

## **Developing a Self-access Centre for the LMD Programme**

### **I) Introduction**

The educational system in Algeria has recently witnessed different changes from primary to university levels. At university level, the most recent change is the introduction of the L.M.D (Licence / Master / Doctorat) programme which started in 2004. Through this reform, the ministry aims at a better university training with the adequate qualifications that allow the students to join the workforce and satisfy the needs of the socio-economic sector.

In the LMD language teaching, at the 'Licence' level, the programme is composed of teaching units (70%) and individual work (30%). In terms of practice, the units are organised and presented in a more or less satisfactory way.

However, the organisation of individual work is not appropriately done - the students are left on their own to do whatever activity they like - or is inexistent (it has not been planned yet in the programme).

Therefore, in the present paper, we suggest to develop a self-access area – as a space for individual work, to complement what students do in class. As such, and for a better mastery of the language, we help the students to move from non-members to members of the target discourse community. Thus, a description of such a space and its organisation will be given, together with some suggested activities to develop the students' motivation.

### **II) The L.M.D Reform**

The main objective of the introduction of the L.M.D at university level is to provide the students with a better training and to answer the needs of the socio-economic sector. To reach such an objective, the institution had to reorganise its teaching through four main points<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Le système LMD se caractérise par :

1. une nouvelle architecture des enseignements,
  2. une réorganisation des enseignements,
  3. des contenus des programmes pédagogiques innovants,
  4. l'évaluation et habilitation des offres de formations.
- (La réforme des enseignements: Le système LMD, 2008: 1 )

- a) A new architecture of the teaching programmes;
- b) A re-organisation of the teaching programmes;
- c) Innovating teaching programmes;
- d) Evaluation and entitlement of the training programmes (offres de formation) (La réforme des enseignements: Le système LMD, 2008:1)

In this paper, we shall focus on the first two points (a / b).

**‘A new architecture of the teaching programme’** and **‘a reorganisation of the teaching programme’** at university level through the introduction of the LMD system have entailed the division of the teaching programme into:

- teaching units (70%) of the teaching time, and
- Personal work (30%) of the teaching time.

(Enseignement présentiel et travail personnel).

Through these two innovations (a / b), the methodologists have been interested in classroom implications and applications.

In LMD language teaching, the ‘Licence’ programme has also seen the introduction of new components such as : TIC (Technologies de Communication et d’Information), Méthodologie de la Recherche, etc.

As such we do not teach / learn only content i.e. ‘competence’, but we should also develop ‘performance’. This newly introduced approach is related to “goal-orientation theory”. As Ames (1992) summarises, the theory “goal-orientation theory” highlights 2 contrasting achievement goal constructs, or orientations, that students can adopt towards their academic work:

- They can follow a mastery orientation and pursue mastery goals (also labelled as task-involvement or learning-goals) with **the focus on learning the content**; or
- They can follow a **performance orientation** in pursuit of performance goals (or ego-involvement goals) with the focus on demonstrating ability, getting good grades, or outdoing other students. (Ames (1992) in Dornyei: 1998: 121).

*“Demonstrating ability, getting good grades and even outdoing other students”* to get adequate qualifications, are some of the training objectives of the new Algerian reform.

As stated in the introduction of this paper, the teaching units are organised and presented in a more or less satisfactory way. However, the organisation of individual work is inexistent, or is not appropriately done - the learners are left on their own to do whatever activity they like. This fact may be demotivating for learners.

Motivation is crucial in language learning and *“has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second / foreign language (L2) learning.”* (Dornyei, 1998: 117)

Dornyei also added that *“Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching.”* (Dornyei, 1998: 117)

Therefore, in this paper we suggest to develop a self-access area where students can work independently of their teachers, but in a more organised way to stimulate enough motivation.

### **III) The Self-Access Centre (Definition / organisation)**

- a) **Definition:** Self-access centres are implemented to develop self-access language learning. This latter promotes the approach where students study independently choosing from among different sources that are available.

Self-access language learning is closely related to learner-centred approach, learner autonomy and self-directed learning. All these approaches focus on student responsibility and active participation for his / her own learning.

#### **b) Organisation (Types and Examples)**

There are several types of self-access centres throughout the world. Their organisation can range from very simple to more sophisticated.

##### **- Simple self-access centres**

A classroom set aside with dictionaries and shelves of paper-based exercises.

##### **- More sophisticated self-access centres**

Digital centres with various types of computer – and Internet-based resources.

### **Types of self-access centres**

- Fully independent learning: self-directed learning where teachers act as counsellors;
- Semi-guided learning: Tutors are available to give academic and psychological support;
- Self-access centre combined with English-language writing centre (e.g. Taiwan Universities).

To implement one type of self-access centre or the other, depends on what financial resources an institution has.

### **Examples of self-access centres**

- Self-access centres in British and American universities;
- The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST);
- Taiwan Universities;
- The KELP Project (Kanda English Language Proficiency) / Kanda University in Japan which includes a self-access centre and traditional classroom activities.
- Online self-access learning (The University of Auckland's electronic learning environment);
- 'My English' in Bangkok.

#### **IV) Self-access centres for the LMD programme**

In this part, we specify the use of the self-access centres in Algerian universities.

