



## Analyzing learners' failure in the mastery of foreign languages: A study of the causes in secondary schools in the south of Algeria

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### Abstract

Since globalization is the process of international integration of businesses and organizations worldwide, this interchange of businesses, cultures, and ideas has had a dramatic impact on education and languages' learning. Thus, acquiring foreign languages is seen amongst the prior competencies that learners should possess in the current era of globalization.

In Algeria, both French and English has been made part of the educational system for teaching foreign languages. Despite the great efforts made by Algerian policymakers, in addition to the measures taken by the Ministry of National Education, to improve the

teaching foreign languages in Algerian schools and raise the level of pupils and help them master these languages, pupils are unable to acquire a good mastery of foreign languages, especially in the South of Algeria where pupils fail to achieve a good command of English and French. In fact, their academic results in exams prove this reality.

Using a descriptive approach, the present paper attempts to analyze the learners' failure in the mastery of foreign languages, both English and French. The researcher uses both teachers' and pupils' questionnaire which are administered in secondary schools in five wilayas of the South of

Algeria; namely, Adrar, Bechar, Biskra, El Oued, and Ouargla, to investigate the causes behind learners' failure to master both French and English. Additionally, the present research provides some recommendations to overcome the difficulties encountered by learners in learning foreign languages.

**Keywords:** Foreign languages, learners, secondary schools, South of Algeria.

### \* INTRODUCTION

As a societal phenomenon, language is a distinctly human communication process that aims at transmitting ideas, thoughts, and feelings among community members. Whether spoken or written, language communication allows us to share our views, opinions, feelings, and emotions with other people.

Currently, world societies are multilingual where people learn and speak more than one language, besides their mother tongue. Learning a second/ or a foreign language is a key to self- improvement, and provides knowledge and awareness of world cultures. Amongst the benefits of learning foreign languages are (1) fostering of skills, (2) developing of cognitive abilities, (3) improving

creativity and critical thinking skills, and (4) strengthening of conceptualization and reasoning.

Learning a foreign language is an intuitive aspect of human beings. It is a means by which human beings, at an early age, discover a new language with a new vocabulary and grammar, which other members of society use. Therefore, learning a foreign language allows learners to acquire new meanings, utterances, thoughts and ideas. Meanwhile, it creates opportunities for them to communicate and exchange these ideas and words with foreigners.

It is worth mentioning that globalization and technological revolution have affected world countries. Since Algeria is no exception, Algerian policymakers have made great efforts to develop education and learning by improving its human capital and reviewing pedagogical problems so that learning objectives will be achieved.

Improving the teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially English and French, is amongst the crucial pedagogical issues in the Algerian school. It is worth recalling that both languages make it part of the Algerian educational

curriculum because of their global status. On the one hand, the French language is considered the colonizer's language because of its historical roots. It is taught at the primary level since educational reforms. On the other hand, the English language has a global status; it is the world language of science and technology and communication among countries and people worldwide. The current Algerian curriculum teaches the English language at the primary level.

However, despite educational reforms and efforts made by Algerian policymakers, Algerian learners in secondary schools, especially in the south of Algeria, find difficulties in the mastery of English and French languages. These difficulties might be related to pedagogical issues, such as teaching curricula and methods, or the learners themselves or their social milieu. Therefore, learning difficulties in English and French constitute current educational issues in the Algerian school since our learners find problems in mastering these languages.

Within this perspective, the present paper attempts to analyze the learning difficulties in foreign languages encountered by learners of

secondary schools in the south of Algeria. It addresses the following questions:-

- 1- What are the different learning difficulties of learners in foreign languages at the secondary school level?
- 2- Are these difficulties related to the school environment or other external issues?
- 3- Is the social milieu responsible for these learning difficulties?

The purpose of the present study is to:-

- 1- Highlight the crucial learning difficulties which hinder Algerian pupils in the south of Algeria in their process of mastery of foreign languages;
- 2- Propose solutions that might help solve foreign language learning difficulties.

#### \* **Definition of foreign language**

People try to acquire more languages besides their mother tongue. According to **Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982)**, 'Over a billion people in the world speak more than one language fluently' (p. 9). Amongst the reasons why people acquire another language are as follows:-

- 1- Some of them have to acquire the language of another group of people

living in the same country as themselves,

2- some have migrated to a different country and, in order to succeed in dealing with challenges of everyday life, they must become more or less fluent speakers of the language spoken in that country,

3- Others just wish to be able to use resources only available in a foreign language, make themselves understood when they travel abroad or simply understand the culture of other nations.

