

A Comparative Study of the Evaluation Strategies in the LMD and Classic Systems

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Abstract :

The implementation of the new system « LMD » in Algerian higher education is an ambitious project .In the field of foreign language and especially in English, it is of great importance to the teaching/learning process. Indeed, the LMD system introduces new courses that are not given in the classic one at the level of first year classes in particular. In addition, it gives more importance to the continuous/ formative evaluation than the classic one does. Whereas the formative evaluation is optional in the classic system, it is compulsory in the new system. The main question here is to which extent is that evaluation efficient in case that the students are aware of its impact on their success by the end of each course. The major aim of this paper is to examine the validity and effectiveness of the “formative evaluation” in the LMD system. To answer the question stated above, the present paper takes the following elements as its basis: the students’ level, exam grades, teachers of systems opinions, the common courses syllabi, and the time allotted. To give credit to our claims, this paper relies on a restricted population of teachers who have the experience in teaching 1st year students of the English language department in both systems LMD and Classic. The study spots the light on the teacher’s assessment of the new testing tool. At the end of this work, we come to the conclusion that students in the first place have to pay much more attention to the importance and validity of the continuous evaluation in order to remedy their deficiencies that are related to the latter.

المختص:

إن تطبيق نظام "ل م د" في التعليم العالي في الجزائر مشروع طموح و لا سيما في مجال تعليم اللغات الحية و خصوصا الانجليزية، فهو يكتسي إذن أهمية كبرى في المسيرة التعليمية التربوية. مع نظام "ل م د" جاءت دروس لم نعهدها في النظام الكلاسيكي و لا سيما فيما يخص مستوى السنة الأولى. كما يولي نظام "ل م د" أهمية قصوى للتقييم المستمر/التكويني على غير النظام الكلاسيكي، في حين هذا النوع من التقييم إجباري في النظام الجديد ل.م.د ، فهو اختياري في النظام الكلاسيكي. و سؤالنا هنا هو إلى أي مدى يعتبر هذا التقييم ناجعا خاصة عندما يكون الطلبة واعين بمدى تأثيره على نجاحهم في كل مادة نهاية كل سداسي. من خلال هذه الورقة نتطرق إلى عدة نقاط أهمها مستوى الطلبة، نقطة الامتحانات، آراء الأساتذة، المناهج و الوقت المخصص. و للوصول إلى ما نصبو إليه فلقد اعتمدنا على شريحة معينة من الأساتذة ذوي الخبرة في تدريس طلبة السنة الأولى لقسم الانجليزية في كلا النظامين. هذا و نركز على التقويم الذي يقوم به الأساتذة كأداة جديدة لبلوغ الأهداف المسطرة. في الأخير، فإننا استخلصنا أنه على الطلبة الانتباه أكثر إلى أهمية التقييم المستمر للتمكن من معالجة القصور المرتبط بهذا الأخير.

1. Introduction:

The implementation of the new "LMD" system in the Algerian Higher Education is an ambitious project. In the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language, the LMD is of a great importance to the teaching/learning process. On the one hand, it is a system that introduces new courses especially at the level of first year students as compared to the same category in the classic system as far as the English Language Department at Mohamed Kheider University Biskra is concerned. In the present paper, a special interest is given to the so-called "Travaux Dirigés" or "Practicum" that is known as "TD" marks and forms the essence of evaluation in the LMD system. The latter (namely the TD marks) is known as the "Formative Evaluation" as it will be defined below.

On the other hand, its evaluation strategies are much more useful because of the importance given to the continuous "formative" evaluation which is compulsory in that new system whereas it is not inexistent in the classic system but optional. Hence, the question that needs to be addressed here could be: is that testing instrument more efficient in its application within the new system than that in the classic? If so, to which extent?

2. The nature of the LMD System:

The emergence of the so-called LMD system goes back to the "Sorbonne-Bologna Process" that currently involves approximately 45 European countries. This new system which concerns the European Higher Education in the first place gets its name LMD or BMD (Licence-Master-Doctorat or Bachelor's- Master's- Doctorate in English) from France in which this new organizational framework for university courses is adopted in all of its universities and is currently implemented in all European countries^[1]. Throughout time, the adoption of this system is widespread in other countries out of the European boundaries and one of which is Algeria.

