04.58
<b>6d</b>	A thing	With something	13	11.92
<b>6e</b>	A thing	In the right direction	05	04.58
<b>6f</b>	A thing	A mess of it	01	00.91
<b>6g</b>	A thing	Time off	01	00.91
<b>6h</b>	A thing	To do with me	08	07.33
<b>6i</b>	A thing	Where you left off	03	02.75
<b>6j</b>	A thing	Being	13	11.92
No answer			12	11.00

### 6.5.9.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 6:

In this sentence, 45 students (41.28 %) succeeded in finding the right answer. The right combination is “*a thing*” (6) with “*of the past*” (a) meaning “*it's no longer true, or does not exist*”. The following combinations suggested by students are: “*a thing*” (6) with “*being*” (j) and “*a thing*” (6) with “*with something*” (d). Both combinations were chosen by 13 students representing 11.92 % for each one. It is to be noted, however, that 12 students (11.00 %) did not answer the question.

### 6.5.9.2- COMMENTS:

No real explanation can be given to justify the choice “*a thing*” with “*being*”; however, as far as the second combination is concerned (“*a thing*” (6) with “*something*” (d), a correlation can be made with students' combination in Sentence N° 3. In this latter sentence, 10 students used the combination “*it's got nothing*” (3) with “*with something*” (d). In sentence N° 6, 13 students opted for the combination “*a thing*” with “*with something*”. The conclusion that can be drawn from both combinations (sentence N°3 and sentence N°6) is that the choice may have been motivated by the presence of the word “*thing*” in both words (“*nothing / something*”) in the two different combinations, i.e. (*nothing/ something and a thing / something*). Students may have assimilated the two words and, therefore, opted for these combinations. The last combination that may be explained is “*a thing*” with “*to do with me*” opted for by 08 students. The probable meaning understood by students is “*something concerning me*” which is equivalent to the Arabic expression “*chaioun yakhoussouni*”. Once again, and as it has already been stated in sentence N° 3, our students generally translate into Arabic to try to understand what they read; in fact, most of the time, students tend to think in Arabic to reach the intended meaning; however, this generally ends up with erroneous interpretations. Therefore, we can consider that mother tongue interference is a hindrance for students because it works as an obstacle in comprehension. The other combinations were not really significant.



## 6.5.10- Students' Answers to Sentence N°7

**Table 24: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°7**

7- That's half      g- time off      = be away from work.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>That's half the battle.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>7a</b>	That's half	Of the past	14	12.83
<b>7b</b>	<b>That's half</b>	<b>The battle</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36.69</b>
<b>7c</b>	That's half	In your notice	04	03.66
<b>7d</b>	That's half	With something	03	02.75
<b>7e</b>	That's half	In the right direction	02	01.83
<b>7f</b>	That's half	A mess of it	03	02.75
<b>7g</b>	That's half	Time off	16	14.67
<b>7h</b>	That's half	To do with me	00	00.00
<b>7i</b>	That's half	Where you left off	05	04.58
<b>7j</b>	That's half	Being	09	08.25
No answer			13	11.92

### 6.5.10.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 7:

In this sentence, the right combination “*that's half*” (7) with “*the battle*” (b) was proposed by 40 students (36.69 %). The second important suggestion made by students is the combination “*that's half*” (7) with “*time off*” (b) used by 16 students (14.67). The third combination used by 14 students (12.84 %) is “*that's half*” (7) with “*of the past*” (a). However, it is to be noted that 13 students (11.92 %) did not answer the question and that the other suggestions are not really significant.

### 6.5.10.2- COMMENTS:

The explanation of the second suggestion may have been motivated by the words “*half / off*” with “*off*” having a negative effect. What I mean is that students when combining the two columns have in mind that “*what remains of time, i.e. just half of it*”. This situation usually occurs during exams; students are always in a hurry to finish. According to my experience as a teacher, this could be the only explanation. The reason that motivated the third choice is not really clear.

### 6.5.11- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°8

**Table 25: Exercise N° 2- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°8**

8- Pick up      h- to do with me      = I have no interest or responsibility.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>Pick up where you left off.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>8a</b>	Pick up	Of the past	04	03.66
<b>8b</b>	Pick up	The battle	15	13.76
<b>8c</b>	Pick up	In your notice	15	13.76
<b>8d</b>	Pick up	With something	13	11.92
<b>8e</b>	Pick up	In the right direction	09	08.25
<b>8f</b>	Pick up	A mess of it	07	06.42
<b>8g</b>	Pick up	Time off	07	06.42
<b>8h</b>	Pick up	To do with me	02	01.83
<b>8i</b>	<b>Pick up</b>	<b>Where you left off</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
<b>8j</b>	Pick up	Being	11	10.09
No answer			17	15.59

#### **6.5.11.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 8:**

The right combination in that sentence is “*pick up*” (8) with “*where you left off*” (i). Only 09 students (08.25 %) managed to find the combination. The other combinations are as follows: “*pick up*” (8) with “*the battle*” (b) = 15 students (13.76 %); “*pick up*” (8) with “*in your notice*” (c) = 15 students (13.76 %) and “*pick up*” (8) with “*with something*” (d) = 13 students (11.92 %). The remaining combinations are not really significant. It is to be noted, however, that 17 students (15.59 %), representing the most important percentage on the whole, did not answer the question.

#### **6.5.11.2- COMMENTS:**

We may say that our students did not grasp the meaning of the expression (*start again in the same situation*). This may probably be due to the fact that in this expression, we have two phrasal verbs (“*pick up*” and “*left off*”) which are both relatively non-compositional. This situation may explain the failure. As already explained in exercise N° 1, sentence N° 3, students do not try to combine the meaning of the words that constitute the sentence. According to research in teaching vocabulary, it is assumed that in order to understand the meaning of words in a given context, what matters is not to know the meaning of words individually but rather the combination of these meanings to come up with the intended one. In this sentence, the phrasal verbs (verb + preposition) “*pick up*” and “*left off*” will be quite difficult to understand because the prepositions “*up*” and “*off*” may be considered as different parts of speech (“*up*”: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition; “*off*”: noun, adjective, preposition) depending on the context where they are used. In addition to that, the combination “*pick*” + “*Up*” has about twenty different meanings whereas the combination “*leave*”

+ “*off*” has only one meaning. We may therefore conclude that the difficulty of grasping the meaning of these phrasal verbs may explain the failure (08 answers representing 08.25%).

Concerning the two suggestions which received the highest scores, “*pick up*” (8) with “*the battle*” (b) and “*pick up*” (8) with “*in your notice*” (c), they may be explained as follows: the former one may be related to the translation of the expression “*pick up the battle*” into Arabic which will result in “*bidayet el maaraka min djadid*” which is equivalent to “*to start again the battle*”. What students probably ignore is the fact that this expression is a ready made sentence which only works with that specific meaning i.e. “*start again*”. The latter choice is not easy to explain because there is no apparent reason for that suggestion in spite of the fact that the number of students who opted for that combination is relatively important. The last important suggestion proposed is “*pick up*” (8) with “*with something*” (d) (13 students representing 11.92 %). This combination can be explained by the fact that students ignored the preposition “*up*” and only considered the verb “*to pick*” combined with “*with something*” which in students’ mind means “*to pick something with something else*” probably meaning that “*something was boiling and that to avoid burning one self, one has to remove it using for example a towel*”.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the results obtained highlights the fact that students have a real difficulty dealing with phrasal verbs. As already expressed in sentence N° 1 of this exercise with the phrasal verb (“*put up*”), the verb “*pick*”, this time, is combined with the preposition “*up*” which completely changes its meaning; these two words make one unit of vocabulary. Since much English vocabulary is made

of this kind of compound, we may deduce that our students will have difficulties grasping these combinations and determining their meanings. This will obviously be an obstacle for comprehension.

### 6.5.12- Students' Answers to Sentence N°9

**Table 26: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°9**

9- Take                      i- where you left off      = start again in the same situation.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>Take time off.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>9a</b>	Take	Of the past	06	05.50
<b>9b</b>	Take	The battle	07	06.42
<b>9c</b>	Take	In your notice	16	14.67
<b>9d</b>	Take	With something	07	06.42
<b>9e</b>	Take	In the right direction	07	06.42
<b>9f</b>	Take	A mess of it	18	16.51
<b>9g</b>	<b>Take</b>	<b>Time off</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23.85</b>
<b>9h</b>	Take	To do with me	03	02.75
<b>9i</b>	Take	Where you left off	05	04.58
<b>9j</b>	Take	Being	03	02.75
No answer			11	10.09

#### 6.5.12.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 9:

The right combination in this sentence is “*take*” (9) with “*time off*” (g). The number of students that opted for that combination is 26 (23.85 %). The second matching proposed by students is “*take*” (9) with “*a mess of it*” (f) obtaining 18

answers (16.51 %). The third combination used by students is “take” (9) with “in your notice” (c); 16 students representing 14.67 % opted for it. However, it is to be noted that 11 students did not (10.09%) did not answer the question.

#### **6.5.12.2- COMMENTS:**

The second matching proposed by students may be explained by the influence of the phonological level as it has been done in the first exercise (words in context), sentence N° 2 where students confused between (t / d) in “foot / food”. In this sentence, students may have been influenced by the pronunciation of the words “take / make” where a paradigmatic relation exist between /t/ and /m/. This explanation may justify the choice of these students. As far as the third combination is concerned, “take” (9) with “in your notice” (c), students may have been influenced by the phrasal verb “take something in” meaning “to note something with the eyes, or to observe something”. This explanation can be reinforced by our experience because our students have the tendency to ignore the notices on boards for information. In fact, this can be considered a lack of culture as far as communication through notices is concerned.

### 6.5.13- Students' Answers to Sentence N°10

**Table 27: Exercise N° 2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°10.**

10- A step                      j- being                      = temporarily.

<b>Right matching</b>	<b>A step in the right direction.</b>		<b>Nb. Of answers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>10a</b>	A step	Of the past	13	11.92
<b>10b</b>	A step	The battle	04	03.66
<b>10c</b>	A step	In your notice	08	07.33
<b>10d</b>	A step	With something	07	06.42
<b>10e</b>	<b>A step</b>	<b>In the right direction</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>31.19</b>
<b>10f</b>	A step	A mess of it	02	01.83
<b>10g</b>	A step	Time off	08	07.33
<b>10h</b>	A step	To do with me	04	03.66
<b>10i</b>	A step	Where you left off	17	15.59
<b>10j</b>	A step	Being	06	05.50
No answer			06	05.50

#### 6.5.13.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 10:

In this sentence, the right matching is “*a step*” (10) with “*in the right direction*” (e) which means “*an improvement*”. Here, 34 students (31.19 %) succeeded in finding the right combination. The second important answer suggested by students is “*a step*” (10) with “*where you left off*” (i) with 17 answers (15.59 %). The third combination “*a step*” (10) with “*of the past*” (a) was chosen by 13 students (11.92 %). It is to be noted that 06 students did not answer the question.

### **6.5.13.2- COMMENTS:**

The students who opted for the second combination probably mean “*to start or make a step with the sense of advancing from where you left off last time*”. This choice may have been motivated by the translation in Arabic. According to P. Prince, (1996:448) “*Knowing translations for L2 words does not guarantee that they will be successfully accessed for use in an L2 context*”. In fact, knowing a word means knowing more than just its translated meaning or its L2 synonyms. The second combination is a kind of expression most of the time used by teachers before they start their lectures, (*sanantalik min eina antaheina al bariha*), meaning “*to start where we left off yesterday*”. The students have probably assimilated “*a step*” with “*start*” in Arabic and therefore opted for that combination. The third choice may be explained by the fact that students focused more on the second part of the matching and assimilated “*a step*” to probably “*a period*” which results in “*a period of the past*”.

### **6.5.14- Conclusion:**

The results obtained in this exercise may be explained by students’ neglect of contextual cues which are the most important factor in comprehension. It seems that students do not give much attention to these, or are unaware of them. Therefore, they fail to reach the right answer. As already explained in Chapter Three, we note two kinds of strategies associated with complex lexical units: awareness strategies and retention strategies. As far as vocabulary strategies are concerned, we may consider that the students who managed to find the right answer are more aware and more conscious of



contextual clues. By contrast, the students who failed may have considered each word as a discrete item unrelated to previous words.

The general conclusion that can be drawn from the results obtained in this exercise is as follows:

- 1- The strategy mostly used by our students appears to be translation. We have seen through the exercise that, most of the time, our students have recourse to it. This can be, to a certain degree, considered as mother tongue interference, which most of the time results in an incorrect interpretation of meaning i.e. many errors can be accounted for by a literal translation to and / or from Arabic. This is so because students tend to think in Arabic and, then, translate into English. Students should learn to think in English and avoid the word for word translation in order to overcome the problem. This confirms the fourth sub-hypothesis related to translation as a strategy to understand English vocabulary.
  
- 2- The second aspect to be highlighted is students' difficulty dealing with phrasal verbs. Since a much English vocabulary is made of this sort of compounds, we may deduce that this will obviously be an obstacle for comprehension and that our students will have difficulties grasping these combinations and determining their meanings.

3- The third aspect to be considered and which has been revealed by the answers is the comprehension of idiomatic expressions which is missing in our students.

The most obvious cases of that are ready-made-utterances. In fact, what works in a language does not necessarily work in another, especially between Arabic and English which are two quite different languages.

The last points may be related to the first sub-hypothesis related to the lack of mastery of vocabulary strategies which result in poor comprehension.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: THE TEST- PART TWO.**  
**TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING COHERENCE AND**  
**COHESION IN TEXTS.**

**7.1- Exercise N° 3: Rephrasing**

**7.1.1- Introduction:**

The aim of the exercise is to test to what degree students are aware of rephrasing. Students are asked to underline the equivalent of the word stated at the end of the sentence.

**Exercise N° 3.**

**III- In each of the following sentences, underline the phrase which could be replaced with the words shown below. The first one has been done for you.**

- 1- Let's hope that by the beginning of the next decade, pollution will be a thing of the past. **No longer exist.**
- 2- I'm not sure what tonight's program is called, but I think it's got something to do with Indian regional cookery. **A connection.**
- 3- Have you any idea what has become of Harry since he left the company so suddenly all those months ago? **Happened to.**
- 4- They told me that the thing he really couldn't stand about being unemployed was sitting around all day with nothing to do. **Hated.**
- 5- Jane's away today. So, I'll have to ask you to stand in for her. **Replace.**
- 6- Look at the weather! It's ten to one half the staff will decide to stay away from work today! **Probable.**
- 7- By the time he has finished telling about the difficulties and dangers I would face on the journey, he had managed to put me right off going. **Discourage me from.**
- 8- Only somebody born and bred in New York can really understand the reasons for the strong emotions which are sometimes publicly expressed in that city. **From.**

- 9- That report you sent me was just the job: it made it impossible for the directors to refuse to give me all the money I had asked for. **Perfect.**
- 10- A lot of people object to the idea that before a company sells a new product, they can try it out on animals to see if it is harmful. **Experiment.**

## 7.2.2- Students' Answers to Sentence N°2

**Table 28: Exercise N° 3- Students' Answers to Sentence N°2**

2-I'm not sure what tonight's program is called, but I think it's got something to do with Indian regional cookery. **A connection.**

<b>Something to do with = A connection.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>08</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>56.88</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>35.77</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>07.33</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Indian regional cookery					<b>17</b>	<b>15.59</b>
Tonight's program					<b>12</b>	<b>11.00</b>
I think it's got something					<b>07</b>	<b>06.42</b>
Something					<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>
With					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

### 7.2.2.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 2:

In this sentence, 62 students (56.88 %) managed to find the right answer. The 39 students (35.77 %) who failed in their answers suggested other answers. 17 of them (15.59 %) proposed “*Indian regional cookery*”. These students may have opted for that answer on the basis of their understanding that tonight's program is related to “*Indian regional cookery*”. But they did not underline the equivalent words of “*a connection*”

which, in fact, connects the first part to the last one. The remaining answers suggested by students are as follows: “*tonight's program*” received 12 answers (11.00 %); “*I think it's got something*” received 07 answers (06.42 %), “*something*” received 02 answers (01.83 %) and finally “*with*” received 01 answer (00.91 %). If we consider the last three answers, which represent 10 answers combined (09.17 %), we notice that students were not too far from the right answer but just failed because they were not really precise in their answers. Students probably understood the meaning, but they just limited themselves in underlying only one word of the whole such as “*something*” and “*with*”. This reasoning is inappropriate because it leads to wrong answers. This is highlighted by the students who opted for “*I think it's got something*”; this, in a sense, can be considered as an acceptable answer but what matters is that these students missed the most important part of the answer which is “*to do with*”. As already explained in the comments of the two preceding exercises, this can be seen as a lack of awareness / precision about the words in expressing the meaning on the part of the students. This reflects students’ “word consciousness” or “lexical awareness” which is the ability to recognise that writing and speech are made up of distinct entities (words), and that these may be combined to result in one or two words standing for a whole expression. It is, however, to be noted that 08 students (07.33 %) did not answer the question.

### **7.2.3- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 3**

**Table 29: Exercise N° 3- Students’ Answers to Sentence N°3.**

3-Have you any idea what has become of Harry since he left the company so suddenly all those months ago? **happened to.**

<b>Become of = Happened to.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>03</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>85.32</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>11.92</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>02.75</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Suddenly					<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
Have you any idea					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>
Since he left the company					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>
Left					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

### 7.2.3.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 3:

This sentence proved to be among the most accessible to our students. It received 93 right answers (85.32 %). This may be explained by the fact that the relation between the words to underline (rephrase) and the word expressed at the end of the sentence is a very usual one. Students encounter both words very frequently in reading and, therefore, did not have any difficulty in finding the right answer. The other answers suggested by students, and which are not really significant, are as follows: “*suddenly*” received 06 answers (05.50 %), “*have you any idea*” 03 answers (02.75 %), “*since he left the company*” 03 answers (02.75 %) and finally “*left*” 01 answer (00.91 %). We, however, notice that 03 students (02.75 %) did not answer the question.