A language is termed *foreign* if it is learned largely in school classrooms and is not spoken by the entire community members. A foreign language refers to L2 when it does play a social role in the learners' community. i. e. when there is no social need to use a language inside a community. This is the case of French in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK).

A foreign language is different from a person's mother tongue which is learned consciously. i. e. It is that language that a child will not know and is typically not a language that is native to him. It is; however, learned in public and private schools beginning from grade 8. It is that language which

is studied in addition to one's mother tongue in a context where the target language is neither the official language nor used for communicative purposes.

A foreign language is a language not widely spoken and used by the people of a community. For example, Spanish is a foreign language in Canada.

A foreign language is a language that is neither one's native language nor used for communicative purposes among the members of the community. i. e. A language that is not one's mother tongue. It should be noted that, even though there are many authors who establish a distinction between foreign language and second language, it is also very common to use them as interchangeable terms. Those who do make the difference consider that a second language is learnt in a context where that particular language is normally used, while a foreign language is always learnt in a context where the members of the community do not normally speak it. For instance, if an Australian whose mother tongue is English moves to Spain, this person will learn Spanish as a second language. On the contrary, if

the same person, instead of moving to Spain, decides to learn Spanish at a language school in Australia, this will be a foreign language learning context.

A *foreign language* is also acquired after the first language; however, it is one a person voluntarily chooses. It is not a vital means of communication with other people living in their homeland or a country they moved to. The choice is usually influenced by the interests of the individual and/or their plans for the future in an effort to make use of the language acquired.

It is worth mentioning that Second language and foreign language are linguistic terms which are used interchangeably. The most important difference between the abovementioned terms is that a second language is usually acquired in the environment where it is actually spoken on an everyday basis by a certain group of the population while a *foreign language* is most often studied outside of the natural language environment. The example of a Swiss native speaking German and learning French as a second language might be used.

Both terms are referred to as a second language or language two (L2). This is based on the fact that, in spite of the reasons helping an individual decide to study a language and the environment, language two (foreign and second language) is studied after the first language has been acquired to some level. The factors differentiating foreign and second languages are important; still, it is indisputable that the ways of second and foreign language acquisition are closer to each other than when comparing the first language to language two. That makes it possible to find relevant such research results which have been achieved in both fields – foreign and second language acquisition (Eddy, 2011, pp. 10- 1).

Since a foreign language is a non- native language to learners' community, it is learnt inside the school environment. Learning a foreign language means developing the ability to communicate in that target language. Foreign language learning can be defined as learning of a nonnative language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken. Successful learning of a foreign language leads to developing the four skills of foreign language

learning that allow an individual to comprehend and produce spoken language for proper and effective interpersonal communication. These skills are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**\* Learning a foreign language: Importance and benefits**

Foreign language knowledge is a basis of understanding world cultures, different ways of life, and of intercultural communication. Additionally, foreign languages offer an advantage when it comes to getting job, they facilitate travelling; they open the possibilities to study abroad.

In the current era of globalization, studying a foreign language is considered an important factor which allows the individual to communicate effectively and creatively. According to Moeller and Catalano (2015), the individual can participate in real life situations through the target language that he masters. Moreover, learning a foreign language provides access into the perspective of the authentic culture, and increases the ability to see connections across content areas. Also, it promotes cultural understandings. A foreign language makes it a vehicle

required for effective human-to-human interactions and yields a better understanding for one’s own language and culture. All in all, studying a foreign language provides learners with the opportunity to gain linguistic and social knowledge to know how, when, and where to use the target language effectively and appropriately (p. 2).

In regard to the benefits of learning a foreign language, the table below lists the main benefits:-

<p><b>Foreign language learning benefits basic skills development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A study of 13,200 third and fifth graders in Louisiana public schools revealed that, regardless of race, gender or academic level, children taking foreign language classes did better on the English section of the Louisiana Basic Skills Test than those who did not (Dumas, 1999).</li> <li>• There’s a high positive correlation between foreign language study and improved reading scores for children of average and below average intelligence (Garfinkel &amp; Tabor, 1991).</li> <li>• Foreign language learners have better listening skills and sharper memories than their monolingual peers (Lapkin, et al 1990, Ratte 1968).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Foreign language learning benefits higher order, abstract and creative thinking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several studies indicate that individuals who learn a second language are more creative and better at solving complex problems than those who do not (Bamford &amp; Mizokawa, 1991).</li> <li>• Language learners show greater cognitive flexibility, better problem solving and higher order thinking skills (Hakuta, 1986).</li> <li>• Research suggests that foreign language study “enhances children’s understanding of how language itself works and their ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem solving” (Cummins, 1981).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Foreign language learning enriches and enhances cognitive development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The power to learn a language is so great in the young child that it doesn’t seem to matter how many languages you seem to throw their way... They can learn as many spoken languages as you can allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time. Children just have this capacity. Their brain is ripe to do this... there doesn’t seem to be any detriment to ... develop[ing] several languages at the same time” according to Dr. Susan Curtiss, UCLA Linguistics professor (Curtain &amp; Dahlberg, 2004).</li> <li>• Research indicates that children who are exposed to a foreign language at a young age achieve higher levels of cognitive development at an earlier age (Bialystok &amp; Hakuta, 1994; Fuchsen, 1989).</li> <li>• People who are competent in more than one language consistently outscore monolinguals on tests of verbal and nonverbal intelligence (Bruck, Lambert, and Tucker, 1974; Hakuta, 1986; Weatherford, 1986).</li> </ul>

