Journal of Translation and Languages مجلة الترجمة واللغات
ISSN : 1112-3974

German Language Students and The English Language

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Abstract: *The main objective of writing this research paper is to deal with the factors that affect the acquisition of the English language in the educational system in Algeria. The most effective way to raise educational standards begins with teaching quality to affect the learners' readiness in society and aligning with national aspirations and economic development. Being an international language, English has occupied a prominent position in the Algerian educational system. However, the specialty of German studies at the university tends to neglect the use of the English language. The students are acquainted to a new situation when their encounter with the teacher of English is limited to one hour and a half per week. To what extent could the time table and coefficient impact the acquisition of the English language for the German language students? To carry out the research, a qualitative approach was conducted relying on the two following methods: observation and a group interview. Through these two methods, the collected data were collected and then analysed; they constituted the findings of our research paper.*
Keywords: *Algerian students, coefficient, learning English, time table.*
Résumé : *L'objectif principal de la rédaction de cet article est de traiter des facteurs qui affectent l'acquisition de la langue anglaise dans le système éducatif en Algérie. Le moyen le plus efficace d'élever les normes éducatives commence par la qualité de l'enseignement pour influer sur la préparation des apprenants dans la société et s'aligner sur les aspirations nationales et le développement économique. Etant une langue internationale, l'anglais a occupé une place prépondérante dans le système éducatif algérien. Cependant, la spécialité des apprenants en études allemandes à l'université tend à négliger l'usage de la langue anglaise. Ils se trouvent face à une nouvelle situation ; leur rencontre avec le professeur d'anglais est limitée à une heure et demie par semaine. Dans quelle mesure l'emploi du temps et le coefficient pourraient-ils avoir un impact sur l'acquisition de la langue anglaise pour ces étudiants ? Pour mener à bien la recherche, une analyse qualitative a été réalisée en s'appuyant sur les deux méthodes suivantes : l'observation et l'entretien collectif. Grâce à ces deux méthodes, les données ont été collectées puis analysées ; ils constituaient les conclusions de notre document de recherche.*
Mots clés : *apprendre l'Anglais**,** coefficient, emploi du temps, etudiants Algeriens.*

1. Introduction

Algeria has witnessed educational reforms since 2002 to improve the educational system from the primary school till the tertiary level. It has always tried to bridge educational studies and professionalism and to help the learners to transit to the world of work. These reforms have implementd changes in the teaching practice. The school plays an important role in the individuals life. It is the funnel through which the learners go inevitably to meet their objectives and needs. The diplomas are supposed to secure a work position, hence: a higher social status for the learner. English as always introduced alongside French as first foreign language.

The Ministry of National Education supervises primary, middle and secondary education while the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research are in charge of the tertiary level.

At the end of the third year, the pupils sit for the baccalaureate exam. Their admission to the tertiary education is based on passing the exam. They have to show their performance in all the subjects with a scoring scale starting from 10 till 20.