2.a) Aims and Points of Interest:

This new system aims at encouraging and promoting students' mobility and improving the transparency of qualifications on the job

market. To realize these goals, three strategies are used: organizing study around three levels, by defining programmes of study, and by using a credit system (ECTS or European Credit Transfer System) to recognize skills and knowledge. (ibid).

2.b) How the "LMD" System Works:

Each LMD degree is based on several semesters, each semester being validated for 30 credit points^[2]. The system is made up of compulsory and optional Unités d'Enseignement (UEs). Each UE has a define value in European credits in proportion to the work (classes, supervised work, practical work, work experience, project, coursework, etc.) which the student must provide in order to obtain his or her UE.^[3]

2.c) Comparison between the LMD System and the Classic:

As teachers with a teaching experience in the Classic system as well as the LMD, when it comes to the comparison between the two systems we may notice many differences as far as the first year classes are concerned including the number of courses, the time allotted, the syllabi content, the evaluation tools, and especially the students workload which is the core of this new system "LMD". While first year classes of the Classic system had seven modules, those of the LMD have eleven as it is indicated in Figure.1 below with 1h30 for each except for some such as: Grammar, Oral Expression, and Written Expression in which they have 3 hours instead. The new system allows teachers to elaborate programmes that go with their students' needs and interests. Moreover, it gives much importance to the students' personal work that helps them to get their UE, hence to succeed. The major difference between the two systems is the percentage devoted to the students' workload which has a great impact on their success or failure since the mark once is accredited, it will not be changed.

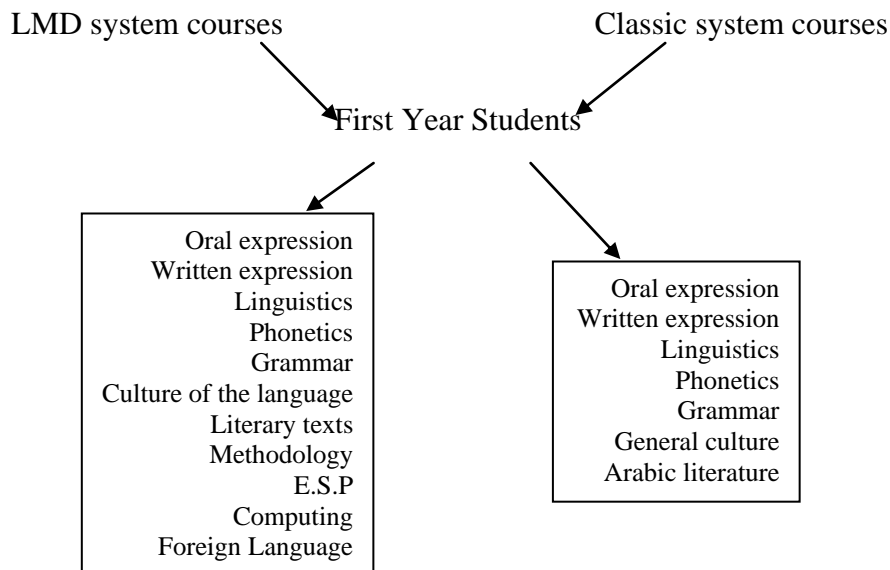


Figure 01- Divergences between the Classic System and the LMD System Courses

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3. The Definitions of Evaluation:

Before answering our main question that is stated above, we would give a brief overview about evaluation in teaching. First, when we come across the term "evaluation", we think about testing, exams, marks, etc... Indeed, it has relation with all these elements, or in other words, it includes them. As an English term, evaluation derives from the verb to evaluate which means to form an idea or judgement about the worth of^[4], and in our context dealing with the Teaching /Learning process, the latter means the judgement of students' learning.