Foreign language learning enhances a student's sense of achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offering foreign language study demonstrates to ELL students and their families that languages other than English - and by extension cultures other than the mainstream - are valued. Research suggests that foreign language study "enhances children's understanding of how language itself works. It also increases their ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem solving" (Cummins, 1981).</li> </ul>
Foreign language learners score higher on standardized tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students of foreign languages tend to score higher on standardized tests. Results from then Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) show that students who had studied a foreign language for 4 or more years outscored other students on the verbal and math portions of the test (College Board, 2003).</li> <li>Students who studied four or five years of a foreign language scored higher on the verbal section of the 2004 SAT than students who had studied any other subject for the same number of years (Cooper, 1987; Eddy, 1981).</li> </ul>
Foreign language learning promotes cultural awareness and competency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In an age of global interdependence and an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic society, early foreign language study gives children unique insight into other cultures and builds their cultural competency skills in a way that no other discipline is able to do. "The age of ten is a crucial time in the development of attitudes toward nations and groups perceived as 'other' according to the research of Piaget, Lambert and others. At age 10, children are in the process of moving from egocentricity to reciprocity and information received before age 10 is eagerly received" (Curtain &amp; Dahlberg, 2004).</li> <li>"The positive impact of cultural information is significantly enhanced when that information is experienced through foreign language and accompanied by experiences in culturally authentic situations" (Curtain &amp; Dahlberg, 2004).</li> <li>Foreign language learners are more tolerant of the differences among people (Carpenter &amp; Torney, 1974).</li> </ul>
Foreign language learning found to improve chances of college acceptance, achievement and attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who were in "rigorous" programs in high school—that included three years of foreign language study—were likely to earn better grades in college and less likely to drop out (Horn &amp; Kojaku, 2001).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduating high school seniors with two or more years of foreign language study showed significant superiority in performance on achievement tests in English when compared with non-foreign language students (Bastian, 1980).</li> </ul>
Foreign language learning enhances career opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studying a foreign language helps students understand English grammar better and improves their overall communication and problem-solving skills. Beyond the intellectual benefits, knowledge of a foreign language facilitates travel, enhances career opportunities, and enables one to learn more about different peoples and cultures (National Research Council, 2007).</li> </ul>
Foreign language learning benefits understanding and security in community and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research suggests that attitudes about other groups and peoples are formed by the age of ten and are often shaped between the ages of four and eight. Learning a language at a young age helps connect a child with another culture while they are still open-minded and have not yet begun to restrict their views of others whom they perceive to be different (Curtain &amp; Pesola, 1988).</li> <li>The benefits of foreign language study last throughout one's lifetime. Recent research indicates that knowing two languages may help stave off age-related mental decline. Researchers compared monolingual to bilingual adults in a test of cognitive function, and bilingualism seemed to offer a protective benefit (Bialystok, 2004).</li> <li>The benefits to society are many. Americans fluent in other languages improve global communication, enhance our economic competitiveness abroad, and maintain our political and security interests (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004).</li> </ul>

**Table 1: The benefits of learning foreign languages**

## \* Definition of Foreign Language Learning Difficulties

Foreign language learning is a prominent part of formal education everywhere. In a global economy and increasingly multilingual society, the acquisition of a foreign language (FL) has emerged as one of the major goals for children of the next century (Agresto, 1985). Learners in primary, middle, and secondary schools are required to learn foreign language courses to their curricula. Also, it has been common that colleges and universities require foreign language study for graduation. Moreover, public schools and universities often require their students to demonstrate this competency in FL coursework prior to graduation (Ganschow, Myer, & Roeger, 1989). However, this requirement is difficult for many students of average to above-average ability who do not perform well in FL courses (Freed, 1987). Numerous explanations have been proposed and debated concerning why some students who do well in other courses do not perform well in or fail FL courses.