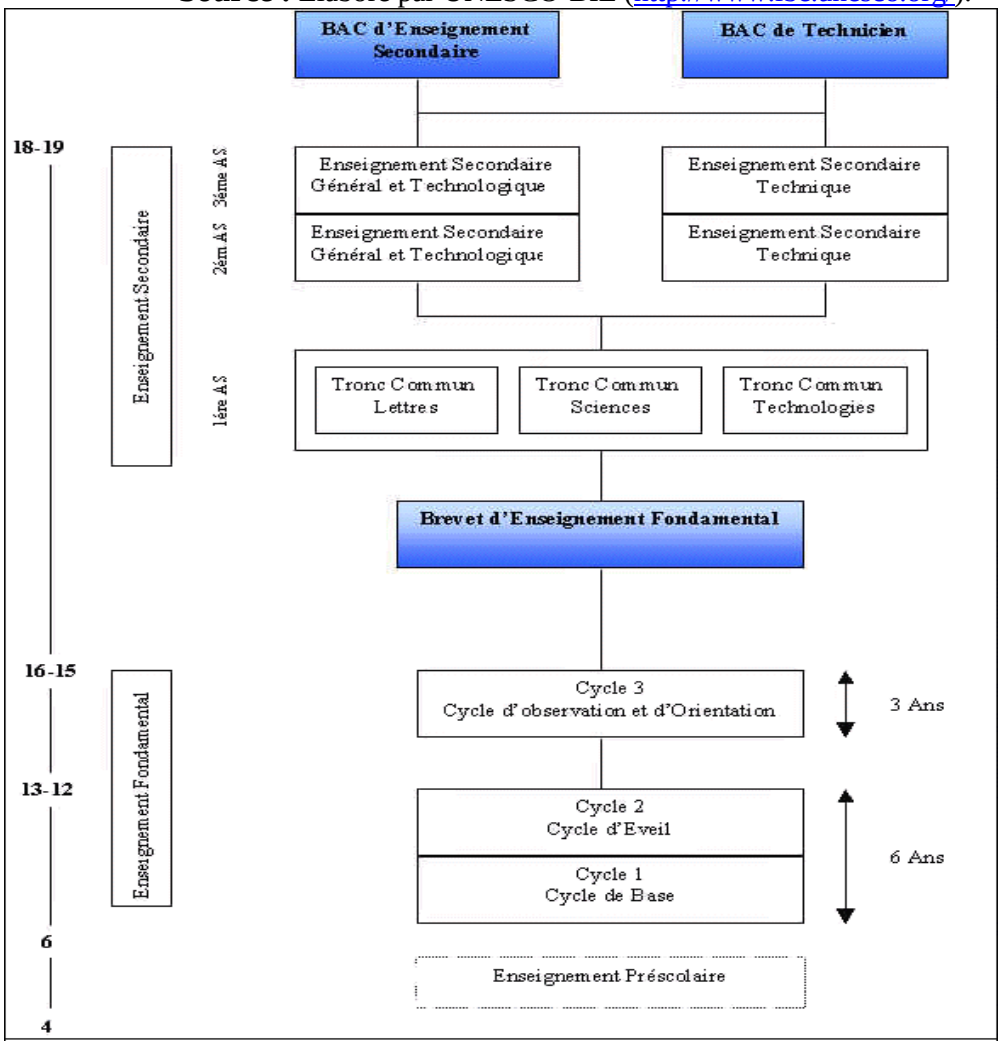
> McGinnnis et al. (1995) argue that "students should be involved in the creation of rules. At this point, communication between teacher and student is of utmost importance." (p. 222). This means that building good relationship with students is necessary. Weinstein (2007) Chapter Three: Classroom Management. 98 maintains that "when students perceive their teachers to be supportive and caring, they are more likely to engage in cooperative, responsible behavior and adhere to classroom rules and norms" (p. 7).

Inviting the students to engage thoughtfully with the complex situation enables them to reflect on their learning. When an experience challenges them and they are given the opportunity to reflect their interest and make their voices heard, they will feel valued and respected.

In Algeria, the education system allows the mastery of at least two foreign languages as an opening to the world and a means of access to documentation and exchanges with foreign cultures and civilisations; At the level of secondary education, provided in high schools, general secondary education and technological secondary education are included. The duration of studies is three years. General and technological secondary education is organized into streams; it can be organized into common cores in the first year (literature, science, technology) and into streams from the second year. The end of secondary education studies witnesses the secondary education baccalaureate exam for the general and technological secondary education streams and by the technician baccalaureate for the technical secondary education streams. Figure 1 states clearly the Algerian education system in the high school.

Figure 1. Structure and organization of the education system in Algeria

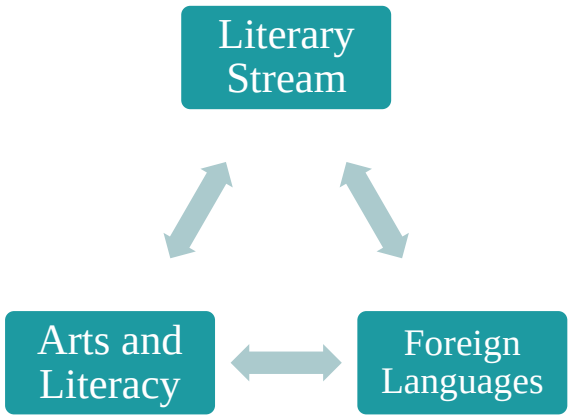
Source : Elaboré par UNESCO-BIE (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/).