### 7.2.4- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 4

**Table 30: Exercise N° 3 – Students’ Answers to Sentence N°4.**

4-They told me that the thing he really couldn’t stand about being unemployed was sitting around all day with nothing to do. **hated.**

<b>Couldn't stand = Hated.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>69.72</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>20.18</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>10.09</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Couldn't stand about being unemployed					<b>10</b>	<b>09.17</b>
Was sitting around					<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
The thing that really					<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>

#### **7.2.4.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 4:**

In this sentence, the positive scores are good. 76 students (69.72 %) succeeded in finding the right equivalent. However, 22 students (20.18 %) failed and 11 (10.09 %) did not answer the question. If we consider the other answers suggested by students, we notice that 10 of them (09.17 %) proposed “*couldn't stand about being unemployed*”. As already stated in sentence N° 2, we note that these students got the right equivalent but failed because of their lack of precision. The two remaining answers suggested by students are “*being around*” and “*the thing that really*”; each of these received 06 answers representing 05.50 % for each. This success can also be attributed to the fact that students know the expression because, during the lectures, and when students are noisy, teachers use this expression “*I can't stand your noise*”.

## 7.2.5- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 5

**Table 31: Exercise N° 3 - Students' Answers to Sentence N°5.**

5- Jane's away today. So, I'll have to ask you to stand in for her. **Replace.**

Stand in for = Replace.						
<b>R</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>01</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>94.49</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>00.91</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Jane's away today					<b>03</b>	<b>02.75</b>
I'll have to ask you					<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>

### 7.2.5.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 5:

This sentence received the most positive score of the whole. 103 students (94.49 %) managed to find the right answer. The possible explanation of that success is probably the role played by the first main clause and more specifically the word “*away*” which may have guided students to the right answer. They have probably made the right connection between “*somebody being away / absent who needs to be replaced by somebody else*”. Here, we notice that students probably considered the context and used reference which is a property in language which extends beyond single words to lexical items. The 05 students who failed (04.58 %) proposed “*Jane's away today*” 03 students (02.75 %) and “*I'll have to ask you*” 02 students (01.83 %). The first suggestion may be explained by the fact that students imagined the first main clause under an interrogative form and which will give: “*Can you replace Jane who is absent*



today?” and therefore opted for that answer. Concerning the second one, students may have imagined the sentence as a request by the head. This will give: “Jane's away today. Please, replace her”. It is to be noted that only 01 student (00.91 %) did not answer the question

**Table 32: Exercise N° 3 – Students’ Answers to Sentence N°6.**

6- Look at the weather! It’s ten to one half the staff will decide to stay away from work today! **probable.**

<b>Ten to one half = Probable.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>17</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>29.35</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>55.04</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>15.59</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Will decide to stay away					<b>44</b>	<b>40.36</b>
Look at the weather					<b>09</b>	<b>08.25</b>
The staff					<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
It's					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>
Half					<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>

**7.2.6.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 6:**

This sentence was the most difficult to grasp. Only 32 students (29.35 %) succeeded in making the right connection between the expression “ten to one” and “probable”. As explained in Chapter Two, section 2.6.2.4. (Schema Theory and Reading), the expression may be a frame. We may consider that or students are not familiar with a “betting scenario”. As expressed by Fillmore, “Case frames were understood as characterizing a small abstract ‘scene’ or ‘situation’, so that to

*understand the semantic structure of the verb, it was necessary to understand the properties of such schematized scenes*". He explains that "frames" have many properties of stereotyped scenarios i.e., situations in which speakers expect certain events to occur. For him, word meanings are best understood in reference to the conceptual structures which support and motivate them. On the other hand, and among the 60 students (55.04 %) who failed, 44 ones representing (40.36 %) answered "*will decide to stay away*". The students may have decided to opt for that answer on the basis of what is expressed in the first part of the sentence "*look at the weather!*". They have probably been influenced by the climatic conditions prevailing and therefore assimilated that to the fact that people will decide to stay away from work. We may say here that our students are more influenced by the predictions they make, and therefore come up with such answers. This may also be explained by the lack of attention on the part of the students because they forget about the main objective of the exercise which is concerned with underlying the part of the sentence which is equivalent to the word stated at the end of this one. Another possible explanation is the fact that students mistook it for the time 12:50 (ten minutes to one) along with the remaining sentence (the staff will decide to stay away from work). In the Algerian context, at that time (12:50), most of the staff are away. So, this may justify the results obtained. The other answers suggested by students and which according to us are not really significant are as follows: "*look at the weather*" received 09 answers (08.25 %), "*the staff*" received 05 answers (04.58 %), and "*it's*" and "*half*" received 01 answer (00.91 %) each.

### 7.2.7- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 7

**Table 33: Exercise N° 3 - Students' Answers to Sentence N°7.**

7- By the time he has finished telling about the difficulties and dangers I would face on the journey, he had managed to put me right off going. **Discourage me from.**

Put me right off = Discourage me from.						
R	75	W	27	N.A	07	
%	68.80	%	24.77	%	06.42	
Other answers					Nb.	%
The difficulties and dangers					09	08.25
He has managed to put me					06	05.50
I would face					04	03.66
Right of going					04	03.66
He has finished telling					04	03.66

#### 7.2.7.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 7:

The answers to that sentence are among the best scores the exercise received. 75 students (68.80 %) managed to find the right answer. The number of students who failed is 27 (24.77 %) and the number of students who did not answer is 07 (06.42 %). Among the students who failed, 09 (08.25 %) proposed “*the difficulties and dangers*”. As already explained in sentence N° 5, the choice of this answer may be explained by the influence of the context. This is related to the use of inferences by the readers to come to conclusions about what they are reading. As students probably know that

“what may discourage a person from doing something are the difficulties and dangers”, they opted for that answer. The second answer proposed by the students is “*he has managed to put me*”. This suggestion received 06 answers (05.50 %). This answer cannot be really considered as completely wrong because the students underlined half of the answer. Once again, and as stated in the comment on the sentence N° 5, we notice that students do not pay enough attention to what they are asked to do. Awareness is once again highlighted. The other answers suggested by students and which can not be considered really important are as follows: “*I would face*”, “*right of going*”, and “*he has finished telling*”. Each of these received 04 answers representing 03.66 %.

### 7.2.8- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 8

**Table 34: Exercise N° 3 - Students’ Answers to Sentence N°8.**

- 8- Only somebody born and bred in New York can really understand the reasons for the strong emotions which are sometimes publicly expressed in that city.

**From.**

<b>Born and bred = From.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>05</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>44.03</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>51.37</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
In that city					<b>27</b>	<b>24.77</b>
Something publicly expressed					<b>16</b>	<b>14.67</b>
For the strong emotions					<b>07</b>	<b>06.42</b>
New York					<b>04</b>	<b>03.66</b>
Understand the reasons					<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>

### 7.2.8.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 8:

The results obtained in that sentence are relatively low. Only 48 students (44.03 %) come up with the right answer. However, the number of students who failed is 56 representing 51.37 % of the whole. Among these, 27 students (24.77 %) opted for the answer “*in that city*” meaning New-York and 04 students (03.66 %) answered “*New-York*”. When we combine these two answers, they give us a number of 31 answers representing 28.44 %. Here, and as far as the right answer “*from*” is concerned, we notice, once again and as it has been stated in the comment on sentence N° 5, that the students rather answer the word expressed at the end of the sentence (*from*). This will give the two suggestions made by students (*that city / New-York*). This may confirm the fact that our students do not pay enough attention to what is expected of them, but are rather influenced by the predictions they make. This joins C. Fillmore’s “*scenes and frames*” approach to semantics which takes its starting-point in the assumption that the human conceptual apparatus does not consist of isolated concepts, but is organised into larger, internally structured wholes. (“*scene*” is a cognitive, conceptual or experiential entity and “*frame*” a linguistic one). The famous example is the commercial transaction frame whose elements include a buyer, a seller, goods, and money. In view of this, we can consider that our students used a frame along with the elements which resulted in the choice of “*city / New York*” as answers. In the same sense, we may add the students who opted for the answer “*sometimes publicly expressed*” (16 students representing 14.67 %) and who may mean “*in that city*”, therefore joining their friends who opted for “*in that city*” and “*New-York*”. In fact, our students do not target the word in question but rather take what is in the surrounding area on the basis of what they have

understood. The two last suggestions made by students are “*for the strong emotions*” which received 07 answers (06.42 %) and “*understand the reasons*” which received 02 answers representing (01.83 %). It is to be noted that 05 students (04.58 %) did not answer the question.

### 7.2.9- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 9

**Table 35: Exercise N° 3 – Students’ Answers to Sentence N°9.**

9- That report you sent me was just the job: it made it impossible for the directors to refuse to give me all the money I had asked for. **Perfect.**

<b>Just the job = Perfect.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>06</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>33.94</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>60.55</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>05.50</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Made it impossible for					<b>32</b>	<b>29.35</b>
Refuse to give me					<b>11</b>	<b>10.09</b>
I had asked for					<b>10</b>	<b>09.17</b>
All the money					<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
That report					<b>05</b>	<b>04.58</b>
Just					<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>

#### 7.2.9.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 9:

The answers to this sentence are among the lowest scores obtained in this exercise. Only 37 students (33.94 %) succeeded in finding the right answer. The students who failed were 66 in number representing 60.55 % of the whole. Among these

students, 32 students (29.35 %) opted for the answer “*made it impossible for*”. As stated in the comment on sentence N° 8, students do not target the word in question but rather take into account what is in the surrounding area. As explained, students are rather influenced by the predictions they make. Another explanation of that choice is the assimilation of that as being an answer to the prevailing situation i.e. “because the report was just the job, it made it impossible...”. Once again, we notice that the students answer rather than look for the equivalent words that can replace the word stated at the end of the sentence. This may be related to the fact that our students do not pay enough attention to what they are supposed to do. The other answers proposed by students are as follows: “*refuse to give me*” received 11 answers (10.09 %), “*I had asked for*” received 10 answers (09.17 %), “*all the money*” received 06 answers (05.5 %), “*that report*” received 05 answers (04.58 %) and finally “*just*” received 02 answers (01.83 %). It is to be noted that 06 students (05.50%) did not answer the question.

### 7.2.10- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 10

**Table 36: Exercise N° 3 – Students’ Answers to Sentence N°10.**

**10-** A lot of people object to the idea that before a company sells a new product, they can try it out on animals to see if it is harmful. **Experiment.**

<b>Try it out = Experiment.</b>						
<b>R</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>04</b>	
<b>%</b>	<b>55.96</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>40.36</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>03.66</b>	
<b>Other answers</b>					<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
To see if it is harmful					<b>17</b>	<b>15.59</b>
Before a company sells a new product					<b>15</b>	<b>13.76</b>
People object to the idea					<b>12</b>	<b>11.00</b>

### 7.2.10.1- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF SENTENCE N° 10:

This sentence obtained a relatively good score. 61 students in number (55.96 %) managed to find the right answer. The students who failed were 44 in number representing 40.36 % of the whole. Among these, 17 students (15.59 %) opted for the answer “*to see if it is harmful*”. This answer confirms what we expressed in the previous comments concerning the choice of students. Here, the choice sounds as an answer to the question “*Why do we try out new products?*”. The answer will obviously be “*To see if it is harmful*”. Once again, students are more influenced by the fact of answering rather than looking for what they are asked for. Concerning the other answers proposed by students, 15 of them (13.76 %) chose “*before a company sells a new product*”. This joins what has already been stated above concerning the choice of students. This answer sounds as an assimilation to the fact of “*experimenting any new product before a company sells it*”. The last proposition made by students is “*people object to the idea*” which received 12 answers (11.00 %). It is to be noted that 04 students (03.66 %) did not answer the question.



### **7.2.11- Conclusion:**

This exercise is characterized by its accessibility to students. In view of the right answers obtained in sentence N° 2 = 56.88%; sentence N° 3 = 85.33%; sentence N° 4 = 69.72 %; sentence N° 5 = 94.49 %; sentence N° 7 = 68.80 %; and finally sentence N° 10 = 55.96 %, we can say that students obtained the best scores on the whole. Therefore, certain comments about these good results deserve to be mentioned.

Considering the different comments made previously, we may say that the successful students were more conscious and aware of the words concerned, and therefore, targeted them. We can also add that these students took into account the context and knew how to refer to the appropriate words. It is also clear that students identified words because they are familiar to them.

However, and as far as the students who failed are concerned, we may conclude that their areas of difficulty are the lack of precision / awareness (lexical) and the influence of context. This can be explained by the assumptions of significance developed by these students in order to reach the right answers. However, most of the time, these suppositions proved to be wrong because they lead, in most cases, to negative results. This confirms the second sub-hypothesis related to the lack of mastery of syntactic and semantic cues which impairs comprehension.

In addition, two more important factors may be added to explain these results. The first one is the degree of compositionality and the second one is the frequency of words. Considering the degree of compositionality, and as already explained in the comment of sentence N° 3 of the first exercise, the Principle of Compositionality is

that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its constituent expressions and the rules used to combine them. It is frequently taken to mean that every operation of the syntax should be associated with an operation of the semantics that acts on the meanings of the constituents combined by the syntactic operation. The second possible cause is the frequency of words, i.e., students may not be familiar with certain expressions because as stated in Chapter Three, the number of exposures needed for the mastery of a new word hinges on many other factors such as the salience of the word in context, the richness of contextual clues, the learner's interest and the size of his/her existing repertoire of vocabulary. Moreover, multiword units and collocations may be mastered depending on their respective frequency of use. In addition to that, we can add other factors such as students' motivation in learning English. According to psychologists, motivation is a crucial factor in the process of learning. However, considering students' background before reaching the university, we may say that motivation is low because an important number of students are enrolled in the Department of English on the basis of the average mark obtained in the Baccalaureat in spite of the fact that this was not their choice. This may explain the lack of motivation which characterizes the most underachieving learners.

The Algerian political system of orientation ensures a "place pedagogique" to all the winners without really taking into account the wish of every student. Such a situation can only lower motivation and the best proof is that an important number of these students spent the year attending the lectures without any result, waiting for the end of the year to once again pass the Baccalaureat exam, wishing to get a better mark which will allow them to enroll in the field of study of their choice, and therefore, realise their dream.

## **7.4- Exercise N° 4: Reference words.**

### **7.4.1- Introduction:**

The aim of the exercise is to make students understand what is expressed even when some words are missed out. The process involved in comprehension are hypothesized to include extracting word meaning, apprehending syntactic structures, making links within and between sentences and ultimately building a mental representation of the content of a sentence or a text. Sentence understanding is based on the mechanisms which carry out structural analyses which specify the relation among words. The perception of textual relationship seems to be syntactically difficult for students.

Moreover, as already stated in the second chapter, to form a coherent representation of discourse in the mind, the reader constantly needs to resolve anaphoric references by means of pronouns, repeated or new noun phrases, and ellipsis to previously mentioned nouns. Although assigning anaphoric reference is often a matter of making inferences, the difference is that in contrast to inferences, resolving anaphora is a prerequisite for comprehending discourse. Doing so entails a complex combination of grammatical rules, discourse conventions, and knowledge of the world.

At this stage, two points must be made. First, making inferences is an essential part of comprehension. Writers cannot possibly make all the information in a text explicit; they must rely on the reader to make the necessary inferences that can usually be drawn. Second, the number of inferences that can usually be drawn even from one or two sentences is extremely large; readers cannot possibly make all of

them. Thus, a mechanism must exist for the reader to make only those inferences that are necessary and sufficient for comprehension of the text.

To understand a text, it is necessary to establish connections between the ideas in the text and to be able to express them in a different form. Since texts leave many things implicit, inferences are crucial to this process of connecting ideas, since they are required to fill in the missing information.

Another way of thinking about inference is to say that inference making is the incorporation of prior knowledge, memories and personal experience into the mental representation of a text.

One more important aim of this exercise is skimming and scanning. As already explained in Chapter Three, section 3.5.2., any reader whose reading is content based and facing a comprehension difficulty would certainly try to overcome it using a strategy of some sort. In skimming, the reader reads quickly, and at the same time, tries to get the gist of what is being read. For example, the reader would read three or four sentences at one go and then try to paraphrase them in his own words. In scanning, however, and after establishing the purpose of reading, the reader establishes what kind of information he or she is looking for in the reading task.

In this exercise, students are asked to read the sentences and answer the questions asked at the end of each sentence. Sentence N° 1 works as a guide to orient students to the answer. Sentence N° 2 comprises only one question. Sentence N° 3 comprises two questions (a and b). Sentence N° 4 comprises four reference questions (a, b, c, and d) and finally sentence N° 5 which comprises only one question with suggested answers (a or b).

This exercise is analysed sentence by sentence where (R) is attributed to the right sentences, and (W) to the wrong ones, (N.A) to students who did not answer the question, and finally (others) representing the wrong suggestions made by students.

**Exercise N° 4.**

**IV- Certain words can be “missed out”, usually to avoid repetition. To understand what is being expressed, read the following sentences and answer the questions.**

**The first one has been done for you.**

- 1- Many thousands of people pass through the main airport during the summer months, with most concentrated in the middle two weeks of August. What word could follow “most”? **People.**
- 2- Of all the changes we’ve experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. “Remarkable”. What?
- 3- The elegance of Dublin’s 18<sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland’s capital. The city’s pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should appeal to any visitor. A- “Would be” What? B- What word or phrase could follow “two”?
- 4- The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980 s; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before “once”? B- What word could come after “place”? C- Does “to” belong to “go to”, or “to be seen”? D- What two words could be added before “to”?
- 5- Forget your roller- blades, this year’s fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is “not bad”? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year.