Learning difficulties are commonly known as those failures encountered by learners which do not enable them to master the acquisition

of certain skills and knowledge. These learning difficulties are shown in the learner's behavior in his interactions in the school environment with his peers and his teachers. In addition, these learning difficulties are reflected in the disabilities which hinder learners and teachers from reaching the expected learning objectives.

It is worth mentioning that these difficulties may be related, on the one hand, to the learners' problems, whether economic, or social, or psychological; or, on the other hand, related to the teaching process; such as, teaching methods, teaching strategies, the school milieu, or the teacher.

Learning difficulties can be described as follows:-

- 1- Slow pace in acquiring different aspects of learning, including knowledge and information, skills, and emotional aspects;
- 2- Disturbance in the course of learning, lack of ease or smoothness in learning, and exposure to severe fluctuations in performance, ups and downs.

Difficulties in learning a foreign language procedurally are defined as: the obstacles that prevent investigation the desired learning objectives of learning a foreign language, which are

represented in both French and English languages. These learning difficulties can be caused by factors related to the nature and content of the language, or the teacher, or the learner, or the teaching methods. i. e. The factors may be related to the school environment or the learner's environment.

#### **\* The Status of Foreign Languages in the Algerian Educational System**

Although the Algerian linguistic situation is rich and complex, it makes a unique country with a number of languages taught and used for both academic and non- academic contexts. However, in spite of these plurality in foreign languages, educational language problems arose. Learners' weaknesses in the mastery of foreign languages are reflected in the failure of current educational system (Tabory, as cited in Rezig, 2011, pp. 1327- 8).

In schools, Algerian learners are first exposed to French, which is the first foreign language in Algeria, since their third-year school of study. Then, at the age twelve, they began studying English, which is the second foreign language in Algeria. Despite this privilege of exposure to target languages, learners' failure in foreign languages is revealed at their levels of



grammar, spelling, linguistic background, and writing.

### \* **French Language**

Because of the French colonial heritage in Africa, the French language is amongst the most important, widespread languages in Africa and North Africa, especially. It is an important, recognized language in the European Union (EU), United Nations Organization (UNO), several international organizations, and used in many world universities.

In regard to Algeria, the status of the French language is deeply related to the French colonial history in Algeria (1830- 1962). It is; therefore, the first foreign language in Algeria, and is widely used spoken in the country.

It is worth mentioning that the French colonial administration worked hard to spread the French language in Algeria (Laitin, as cited in Sharky, 2012, p. 432). To achieve this end, they closed all Quranic schools which used to teach the Holy Quran and Arabic. In the French colonial educational policy, French became the national, official language, and Arabic became a second language (Murphy, as cited in Bellam, 2012, p. 1). In this regard, Rezig (2011) stated that French was imposed

on Algerians as the only official language and asserted it over all other regional and local dialects in Algeria so as to conquer the Algerian school. The main purpose was to convince Algerian Muslims that France was superior. Arabic, which was considered the language of the Holy Quran, became the language used only in mosques (p. 1329).

After independence, French maintained its status as the first foreign language in the country, although recent calls arose for substituting French with English as the first foreign language.

In the Algerian educational system, French is taught since primary school at the age of 8 and continues for the next three years. The French language continues to be taught for the rest of the phases, leading to higher education in order for students to enroll in studies which require proper pronunciation and excellent linguistic background of French.

The objective of learning French in primary school is to achieve the highest level of proficiency for novice learners in verbal and written communication, listening, and reading. In primary school education, French teachers concentrate on teaching

alphabets and numbers to achieve a good pronunciation and be able to memorize what had been learned.

When learners graduate and pass to the middle school stage, they begin to delve into the French language and learn how to write a letter consisting of ten lines, and acquire the reading ability and how to analyze texts. In addition to French, they start learning English.

After the middle school, learners graduate and pass to the secondary school for a period of three years. At this stage, studies are divided into scientific and literary streams. In literary streams, the French language is taught basically, in addition to English and German, in which pupils learn how to write long sentences and analyze texts and literary works.