2. Teaching English to Literary Classes

In Algeria, the learners who pass the BEM (Brevet de l'Enseignement Moyen) exam are initiated to fulfill the high school level which comprise a period of time of three years. The learners are devided up on the basis of previous educational achievement. The ones who get good grades in Arabic literature, history, geography besides French as a second language and English as the third language are introduced to the literary stream. This specialty attributes more timing and coefficient to English. During the first year they are provided a common core curriculum. They study English for three hours per week with a coefficient estimated at 2. Based on their end year assessment, the learners who get good grades in English, they are enrolled in foreign language classes. The Arabic literature involves the ones who prove to be better at Arabic literature, history and geography. Figure 1 states the streaming of the literary classes after fulfilling a one-year period of common core studies.

Figure 2. The Streaming at the end of first year studies

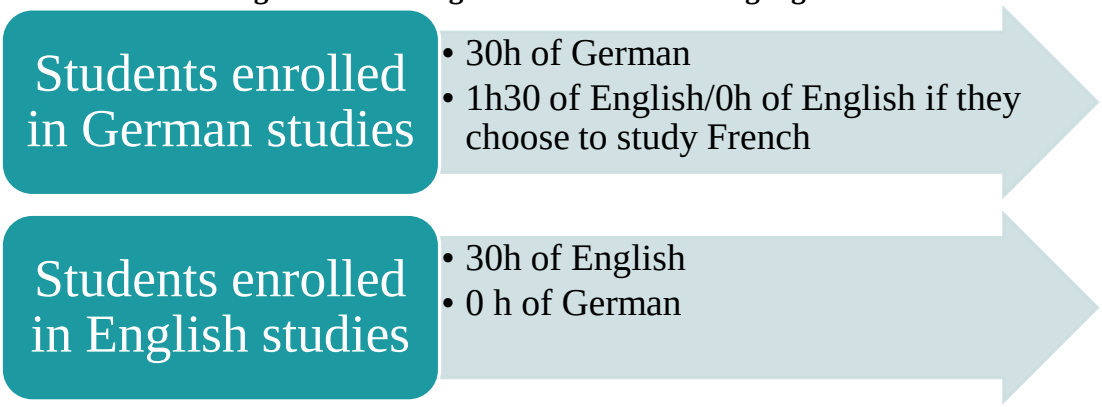


Source. Elaborated by the article's writer

During the two years of the foreign languages' specialty, much focus is put on the acquisition of the languages. Besides French, considered the second language after Arabic, they switch between two foreign languages: English and German and the timing allowed for each of them is four hours a week**.** This makes a balance in timing leading to a homogeneous language acquisition. The school uses a predominance of English and German respectively. The appropriate use of both languages is the key factor in the implementation of bilingual education program.

Once at the university, the ones who become specialized in English, and who were probably good or average at German, will never study German at all. The ones for whom German is the field of specialty, and who were probably good or average at English, will study it for 1 hour and thirty minutes a week, if they choose it; that's to say some choose to study French instead of English, so they will never meet English at all in their university studies. Figure 2 illustrates the given data.

Figure 3. Teaching hours for German language students



Source: Elaborated by the article's writer

The instructional time of teaching English is either little or absent though it is necessary in the language learning performance of an international language. The language gains that were made during the high / secondary school will diminish or vanish. During the group interview with sixty students, the students speak out their inner thoughts saying they refused to stop learning English and that they preferred to master it instead.

3. The Influence of Time on the Acquisition of a Foreign Language

Our culture is rich with words of wisdom on the subject of time that advise us about the time usage. It is related mainly to ability, acquisition and aptitude. Needless to say, that the educational time factors affect the students' outcomes. Besides the school and class room time there is the instructional time. A clear definition of the latter is stated in the following quote*:" The portion of classroom time spent teaching students' particular knowledge, concepts, and skills pertaining to school subjects (i.e., excludes routine procedural matters, transitions, and discipline)"*. (Cotton, 1989:2)

When dealing with the time allocated to the English language teaching, the students compalin about its littlness besides some other factors like; absenteeism, and tardies and, closures due to holidays and strikes. Most researchers like Wiley (1974) and Kidder (1975) have found a positive relationship between the time spent on a subject and the learner's achievement. Students' performance depends upon the time provided to learn.

Figure 4 illustrates the secondary education; first year called the common core and the weekly timetable by subject in Algeria. The correlated writing in yellow indicates the provided time for studying English during the first-year studies in the literary stream.