## 7.4.2- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 2

**Table 37: Exercise N°4 – Students' Answers to Sentence N°2.**

2- Of all the changes we've experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. "Remarkable" What? **Changes.**

<b>Changes.</b>					
<b>R</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>63.30</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>33.02</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>03.66</b>
<b>Other answers</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Development of shopping				<b>23</b>	<b>21.10</b>
Experience				<b>06</b>	<b>05.50</b>
Problem				<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>
People				<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>
Daily life				<b>02</b>	<b>01.83</b>
50 years				<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>
Remarkable				<b>01</b>	<b>00.91</b>
Total				<b>36</b>	<b>33.02</b>

### 7.4.2.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 2:

In this sentence, and according to table 4.1, we notice that 69 students out of 109 representing 63.30 % succeeded in finding the right reference word "*changes*". 36 students (33.02 %) did not manage to find the right reference word, and 04 students (03.66 %) did not answer the question. Among the 36 students (33.02 %) who used a

wrong answer, 23 of them (21.10 %) opted for “*the development of shopping*” instead of “*changes*”.

#### **7.4.2.2- COMMENTS:**

The students’ failure (33.02 %) may be explained by the lack of mastery of textual reference (anaphoric / cataphoric) in this case anaphoric and more precisely with the problem of “*divorcement*” which has already been dealt with in Chapter Three, section 3.4.2. In fact, by divorcement is meant a considerable distance between the two elements. This may take the form of the explicit word being separated from its co-referent. Our students may be unable to make the tie required. The perception of textual relationship seems to be difficult for students. A good reader should use a certain number of strategies when encountering a difficulty; he may read slowly, pausing to consider what he has read. Then, he has to re-read the sentence in order to make the right connection between the different parts. Since texts leave many things implicit, inferences are crucial to the process of connecting ideas, since they are required to fill in the missing information.

#### **7.4.3- Students’ Answers to Sentence N° 3**

##### **Table 38: Exercise N° 4 – Students’ Answers to Sentence N°3.**

3- The elegance of Dublin’s 18<sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland’s capital. The city’s pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should

appeal to any visitor. A- “Would be” What? B- What word or phrase could follow “two”?

**A- A good reason; B- Reason, aspect, attraction.**

<b>A</b>	A good reason to visit Dublin.				<b>B</b>	Reason, aspect, attraction.					
<b>R</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>69.72 %</b>		<b>23.85 %</b>		<b>06.42 %</b>	<b>08.25 %</b>		<b>75.22 %</b>		<b>16.51 %</b>	
<b>Other Answers</b>			<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Other Answers</b>			<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>		
Cities’ pubs			09	08.25	Elegance and citie’s pubs			41	37.61		
Ireland’s capital			03	02.75	People			15	13.76		
Elegance of Dublin			06	05.50	Conversation			05	04.58		
To visit			04	03.66	Elegance and people			06	05.50		
Dublin’s streets			01	00.91	Elegance of Dublin			06	05.50		
People			01	00.91	Visit			03	02.75		
Good			01	00.91	Pleasure			03	02.75		
Although			01	00.91	Places			01	00.91		
					Ideas			01	00.91		
					Two			01	00.91		

#### **7.4.3.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 3:**

In this sentence, students are supposed to answer two questions (a and b). As far as question “a” is concerned, 76 students (69.72 %) out of 109 managed to find the correct answer. However, in question “b”, only 09 students (08.25%) succeeded. The comment that may justify the difference between the two questions (a and b) concerning the right answers is the following:



#### 7.4.3.2- COMMENTS:

The success in answering question “a” may be explained by the textual reference. Here, we notice that there is no divorcement; in fact, there is no distance between the two elements which are closely related. This situation eased students and helped them in making the right connection to reach the right answer. However, the situation is quite different in question “b”. As it has been stated in sentence N° 2, the problem of divorcement exists and may probably justify the failure. Here, the elements of answer are a bit far; the explicit word is separated from its co-referent. The perception of textual relationship seems, therefore, difficult to grasp by our students.

Considering the wrong answers (82 students representing 75.22 %), we notice that 41 students (50 %) of the wrong answers opted for the answer “*the elegance of Dublin and city’s pubs*”. This choice may be explained by the fact that students developed the answers. Instead of opting for “*reason*”, students chose to explain in detail the reasons that make Dublin appeal to any visitor. Here again, we notice that there is no distance between the elements concerned. While reading the sentence, the two elements (*the elegance of Dublin and the city’s pubs*) are following each other and therefore easy to find. The other answers made by students are not really significant.

#### 7.4.4- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 4

**Table 39: Exercise N° 4 – Students' Answers to Sentence N°4.**

4- The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980's; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before "once"? B- What word could come after "place"? C- Does "to" belong to "go to", or "to be seen"? D- What two words could be added before "to"?

**A- It was; B- Where; C- To be seen; D- In order.**

<b>A</b>	<b>It was.</b>				
<b>R</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>01.83</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>81.65</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>16.51</b>
<b>OTHER ANSWERS</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
The grand theatre				71	65.13
A visit				07	06.42
It is				04	03.66
Although				03	02.75
Famous				01	00.91
This				01	00.91
However, but				01	00.91
Lovely restored				01	00.91

<b>B</b>	<b>Where.</b>				
<b>R</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>04.58</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>69.72</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>25.68</b>
<b>OTHER ANSWERS</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Which, who				12	11.00
Grand theatre				07	06.42
Fashionable				07	06.42
Bar				07	06.42
Lovingly restored				06	05.50
Place				06	05.50
Very, although, really, all, the				05	04.58
Worth				04	03.66
Of				04	03.66
More, most				04	03.66
Pulled down				04	03.66
Visit				03	02.75
Danger, people, good				03	02.75
For				02	01.83
That				02	01.83

<b>C</b>	<b>To be seen.</b>				
<b>R</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>58.71</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>24.77</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>16.51</b>
<b>OTHER ANSWERS</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Go to				24	22.01
People				01	00.91
Bar				01	00.91
Theatre				01	00.91

<b>D</b>	<b>In order.</b>				
<b>R</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>05.50</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>46.78</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>47.70</b>
<b>OTHER ANSWERS</b>				<b>Nb.</b>	<b>%</b>
Grand theatre				13	11.92
Go to				06	05.50
To it				06	05.50
Fashionable place				04	03.66
People				04	03.66
To there, go				04	03.66
Its bars				04	03.66
Want to				03	02.75
Place				03	02.75
Pulled down				01	00.91
Seeing it				01	00.91
Worth				01	00.91
A visit				01	00.91

#### **7.4.4.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 4:**

In this sentence, students were asked to answer 4 questions. The answers are generally a complete failure apart from the answers to question “c”, which are relatively acceptable. In this question, 64 students (58.71%) managed to find the right answer. It is also to be noted that 18 students (16.51%) did not answer the question at all. This gives a total number of 82 students (75.22%) out of 109. We have to emphasise the fact that the number of students who did not answer the question is relatively high: question A = 18 students representing 16.51 %; question B = 28 students representing 25.68 %; question C = 18 students representing 16.51%, and finally question D = 52 students representing 47.70%.

#### 7.4.4.2- COMMENTS:

In question “A”, the total number of wrong answers is 89 representing 81.65%. Among this number, 71 students representing 79.77% of the wrong answers opted for “*the grand theatre*”. The correct answer is “*it was*” pointing back to “*the grand theatre*”. The first comment that can be made here is about the number of words constituting the answer. In spite of the fact that students were told that two words could replace the word “*once*”, they chose an answer made up of three words. Here, there is a problem of anaphoric reference namely a problem of ambiguity of the pronoun “*it*” that can clearly be seen. As explained in the previous chapter on vocabulary, referential ambiguity can cause serious problems to students. We can also say that textual cohesion is concerned with semantic relations within a text or a sentence such that the reader’s ability to interpret a particular textual element depends on his ability to interpret another element because these elements are linked. The second comment that can be made is the fact that students grasped that the element referred back to is “*the grand theatre*” which can be substituted by the pronoun “*it*”. However, if we take that into account, we will notice that one element of the answer is missing and the answer will be: “*although the grand theatre in danger of being pulled down*”; therefore, the answer is grammatically incorrect because the heart of the sentence is missing. According to our experience as a teacher, we can say that the production of sentences without verbs is a common situation. The probable explanation is that Arabic and English are very dissimilar languages, and since our students are heavily influenced by their first language, this may have had an effect. As already stated in Chapter Two, section 2.3.3., and as explained by E. H. Saada (1983), With regard to the structure of the sentence, it is formed, in Arabic, by the verb placed initially, the subject, and finally the complements, whereas in French or English, the subject generally precedes the verb. In Arabic, the

tense of the verbs is formed starting generally from a root including three syllables. The auxiliary verbs (to be and to have) do not exist in Arabic, and contrary to the variety of French and English tenses, Arabic has two great tenses: the accomplished one (past) and the unaccomplished one (present) whereas the future is formed with the present tense plus the letter “s” at the beginning of the verb.

In addition to that, the alphabetical differences and graphs between the two languages are also important. Indeed, the difference of the two alphabets (Roman and non-Roman alphabet), of which only certain letters correspond phonetically, but several do not have their phonetic equivalent in the other language; the marking of the vowels by signs supplementing the consonant letters in Arabic (becoming the use of the long vowels) whereas the consonants and the vowels are French letters (graphic change of status of the vowels), but especially the complexity of the graphics of the letters in each of the two languages and the direction of writing, constitute as many disturbing factors in the training and the control of their writing and their reading.

To emphasize that aspect, Green and Meara (1987) in Coady and Huckin (1991:43) examined visual processing strategies for letter searching in L1 and L2. Their subjects included three groups of ESL learners with Roman alphabetic (Spanish), non-Roman alphabetic (Arabic), and non-alphabetic (Chinese) L1 backgrounds. They came to the conclusion that L1 writing systems have profound and long lasting effects on the way L2 linguistic materials are processed. In a subsequent experiment, Ryan and Meara (1991:153) compared the ability of Arabic and non-Arabic ESL learners, in a lexical matching task, to detect missing vowels and found that Arabic subjects were considerably slower and less accurate than non-Arabic ESL learners. The researchers

attributed the results to the fact that “*modern Arabic writing does not normally represent short vowels and that Arabic learners’ heavy L1 reliance on consonants is transferred to their L2 lexical processing*”.

What can also be noted is the fact that 04 students answered “*it is*”. Here, grammatically speaking, the answer is incorrect because students substituted “the past tense” by “the present” in spite of the fact that the word “*once*” suggests the use of the past tense. Apart from that, the other answers suggested by students seem not to be significant.

In question “B”, only 05 students (04.58%) succeeded in finding the right answer. 76 of them (69.72%) suggested other answers and 28 students representing (25.68%) did not answer at all. Among the 76 students, 12 (15.78%) suggested “*who or which*” as an answer. We can say that these students know that the use of a relative pronoun is necessary; however, they are not aware about whether it is for a thing or a person. This problem is probably related to the structural difference that exist between Arabic and English. Students are confused with the use of the appropriate relative pronoun and may use “*which*” for “*who*” and vice-versa. The probable explanation lies in the fact that in Arabic, the difference between “*who*” and “*which*” does not exist. There is only one relative pronoun for both. However, as far as gender is concerned, two different pronouns exist in Arabic. The three other propositions made by students are “*grand theatre*”, “*fashionable*”, and “*bar*” which obtained 07 answers (27.63 %) each giving a total number of 21 answers (27.63 %). This latter percentage is significant enough and may be explained by the fact that students were influenced by the word “*place*” in their choice. Students grasped that “*the grand theatre*” and “*bar*” are

fashionable places people go to and immediately related that to the word “*place*” which, in a sense, justifies the answers. We can also add that students failed to make the right connection between “*place*” and the cohesive tie “*where*”, which relates between the two parts of the sentence expressing “*place*”. Students rather considered the semantic level of “*place*” and related it to “*grand theatre*” or “*bar*” which are in fact places. The other answers suggested by students seem not to be really significant.

Question “C” was the most accessible one to students. Here, 64 students (58.71%) managed to find the right answer. However, 27 (24.77%) failed and 18 (16.51%) did not answer at all. Among the 27 students who failed, 24 (88.88%) opted for “*to go*” as an answer. This choice may be explained by the options proposed to them (*go to / to be seen*), failing to make the connection or rather the difference between the preposition “*to*” and the infinitive marker “*to*”. The remaining answers are not significant at all.

Question “D”, as “A” and “B”, received a very low percentage of right answers. Only 06 students (05.50%) succeeded in finding the right answer. 51 students (46.78%) failed and 52 (47.70%) did not answer the question. Here, we notice that the number of students who failed and the number of students who did not answer is approximately the same. Among the 51 students who failed, 13 (25.49%) proposed “*the grand theatre*” as an answer. Once again, and as it has been stated in question “B”, students may have been influenced in their choice by the word “*place*”. The sentence expresses that the two fashionable places are “*the grand theatre*” and “*bar*”, and since the latter is expressed at the beginning of the second part of the second sentence, what remains is “*the grand theatre*” which represents the second fashionable place. This may have



influenced students to opt for that answer. The conclusion that may be drawn is that our students are more influenced by the semantic level and forget about the regularities of inter-sentential linkage, in this case the use of cohesive ties, to insure coherence. The remaining answers proposed by students are not significant.

#### 7.4.5- Students' Answers to Sentence N° 5

**Table 40: Exercise N° 4 – Students' Answers to Sentence N°5.**

5-Forget your roller-blades, this year's fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is "not bad"? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year.

#### **B- The fact that it is fashionable this year.**

<b>The fact that it is fashionable this year.</b>					
<b>R</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>N.A</b>	<b>00</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>37.61</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>62.39</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>00</b>

#### 7.4.5.1- ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE N° 5:

The question in this sentence is a multiple choice one. Students had to choose between two alternatives offered to them (A or B). The number of students who succeeded in finding the right answer is 41 (37.61%) whereas the number of those who failed is much greater representing 68 students (62.39%). The choice of the latter alternative may be explained by the fact that students faced a referential ambiguity

which prevented them from finding the right referent. Students may have been influenced by the choice between “*roller blades*” and “*the motor scooter*”, and neglected the fact that “*it is fashionable this year*”. This highlights the fact that our students have a real problem with textual reference.

## **7.5- Conclusion:**

In this exercise, the results obtained revealed that students experience great difficulty in handling textual reference. This confirms the third hypothesis stated in the introduction. This is highlighted by students’ answers to sentence N° 1 and sentence N° 5. However, we have to point out that the problem arises particularly when there is “*divorcement*” i.e. a distance between the word concerned and its referent. If we consider sentence N° 2, we notice that students did not have this problem because there is no “*divorcement*”; in fact, the two words concerned were close one to the other and therefore students did not have any difficulty answering. The second problem noticed is concerned with anaphoric reference and the problem of ambiguity. It was really difficult for students to target the word in question. What made the problem worse is probably the difference between Arabic and English at the syntactic level. We know that our students are heavily influenced by their mother tongue because they have the tendency to think in Arabic; therefore, this situation can not help improve their learning. In addition to that, we notice that our students confuse between the use of relative pronouns “*who*” and “*which*”. This may be justified, once again, by the influence of mother tongue which has only one pronoun for both. The least but not last problem remarked is that students have got the tendency to stress more the semantic aspect of words and neglect the syntactic one. These are the different difficulties highlighted by this exercise.

## **7.6- General conclusion of the Test:**

Considering the different results obtained in the four different exercises and in view of the different conclusions reached by exercise, two important aspects of vocabulary acquisition should be considered. The first one is concerned with the strategies used by the students and the second one is concerned with their areas of difficulty. As far as the first one is concerned, we may say that the strategies adopted by students are:

- 1- Deductive reasoning: students have the tendency to develop assumptions of significance in order to reach the answer. These are, of course, determined by the consideration of the context of situation.
- 2- Contrastive analysis: students analyse certain elements of the foreign language and compare them with the L 1 or another known language. In the case of our students, it is the analysis of English words with Arabic or French.
- 3- Translation: students use their L. 1 as a basis for comprehension and production.

The second aspect of vocabulary to be considered is related to the areas of difficulty of our students revealed by the different exercises:

- 1- The areas of difficulty highlighted by the exercise N°1 are the use of syntactic clues, function of words in the sentence (parts of speech), compositionality, metonymy, idiomatic expressions and finally lack of cultural background.

- 2- The aspects of difficulty highlighted by the exercise N° 2 are phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions and background knowledge. Since much English vocabulary is made of compounds, we may deduce that this will obviously be an obstacle for comprehension and that our students will have difficulties grasping these combinations and determining their meanings. Concerning background knowledge and idiomatic expressions, we can say that they are closely related and that in order to understand these latter, one needs to be immersed in the culture concerned. In fact, what works in a language does not necessarily work in another, especially between Arabic and English which are two quite different languages.
  
- 3- The exercise N° 3 revealed two major problems related to the lack of precision on the part of our students in answering and the predictions they make. This may be explained by the lack of lexical awareness of students and the misuse of context. The probable reason for that is mother tongue interference because students tend to think in Arabic and imagine the situation in their own culture.
  
- 4- The last exercise (N° 4) highlighted the lack of mastery of textual reference (inferences), more specifically the problem of divorcement, anaphoric reference and the problem of ambiguity which is a hurdle for our students, the problem of structural difference between Arabic and English which prevents students to attain the right answers, and finally the consideration of the semantic aspect without the syntactic one in understanding.