#### **\* English Language**

During the late 1930's, teaching of English started officially in Algeria under the French colonial rule. With no English language policy and no plan for its education, the teaching of English was part of what "l'enseignement des langues vivantes", namely "l'anglais vivant" (IElsherif & Smith, 2013, p. 170). Until the late 1960s, English instruction was still based on the French system in terms of

syllabi, textbooks, and organization. Within the Algerian educational system, English was introduced into middle school where pupils start learning English as a second foreign language since their first year in middle school. It covers four years at this stage. The teaching procedure contains designing new syllabi and curricula, devising new textbooks, and accompanying documents. With the introduction of the Competency-Based Approach as a new working methodology in the Algerian educational system, English language is taught as a compulsory course starting from the first-year middle school. Most importantly, the English language is learned for educational purposes.

In secondary school level, pupils learn English for three years. The syllabi for teaching English required pupils of all streams to study English as a foreign language. The main objective set by Algerian ministry of education for teaching English language is to provide learners to discover the culture of the English language and the countries which represent that culture.

By the mid of the year 2000, the Algerian policymakers introduced

some amendments which aimed at enhancing the educational system. English language has become a necessary subject in the curriculum and required a tremendous demand at all the levels of education. According to Miliani (2000), the introduction of the English language into the Algerian educational system can be explained from the following perspective:

In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the socio-cultural and educational environments of the country; the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills- including economic, technological and educational ones. (as cited in Abdelatif Mami, 2003, p. 432)

The English teaching program which was introduced by the Algerian Ministry of Education (2006) made a clear statement of English language learning. It emphasized on the acquisition of linguistic background and methodological and cultural objectives. These aforementioned objectives are stated below in the following declaration:-

It is stated that “English is the language of globalization. It is assigned a primordial role in science, technology, business, and commerce.

Due to globalization, knowing English and being part of the world became synonymous. Algeria is giving importance to foreign languages, particularly, English, which is promoted through a special acquisition planning that begins from first-year middle school, attempting to form competent users of English. However, when it comes to real classroom practices of EFL teaching, the situation still has some complications that have to be reconsidered in EFL acquisition planning in order to come to more effective results.”(p.145).

The teaching of English language serves the following purposes:-

- 1- To give some help to learners support self-learning and critical thought;
- 2- To promote learners' intellectual abilities to analyze evaluating and synthesizing;
- 3- To enable students to utilize English documents, in new situation at work;
- 4- To support learners to accept cultural diversity.

It is worth mentioning that these goals stated by the Ministry of Education offer opportunities for teachers to promote intercultural

perspectives and to support diversity and tolerance among their learners.

The teaching of English at the Algerian secondary school is not only concerned with general aims of teaching but also universal, human and national values are promoted. Learners are expected to learn how to speak about their country and its cultural values in English, as well as to acquire an open- minded spirit, and universal and human values which are essential elements of modernity and globalization.

Within the Competency- Based Approach, the goals of teaching English as foreign language in both middle and secondary schools have been in accordance with the objectives of the Educational Reform in order to consolidate, and increase the learners' competencies and capacities. The table below sets the major objectives of teaching English in the Algerian educational policy:-

<b>Linguistic Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To give the learner with the basic linguistic material (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the four skills) that are necessary to keep further education.</li> </ul>
<b>Methodological Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To consolidate and increase learning strategies aiming at autonomy, critical thinking skill, and selfestimate.</li> <li>To make easy for students to use various documents and feel interested and involved to subjects that are not treated in class.</li> </ul>
<b>Socio-cultural Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To make sure interdisciplinary coherence as an attempt to merge the overall information and knowledge acquired by the learner.</li> <li>To inspire the learners curiosity and to support the students broad-mindedness to get access to cultural principles brought by English.</li> </ul>

**Table 2: the objectives of teaching foreign languages**

As stated by Burni (2017), if English were to replace French, it would gain the status of the primary foreign language that Algerians would speak it better than French (as cited in Belmihoub, 2018, p. 8). Likewise, the status of English is rampant throughout Algeria in which business takes this advantage and is associated with small businesses. Owners of coffee shops, restaurants... etc. named their boutiques as follows: ‘Black and White Café Shop’, ‘Junk Food’, ‘Las Vegas Restaurant’... etc. (p. 11). In fact, these names reflect prestige that is linked with the English- American culture which proves that even the Algerian resorts to English in lieu of French.

**\* The Research Methodology**

The nature of research in educational sciences identifies the research methodology and the research design which, in turn, guides the researcher to use the appropriate tools and materials which are compatible with the research conducted by the researcher(s).

Within this regard, the descriptive analytical approach has been used in the present study. A teachers’ questionnaire constituted the main research tool on which the

researcher relied to collect data for the sake of analyzing learners' failure to master foreign languages' learning in the South of Algeria. i. e. To examine learners' inability to acquire a good mastery of foreign languages, mainly English and French.