##### **a) Aims and objectives: Autonomy and motivation**

Throughout the world, the 1990s was the decade that brought a revival of interest in L2 motivation. Benson & Voller, 1997; Dickinson, 1995; Ehrman & Dornyei, 1998; Ushioda, 1996b provide evidence that L2 motivation and learner autonomy go hand in hand, that is,

enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their learning (...) and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies, rather than to factors

outside their control. » (Benson *et al.*, in Dornyei, 1998: 124)

In the same line of thought, Ushioda (1996b: 2) explicitly states “*Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners.*”(in Dornyei, 1998: 124)

Therefore and following that revival, it was thought in 2004 – we would think- that by introducing ‘travail personnel’ in the “Licence” programme, the Algerian authorities aimed at fostering learner autonomy in foreign language classrooms. By fostering learner autonomy, we increase learners’ motivation.

### **b) Types of self-access centres for the LMD programme**

To implement a self-access centre for the LMD programme in Algerian universities, we would suggest to start with:

- **simple self-access centres:** a room set aside with paper-based exercises where students can work independently of the teacher or with the teacher if s/he is available.

Teachers will have to develop materials dealing with language learning / teaching items (grammar, punctuation, etc.) and activities for communicative purposes.

Each exercise / activity should be supplied with an answer key so that students can correct the activity they have done and evaluate themselves.

Self-access activities provide opportunities for self-evaluation and progress in learning.

The self-access centre needs the collaboration of all teachers of the department, each teacher contributing in his/her own field. (Belkhenchir, 2006: 185)

- **More sophisticated self-access centres**

With the budget allotted to the LMD programme and the recent implementation of sophisticated language laboratories and Internet rooms in most of the Algerian universities, we hope that in the near future, more sophisticated self-access centres would see the light.

### **c) Suggested activities**

The language centre provides the English component, in which you learn the language skills needed for effective academic study.

According to Dornyei “*course specific motivational components are related to the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks.*” (Dornyei, 1998 : 125)

The four components (*the syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning tasks*) are dealt with in the classroom. However, more emphasis is to be put on the activities / tasks in self- access learning.

In self-access learning, teachers have to focus on the learning tasks. In order to develop such tasks, teachers usually want to know how they can intervene, that is, what activities they need to develop to motivate their learners.

Depending on the learners’ level and needs / goals, as well as on the institution resources, the activities vary from paper-based to computer and Internet activities.

### **Types of activities:**

- a) E.A.P Practice materials: general practice in the language to develop one skill or more (Reading / writing / speaking or listening);
- b) Academic writing: a series of exercises to help students in their essay and dissertation writing, with suggested answers and comments.
- c) Video: watch lectures given to language students, documentaries and presentations, and give comments.
- d) Computer activities: these are necessary because they allow interaction (Student / the activity on the computer).

### **V) Advantages / disadvantages of self-access centres**

Self-access centres have advantages as well as disadvantages.

#### **a) Advantages**

- New working environment: The learner decides what to learn and how ;
- Students can use these centres voluntarily or can have assignments to complete there;

- A chance to be one's own boss: Learners do the work in their own pace and in their own time;
- Learners report feeling more "empowered" by such modes of instruction;
- Learners use technologies to work independently to improve their motivation.

**b) Disadvantages**

- Difficulty of both teachers and students to adapt / integrate the method effectively;
- Learners do not seem to want 'too much' freedom;
- Teachers lose their 'all-powerful' and 'all-knowing' position.

All the above information could be summarised in the following table (next page).

**VI) Conclusion**

In the present paper, we have tried to shed light on self-access centres used throughout the world by specifying their organisation and types, and by suggesting different kinds of activities.

It is hoped that self-access centres - as a space for students' individual work- will be implemented in the Algerian universities. It is also hoped that the suggested activities will be put into practice in the "Licence" programme for a better quality training.

## The Self-access Centre: Autonomy and Motivation

| Definition                                                                                                                                                 | Organisation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Types                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Advantages / Disadvantages                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>- To develop self-access language learning : an approach where students study independently choosing from among various sources that are available.</p> | <p>-Simple: a classroom organisation with dictionaries / books and paper-based exercises / activities;</p> <p>-More sophisticated: digital centres with computer –and Internet-based resources.</p> <p>(To implement one type or the other depends on what financial resources an institution has).</p> | <p>-Fully independent learning: self-directed learning where teachers act only as counsellors.</p> <p>- Semi-guided Learning: Tutors are available to give academic and psychological support.</p> <p>-- Self-access centre combined with English-language writing centre. (Taiwan universities)</p> | <p>-The Hong Kong University Of Science and Technology / HKUST);</p> <p>-Taiwan universities;</p> <p>-The KELP Project: Kanda English Language Proficiency/Kanda University in Japan (self-access centre +traditional classroom activities).</p> <p>-Online self-access learning The University of Auckland's electronic learning environment.</p> <p>-My English / Bangkok.</p> | <p>They vary from paper-based to computer and Internet activities.</p> <p>-EAP Practice materials; general practice in the language (reading / writing and listening);</p> <p>-Academic writing: a series of exercises to help learners in essay and dissertation, with suggested answers and comments.</p> <p>-Video: watch lectures given / documentaries and presentations.</p> <p>-Computer activities</p> | <p><b>Advantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new learning environment;</li> <li>- To be one's own boss: do it your own pace and in your own time.</li> <li>- Students use self-access voluntarily or complete assignments there.</li> <li>- Students use technologies to improve motivation to work independently.</li> <li>- Students report feeling more « empowered » by such modes of instruction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- difficulty of both teachers and students to adapt/integrate method effectively.</li> <li>- Students don't seem to want too much freedom;</li> <li>- Teachers: lose their « all-powerful » and « all-knowing » position</li> </ul> |



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