In view of the areas of difficulty highlighted by the test, the different aspects of vocabulary revealed should be taken into account and introduced in the syllabus. This may help our students overcome the different problems they encounter when learning. As previously stated, the need for a vocabulary instruction is necessary to help students cope with the difficulties they face when reading. We believe that this instruction is very important in that it could contribute to help our students tackle texts and comprehend. Indeed, the mastery of lexical and grammatical patterns, text organisation and vocabulary will certainly result in the improvement of comprehension.

Considering all what has been stated previously, we can say that most of the four hypotheses stated in our introduction are confirmed by the results obtained in the different exercises of the test.

Another important factor needs to be revealed; it is concerned with the use of a dictionary. During our test, students were not allowed to use the dictionary. However, if we consider the literature on vocabulary development, and in view of the different studies carried in that field, the use of a dictionary, and more precisely a bilingual one, is really crucial. Through our experience, the use of dictionary is a strategy used by the majority of students. It would be impossible to comprehend any reading passage without some use of the dictionary. However, its use may slow down the reading process. Obviously, the question that comes to light is the following: would the results have been better if the use of the dictionary was allowed? In any way, the question is open to discussion. In my opinion, we have to consider that, and introduce the use of dictionary in the syllabus because it is an important tool in vocabulary learning.

To conclude this chapter, we have to emphasize the fact that, in spite of all the areas of difficulty, our students succeeded in reaching the right answers in the different exercises proposed. This highlights the acceptable level of the students and the mastery of certain aspects of vocabulary and reading. What really matters is to take into account the different conclusions drawn and, on the basis of that, try to tackle the areas of difficulty by introducing difficult vocabulary aspects in the syllabus so that our students overcome the different problems encountered. Teachers have a crucial role to play in motivating their students and accompanying them; the results can only be better. These pedagogical implications are intended to contribute to the reinforcement of the students' previous acquired knowledge of the language and are expected to make students able to master the different skills related to both reading and vocabulary. This will probably result in an improvement of students' level.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE INTERVIEW.

### 8.1- Introduction

The interview annexed was handed to 11 subjects representing 10% out of the 109 students who took the test six months before. Two (02) male participants and nine (09) female took part in the interview. The participants were chosen randomly. Before dealing with the interview, students, taken individually, were handed the same test and asked to deal with it. In view of the results obtained, and as the table representing students' answers to the different exercises indicates, students were told not to deal with exercise N° 3 where students received the highest scores. Therefore, only exercise N° 1 (Deducing Meaning from Context), exercise N° 2 (Matching), and finally exercise N° 4 (Inference) were dealt with.

**Table 41: Global Table Representing Students' Answers Results per Exercise**

<b>EXERCISE</b>	<b>R.(1)</b>	<b>W.(2)</b>	<b>%(1)</b>	<b>%(2)</b>
<b>Words in Context.</b>	223	649	25.57	<b>74.43</b>
<b>Matching.</b>	298	792	27.33	<b>72.67</b>
<b>Rephrasing.</b>	587	394	<b>58.83</b>	40.17
<b>Reference Words</b>	268	604	38.43	<b>61.57</b>
<b>Total</b>	1485	2439	37.84	62.12

All the tests were completed in the presence of the author. The interview was conducted for some further data elicitation. The interview was conducted straight after students finished dealing with the test and recorded on audio-cassettes which were later transcribed. The questions asked were designated to elicit specific information and at the same time allowing subjects to comment freely on the answers they proposed in the test.

However, we have to point out that among the 11 students invited to pass the interview, 02 of them started with the test, but then abandoned because they did not feel well. It was really difficult for us to replace them because of the heavy time table they have, in addition to the short stay we had in Algeria. Therefore, only 09 interviews will be dealt with. In addition, we have to highlight the fact that students had difficulty answering the questions asked by the author because of a certain inhibition, shame and a kind of stress even if they knew that the interview was carried to determine areas of difficulty encountered while learning. The best evidence is what student N° 9 said before we start the interview:

*“I have a big problem with vocabulary and with the words having different meanings, and also my friends. I thought I was the best student in my group, but now I feel really stupid”.*



### Exercise N° 1.

**I-Use one of the words on the list to fill the gap in each sentence.**

Head Foot Finger Hand Chair Room Door Book

- 1- There isn't enough **room** for 12 students in there.
- 2-Please don't **finger** the fruit unless you're going to buy some.
- 3-He walked out of the café and left me to **foot** the bill.
- 4-Could you **hand** me those papers, please?
- 5- We've asked Professor PLUM to **chair** the meeting.
- 6-You'll have to **book** .early or there'll be no tickets left.
- 7-I don't much like the people who live next **door** to me.
- 8-With your **head** for figures, you ought to be an accountant.

### 8.2.1- Tables Representing Students' Answers to Exercise N° 1.

EXERCISE N° 1.		
Student N° 1.		
Right answer.	Student's answer.	Justification.
Room	Chair	No available chairs in the class.
Finger	Finger	Using the finger to show (this one).
Foot	Door	The cashier is near the door.
Hand	Hand	To give.
Chair	Head	Be the responsible (translation from Arabic).
Book	Foot	To walk.
Door	Room	Neighbour.
Head	Book	No answer.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 2.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chair	Problem of chairs in the classroom.
Finger	Finger	To touch.
Foot	N. A.	No explanation.
Hand	Book	No explanation.
Chair	N. A.	No explanation.
Book	N. A.	No explanation.
Door	Room	Neighbour.
Head	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 3.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chair	Translation.
Finger	Finger	To touch.
Foot	Book	Translation.
Hand	Hand	The act of giving.
Chair	Head	Translation.
Book	Foot	Association with the act of walking.
Door	Door	Neighbours.
Head	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 4.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chair	No chairs in the classroom.
Finger	Finger	To touch.
Foot	Book	To pay (chosen randomly).
Hand	Hand	To give.
Chair	Head	Headmaster, going to lead the meeting (translation).
Book	Foot	Walk, go by foot.
Door	Door	Neighbour.
Head	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 5.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chair	No chair in the classroom.
Finger	Foot	Lack of money, can't buy fruit.
Foot	Book	To register, give the paper.
Hand	Hand	Give.
Chair	Head	Chief of the meeting.
Book	Room	To come early to take place.
Door	Door	Next me.
Head	Finger	We can count with fingers.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 6.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Room	Problem of rooms in hall of residence.
Finger	Finger	Randomly.
Foot	Head	To pay the bill, responsible of it.
Hand	Hand	No explanation.
Chair	Chair	The manager of something.
Book	Foot	Means of walking.
Door	Door	Neighbour.
Head	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 7.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Rooms	Shortage of rooms.
Finger	N. A.	No explanation.
Foot	N. A.	No explanation.
Hand	N.A.	No explanation.
Chair	N. A.	No explanation.
Book	Foot	To go early.
Door	N. A.	No explanation.
Head	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 8.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chair	We know students need chairs.
Finger	Room	No explanation.
Foot	Foot	Money.
Hand	Hand	Give me.
Chair	Head	The head of / Chief (translation).
Book	Foot	To go.
Door	Door	Neighbour.
Head	Finger	Count with fingers.

<b>EXERCISE N° 1.</b>		
<b>Student N° 9.</b>		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Student's answer.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
Room	Chairs	Lack of chairs or books for students.
Finger	Finger	Don't touch if you are not going to buy.
Foot	Foot	To pay (I have already seen it).
Hand	Hand	Give me (using hand).
Chair	Head	Translation from Arabic.
Book	Room	I'm not sure (last word left).
Door	Door	Neighbour.
Head	Book	Intelligent, good with numbers, with his way of thinking, he seems like a book.

### 8.2.2- Global Table Representing Students' Answers to the First Exercise.

(N. A. stands for No Answer).

<b>Exercise N° 1.</b>					
<b>Right answer.</b>		<b>Others.</b>			<b>N. A.</b>
<b>Sentence N° 1.</b>	Room (02)	Chair (07)			(00)
<b>Sentence N° 2.</b>	Finger (06)	Foot (01)	Room (01)		(01)
<b>Sentence N° 3.</b>	Foot (02)	Book (04)	Door (01)	Head (01)	(01)
<b>Sentence N° 4.</b>	Hand (07)	Book (01)			(01)
<b>Sentence N° 5.</b>	Chair (01)	Head (06)			(02)
<b>Sentence N° 6.</b>	Book (00)	Foot (06)	Room (02)		(01)
<b>Sentence N° 7.</b>	Door (06)	Room (02)			(01)
<b>Sentence N° 8.</b>	Head (00)	Finger (02)	Book (02)		(05)

### 8.2.3- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON EXERCISE N° 1

In this exercise, the results tally for sentence N° 2, sentence N° 4, sentence N° 6 and sentence N° 7. The remaining sentences received two right answers for sentence N° 1 and sentence N° 3 and only one right answer for the others.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 1.</b>		
There isn't enough <b>room</b> for 12 students in there.		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>
Room (02)	Chair (07)	(00)

In sentence N° 1, it is important to point out the correlation between the explanation given in the test concerning students' choice and their own explanations. Effectively, students were heavily influenced by the environment where they study. All the students who opted for “*chair*” relate that to “*the lack of chairs in the classrooms*” (07 answers); even the two students who opted for the right answer “*room*” relate that to “*the lack of rooms in city*” (02 answers). In this latter answer, students used the word “*city*” meaning “*la cité universitaire*” or “*the hall of residence*”. Here, students have probably associated the French word “*cité*” with the English word “*city*” meaning “*town*”. Word choice errors are often categorized as interference errors in the foreign language literature. In addition, four (04) students spelled the word “*chair*” with “*s*” and one student (01) spelled “*room*” with “*s*” i.e., the students have not responded to purely morphological rules. This reveals that students are not aware of the inflectional rule of the English plural. Here, we can consider that the two words are used incorrectly syntactically.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 2.</b>			
Please, don't <b>finger</b> the fruit unless you're going to buy some.			
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>		<b>N. A.</b>
Finger (06)	Foot (01)	Room (01)	(01)

In sentence N° 2, the right answer “*finger*” received six (06) answers. Four (04) students related that to “*the act of touching*”, one student associated that with “*the gesture pointing the finger: that one*”, and the last one chose it randomly. The student

who opted for “*foot*” explained that by “*the lack of money*” meaning “*since he has not got money, he could not buy*”. The last student who opted for the answer “*room*” did not give any explanation. We note that one (01) student did not answer.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 3.</b>				
He walked out of the café and left me to <b>foot</b> the bill.				
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>			<b>N. A.</b>
Foot (02)	Book (04)	Door (01)	Head (01)	(01)

In sentence N° 3, only two (02) students managed to find the right answer “*foot*”. One of these students said that “*she has already met this expression before*”, and the other one related it “*to money*”. Four (04) students opted for “*book*” explaining respectively “*I chose it randomly with the meaning of paying*”, “*I translated it in Arabic*” (giving the real meaning of booking / *yahdaz* /, which would have been appropriate in sentence N° 6), “*It means to register, to give the paper*” probably meaning to give the ticket back to the waiter and pay, and the last student did not give any explanation. The student who opted for “*door*” explains that “*The cashier is near the door*” influenced by the Algerian conception of the café where the cashier is really near the entrance. The last student who opted for “*head*” explains “*He was responsible of the bill, to pay it*”. This latter may explained by the fact that our student imagined a situation where he invited friends to a cafe and that he was responsible for paying the bill. We note that one (01) student did not answer. In view of the diverse suggestions



made by students (book, door, head), and considering the different explanations given, we can consider that students do not know the idiomatic expression “*To foot the bill*”.

<b>Exercise N° 1. Sentence N° 4.</b>		
Could you <b>hand</b> me those papers, please?		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>
Hand (07)	Book (01)	(01)

Sentence N° 4 was the easiest one for students. Seven (07) of them managed to find the right answer. However, the student who opted for “*book*” did not give any explanation. We note that one (01) student did not answer. This success can be related to the association ‘hand / paper’ which helped students infer the meaning from context.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 5.</b>		
We’ve asked Professor PLUM to <b>chair</b> the meeting.		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>
Chair (01)	Head (06)	(02)

In sentence N° 5, only one (01) student managed to find the right answer “*chair*”. All the others (06) who answered opted for “*head*”. They explain that “*the head is the manager, the chief, the responsible, the headmaster of the meeting*” and that they used translation (English / Arabic) which gives “*raais, yarassou*”. We note that

two (02) students did not answer. In view of the explanations provided by students, we can say that the choice of “*head*” is related to mother tongue interference. Students translated the word “*head*” into Arabic and then derived the verb from it, a fact which has been confirmed by students. This case can be considered as a lexical transfer because students used the foreign language word “*head*” on the basis of their L1 translation.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 6.</b>			
You’ll have to <b>book</b> early or there’ll be no tickets left.			
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>		<b>N. A.</b>
Book (00)	Foot (06)	Room (02)	(01)

Sentence N° 6 was the most difficult to deal with. No student succeeded in finding the right answer “*book*”. However, six (06) students opted for “*foot*” associating that “*to walk, to go, go by foot, to go/foot early, and foot is a means of walking*”. This reflects students’ hypothesis or imagination of the situation. In fact, students were influenced by the context in which the word occurs, and the different words constituting the sentence; this gives “*If you want to get a ticket, you will have to go/walk/foot early*”. This situation is part of the daily life of Algerian people because if you want to get something, you always have to “get up” early. So, we can say that this choice was influenced by the socio-cultural background of students. In addition, we can state that students proceeded by association; for them, ‘to foot’ means ‘to go’, ‘to walk’. As stated in the comment in the test, the difficulty for our students lies not only in

‘meaning’ but in ‘syntax’ as well. The two (02) students who opted for “*room*” explain the choice by stating that “*To room means to come early to take a place*”, and “*I’m not sure; it was the last item left from the list*”. We note that one (01) student did not answer the question.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 7.</b>		
I don’t much like people who live next <b>door</b> to me.		
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>
Door (06)	Room (02)	(01)

In sentence N° 7, six (06) students managed to find the right answer “*door*”. Two students (02) opted for “*room*” and one (01) did not answer. Here, all the students who answered gave the words “*neighbour*” as explanation. As already explained in the test, the two students who chose “*room*” may have been influenced by the social environment where they live, i.e. hall of residence. This choice, which can be considered as ‘metonymy’, may be due to translation in Arabic or French because the notion “*door*” only exists in the English language. The most obvious word to describe such a situation in Arabic is “*room*” equivalent to the word “*beit*”, in addition to the extrapolation of the same word which will give “*maison*”. This is so because the notion of “*room*” exists both in Arabic and French.

<b>Exercise N° 1; Sentence N° 8.</b>			
With your <b>head</b> for figures, you ought to be an accountant.			
<b>Right answer.</b>	<b>Others.</b>		<b>N. A.</b>
Head (00)	Finger (02)	Book (02)	(05)

Sentence N° 8 was also difficult for students to deal with. No one managed to find the right answer “*head*”. What is important to note is that five (05) students did not deal with the sentence. However, concerning the students who answered, two (02) opted for “*finger*” and the two (02) others chose “*book*”. The students who opted for “*finger*” explain their choice by the fact that “*we count with our fingers*” whereas the students who chose “*book*” explain that “*someone who is intelligent, good with numbers, with his way of thinking, he seems like a book*”. In view of these explanations, we can consider that the meaning deserved was grasped but the word used is wrong. Therefore, we can conclude that students have a real difficulty grasping idiomatic expressions which meaning go beyond the meanings of the words constituting them.

### 8.3- Exercise N° 2: Matching

II-Match the two parts of some common expressions to give the meanings shown on the right.

Column 1.	Column 2.	Meaning.
6- A thing	a- of the past.	= it's no longer true, doesn't exist now
7- That's half	b- the battle.	= you've solved 50% of the problem.
4- Hand	c- in your notice.	= say you intend to leave your job.
1- Put up	d- with something.	= tolerate something.
10- A step	e- in the right direction.	= a (small) improvement.
2 – Make	f- a mess of it.	= do something very badly.
9- Take	g- time off.	= be away from work
3- It's got nothing	h- to do with me.	= I have no interest or responsibility
8- Pick up	i- where you left off.	= start again in the same situation
5- For the time	j- being.	= temporarily

### 8.3.1- Tables Representing Students' Answers to Exercise N° 2.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 1.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	In your notice.	Leave.
That's half / the battle.	The battle	Because there is 50%.
Hand / in your notice.	With something.	Use it, hand a bag.
Put up/ with something.	Where you left off.	You can't start again where you left.
A step /in the right direction.	In the right direction.	N. A.
Make/ a mess of it.	A mess of it.	N. A.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	Be away from work, resign in French.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	To do with me.	N. A.
Pick up/ where you left off.	Being.	Randomly, the only word left in the list.
For the time/ being.	Of the past.	In the past.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 2.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	N. A.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	N. A.	No explanation.
Hand / in your notice.	Where you left off.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	N. A.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	N. A.	No explanation.
Make/ a mess of it.	N. A.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	N. A.	No explanation.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	N. A.	No explanation.
Pick up/ where you left off.	N. A.	No explanation.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 3.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	N. A.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	N. A.	No explanation.
Hand / in your notice.	In your notice.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	N. A.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	N. A.	No explanation.
Make/ a mess of it.	A mess of it.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	N. A.	No explanation.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	N. A.	No explanation.
Pick up/ where you left off.	Time off.	No explanation.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 4.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	Of the past.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	The battle.	I was guided by 50%.
Hand / in your notice.	N. A.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	In your notice.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	In the right direction.	No explanation.
Make/ a mess of it.	A mess of it.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	No explanation.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	With something.	Not really convinced.
Pick up/ where you left off.	N. A.	No explanation.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 5.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	A mess of it.	Make badly.
That's half / the battle.	The battle.	50%.
Hand / in your notice.	To do with me.	Ask for help, not responsible.
Put up/ with something.	In your notice.	Decide to leave.
A step /in the right direction.	N. A.	No explanation.
Make/ a mess of it.	In the right direction.	In the right way, improve.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	Have a rest.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	Where you left of.	Repeat the same.
Pick up/ where you left off.	Of the past.	Keep in your mind that the information is not true all the time.
For the time/ being.	With something.	Agree, accept.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 6.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	Of the past.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	The battle.	50 %.
Hand / in your notice.	N. A.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	N. A.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	In the right direction.	Improvement.
Make/ a mess of it.	A mess of it.	Do something badly.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	To be away, take a day off.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	To do with me.	No interest.
Pick up/ where you left off.	With something.	Deal with something.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.