The questionnaire was administered in secondary schools, in the south of Algeria, to investigate the causes behind learners' failure to master both English and French languages. The teachers' questionnaire comprised three main sections: background information about teachers, learners' foreign languages proficiency, and learners' difficulties in foreign languages learning. The questions ranged from closed, open-ended, to Likert Scale.

Although the researcher intended to receive responses from secondary school teachers of the wilayas of the south, namely Bechar, Adrar, El Oued, and Ouargla that consisted the research sample of the present study, it was; however, limited to only secondary school teachers of Bechar because they were the only ones who responded to the present questionnaire (only seventy- eight out of two hundred and fifty). The responses were received electronically

through the researcher's main email. Data were analyzed statistically.

### **\* Results and Discussion**

This section of the research presents the results of the study which is conducted for the purpose of examining learners' failure in the mastery of foreign languages. Secondary school teachers from five cities in the south of Algeria comprised the sample of the present study. In this regard, 51 (65%) were males and 27 (35%) were females. It is worth mentioning that teachers' ages were divided into three main categories: 17 teachers of 25- 30 (22%), 23 of 30- 40 (29%), and 38 were above 40 (49%). 45 of these secondary school teachers are mainly English teachers (58%), and 33 are French teachers (42%). As for teaching experience, teachers' answers ranged from excellent (17%), very good (42%), good (35%), and weak (6%). In fact, the results show that these foreign languages' teachers have enough experience in the field of teaching.

When teachers were asked about their career problems which they encountered, 29 (43%) of them cited that they had curricula problems, 20 (30%) had working conditions problems, 11 (16 %), and 7 (11 %) had

social milieu problems. Teachers' answers indicate the different issues, circumstances, and problems from which they suffer, and which necessitate a serious intervention from the part of the ministry of education in favor of both teachers and learners.

As for teachers' satisfaction about the level of their learners' proficiency in foreign languages, 69 of the secondary school teachers (88 %) confirmed that they are little satisfied, and 9 of them (12 %) were not satisfied at all. These answers; unfortunately, prove that secondary school learners in the south of Algeria lack the mastery of foreign languages.

The answers provided by teachers about their satisfaction of their learners' level of proficiency in foreign languages' learning highlight the reality of foreign languages' learning in the south of Algeria. Also, the answers indicate a gap between teachers' self- efficacy and learners' proficiency.

In foreign language context, the teachers believed that their roles are as follows:-

**Table 3: Teachers' roles in foreign languages' learning context**

Strengthening Foreign Language learners' mastery of language knowledge.	18	23 %
Improving Foreign Language learners' skills.	18	23 %
Boosting Foreign Language learners' motivation.	11	14 %
Improving Foreign Language learners' pronunciation errors.	10	13 %
Reducing Foreign Language learners' anxiety.	12	15 %
Fostering learners' independence.	06	08 %
Enhancing learners' experience.	03	04 %

As far as learners' motivation is concerned, most of the teachers (92 %) emphasized that their secondary school learners are not motivated to learn foreign languages because of (1) foreign language anxiety (77 %), lack of confidence (15 %), and other issues (8 %). In order to motivate learners in class, 94 % of the teachers confirmed that they use the following strategies and extracurricular activities in class for the aforementioned purpose. These are groupwork (40 %), role plays (42 %), and language games (18 %).

The analysis of teachers' statements on learners' motivation show that learners are demotivated to learn foreign languages, mainly English and French because they believe this takes from them a hard time to master these foreign languages. In addition, they have complex thoughts and attitudes about these foreign languages.

In regard to teachers' experiences, secondary school

learners' foreign languages skills are ranked as follows:-

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Weak
Writing skills	0%	2%	13 %	85%
Reading Skills	0%	0%	12%	88%
Listening Skills	0%	0%	13%	87%
Speaking Skills	0%	2%	13%	85%
Critical Thinking Skills	0%	9%	19%	72%

**Table 4: Teachers' ranking of their learners' foreign languages' skills**

According to these answers, secondary school learners' proficiency in foreign languages is not so good. The data in the above table highlight that learners feel that they are distant from foreign languages. They need to work hard to achieve a good level of proficiency because they need to work with foreign languages when they enroll in university studies.