Figure 4. Common core (first year): weekly schedule by discipline

Matières	**Nombre d'heures par semaine dans chaque filière**		
	Lettres	**Sciences**	**Technologie**
Langue arabe	5+1	3+1	3+1
Mathématiques	2+1	4+1	4+1
Histoire/géographie	4	3	3
Education islamique	2	2	2
Dessin et technologie	–	–	4
Sciences naturelles	1+1	2+2	–
Sciences physiques	0+1	3+2	3+2
Langue étrangère 1	3+1	2+1	2+1
Langue étrangère 2	2+1	1+1	1+1
Langue étrangère 3	–	–	–
Informatique (*)	1	1	1
Dessin ou musique	1	1	1

Education physique et sports	2	2	2
Total hebdomadaire	**31h**	**32h**	**32h**

Source: MEN, 2004.

After passing to the second year, they are initiated to specialize either in arts and literature or foreign languages. the criterion of orientation towards foreign languages is based on the marks obtained in English since they did not study German during the common core of their previous studies. Figure 5 contends this given interpretation.

Figure 5. Literary streams (second and third years): weekly schedule by discipline

Matières	**Nombre d'heures par semaine**					
	Lettres et sc. humaines		**Lettres et sc. islamiques**		**Lettres et langues vivantes**	
	2e	**3e**	**2e**	**3e**	**2e**	**3e**
Langue et littérature arabe	6	7	4	4	4	4
Mathématiques	2	2	2	2	2	2
Histoire/géographie	4	4	4	4	4	4
Sciences islamiques	2	–	5	5	2	–
Philosophie	2	7	2	5	2	5
Langue étrangère 1	4	3	4	3	4	4
Langue étrangère 2	3	3	3	3	4	4
Langue étrangère 3	–	–	–	–	3	4
Sciences naturelles	1+0	–	1+0	–	1+0	–
Sciences physiques	1+0	–	1+0	–	1+0	–
Dessin ou musique	2	–	2	–	2	–
Education physique et sports	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total hebdomadaire	**29 h**	**28 h**	**30 h**	**28 h**	**31 h**	**29 h**

Source : MEN, 2004. Les coefficients ne sont pas inclus

4. The Impact of the Coefficient on the Learners' Ability of Learning

The coefficient is a number attributed to the subject. It reflects the importance of the in the year scoring scale. This numerical index of reliability contributes in the assessment of the students' results. The coefficient that is attributed to English in Algeria differs from one stream to another. At the level of third year studies at high

school, the learners enrolled in Art & Literature stream the coefficient attributed to English is 3 similar to French (see table 1).

Table 1. Art & Literature Stream / Third year

Subject	Coefficient
Foreign language 1(French)	3
Foreign language 2 (English)	3

Source: Ministerial Decree- N-382-19 May 2007.

If the learners are sent to foreign languages class, the coefficient of English becomes of a more significant importance since it moves upward to 5 (see table 2). Learners allocate much importance to the subject due to its elevated coefficient. It is of one's duty to reveal that at the beginning of each year, the students ask about the coefficient of each subject and classify them in their minds accordingly; subjects with high coefficient are considered 'essential' and come before 'the complementary' ones.

Table 2. Foreign Languages Stream / Third year

Subject	Coefficient
Foreign language 1(French)	5
Foreign language 2 (English)	5
Foreign language 3 (German)	4

Source: Ministerial Decree- N-382-19 May 2007

At the university level, if these students of foreign languages are oriented (sometimes against their will) to specialize in German civilization, the coefficient of English degrades to (01).

5. Conclusion

Assessment allows the teacher, by appaling to a djudgment that is based on data or observations collected beforehand, to take the necessary regulatory decisions. Techniques such as classroom observation and interviews are required to correct and adjust any complex situation. The case study of the streaming in the department of German civilization studies reveals the neglect of the English language acquisition. Students speak English disfluently and, meet difficulties in thinking in English. Interests and needs of the learners have to be respected.

Coefficient of variation and the time allowed for teaching English should be reviewed with due consideration of the weighing factor that the learners credit to them. These two factors may be considered unessential or are not taken into consideration when designing the foreign language learning process.

The data collection offers essential information to understand the process of foreign language learning, as it gathers the experience and learning accumulated by the teacher who took part in this work, which implies direct information from the educational reality.

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