<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 7.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	Of the past.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	The battle.	No explanation.
Hand / in your notice.	N. A.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	N. A.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	Where you left off.	To do step by step.
Make/ a mess of it.	N. A.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	Be away from work.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	N. A.	No explanation.
Pick up/ where you left off.	A mess of it.	No explanation.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 8.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	Of the past.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	Being.	No explanation.
Hand / in your notice.	With something.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	In your notice.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	In the right direction.	No explanation.
Make/ a mess of it.	N. A.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	No explanation.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	To do with me.	No explanation.
Pick up/ where you left off.	The battle.	No explanation.
For the time/ being.	N. A.	No explanation.

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>		
<b>Student N° 9.</b>		
<b>Right matching.</b>	<b>Student's matching.</b>	<b>Justification.</b>
A thing /of the past.	N. A.	No explanation.
That's half / the battle.	The battle.	No explanation.
Hand / in your notice.	In your notice.	No explanation.
Put up/ with something.	With something.	No explanation.
A step /in the right direction.	Of the past	The student changed mind and opted for the right answer.(S.1=A thing of the past).
Make/ a mess of it.	A mess of it.	No explanation.
Take/ time off.	Time off.	No explanation.
It's got nothing/ to do with me.	To do with me.	No explanation.
Pick up/ where you left off.	In the right direction.	Pick up means to make progress.
For the time/ being.	Being.	No explanation.

### 8.3.2- Global Table Representing Students' Answers to Exercise N° 2.

(R. = Right, W. = Wrong, and N. A. stands = Answer).

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students' matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
Put up	<b>With something.</b>	01	04	04	In your notice (04).
Make	<b>A mess of it.</b>	05	01	03	In the right direction (01).
It's got nothing	<b>To do with me.</b>	05	03	01	With something (01); Where you left off (02).
Hand	<b>In your notice.</b>	01	03	05	To do with me (01); With something (02).
For the time	<b>Being.</b>	01	01	07	Where you left off (01).
A thing	<b>Of the past.</b>	05	01	03	A mess of it (01).
That's half	<b>The battle.</b>	07	01	01	Being (01).
Pick up	<b>Where you left off.</b>	00	07	02	Being (01);Of the past (01);Time off (02);With something (01);A mess of it (01); In the right direction (01).
Take	<b>Time off.</b>	07	01	01	In your notice (01).
A step	<b>In the right direction.</b>	04	03	02	With something (01); Where you left off (01); Of the past (01).

### 8.3.3- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON EXERCISE N° 2.

In this exercise, the results obtained reveal that 50% of the expressions received relatively good scores. This is the case of expression N° 7 and expression N° 9 which received seven (07) right answers each, expression N° 2, N° 3 and N° 6 which received five (05) right answers each. However, the remaining expressions received very low

scores; expression N° 8 received no right answer (00), expression N° 1, N° 4 and N° 5 received only one (01) answer each, and finally expression N° 10 received four (04) right answers.

**Table 42: Exercise N° 2 - Students' Answers to Matching N° 1.**

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>					
<b>Right matching.</b>		<b>Students' matching.</b>			
<b>Column 1.</b>	<b>Column 2.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N.A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
Put up	<b>With something.</b>	01	04	04	In your notice (04).

In matching N° 1, only one (01) student managed to find the right one. Four (04) students proposed “*in your notice*”, and four others (04) did not answer. On the four (04) students who proposed “*in your notice*”, only two gave explanation about their choice. One student proposed “*to leave*”, and the other proposed “*decide to leave*”. These two explanations have probably been influenced by column N° 3 “*you say you intend to leave your job*” in the exercise which explains the right matching. The failure can be explained by the fact that the phrasal verb “*put up*” is a complex lexical unit composed of “*put*” and “*up*”, and that its meaning cannot be grasped from the combination of the meaning of its constituents. Students themselves recognize that it is really difficult to deal with phrasal verbs which are compounds recognized in the literature as difficult to deal with because of the number of parameters involved such as syntactic nature, idiomaticity and pragmatic function.

**Table 43: Exercise N° 2 - Students' Answers to Matching N° 2.**

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students' matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
Make	A mess of it.	05	01	03	In the right direction (01).

In matching N° 2, five (05) students succeeded, one (01) proposed “*In the right direction*”, and three (03) did not answer. The student who failed gave as explanation “*to do something in the right way, to improve*”. As we have already explained in the test, students do not make the difference between “*do and make*” due to their semantic proximity. They most of the time take them for synonyms. This will result in “*to do/make something in the right way*”.

**Table 44: Exercise N° 2 - Students' Answers to Matching N° 3.**

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students' matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
It's got nothing	To do with me.	05	03	01	With something (01); Where you left off (02).

In matching N° 3, five (05) students managed to find the right one, three (03) failed and one (01) student did not answer. The three students who failed opted for “*where you left off*” (02) and “*with something*” (01). Concerning the first proposition “*where you left off*”, one student explained that for him, it was equivalent to “*to repeat the same*” whereas the other did not give any. However, the student who proposed “*with something*” said that he was not convinced of his choice and that he chose it randomly. Once again, we may say that the student who explained the first wrong choice has been influenced by the explanation of the expression “*start again in the same situation*”.

**Table 45: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 4.**

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>					
<b>Right matching.</b>		<b>Students’ matching.</b>			
<b>Column 1.</b>	<b>Column 2.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N.A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
Hand	<b>In your notice.</b>	01	03	05	To do with me (01); With something (02).

In matching N° 4, only one (01) student managed to find the right answer. Three (03) students opted for something else and five (05) did not answer. The three students who failed opted for “*with something*” (02) and “*To do with me*” (01) respectively. One student who opted for “*with something*” explained his choice by “*to use it, to hand a bag*”. In view of this, we may conclude that the student confused between ‘to hand and to handle’ because he associated “*hand*” with “*bag*”. The second student did not give

any explanation. However, the student who opted for “*to do with me*” explains that by “*ask for help, I have no interest, I’m not responsible*”. If we consider student’s explanation, we may conclude that the student associated that to the expression “*a helping hand*”. In addition, the student may have been influenced by the explanation of the expression “*I have no interest or responsibility*” revealed in student’s explanation by “*I have no interest, I’m not responsible*”. This once again confirms the fact that students proceed to associations, in addition to the use of context in order to determine the meaning intended. However, as this is an idiomatic expression, we can conclude that it was really difficult for students to grasp it. The comment of this sentence is done in more detail in the test.

**Table 46: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 5.**

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students’ matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
For the time	<b>Being.</b>	01	01	07	Where you left off (01).

In matching N° 5, only one (01) student succeeded in finding the right one, and one (01) other proposed another matching. What is important to note is the number of students who did not answer (07). The expression is generally known and well used, especially by teachers. The student who failed suggested “*where you left off*”. He/she explains his/her choice by saying “*you can start again where you left off*”. We can deduce that the choice was influenced by the explanation of the expression (column 3)

“start again in the same situation”. We can also add that students have confused between “for” and “from” giving the meaning of “since”. We have to point out that this is a very frequent case of error with our students.

**Table 47: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 6.**

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>					
<b>Right matching.</b>		<b>Students’ matching.</b>			
<b>Column 1.</b>	<b>Column 2.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N.A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
A thing	<b>Of the past.</b>	05	01	03	A mess of it (01).

In matching N° 6, five (05) students succeeded, one (01) failed, and three (03) did not answer. The student who failed opted for “A mess of it” explaining that by “doing something badly”. The student may have been influenced by the word ‘something’ in the right expression and related it to the word ‘a thing’ in the first column.

**Table 48: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 7.**

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>					
<b>Right matching.</b>		<b>Students’ matching.</b>			
<b>Column 1.</b>	<b>Column 2.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N.A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
That’s half	<b>The battle.</b>	07	01	01	Being (01).



In matching N° 7, seven (07) students managed to find the right answer. This was among the best scores. All the students who opted for that answer explained that they were guided by ‘50%’ expressed in the third column “*you’ve solved 50% of the problem*”. The student who chose “*being*” did not give any explanation. It is to be noted that one (01) student did not answer.

**Table 49: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 8.**

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students’ matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
Pick up	Where you left off.	00	07	02	Being (01);Of the past (01);Time off (02);With something (01);A mess of it (01); In the right direction (01).

Matching N° 8 was a complete failure. No student could manage to find the right answer; two (02) students did not answer. The students who proposed an answer (07) suggested five different matching: “*being*” (01), “*of the past*” (01), “*time off*” (02), “*with something*” (01), “*a mess of it*” (01), and finally “*in the right direction*” (01). Among these students, only four tried to explain their choice. The student who proposed “*being*” explained that “*he chose that randomly because it was the only one left*”. The student who chose “*of the past*” said that “*he considers that as a kind of warning: keep in mind that this information is not true all the time*”. The student who proposed “*with*

*something*” associated that to “*to deal with something*”. The student who chose “*in the right direction*” explained that for him “*pick up means to make progress*”; the student has probably been influenced by the explanation of the expression given in column 3. Finally, the students who opted for “*time off*” and “*a mess of it*” did not give any explanation. The failure may be explained by the presence of two phrasal verbs in the expression namely “*pick up*” and “*left off*” which made it really difficult for students to comprehend. This joins what we noted in the comment of the first matching with “*put up*”. The compound can only be understood as a whole (one unit of vocabulary) and not as individual items combined.

**Table 50: Exercise N° 2 - Students’ Answers to Matching N° 9.**

<b>EXERCISE N° 2.</b>					
<b>Right matching.</b>		<b>Students’ matching.</b>			
<b>Column 1.</b>	<b>Column 2.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N.A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
Take	<b>Time off.</b>	07	01	01	In your notice (01).

Matching N° 9 received a good score. Seven (07) students succeeded in finding the right matching. Most of the students explained their choice by “*to be away from work*”, “*to take a rest*” or “*take a day off*”. The student who opted for “*in your notice*” did not give any explanation. However, one student did not answer.

**Table 51: Exercise N° 2 - Students' Answers to Matching N° 10.**

EXERCISE N° 2.					
Right matching.		Students' matching.			
Column 1.	Column 2.	R.	W.	N.A.	Others.
A step	<b>In the right direction.</b>	04	03	02	Of the past (01); With something (01); Where you left off (01).

In matching N° 10, four students (04) managed to find the right matching, three (03) students failed, and two (02) students did not answer. The other propositions made by students are “*with something*” (01), “*where you left off*” (01), and “*of the past*”. The student who opted for “*with something*” explained that for him, this meant “*to agree, to accept*”. The second student who proposed “*where you left off*” explained that this meant “*to proceed step by step*”. Finally, the last student who chose “*of the past*”, while asked to explain his choice, changed his mind and said that “*this goes with N°6, a thing*”. We have to note that this student did not answer sentence N°6.

## 8.4- Exercise N° 4: Reference Words

IV- Certain words can be “missed out”, usually to avoid repetition. To understand what is being expressed, read the following sentences and answer the questions. The first one has been done for you.

- 1- Many thousands of people pass through the main airport during the summer months, with most concentrated in the middle two weeks of August. What word could follow “most”? People.
- 2- Of all the changes we’ve experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. “Remarkable”  
What? Change.
- 3- The elegance of Dublin’s 18<sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland’s capital. The city’s pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should appeal to any visitor. A- “Would be”. What? B- What word or phrase could follow “two”? A good reason to visit Dublin / reason, aspect, attraction.
- 4- The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980 s; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before “once”? B- What word could come after “place”? C- Does “to” belong to “go to”, or “to be seen”? D- What two words could be added before “to”? a- it was; b- where; c- to be seen; d- in order.
- 5- Forget your roller-blades; this year’s fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is “not bad”? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year. The fact that it is fashionable this year.

### 8.4.1- Tables Representing Students' Answers to Exercise N° 4.

EXERCISE N° 4.							
Student N° 1.							
Right answer.				Student's answer.			
2-Change.				Change.			
3- A.		B.		A.		B.	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		Elegance		Cities' pubs & people	
4- A.	B.	C.	D.	A.	B.	C.	D.
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	Grand theater	Which	To be seen	Visiting it.
5-The fact that it is fashionable this year.				The motor scooter.			

EXERCISE N° 4.							
Student N° 2.							
Right answer.				Student's answer.			
2-Change.				N. A.			
3- A.		B.		A.		B.	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		N. A.		N. A.	
4- A.	B.	C.	D.	A.	B.	C.	D.
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				N. A.			

<b>EXERCISE N° 4.</b>							
<b>Student N° 3.</b>							
<b>Right answer.</b>				<b>Student's answer.</b>			
2-Change.				Changes.			
<b>3- A.</b>		<b>B.</b>		<b>A.</b>		<b>B.</b>	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Places & streets.	
<b>4- A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>	<b>A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	A visit	Which	To go to.	In order
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				N. A.			

<b>EXERCISE N° 4.</b>							
<b>Student N° 4.</b>							
<b>Right answer.</b>				<b>Student's answer.</b>			
2-Change.				Changes.			
<b>3- A.</b>		<b>B.</b>		<b>A.</b>		<b>B.</b>	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Places.	
<b>4- A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>	<b>A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	Grand theater	Where	To be seen	Grand theater.
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				N. A.			

EXERCISE N° 4.							
Student N° 5.							
Right answer.				Student's answer.			
2-Change.				Development of shopping.			
3- A.		B.		A.		B.	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		Cities' pubs.		Elegance & cities' pubs.	
4- A.	B.	C.	D.	A.	B.	C.	D.
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	Grand theater	which	To be seen	Grand theater
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				The motor scooter.			

EXERCISE N° 4.							
Student N° 6.							
Right answer.				Student's answer.			
2-Change.				Changes.			
3- A.		B.		A.		B.	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Reasons.	
4- A.	B.	C.	D.	A.	B.	C.	D.
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	N. A.	Where	To be seen	On purpose
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				The fact that it is fashionable.			

<b>EXERCISE N° 4.</b>							
<b>Student N° 7.</b>							
<b>Right answer.</b>				<b>Student's answer.</b>			
2-Change.				Changes			
<b>3- A.</b>		<b>B.</b>		<b>A.</b>		<b>B.</b>	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Cities pubs & elegance.	
<b>4- A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>	<b>A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	Grand theater	N. A.	To be seen	N. A.
<b>5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.</b>				The fact that it is fashionable.			

<b>EXERCISE N° 4.</b>							
<b>Student N° 8.</b>							
<b>Right answer.</b>				<b>Student's answer.</b>			
2-Change.				Changes.			
<b>3- A.</b>		<b>B.</b>		<b>A.</b>		<b>B.</b>	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Elegance & cities pubs.	
<b>4- A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>	<b>A.</b>	<b>B.</b>	<b>C.</b>	<b>D.</b>
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	N. A.	Where	To go to.	In order
<b>5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.</b>				The motor scooter			



<b>EXERCISE N° 4.</b>							
<b>Student N° 9.</b>							
<b>Right answer.</b>				<b>Student's answer.</b>			
2-Change.				Changes.			
3- A.		B.		A.		B.	
A good reason...		Reason, aspect.		A good reason.		Reasons.	
4- A.	B.	C.	D.	A.	B.	C.	D.
it was	Where	to be seen	in order	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.	N. A.
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.				The fact that it is fashionable.			

## 8.4.2- Table 52: Global Table Representing Students' Answers to

### Exercise N° 4.

(R.= Right; W.= Wrong; N. A. = No answer).

EXERCISE N° 4.					
Right answers.		Students' answers.			
Sentence.		R.	W.	N. A.	Others.
2-Change.		07	01	01	Development of shopping (01).
3- A.	A good reason...	R.	W.	N. A.	
		06	02	01	A-Cities' pubs, elegance.
		R.	W.	N. A.	
B.	Reason, aspect.	02	06	01	B-Cities' pubs & elegance (03), cities & people (02), places (01).
		R.	W.	N. A.	
4- A.	it was	00	05	04	A-Grand theater (04); A visit (01).
		R.	W.	N. A.	
B.	Where	03	03	03	B- Which (03).
		R.	W.	N. A.	
C.	to be seen	05	02	02	C- To go to (02).
		R.	W.	N. A.	
D.	in order	02	04	03	D- Visiting it (01); Grand theater (02); On purpose (01).
		R.	W.	N. A.	
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.		03	03	03	The motor scooter (03).

### 8.4.3- ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON EXERCISE N° 4.

The results obtained in this exercise are relatively low. The sentences that received good scores are sentence N° 2 with seven (07) right answers, sentence N° 3 'A' with six (06) right answers, and finally sentence N° 4 'C' with five (05) right

answers. The other sentences (N° 3, 'B'; N° 4, 'A', 'B' and 'C'; N° 5) received low scores varying between zero (00) and three (03). We have to note that in this exercise students did not give any explanation concerning their choices.