In relation to learners' ability to understand contents of academic books, and their ability to understand exams' questions, and their ability to understand teachers' explanations in class, 44 (56 %) of the teachers confirmed positively that they do so. However, this can be done through:-

Understanding contents of academic books	Teachers' feedback	78	100%
	Use of the mother tongue	57	73%
Understanding exams' questions	Teachers' feedback	21	27%
	Use of the mother tongue	57	73%
Understanding teachers' explanations in class	Teachers' feedback	21	27%
	Use of the mother tongue	57	73%

**Table 4: Learners' understanding abilities**

The results in the abovementioned table highlight a deficit in foreign language learning and education, in general. Learning a foreign language requires from learners to master skills that are related to the study of foreign languages; such as, critical thinking skills and understanding contents in the target language. As seen from the results above, without teachers' feedback and mother tongue interference, learners find it difficult to understand.

Moreover, according to teachers' responses, they totally provide necessary feedback to their learners in their foreign language learning through better explain activities (77 %) and guiding learners (23 %). Since learners rely on school books, 70 teachers (94 %) believed that these books help learners in fostering learning process (71 %), and fostering learning dependence (29 %). Again, 62 teachers (79 %) reported that their learners learn foreign languages for the sake of better improving foreign language skills.

In relation to the factors which hinder secondary school learners in their foreign language learning, teachers believed that the school milieu does not help learners to

improve their foreign language learning because of (1) bad working conditions (86 %), and large class size (14 %). Accordingly, these problems which exist within the school environment do not encourage learners to improve their proficiency in foreign languages' learning.

According to the data in the table below, teachers are well aware of the factors which affect learners' foreign language proficiency. Very interesting data were obtained from assessment of learners' foreign language (64 %), the impacts of using mother tongue in foreign language learning (100 %), integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) to improve language teaching (90 %), the impacts of integrating ICT tools in augmenting learners' motivation (85 %), the use of ICTs to enhance learners' foreign languages skills (91 %), the impacts of acquisition of grammar in improving learners' fluency (77 %), and the impacts of watching TV channels in improving learners' proficiency in foreign languages (83 %).

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Adopting CLT in FL classes has been successful in improving learners' communicative skills.	06 %	10 %	20 %	32 %	32 %
Adopting CBA in FL classes has been successful in improving learners' communicative competence.	08 %	18 %	16 %	27 %	31 %
Large classes affect learning objectives.	39 %	37 %	0 %	14 %	10 %
Time allowed to teach foreign languages is not sufficient to teach foreign languages to learners.	46 %	40 %	14 %	0 %	0 %
Learners should be taught practical spelling to master grammar, vocabulary, and writing.	29 %	18 %	8 %	24 %	21 %
Integrating ICT tools in foreign languages' classes can be used to assess students' language skills in a variety of ways.	42 %	35 %	0 %	23 %	0 %
Instructional materials should be available in school to help improve learners' foreign languages proficiency.	37 %	33 %	0 %	21 %	9 %
Assessment of learners' foreign languages is fundamental.	64 %	36 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
The use of mother tongue in class affects learners' proficiency and mastery in foreign languages.	100 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
AI Intelligent tools help solve problems of language teaching.	90 %	8 %	2 %	0 %	0 %
Integrating ICTs in foreign languages' classes augment learners' attention and motivation levels.	85 %	13 %	2 %	0 %	0 %
ICT tools enhance learners' listening skills.	91 %	9 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Learning the grammar of foreign language helps learners' fluency in speaking and writing.	77 %	13 %	10 %	0 %	0 %
Watching TV channels which broadcast in foreign language improves learners' proficiency in foreign languages.	83 %	17 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

**Table 5: Factors which affect learners' proficiency**

According to teachers' answers, amongst the major problems from which learners suffer in their learning process are listed below, respectively:-

- 1- Studying foreign languages in large classes does not encourage learners in their learning process;
- 2- Time allowed to foreign language classes does not help to cover all aspects of foreign language teaching/ and learning;
- 3- Lack of foreign language practice hinders the mastery of foreign language learning;
- 4- Lack of learners' foreign language assessment;
- 5- The use of mother tongue in foreign languages' classes does not encourage foreign language classes;



6- Lack of ICT tools do not increase learners' motivation in foreign language learning;

According to teachers' responses, secondary school learners suffer from the following major difficulties in their foreign language learning:-

Learners' differences	21	27 %
Learners' disabilities	21	27 %
School environment	18	23 %
Social milieu	10	13 %
Lack of interaction with native speakers	06	8 %
Lack of mass media in foreign language	02	2 %

**Table 6: Learning difficulties**

In regard to parents' additional feedback, 83 % of the teachers believed that parents' additional feedback is absent in the learners' foreign language learning. According to them, the lack of parental control, assistance, and supervision affect learners' foreign language learning. Moreover, the secondary school teachers totally confirmed that the weather conditions which exist in the south of Algeria affect learners' foreign language learning. In this regard, teachers are convinced that organizing foreign languages' classes in the afternoon, especially in the months of March and April annually, affects the learners' learning process. In fact, the months of March and April

in the south of Algeria witness high temperatures degrees which reflects negatively on the learners' perception and mental abilities. Therefore, they call for reviewing time of planning foreign languages' classes.