<b>EXERCISE N° 4; SENTENCE N° 2.</b>				
<b>2-</b> Of all the changes we've experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. "Remarkable" What? <b>Change.</b>				
<b>Right answers.</b>		<b>Students' answers.</b>		
<b>Sentence.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
<b>2-Change.</b>	07	01	01	Development of shopping (01).

Sentence N° 2 was the most accessible to students. Seven (07) students managed to find the right referent "*Changes*". One student proposed "*Development of shopping*", and another one did not answer.

<b>EXERCISE N° 4; SENTENCE N° 3.</b>					
<b>3-</b> The elegance of Dublin's 18 <sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland's capital. The city's pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should appeal to any visitor. A- "Would be". What? B- What word or phrase could follow "two"? <b>A good reason to visit Dublin / reason, aspect, attraction.</b>					
<b>Right answers.</b>		<b>Students' answers.</b>			
<b>Sentence.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>	
<b>3- A.</b>	A good reason...	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	
		06	02	01	<b>A-</b> Cities' pubs, elegance.
		<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	
<b>B.</b>	Reason, aspect.	02	06	01	<b>B-</b> Cities' pubs & elegance (03),

					cities & people (02), places (01).
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Sentence N° 3 ‘A’ received six (06) right answers. The two (02) students who failed suggested “*Cities’ pubs*” and “*Elegance*” respectively. The right answer being “*A good reason*”, we can consider that the suggestions they made are “*reasons*” but they do not answer the question asked. We can also emphasize the fact that students had clues that may guide them in opting for the right referent. This may be attributed to the lack of awareness of students.

Sentence N° 3, ‘B’ received only two (02) right answers. Six (06) students failed and one (01) did not answer. Concerning the students who failed, they proposed “*Cities’ pubs and elegance*” (03), “*Cities’ pubs and people*” (02), and “*Places*” (01). The question asked is the same as the one asked in the first part of the sentence; however, students were not aware of that because if they were, they would have answered correctly (the elegance of *Dublin* would be the first reason and the cities’ pubs would be the second reason). Therefore, the same comment made in sentence N° 3, ‘A’ can be made in this sentence.

**EXERCISE N° 4; SENTENCE N° 4.**

**4-** The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980 s; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before “once”? B- What word could come after “place”? C- Does “to” belong to “go to”, or “to be seen”? D- What two words could be added before “to”? **a- it was; b- where; c- to be seen; d- in order.**

Right answers.		Students' answers.			
Sentence.		R.	W.	N. A.	Others.
<b>4- A.</b>	it was	00	05	04	<b>A-</b> Grand theater (04); A visit (01).
		<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	
<b>B.</b>	Where	03	03	03	<b>B-</b> Which (03).
		<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	
<b>C.</b>	to be seen	05	02	02	<b>C-</b> To go to (02).
		<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	
<b>D.</b>	in order	02	04	03	<b>D-</b> Visiting it (01); Grand theater (02); On purpose (01).

Sentence N° 4, ‘A’ was the most difficult to deal with. No student managed to find the right answer. Five (05) students proposed other answers and four (04) did not answer at all. The five answers are “*Grand theatre*” (04) and “*A visit*” (01). Although the students who opted for “*Grand theatre*” made the right guess, they did not get the right answer. We know that what can replace a noun is the pronoun ‘it’ which refers to “*The grand theatre*” and the word ‘once’ suggests the use of the past tense ‘was’. In spite of that, students did not manage to answer the question correctly. Moreover, in spite of the fact that students were told the number of words required (02), most of them opted for “*grand theatre*” omitting the definite article “*the*”, probably to get only two

words which is in fact awkward if used before the word “once”. This is clearly obvious in the answer of the student who opted for “*a visit*”. The failure may also be explained by the anaphoric reference which causes a serious problem.

Sentence N° 4, ‘B’ received three (03) right answers. Three (03) others failed and three (03) did not answer. The three students who failed knew that a relative pronoun was deserved; however, they used “*Which*” instead of “*Where*”. This is a very common mistake made by our students. Most of the time, students use ‘which’ instead of ‘where’ or ‘who’. If ever they are asked about the rule, all of them will say that they know it; however, when it comes to apply it, students have a real difficulty to do so. As explained in the test, this is probably related to the mother tongue where this difference does not exist.

Sentence N° 4, ‘C’ is among the sentences that received a good score. Five (05) students succeeded to find the right answer “*To be seen*”. Two (02) other students proposed “*To go to*”, and two (02) others did not answer.

Sentence N° 4, ‘D’ received only two (02) right answers “*In order*”. Four (04) students failed and three (03) did not answer. The students who failed suggested “*Visiting it*” (01), “*Grand theatre*” (02), and “*On purpose*” (01). In view of the answers proposed, we notice that students were more interested by the number of words (02) rather than providing the most suitable response. The nearest proposition to the right answer is “*On purpose*” which can be considered as quite equivalent to “*In order*”.

<b>EXERCISE N° 4; SENTENCE N° 5.</b>				
5- Forget your roller-blades; this year's fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is "not bad"? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year. <b>The fact that it is fashionable this year.</b>				
<b>Right answers.</b>		<b>Students' answers.</b>		
<b>Sentence.</b>	<b>R.</b>	<b>W.</b>	<b>N. A.</b>	<b>Others.</b>
5- The fact that it is fashionable this year.	03	03	03	The motor scooter (03).

Sentence N° 5 was equitably divided between right, wrong, and no answers. Effectively, three (03) students managed to find the right answer, three (03) failed, and three (03) did not answer.

## 8.5- Conclusion

The results obtained in the interview confirm a certain number of problems or areas of difficulty already stated in the test and our hypotheses. Students use their L1 as a basis for comprehension and production. Students tend to analyse certain elements of the foreign language and compare them with the L 1 or another known language (Arabic or French). In addition to that, students are not aware enough of syntactic clues and function of words in the sentence (parts of speech). They themselves recognized that they do not much care about it. Students have the tendency to stress more the semantic aspect of words and neglect the syntactic. Moreover, students have real difficulty dealing with idiomatic expressions which are closely related to the cultural background of the language learnt. This will obviously be an obstacle for comprehension and students will have real difficulties grasping these combinations and determining their meanings. The last problem revealed is that students experience great difficulty in handling textual reference, i.e. anaphoric reference and the problem of ambiguity. It was really difficult for students to target the word in question (exercise N° 4).

In view of what is stated above, we can say that the interview confirms the hypotheses stated in our introduction particularly sub-hypotheses 2, 3, and 4. We can add that the results obtained in the interview confirm the results obtained in the test which in turn confirm the hypotheses stated.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that the qualitative study confirms the results of the quantitative, written study. Our students are heavily influenced by their mother tongue because they have the tendency to think in Arabic. This will be a hindrance in learning because of the difference between Arabic and English at the syntactic and semantic level. This obviously highlights the fact that students' difficulties are not only related to meaning but to syntax as well.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT: SOME RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **9.1- Introduction**

In our study of vocabulary strategies for foreign language acquisition, we have analysed the state of the art, chosen a methodology and the results of a number of studies, followed up with implications and applications for the classroom, and last of all we made conclusions for the use of the vocabulary strategies to be fostered in students with regard to reading activities. Through the analysis of the research that we have carried out, we have provided reasons and justifications as to why this research is relevant to educators and learners and how this information can be used to shape our programs and how to apply it to our classroom instruction. We have also provided our own expectations of how we will use this research as a framework for our professional practices in our future as an educator.

There is a range of variety of vocabulary strategies in use today. Our goal in this research was not only to find out which strategies are used, but, more importantly, to find out which strategies work effectively to provide an understanding of the meaning and context of a word, not just to provide a method of memorization to learners.

Reading, we have learnt, is a process of interaction between the reader and the text. Understanding what we read depends both on what is presented to the reader i.e. the text, and what knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and the world the reader already

possesses before he starts reading. The processes involved in comprehension are considered to include extracting word meaning, apprehending syntactic structure, making links within and between sentences and ultimately building a mental representation of the content of the text.

According to the results obtained as regards the needs of the students, analysed in the previous chapter, we will suggest recommendations to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary development.

The reading skill is a very important skill for Foreign Language students. We find it useful to propose a set of recommendations that will help in the improvement of reading comprehension and the use of vocabulary strategies. The first recommendation is related to the use of texts which are nearly always used by the teachers in their class work. The second recommendation concerns the teaching of cohesion, both lexical and grammatical, as an important aspect which should be focused on because it will help students establish relations between the different parts of the text and comprehend the message therein.

## **9.2- Text**

Texts for second or foreign language learners are provided by language course books. They are generally intended to improve the learners' language by exemplifying particular structures and vocabulary items and developing reading skills.

A text is defined as a piece of writing consisting of one sentence or more, organised to carry a coherently structured message. Halliday and Hasan (1976:85) defined it as:

*“A unit of language in use...and it is not defined by its size...A text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning. A text has texture and that is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. It derives this structure from the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to its environment”.*

The important aspect of a text is its texture which is provided by the cohesive relation that exists between the different linguistic features present in the passage. Therefore, all grammatical units i.e. sentences, clauses, and words are cohesive because they are structured in the sense that they hang together so as to form a text.

As far as the teaching material is concerned, teachers should provide their own material and use texts related to the students' field of study, in addition to those texts included in textbooks, and perhaps justify using material for specific classes (adapting to local circumstances, particular interests...). Therefore, it is up to the teacher to choose what, according to him, is appropriate to his students. In this respect, the readability of the text, i.e. the degree of difficulty of the text should be carefully matched with the students' ability. The teacher should also take into account not only whether the text contains vocabulary and structure within the students' grasp, but also whether the text is interesting i.e. whether it attracts the students' attention in the sense that they want to read it. This aspect of motivation concerns essentially the need for

more interesting texts in class, and the desire to achieve competence in reading comprehension.

### **9.3- Cohesion**

Cohesion is an important aspect of written texts. It is not only a matter of occurrence of certain cohesive ties; it rather depends on the underlying semantic structure of a text. For Halliday and Hasan (1976:4), “The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exists within the text and that refine it as a text”.

In that sense, texts are not random sequences; they form a semantic unity and can be organised through cohesive devices. These can be divided into two types: lexical and grammatical.

#### **9.3.1- Lexical Devices**

The lexical content is one of the main aspects of a reading text that needs to be taught in order to bring out the meaning of the text and to enable students to establish relations between its different parts. This is achieved by means of vocabulary: synonymy, super-ordinates, and general nouns.

### **9.3.1.1- Synonymy**

It is the fact of using different items to express the same meaning in order to avoid repetition and to link ideas from sentence to sentence.

This is essentially a bilateral or symmetrical sense relation in which more than one linguistic form can be said to have the same conceptual or propositional meaning. This does not mean that the words should be totally interchangeable in all contexts; but where synonyms are substituted changes in the propositional meaning of the sentence as a whole do not occur.

### **9.3.1.2- Super-ordinate**

It is the establishment of a link by using a general term and then words belonging to the same semantic field but with a more restricted meaning and vice-versa.

As already stated in chapter 5, section 5.5 (see page 166), the basic principle of a structural semantics approach to word meaning is that words do not exist in isolation: their meanings are defined through the sense relations they have with other words. R. Carver (1998:19) explains that students are given a word and asked to record the word with which, for them, it is most immediately associated. He states that such associations are organised structurally in a rather less incoherent way than may at first appear. In view of this, some of the main networks between words can be classified as follows: synonymy, antonymy which includes complementarity, converseness, incompatibility, and hyponymy: Reference above to super and subordinate relations leads to consideration of what have generally been termed 'inclusive' sense relations.

Hyponymy is a relationship existing between specific and general lexical items in that the meaning of the specific item is included in, and by, the meaning of the more general item. Hyponymy is a kind of asymmetrical synonymy; its basic organisation is hierarchical. Tulips and roses are co-hyponyms, for example, and are linked by their common inclusion under a super-ordinate (or hyperonym) flower in whose class they belong to. We can therefore say that even a very ordinary word and widely used word can have a complex relationship with its 'referents' and with the other words with which it exists in a structural semantic network.

If we consider the first exercise of the test (Chapter Six) and in view of the results obtained, we can point out that students make many associations in choosing their answers. This can clearly be seen in students' answers to exercise N° 1, sentence N° 2 (Please, don't **finger** the fruit unless you're going to buy some) where only 37.61% managed to find the right answer. However, 20.18% of the students opted for '**foot**' and 12.84% opted for '**hand**'. In view of these answers, we may conclude that students proceed by association because the three different choices can be related to the human body. The same comment may be made about students' answers to the second sentence (He walked out of the cafe and let me to **foot** the bill) of the same exercise. In this sentence, only 21.10% of the students succeeded in finding the right answer. However, 13.76% opted for '**head**' and 11.92% opted for '**finger**'. This suggests that association was indeed being used by the students as a discovery strategy, but the correct association had not been found. This needs to be further investigated.

Therefore, we can consider that this aspect should be taken into account by teachers in order to improve students' vocabulary and focus on the relation that may

exist between words of the same family and words that occur in the same context. Lexical items are learned in groups and not as single items since they are from the same semantic field.

### **9.3.1.3- General Nouns**

They are nouns of great degree of generality used to summarize a preceding sentence, frequently with evaluative overtones.

## **9.3.2- Grammatical Devices**

Grammar can be taught through a text. In spite of the fact that understanding the passage is the main objective, one should reinforce the mastery of grammatical devices which will help in reading comprehension. The grammatical devices identified and described by Halliday and Hasan(1976:278) are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions.

### **9.3.2.1- Reference**

Reference, as already explained in chapter two, is the fact of using certain items in order to interpret something else, i.e. the information is to be retrieved from elsewhere in the text. This is achieved by the use of pronouns, such as personal (*he, she, they, her, him...*), possessive (*mine, yours...*), demonstrative (*this, that, these...*) and comparative (*similarly, likewise, such...*). The information required may either be preceding or following in the text. This distinction of reference is a basis for a subdivision into:

iii) **Anaphoric Reference:** when the pronoun refers back to a noun which has previously appeared in the text.

iv) **Cataphoric Reference:** When the pronoun precedes the noun it replaces.

Both anaphoric and cataphoric form endophoric reference, a reference to items in the text. Here, the reference is textual. Sometimes, however, the information required is not expressed in the text but is present in the context of situation. This is known as exophoric reference, i.e., the reference is situational.

Moreover, to form a coherent representation of discourse in the mind, the reader constantly needs to resolve anaphoric references by means of pronouns, repeated or new noun phrases, and ellipsis to previously mentioned nouns. Making inferences is an essential part of comprehension. Writers cannot possibly make all the information in a text explicit; they must rely on the reader to make the necessary inferences that can usually be drawn. To understand a text, it is necessary to establish connections between the ideas in the text and to be able to express them in a different form. Since texts leave many things implicit, inferences are crucial since they are required to fill in the missing information.

If we consider the fourth exercise of the test, we notice that the results reveal that our students have great difficulty handling textual reference. The scores obtained in sentence N° 3, part 'B' (only 08.25% of right answers) and sentence N° 4, part 'A', 'B', and 'D' which respectively received 01.83%, 04.58% and 05.50% of right answers are really significant.



We consider that this aspect should be considered by teachers in order to help students improve comprehension since it is crucial to this process of connecting ideas and therefore comprehending.

### **9.3.2.2- Substitution**

Substitution is a relationship at the level of grammar and vocabulary. It is used to avoid repetition, i.e., the replacement of an item by another. These substitutes can be nominal (*one, ones, the same*), verbal (*do*), and clausal (*so, not*). These latter replace other items which are found in the text.

### **9.3.2.3- Ellipsis**

Ellipsis is the total elimination of a segment of text and is anaphoric. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define it as a "substitution by zero". They say: "*There is no implication that what is unsaid is not understood; on the contrary, 'unsaid' implies 'but understood nevertheless'.*"

The reader identifies the missing part of the text as having already been mentioned and that there is no need to repeat it. In the fourth exercise of the test, our students find it really difficult to deal with ellipsis (see students' answers to sentence N° 4). According to the results obtained, we can deduce that students found it hard.

### **9.3.2.4- Conjunction**

A conjunction is a marker that signals the logical organisation of the text. The cohesive relation is that it is not its form which indicates cohesion but the meaning carried by its presence, i.e., a conjunction is semantic in terms of cohesion. Conjunctions are divided into four categories:

- Additive: *and, moreover, in addition...*
- Adversative: *but, yet, however...*
- Causative: *so, hence, consequently...*
- Temporal: *then, to start with, next...*

## **9.4- Vocabulary Improvement**

Vocabulary improvement and word recognition are recognised as crucial in reading comprehension. It is known that a given word has a variety of meanings, and that these meanings interact with context and background knowledge. Different approaches may be used to help the learner understand the meaning of a word. This can be achieved by demonstration, i.e., showing an object, gestures, performing an action or by explanation, i.e., description, giving synonyms or opposites and translation. Generally speaking, our students frequently face the crucial problem of not being able to determine the meaning of a word and thus being unable to understand what they are reading. To help them cope with this problem, the teacher may use different techniques such as guessing the meaning from context, to interpret the meaning by word analysis or to check the meaning of the word in a dictionary.

### **9.4.1- Guessing Meaning from Context**

Of all the reading strategies commonly recognized today in both L1 and L2 reading, arguably the most widely studied and encouraged is the guessing of the meaning of unknown words from context, hereafter referred to as the “guessing strategy”. Justification for applying it to L2 reading has come from cognitive science models of reading and schema theory, which are now widely accepted in ESL/EFL circles. This is especially true of models that emphasize top-down processing, with Goodman's (1967) famous characterization of “reading as a psycholinguistic guessing game” as probably the most influential.

The fact that the guessing strategy is often encouraged is not surprising considering the enormous number of words in the English language, the size of the average adult's working vocabulary, and the number of words one needs to know to recognize a reasonably high percentage of words on the average written page. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, for example, contains 460,000 words, and this number does not include plural forms of nouns, different present and past tenses of verbs, neologisms, and some technical terms (Denning and Leben, 1995, p. 3). Of course, the average person's actual vocabulary (both passive and active) is much smaller, but still considerable. Although estimates of the size of the working vocabulary of the average English-speaker vary widely, commonly accepted figures hover around 20,000 words (Nation, 1990, p. 11). Word frequency counts indicate that this number is more than sufficient for understanding the vocabulary of most non-technical texts, although estimates again vary. So, while it takes 2500 words to cover 78% of the page, vocabulary size has to be doubled to 5000 to reach 86%, and doubled again to 10,000 to cover 92% of the text. One would need to know another 200,000 to cover the low

frequency words that make up the remaining 8% (Diller 1978). However, Nation's (1990, p. 16) claim that the 2000 most frequently occurring words account for 87% of the average text, and that 2800 will account for 95%, is widely accepted today.

Regardless of the exact size of a native speaker's vocabulary, it is clear that the average second or foreign language learner faces a major challenge in trying to match it. Therefore, it is not surprising that the main reason given for encouraging use of the guessing strategy is the perception that it is the only reasonable way for L2 learners to learn enough words to form suitably large active and passive vocabularies. We can point out as example the nouns turned into verbs in Exercise N° 1 of the test; if students are encouraged to think of words they know belonging to different grammatical classes, they can infer the meaning of what are in fact strictly speaking new lexical items (*to finger*, for example), but which they already know in another form.

Inferring meaning is a skill we all have to some degree in our native language. The meanings are gradually assimilated when meeting the words frequently and in concrete situations. In fact, training students infer meaning from context gives them a powerful aid to comprehension. One way of achieving that is to give three or four sentences including a given word, repeated in the different sentences and ask students to infer the meaning from context. With every occurrence, the meaning of the word becomes a little more precise. To try to understand the meaning of the word, we have to consider the context where it occurs.

Another way of inferring is to ask students complete the last part of a sentence with a noun. A careful study of the context expressed by the first part of the sentence will guide the students limit the possibilities until they reach the appropriate filler.

#### **9.4.1.1-Factors Affecting L2 Readers' Use of the Guessing Strategy**

More and more studies show that a key factor affecting L2 readers' ability to make use of context is vocabulary knowledge. Laufer's (1996, p. 20-22) summary of L2 research on this topic provides some interesting conclusions regarding the importance of vocabulary in reading comprehension and strategy use:

- L2 learners tend to rely heavily on words as landmarks of meaning in text, less so on background knowledge, and to virtually ignore syntax (we have to point to the very low scores obtained in the test where important clues were exclusively syntactic).
- Vocabulary knowledge has been consistently shown to be more strongly related to reading comprehension than other components of reading.
- Even if a reader has and uses good meta-cognitive strategies in L1, they will not be of use in the L2 until the reader develops a solid language base.

To this list, we can add points from Barnett's (1988) discussion of research on the guessing strategy:

- Usable context varies from rich to poor, and is affected by the proportion of known to unknown words.
- Readers with larger active vocabularies can use available context better than those with smaller vocabularies.

- Beginning readers and advanced readers have been shown to use guessing strategies more than middle level readers.

These findings have some important implications. First, they support Bialystock's proposition that context is created by the L2 reader in proportion to pre-existing knowledge, and show that vocabulary is an important part of that knowledge. Second, they make it clear that a critical level of vocabulary and general language mastery is essential, not only for successful use of the guessing strategy, but also for the transfer of L1 strategies to L2 reading (Laufer, 1996). Third, the seemingly paradoxical fact that low- and high-level L2 readers use the guessing strategy more than middle-level readers is, in fact, another indication that level of linguistic development plays an important part in guessing. All of these points have direct implications for L2 reading instruction.

We have also seen that a vocabulary threshold of about 3000 word families or 5000 words is essential to effectively transfer L1 strategies to L2 reading. Indeed, a large sight vocabulary has been shown to enhance guessing from context (Laufer, 1996). Clearly, this evidence supports active teaching of vocabulary. Although direct vocabulary teaching has been out of favour recently, there is definitely reason to reassess arguments against it and to look for effective ways to balance vocabulary learning through direct instruction and incidental exposure.

#### **9.4.2- Word Analysis**

According to the literature, the majority of English words have been created through the combination of morphemic elements, that is, prefixes and suffixes with base

words and word roots. If learners understand how this combinatorial process works, they possess one of the most powerful understandings necessary to vocabulary growth. This understanding of how meaningful elements combine is defined as morphological knowledge because it is based on an understanding of morphemes, the smallest units of meaning in a language.

The technique consists in breaking down words into small elements: prefix, stem, and suffix. The students are then taught to find the meaning of an unknown word by breaking it into elements in order to obtain the meaning of the entire word. Prefixes are elements added at the beginning of a word, whereas suffixes are endings added to a word to produce another one.

Vocabulary items, whether one-word or multi-word, can often be broken down into component 'bits'. How these bits are put together is useful information. For example, the teaching of the common prefixes and suffixes; for example, if learners know the meaning of *-un* and *-able*, this will help them guess the meanings of words like *ungrateful* and *untranslatable*. They should, however, be warned that in many common words, the affixes no longer have any obvious connection with their root meaning such as *comfortable*.

Another way vocabulary items are built is by combining two words to make one item: a single compound word or two separate, sometimes hyphenated words such as *bookcase*, *follow-up* and *swimming pool*.

These aspects of word formation are important in vocabulary learning. They may contribute in helping students improve their vocabulary.

### **9.4.3. Using a Dictionary**

Using a dictionary was, at times, synonymous with laziness on the part of the students who were considered to be unwilling to use their own resources and guess the meaning by themselves. However, in certain situations, the dictionary can be a valuable support and be a quick way of finding information. This is, in fact, important especially for students learning outside the classroom; it gives them autonomy of learning.

The student is first encouraged to use word analysis and context clues to derive the meaning of unfamiliar words, applying these techniques, he will not stop reading; he will understand the meaning from the suffix or the prefix. If the student is not successful in obtaining the meaning in either of these ways, he could resort to the dictionary.

## **9.5- The Reading Skill**

Reading as stated in chapter two is regarded as the skill most students need. So, the objective of the English course should be to make the students able to read specialised literature in English, independently. In view of that, teachers should focus on the following sub-skills:

- 1- Skimming: It is the skill that helps the students read quickly and selectively in order to obtain a general idea of the material.
- 2- Scanning: It helps the students search quickly for the specific information they wish to get from the material.
- 3- Intensive Reading: It helps the reader look for details to support the main points picked out at the skimming level. This includes the



recognition of the main idea and its supporting details, vocabulary, and syntax recognition of cohesive elements and connectors.

- 4- Extensive Reading: It is the act of reading larger texts to develop the habit of reading with a global understanding. This is generally done for one's pleasure. Extensive reading is often rapid and silent.

## **9.6- The Teacher's Role**

The teacher has a crucial role to play in helping the students learn to read. It is the teacher who must stimulate interest in reading and help students that reading can be of real value to them through materials, as said earlier, which appeal to the students and are at the students' linguistic competence. As the materials read in class often do not provide students with enough practice in reading, outside class reading should be assigned. This will teach the students that reading is a useful experience that can provide them with interesting information. In guiding his students towards reading, the teacher will enable them to learn the language and discover the knowledge they look for through reading.

The teacher must show students how to grasp and set purposes in reading. He/she needs to model for students the use of strategies in dealing with the texts used in class and give them opportunities to talk about the strategies they use. Another important aspect to consider is the fact of giving students guided experience with different types of texts (structure) which can be very helpful to students as they learn from a wide variety of written materials. In addition to that, teachers have to help students activate their prior knowledge and apply it to the text read. Awareness of what a student know will help setting a purpose and making a plan. Concerning vocabulary,

teachers should build prior understanding of key vocabulary which is the terminology critical to understanding information on a specific topic. The teacher may start by exploring and activating prior knowledge to find out what students already know about the topic and try to relate the new information to something students already know and understand. Teachers need to provide students with a variety of strategies to use when trying to understand new vocabulary; they need to demonstrate to them that real understanding takes time. Meeting and understanding a new vocabulary word may take several exposures and varied contexts to really master it.

### **9.6.1- Teaching Procedures**

In the preceding sub-section, we have looked at the teacher's role in stimulating interest in the learners so that they develop reading abilities. Another aspect as important as the previous one is the teaching procedures. We suggest that the teacher follows pre-reading, while-reading and post reading activities. These latter will be essential aspects of the lesson.

#### **9.6.1.1- Pre-Reading Activity**

This activity introduces and raises interest in the topic. It also provides some language preparation for the text. In fact, it prepares the student to what they are going to read about. One way of achieving that is to ask them to anticipate about what the text deals with. It has to be mentioned that we have to make sure that the reading text does not contain too many unfamiliar words because this will make students lose interest. Before the student read the text, the subject is introduced orally by the teacher. This is known as the 'warming up'. The teacher may use certain of the vocabulary the students

will encounter in the text without explaining the words because certain of the following exercises will be dealing with that. He may also ask certain general questions referring to the students' experience with the subject matter. After that, the teacher may write a brief outline on the board, listing the different activities that will follow. This will give the students an awareness of what activities they are going to take part in and what will be expected from them.

In this activity (before reading), students have to set a purpose in reading, make a plan, activate prior knowledge of the topic, and make predictions about what will happen in the in the reading.

#### **9.6.1.2- While Reading Activity**

This activity consists in identifying the main ideas, finding details and inferring from context. It helps understanding the text structure and the writer's purpose. A paragraph will often, but not always, have a topic sentence. This is often a generalisation, exemplified and expanded in other sentences of the paragraph. If the student manages to identify the topic sentence, he will anticipate what is coming next in the text. Texts are handed out and students are asked to read silently. The questions which have been asked in the warming up will give students a purpose for reading and encourage them to read on until the end of the text. Through the different questions asked and the discussion that follows, students will use different strategies such as skimming and scanning.

In this activity (during reading), the student read the text, pauses and thinks about what he is reading, monitor his comprehension by rereading and looking for key

words, pauses and checks predictions, asks himself questions, pauses and summarizes in his head what he is reading.

### **9.6.1.3- Post-Reading Activity**

This activity checks the understanding of the reader. It is intended to help the learner consolidate and reflect upon what has been read by retelling the plot or main idea. For example, what the learner has read can be used as a model for his writing. The vocabulary will of course vary from one topic to another; however, the structure of the discourse will be similar. Comprehension questions, vocabulary and grammatical points included in the text may also be raised.

At this stage, students may be asked different types of questions (requiring short or complete answers) they have to answer within a time limit. Then, they may be divided into pairs and asked to compare their answers. At the end of this step, the teacher conducts a general discussion in which students give their answers to the questions and justify them by reference to the text.

After the basic reading practice is completed, the teacher may turn to vocabulary. One type of exercise to be used is to choose an unfamiliar word and encourage students to read what goes before and what goes after the word in question, and to try to find the clues leading to an acceptable interpretation of the word in that particular context. Another type of exercise is to provide students with a list of synonyms of certain words in the text and ask them to find the equivalent ones. This exercise not only helps expand student's vocabulary but also enables them to relate the meanings of words to the context.

As regards cohesion and comprehension, the teacher may use exercises about reference and make students establish relation between sentences or parts of sentences by having to identify the presupposed item. Then, he will give a list of words and ask students to write down the words referred to. Another exercise is to give a scrambled paragraph and ask students to rearrange its sentences so as to obtain a coherent piece of writing. This may be achieved by the recognition of relational signals which structure and organize the paragraph.

Finally, one important aspect to take into account is the time devoted to any of these activities. The teacher has to explain that he sets an approximate time for the activity in order to train the students to undertake their task within a specified time.

## **9.7- Teaching Vocabulary**

In foreign language teaching and learning, certain basic principles should be respected.

### **9.7.1- What Needs to Be Taught?**

#### **9.7.1.1- Form**

The learner has to know what a word sounds like (its pronunciation) and what it looks like (its spelling). These are two obvious characteristics that will be perceived by the learner when encountering an item for the first time. Teachers need to make sure that both these aspects are presented and learned because a word is better memorized when it is presented in both written and spoken form.

### 9.7.1.2- Grammar

The grammar of a new item will need to be taught. An item may have an unpredictable change of form in certain grammatical contexts. When teaching a new verb, for example, we might give also its past form if this is irregular. Similarly, when teaching a noun, we may wish to present its plural form if irregular, or draw learners' attention to the fact that it has no plural at all.

### 9.7.1.3- Aspects of Meaning: Denotation, Connotation,

#### Appropriateness

The meaning of a word is primarily what it refers to in the real world, its denotation: this is often the kind of definition that is given in the dictionary.

A less obvious component of the meaning of an item is its connotation: the associations, or positive or negative feelings it evokes, which may or may not be indicated in a dictionary. The word *dog*, for example, as understood by most British people, has positive connotations of friendship and loyalty; whereas the equivalent in Arabic, as understood by most people in Arab countries has its most extreme negative associations of dirt and inferiority.

If we consider the results obtained in sentence N° 7( I do not much like people who live next **door** to me), Exercise N° 1 of the test we carried out, we notice that the number of students who managed to find the right answer and the number of students who failed is the same (54). What is striking is the fact that among the students who failed, 53 answered '**room**' instead of '**door**'. As already explained in the comments of

the sentence, the choice of the word 'room' may have been influenced by the translation of the word into Arabic or French. The second reason may be the influence of culture of the mother language or the French language (*beit / chamber*), 'door' being specific to the English language. This can also be considered as a case of metonymy i.e. the substitution of one word for another with which it is associated.

A more subtle aspect of meaning that often needs to be taught is whether a particular item is the appropriate one to use in a certain context or not. Thus, it is useful for a learner to know that a certain word is very common, or relatively rare, or tend to be used in writing but not in speech, or is more suitable for formal than informal discourse.

#### **9.7.1.4- Aspect of Meaning: Meaning Relationships**

How the meaning of one item relates to the meaning of others can also be useful in teaching. There are various relationships: here are some of the main ones.

- 1- Synonyms: items that mean the same, or nearly the same; for example, *bright*, *clever*, *smart* may serve as synonyms of *intelligent*.
- 2- Antonyms: items that mean the opposite; for example, *rich* is an antonym of *poor*.
- 3- Hyponyms: items that serve as specific examples of a general concept; for example, *dog*, *lion*, *mouse* are hyponyms of *animal*.
- 4- Co-hyponyms or co-ordinates: other items that are the 'same kind of thing'; for example, *red*, *blue*, *yellow* and *green* are co-ordinates.

- 5- Super-ordinates: general concepts that 'cover' specific items; for example, *animal* is the super-ordinate of *dog*, *lion* and *mouse*.
- 6- Translation: words or expressions in the learners' mother tongue that are more or less equivalent in meaning to the item being taught.

## **9.9- Basic Principles and Practice in Vocabulary Instruction.**

In teaching foreign language vocabulary, certain basic principles should be respected. Teachers generally leave vocabulary learning to students and rarely teach vocabulary learning strategies. Dictionary skills especially are rarely taught and students are not encouraged to keep vocabulary notebooks. In addition, most vocabulary teaching is from the text with an emphasis on identifying and teaching single words rather than collocations or lexical phrases. Moreover, teachers often teach too many words at one time. This can only confuse students who get them all mixed up. Teachers generally favour rare words over common words with the assumption that the easy words are already known.

In teaching vocabulary, teachers should know that we do not learn a word from one meeting. Research tells us that the word has to be seen and/or heard between 5 and 16 times or more to be learned (Nation, 1990:14). The fact is that it is easier to forget a word than remember it. Memories of new words that are not met again soon are lost.

In word learning, there are two major stages: The first stage is matching the word spelling and pronunciation (form) with its meaning. When this is known, the student should then work on the deeper aspects of word knowledge such as the words it



goes with, whether it is formal or informal, whether it is spoken or written, its similarity to other words, its different meanings and so on.

In order to avoid such pitfalls, teachers should take into consideration the following principles:

- 1- Carefully select words to teach, with special focus on the most frequent and useful words as they carry the most meaning senses. Special attention should be given to words which are difficult to learn. Similarly, those which are relatively easy to learn should be introduced early to build a vocabulary base.
  
- 2- As we cannot guarantee that most words we teach will be remembered, it is therefore essential that the new words are repeated soon after the initial learning, and repeated at spaced intervals many times and in many contexts. Teachers have to find ways to ensure there are enough meetings with the words in order to be reinforced in students' memory. One way to achieve this goal is to assign reading out of class; students will be exposed to amounts of vocabulary which may allow them to discover collocations, as well as improving their reading fluency.
  
- 3- Teachers should recommend material which is not too difficult because students will not be able to guess successfully and easily add new knowledge to what they already know. In addition, the material that is a little easy is beneficial for language learning because students can improve their reading speed and fluency.

- 4- By teaching students how to learn vocabulary effectively, and use their dictionaries well, teachers will save a lot of time and will make students independent.

In following these principles, students will notice new words, or new features of words they already know as well as giving the students chances to internalize them and improve their vocabulary.

### **9.10- Motivation in the Foreign Language Classroom**

According to psychologists, one of the most important aspects in teaching is motivation. Teachers can use a certain number of strategies in order to motivate their students. As Dornyei (2001:116) notes: “Teachers skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness”.

Therefore, we may say that the skill in motivating students is of paramount importance. In view of that, two important conditions must be met in order to generate motivation:

- 1- Appropriate teacher behaviour and good teacher-student rapport.
- 2- A pleasant classroom atmosphere.