In addition, the teachers agreed that the absence of foreign languages' center contributes to the failure of acquisition of foreign language learning because this factor does not provide learners with the ability to interact with native speakers (67 %) and lack of assistance and feedback (33 %).

The analysis of the statements in the table below shows that teachers acknowledge some of the major problems which are related to the improvement of learners' proficiency in foreign language learning. The teachers reported that self- doubt (90 %), lack of opportunities to practice foreign languages (91 %), learners' attitudes toward foreign languages (90 %), and learning disabilities (91 %).

Teachers' statements about the reasons behind the failure of learners in their mastery of foreign language proficiency were measured on 5- point Likert Scale. Accordingly, a total of 83 % of foreign language teachers had strongly positive attitudes toward these

statements, while 15,50 % had agreed to these statements. Therefore, teachers' attitudes towards learners' proficiency in foreign language learning confirmed the failure of their learners in acquiring total proficiency in foreign language learning.

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Self- doubt is the biggest difficulty in foreign language learning.	90 %	10 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
Lack of opportunities to practice a foreign language is one of the most common problems in language learning.	91 %	09 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
Foreign language anxiety is another obstacle encountered by foreign language learners.	85 %	15 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
It is very hard for learners to learn a foreign language without enthusiasm and motivation.	77 %	23 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
Poor vocabulary does not enable learners to succeed with foreign language learning.	76 %	24 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
Difficulties in foreign language learning stems from poor grasp of grammar.	64 %	24 %	12 %	00 %	00 %
Learners' attitudes towards foreign languages learning is the biggest barrier to language learning.	90 %	10 %	00 %	00 %	00 %
Learning disabilities hinder foreign language learning among learners.	91 %	09 %	00 %	00 %	00 %

**Table 7: Reasons behind the failure of foreign languages' mastery**

In foreign language learning context, teachers believed that there are barriers which hinder successful foreign language learning. These are listed in the table below:-

A	Scarcity of teaching materials and ICT tools	13	16%
B	Shortage of foreign language awareness	18	22%
C	Overburden of the curriculum	14	17%
D	Increased workload	17	21%
E	Scarcity of time for planning, implementing, and evaluating	6	08%
F	Large class size	6	08%
G	Lack of awareness or enthusiasm among EFL learners	4	05%
H	Learners' unwillingness to learn foreign languages	2	03%

**Table 8: Barriers which hinder successful foreign languages' learning**

Generally, we can conclude that foreign language teachers maintained a positive attitude towards the failure of their learners in achieving proficiency of foreign language learning. This is

indicated in the teachers' statements about their level of satisfaction of their learners' proficiency in foreign languages, learners' motivation to learn foreign languages, and the ranking of their learners' foreign languages skills. In addition, teachers' statements about the school milieu which does not help learners in their learning process proves that the school milieu poses another critical issue in learners' proficiency on foreign languages.

Finally, the analysis of the data of the teachers' questionnaire has enabled the researcher to reach the major crucial difficulties of learners in their foreign language learning. These are listed below:-

- 1- Foreign language anxiety;
- 2- Teaching syllabi;
- 3- Time allowed to foreign languages' classes;
- 4- Variety of teaching methods;
- 5- Social milieu;
- 6- Timetables;
- 7- Lack of motivation;
- 8- Insufficient budget;
- 9- Weather conditions;
- 10- Organizing making up exams;

#### \* Conclusion

Since education is one of most important tributaries of development

and a crucial pillar of progress upon which a country rests, the inclusion of teaching foreign languages' curriculum also serves in the development of human resources capital. Learning foreign languages provides opportunities for the reinforcement of knowledge, skills, and understanding. Furthermore, it aids learners to cope with the unknown. In order for the teaching of foreign languages to succeed in the Algerian school, the various imbalances and difficulties faced by learners, in the south of Algeria, in different phases must be revealed in order to reach solutions, especially since this present study showed the ability of learners in the south of Algeria to learn foreign languages. Therefore, these learners should be given a special attention by Algerian policy makers on education. For this reason, they have to make use of the latest studies and researches in the field of education, didactics, modern linguistic theories, and the different educational, psychological, and linguistic researches related to linguistic skills' acquisition. Also, they have to benefit from the latest technological developments in methods of teaching foreign languages

in favor of improving learners' proficiency in foreign languages.

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