It is generally acknowledged that the teacher has a motivational influence on students. A key element is to establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the students, by means of talking to them on a personal level. This mutual trust can only lead to enthusiasm which will generate an interest in the subject matter.

As far as the pleasant atmosphere is concerned, learners' motivation will reach its peak in safe classroom climate in which students can express their opinions. To achieve that and to be motivated to learn, students need opportunities to learn and steady encouragement and support of their learning efforts. It is important that the teacher organise and manage the classroom as an effective learning environment. This can only ease students in their learning and help them overcome their anxiety.

To conclude, we may say that the feeling of satisfaction is a significant factor in reinforcing achievement behaviour on the part of the students.

## **9.11- Conclusion**

The pedagogical and psychological implications suggested in this chapter are intended to contribute to the reinforcement of the students' previous acquired knowledge of the language and are expected to make students able to master the different skills related to reading and vocabulary learning. We believe that they are very important in that they could contribute to help our students tackle texts and comprehend. Indeed, the mastery of lexical and grammatical patterns, text organisation and vocabulary strategies instruction will result in the improvement of comprehension.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The present research has been undertaken to identify the Foreign Language students' difficulties in learning English, more specifically in reading comprehension and vocabulary strategies students employ when they read a text, reading being the main means for the development of vocabulary. We ultimately suggest recommendations which will contribute to the improvement of the teaching / learning situation at the Foreign Language Department, University of Constantine, and hopefully if our research will be confirmed by other investigations in the area of vocabulary development and reading comprehension, to others departments of English as a Foreign Language in Algeria.

In the process of language learning, reading and vocabulary are of major importance. It is obvious that no language acquisition can take place without knowledge of vocabulary of the language in question. In our review of the literature, we observed that an increasing interest in lexical matters seems to be fully justified by the evidence of the importance of lexis in the functioning of language.

Considering the vital importance of vocabulary in foreign language learning, one expects that a detailed attention is given to it. An examination of the situation in the Foreign Language Department, however, shows that it is not the case.

The test we carried out had for ambition to shed light on certain of the difficulties our students are confronted with when learning English, with specific reference to reading, and to highlight the different strategies used by these students to understand vocabulary. Through the literature on vocabulary learning, researchers have investigated sensitivity to syntactic structure; they have shown that, rather than using

the syntactic and semantic cues in a text to integrate the meanings of the individual words, poor comprehenders seem to treat each word separately, and fail to identify its function. In addition to that, the test allowed us to check how our students deal with complex lexical units which are idiomatic to some degree. Translation, which we believe is one of the most important strategies used by our learners, was both confirmed by the results obtained in the test, and by the interview carried out; students acknowledged that translation is the mostly used strategy to understand vocabulary. Our students are greatly influenced by their mother tongue because they have the tendency to think in Arabic. This will be a hindrance to learning because of the difference between Arabic and English at the syntactic and semantic level. This obviously highlights the fact that students' difficulties are not only related to meaning but to syntax as well.

Considering the different results obtained in the test and in view of the different conclusions reached by exercise, two important aspects of vocabulary acquisition should be considered. The first aspect is concerned with the strategies adopted by students while learning and the second one relates to the areas of difficulty students face while reading and comprehending.

According to the published literature studied in our thesis, the reading skill is given great importance and is taken into account in every foreign language teaching situation. In addition, researchers have claimed that vocabulary knowledge is the single most important factor in reading comprehension. In any reading task, the meaning of a sentence depends on the words which occur in it, though the meaning of the sentence is not the same as the sum of the meaning of the individual words. Grammatical rules

encode the syntactic functions of words in the sentence and enable us to understand its message. If the meaning of the individual words in a sentence is known, it is generally possible to interpret the message of the sentence even if the structure of that sentence is unfamiliar. It is clearly acknowledged that vocabulary is an integral part of reading and comprehending. If students are taught more words, reading will be easier to them. Therefore, we may conclude by stating that reading fluency and text comprehension necessitate vocabulary instruction.

In addition to that, the different aspects of vocabulary revealed should be taken into consideration and introduced in the syllabus. This will help our students overcome the different problems they encounter when learning. As previously stated, the need for a vocabulary instruction is necessary to help students cope with the difficulties they face when reading. We believe that this instruction is very important in that it could contribute to help our students tackle texts and comprehend. Indeed, the mastery of lexical and grammatical patterns, text organisation and vocabulary will certainly result in the improvement of comprehension. If this is taken into account, it will obviously contribute to the improvement of students' level, and the learning / teaching situation prevailing.

As far as vocabulary instruction is concerned, teachers have a crucial role to play in motivating their students and accompanying them; they need to generate interest in the study thus creating a desire for learning. The pedagogical implications presented in the recommendations are intended to contribute to the reinforcement of the students' previous acquired knowledge of the language and are expected to make students able to master the different skills related to both reading and vocabulary. In the teaching of

reading, teachers must help students to read different texts at different rates, for different purposes. They may also have to teach students to read critically. Another role assigned to the teacher is to create a reading habit in the students, keeping in mind that reading is often a preliminary activity to other language activities such as writing. Teachers must facilitate the reading process by teaching strategies for learning words independently, including teaching morphological units, the use of dictionaries, and exploring the link between spelling and learning words. Teachers should develop and sustain students' interest in and curiosity about words.

Vocabulary is the door behind which lies a wealth of knowledge and teachers hold the key. It is imperative that teachers use the key to open the door not only to the wealth of knowledge but also to strategies that will serve learners throughout their life time.

Through our work, we tried to contribute to the improvement of the Foreign Language Department teaching / learning situation. Our research remains open to any further development that would deal with other areas of difficulty that we did not investigate. The reading speed is a crucial aspect of comprehension. There is some controversy in research; certain researchers studied in our thesis attribute students' reading problem to the fact that these students cannot read adequately in the native language. On the other hand, others attribute that to the fact that students do not have a large vocabulary and no automaticity in recognizing common combinations of words. The question is still open to discussion. One of the other skills closely related to reading comprehension is listening comprehension. Investigating this skill will surely contribute to improve the learning situation. Good phonics skills are, for example, prerequisite to reading comprehension. Students' training to become faster and more automatic at recognizing letter-sound correspondences and the sounding of words will end up with

the acquisition of fluency which is important for comprehension. Another important skill to be investigated is writing. Written language instruction helps with reading comprehension because it helps students understand the structure of the text. This can only be of great importance in improving the level of our students, and at the same time helping the teachers in their task which is not always of any rest.



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## APPENDIX I.

### Test

November 21<sup>st</sup> 2005

#### Look at the simple words below.

Head Foot Finger Hand Chair Room Door Book

All of them have more than one meaning. For example:

What's your **head** of department like? (= your boss)

When we last saw them, they were **heading** for the coast. (= going there)

Dinner there will cost you £ 50 a **head**. (= for each person)

#### I-Use one of the words on the list to fill the gap in each sentence.

- 1- There isn't enough ..... for 12 students in there.
- 2- Please don't ..... the fruit unless you're going to buy some.
- 3- He walked out of the café and left me to ..... the bill.
- 4- Could you ..... me those papers, please ?
- 5- We've asked Professor PLUM to .....the meeting.
- 6- You'll have to ..... early or there'll be no tickets left.
- 7- I don't much like the people who live next ..... to me.
- 8- With your ..... for figures, you ought to be an accountant.

#### II-Match the two parts of some common expressions to give the meanings shown on the right:

- |                     |                   |  |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| 1- Put up           | a- of the past    | = it's no longer true, doesn't exist now |
| 2 – Make            | b- the battle     | = you've solved 50% of the problem.      |
| 3- It's got nothing | c- in your notice | = say you intend to leave your job.      |
| 4- Hand             | d- with something | = tolerate something.                    |



5- For the time	e- in the right direction	= a (small) improvement.
6- A thing	f- a mess of it	= do something very badly.
7- That's half	g- time off	= be away from work
8- Pick up	h- to do with me	= I have no interest or responsibility
9- Take	i- where you left off	= start again in the same situation
10- A step	j- being	= temporarily

**III- In each of the following sentences, underline the phrase which could be replaced with the words shown below. The first one has been done for you.**

- 6- Let's hope that by the beginning of the next decade, pollution will be a thing of the past. **No longer exist.**
- 7- I'm not sure what tonight's program is called, but I think it's got something to do with Indian regional cookery. **A connection.**
- 8- Have you any idea what has become of Harry since he left the company so suddenly all those months ago? **Happened to**
- 9- They told me that the thing he really couldn't stand about being unemployed was sitting around all day with nothing to do. **Hated.**
- 10- Jane's away today. So, I'll have to ask you to stand in for her. **Replace.**
- 11- Look at the weather! It's ten to one half the staff will decide to stay away from work today! **Probable.**
- 12- By the time he has finished telling about the difficulties and dangers I would face on the journey, he had managed to put me right off going. **Discourage me from.**
- 13- Only somebody born and bred in New York can really understand the reasons for the strong emotions which are sometimes publicly expressed in that city. **From**
- 14- That report you sent me was just the job: it made it impossible for the directors to refuse to give me all the money I had asked for. **Perfect.**
- 15- A lot of people object to the idea that before a company sells a new product, they can try it out on animals to see if it is harmful. **Experiment.**

**IV- Certain words can be “missed out”, usually to avoid repetition. To understand what is being expressed, read the following sentences and answer the questions. The first one has been done for you.**

1- Many thousands of people pass through the main airport during the summer months, with most concentrated in the middle two weeks of August. What word could follow “most”? People.

2-Of all the changes we’ve experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. “Remarkable” What?

3-The elegance of Dublin’s 18<sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland’s capital. The city’s pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should appeal to any visitor. A- “Would be” What? B- What word or phrase could follow “two”?

4-The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980 s; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before “once”? B- What word could come after “place”? C- Does “to” belong to “go to”, or “to be seen”? D- What two words could be added before “to”?

5-Forget your roller-blades; this year’s fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is “not bad”? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year.

## APPENDIX II.

### Test with Answers

November 21<sup>st</sup> 2005

#### Look at the simple words below.

Head Foot Finger Hand Chair Room Door Book

All of them have more than one meaning. For example:

What's your **head** of department like? (= your boss)

When we last saw them, they were **heading** for the coast. (= going there)

Dinner there will cost you £ 50 a **head**. (= for each person)

#### I-Use one of the words on the list to fill the gap in each sentence.

1-There isn't enough ...**room**..... for 12 students in there.

2-Please don't **finger** the fruit unless you're going to buy some.

3-He walked out of the café and left me to **foot** the bill.

4-Could you **hand** me those papers, please?

5- We've asked Professor PLUM to **chair** the meeting.

6-You'll have to **book** early or there'll be no tickets left.

7-I don't much like the people who live next **door** to me.

8-With your **head** for figures, you ought to be an accountant.

#### II-Match the two parts of some common expressions to give the meanings shown on the right:

6- A thing	a- of the past	= it's no longer true, doesn't exist now.
7- That's half	b- the battle	= you've solved 50% of the problem.
4- Hand	c- in your notice	= say you intend to leave your job.
1- Put up	d- with something	= tolerate something.
10- A step	e- in the right direction	= a (small) improvement.
2 - Make	f- a mess of it	= do something very badly.
9- Take	g- time off	= be away from work
3- It's got nothing	h- to do with me	= I have no interest or responsibility
8- Pick up	i- where you left off	= start again in the same situation
5- For the time	j- being	= temporarily

**III- In each of the following sentences, underline the phrase which could be replaced with the words shown below. The first one has been done for you.**

1-Let's hope that by the beginning of the next decade, pollution will be a thing of the past. **No longer exist.**

2-I'm not sure what tonight's program is called, but I think it's got something to do with Indian regional cookery. **A connection.**

3-Have you any idea what has become of Harry since he left the company so suddenly all those months ago? **Happened to**

4-They told me that the thing he really couldn't stand about being unemployed was sitting around all day with nothing to do. **Hated.**

5-Jane's away today. So, I'll have to ask you to stand in for her. **Replace.**

6-Look at the weather! It's ten to one half the staff will decide to stay away from work today! **Probable.**

7-By the time he has finished telling about the difficulties and dangers I would face on the journey, he had managed to put me right off going. **Discourage me from.**

8-Only somebody born and bred in New York can really understand the reasons for the strong emotions which are sometimes publicly expressed in that city. **From**

9-That report you sent me was just the job; it made it impossible for the directors to refuse to give me all the money I had asked for. **Perfect.**

10-A lot of people object to the idea that before a company sells a new product, they can try it out on animals to see if it is harmful. **Experiment.**

**IV- Certain words can be “missed out”, usually to avoid repetition. To understand what is being expressed, read the following sentences and answer the questions. The first one has been done for you.**

1-Many thousands of people pass through the main airport during the summer months, with most concentrated in the middle two weeks of August. What word could follow “most”? People.

2-Of all the changes we’ve experienced over the past 50 years in our daily life, the development of shopping has been one of the most remarkable. “Remarkable” What? Change.

3-The elegance of Dublin’s 18<sup>th</sup> century streets would be a good reason to visit Ireland’s capital. The city’s pubs would be too; people there talk to you simply for the pleasure of making conversation. Combine the two, and you have a city that should appeal to any visitor. A- “Would be” What? B- What word or phrase could follow “two”? A good reason to visit Dublin / reason, aspect, attraction.

4-The Grand Theater is really worth a visit. Although once in danger of being pulled down, it was lovingly restored in the 1980 s; its bar is now the place fashionable people go to be seen. A- What two words could come before “once”? B- What word could come after “place”? C- Does “to” belong to “go to”, or “to be seen”? D- What two words could be added before “to”? a- it was; b- where; c- to be seen; d- in order.

5-Forget your roller- blades; this year’s fashionable means of transport is the motor scooter. Not bad for a 50-year-old invention. What is “not bad”? A- The motor scooter. B- The fact that it is fashionable this year. The fact that it is fashionable this year.

## RESUME

Dans le processus d'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, le vocabulaire est d'une importance capitale. Il est évident que l'acquisition d'une langue ne peut avoir lieu sans la connaissance du vocabulaire de la langue en question.

L'enseignement du vocabulaire est reconnu comme étant un aspect crucial de la compréhension écrite. A travers notre expérience d'enseignant, nous avons remarqué que le problème le plus important rencontré par les apprenants des langues étrangères (Anglais) était le vocabulaire. Les spécialistes de la compréhension écrite maintiennent que pour être un lecteur mature, il est nécessaire d'aller au-delà de l'identification des mots pour comprendre un texte.

Les étudiants attribuent toujours leur manque de compréhension d'un texte aux mots qu'ils ne comprennent pas dans le texte. Leur souhait est de maîtriser un maximum de vocabulaire pour pouvoir accéder à la compréhension.

L'objet principal de la thèse est d'examiner comment les apprenants d'une langue étrangère, en l'occurrence l'Anglais, construisent leur vocabulaire dans cette langue. Nous sommes plus spécifiquement concernés par les stratégies de lecture qu'ils emploient quand ils lisent un texte dans la langue étrangère, la lecture étant le moyen principal pour le développement du vocabulaire.

Notre but est d'essayer de trouver la stratégie la plus appropriée qui s'adapte au contexte de nos apprenants et d'introduire des stratégies d'apprentissage du vocabulaire adéquates de manière à développer leur vocabulaire et leur compréhension. En fait, une approche éclectique sera mieux d'améliorer cet apprentissage et de le développer afin de donner beaucoup plus de chance à nos étudiants d'avoir accès à la littérature d'expression anglaise dans tous les domaines.

## ملخص

لا يستطيع المرء أن يبالغ في وصف مدى قدرة الكلمات. ربما تكون أعظم الوسائل التي نستطيع أن نزود بها الطلبة، ليس في إطار تكوينهم فحسب و إنما، بصفة أعم، في حياتهم، هي حوصلة لغوية كبيرة و ثرية. يقدم هذا البحث تقريراً عن أهمية الحوصلة اللغوية في إنجازات القراءة. تقديم تعليم بغرض إثراء الحوصلة اللغوية إحدى أنجع الطرق التي يستطيع المدرسون بواسطتها تحسين فهم الطلبة لما يقرؤون. لا يستطيع القراء فهم ما يقرؤون دون أن يعرفوا معاني معظم الكلمات المكونة للنص. على وجه الخصوص، تعكس حوصلة لغوية كبيرة مستويات عالية من الإنجاز في ميدان القراءة.

تم إجراء هذه الدراسة في قسم اللغات الأجنبية، كلية الآداب و اللغات، جامعة منتوري (قسنطينة). تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث و تحليل المشاكل المختلفة التي تعترض الطلبة خلال التعلم ذي العلاقة الوطيدة بالقراءة و الحوصلة اللغوية. يتساءل هذا البحث عموماً حول الكيفية التي يعالج بها الطلبة المعلومات الجديدة و حول نوعية استراتيجيات تحصيل المفردات التي يستعملونها لفهم و تعلم المعلومة. لإنجاز هذه الدراسة، تم اختبار الطلبة كتابياً ثم استجوابهم شفهيًا، الشيء الذي أظهر مواضع الصعوبة للطلبة خلال القراءة و كذا أهمية تحصيل المفردات. تظهر النتائج المحصل عليها في التمارين الأربعة المكونة للإختبار الكتابي أن الطلبة تحصلوا على علامات ضعيفة في ثلاثة من هذه التمارين (التمارين 1، 2 و 4). تم التأكد من هذه النتائج من خلال المقابلة الشفهية.

انطلاقاً من النتائج المحصل عليها، تم تقديم بعض التوصيات لمساعدة الطلبة على التغلب على المشاكل التي تعيقهم، بهدف تحسين مهارة

القراءة لديهم ، و أخرى لمساعدة المدرسين في مهمة تطوير مهارة  
القراءة و إثراء الخوصلة اللغوية لدى طلبتهم .