Evaluation: Both qualitative and quantitative descriptions of pupil behaviour plus value judgments concerning the desirability of that behaviour. Using collected information (assessments) to make informed decisions about continued instruction, programs, activities.^[5]

Throughout this paper, the terms evaluation and assessment are interchangeable for convenience' sake, although many scholars tend to differentiate between the two terms. On that regard, the term assessment is defined as follows as it is pointed out by **Brown and**

knight “assessment is at the heart of the student experience.”^[6] While in **Brown.H Douglas** work “**Teaching by Principles**” “Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the student’s performance.”^[7]

“Assessment: The Latin root *assidere* means to sit beside. In an educational context, the process of observing learning; describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about a student's or one's own learning. At its most useful, assessment is an episode in the learning process.”^[8]

4. The Typology of Evaluation:

Scholars have identified three types of evaluation which will be elaborated to some length in the following section. It should be noted that the first ones (formative vs. *summative*) are very much in use while the third one (*ipsative*) is rarely mentioned due to the fact that it is scarcely used by teachers.

4.a) Summative Evaluation:

Researchers in the field of evaluation give different definitions to what's known as Summative evaluation, among which we have selected the following:

Summative assessment is cumulative in nature and is utilized to determine whether students have met the course goals or student learning outcomes at the end of a course or program.^[9]

Summative assessment: aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. A summation of what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished objectives, but does not necessarily point the way to future progress. Final exams in a course and general proficiency exams are examples of summative assessment.^[10]

Summative Assessment takes place at the end of a term or a course and is used to provide information about how much students have learned and how well a course has worked.^[11]

Summative Assessment: Evaluation at the conclusion of a unit or units of instruction or an activity or plan to determine or judge student skills and knowledge or effectiveness of a plan or activity. Outcomes

are the culmination of a teaching/learning process for a unit, subject, or year's study.^[12]

In other words, summative evaluation main aim is to measure students achievements at the end of a course.

4.b) Ipsative Assessment:

As it is mentioned previously, this kind of assessment exists but rarely used by teachers and it stands for the assessment in which the pupil evaluates his or her performance against his or her previous performance as it appears in **Gipps V.Caroline** work "**Beyond Testing: towards a Theory of Educational Assessment**".^[13] This means that learners tend to measure their abilities according to previous experiences to benefit from their mistakes, so that they will strengthen their weaknesses.

4.c) Formative Evaluation:

In our present paper, our focus is on the importance of the formative evaluation, and before dealing with its importance in the LMD system, we state these definitions given to the term by the following researchers respectively **Central Michigan University, Brown.H Douglas, Gipps V.Caroline, Scriven Michael, and Weston, Mc Alpine, and Bordonaro:**

Formative assessment is utilized to immediately determine whether students have learned what the instructor intend.^[14]

Formative Assessment: Observations which allow one to determine the degree to which students know or are able to do a given learning task, and which identifies the part of the task that the student does not know or is unable to do. Outcomes suggest future steps for teaching and learning.^[15]

Formative assessment: evaluating students in the process of "forming" their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (or formation) of learning.^[16]

Formative assessment takes place during the course of teaching and is used essentially to feedback into the Teaching learning process.^[17]

Formative evaluation is typically conducted during the development or improvement of a program or product (or person, and so on) and it is conducted, often more than once, for in-house staff of the program

with the intent to improve. The reports normally remain in-house; but serious formative evaluation may be done by an internal or an external evaluator or preferably, a combination; of course, many program staff are, in an informal sense, constantly doing formative evaluation."^[18]

"The purpose of formative evaluation is to validate or ensure that the goals of the instruction are being achieved and to improve the instruction, if necessary, by means of identification and subsequent remediation of problematic aspects."^[19]

According to what is stated above, one should understand that "Formative Evaluation" occurs in order to help students improve their learning level after the remarks and grades provided by their teachers. As far as the LMD system is concerned, the formative evaluation is given a special interest for its special importance since it forms a major part in the students' final marks of each course at the end of each semester. In fact, at this element we should draw the students' attention to the importance of such a testing tool. Why? Since the formative evaluation that is known as the "TD mark" by our students is given just once, which means that students should be aware of that the TD mark once given stays the same even if the students sit the make-up examinations. Here, we should, moreover, insist on the fact that students should be aware of their crucial roles including the students' attendance during all courses, submission of their home work on time, making enough efforts to understand their courses to obtain good TD marks. The latter have a certain percentage to get a good average of the course by the end as it is stated in part 16 of chapter III (Evaluation et Contrôle des Connaissances) of the rules governing studies in the LMD system:

L'évaluation d'une matière est appréciée semestriellement par la moyenne:

b. du contrôle continu (CC) (assiduité, participation, au moins deux interrogations écrites, stage, travail personnel doté d'un coefficient un (1). Il fait, autant que possible, l'objet d'une application prioritaire.^[20]

Here, we mean that the TD mark is given after taking into account the students' presence and participation, in addition to at least two written tests, training and their personal work.

Moreover, as far as 1st year students are concerned, a major interest should be given to their awareness concerning the LMD evaluation system in terms of teaching units, number of credits and coefficients

devoted to each taught course, and this what figure.2 below shows in details.

Teaching Units	Courses	Time allotted	Coeff .	Credit points/Course	Credit points/ Teaching units
Fundamental Teaching Unit	Written Expression	3 hours	3	4	20
	Oral Expression	3 hours	3	4	
	Grammar	3 hours	2	4	
	Linguistics	1h30	2	2	
	Phonetics	1h30	2	2	
	Culture of the Language	1h30	1	2	
	Literary Texts	1h30	1	2	
Discovering Teaching Unit	ESP	3 hours	1	4	04
Methodology Teaching Unit	Research Methodology	3 hours	1	4	04
Transversal Teaching Unit	Foreign Language	1h30	1	1	02
	Computing	1h30	1	1	

Repartition of LMD Courses/ Units-Figure 2-

This paper is backed by a battery of questionnaires one of which is included in this revised paper and which gives more insights on evaluation in the LMD system from the teachers' perspective. This is done on the premise that teachers practices of evaluating their students are primarily the factors which define the success or failure of students and ultimately of the whole system.

5. Questionnaire's Analysis:

The questionnaire addressed to the teachers with a long experience in teaching first year students in both systems LMD and Classic is

composed of 13 questions concerning different items including : teachers point of view about the evaluation system in general, the number of courses, time allotted, students' level, students' awareness of the formative evaluation importance, criteria to be taken into consideration when giving the final TD mark, in addition to any other suggestions on evaluation in the LMD system. The respondents' replies were as follow:

Concerning their answers about how they see the LMD evaluation system, 75% of them claim that it is effective because it motivates learners and enhances their learning autonomy. While some others claim that it is good but not clear enough because they claim that there is a lack of coordination to decide on criteria to be taken into account when evaluating. Still, others said that it is complicated because of the differences between the percentage given to each module as well as the number of credits.

Approximately all teachers agreed on that the courses' content is good and interesting, although they claim for the absence of practice that enables students' personal work because time allotted is not sufficient. As for the time allotted for each course, some of the teachers declared that it is sufficient for some courses and insufficient for other ones, where students have just lectures (1h30 in big sections) or one session per week(1h30 in small groups) such as in the following courses: ESP, Literary texts, Linguistics, and Culture of the Language. While some other teachers feel strongly that the time allotted to the modules is unbalanced.

When the question deals with the teachers' experience in teaching in both systems, 70% of them agreed on that there is a difference in terms of level concerning their students in both systems; they noticed that students in the LMD system are more motivated and active than those in the Classic, and they link this difference to the amount of practice done. Whereas only 30% of them answered negatively saying that there is no difference between students but the difference exists at the level of the approaches adopted by each teacher.

Almost 80% of the teachers believe that the time allotted for each course in the exams is sufficient because according to them, the matter is much more related to the examination itself as well as the teacher who must design examination questions appropriate to the time allotted except for some courses such as Literature and Civilization which they think that they need more time.

Moreover, when it comes to the students' awareness of the importance of the "formative evaluation", almost all of our respondent teachers think that their students are not aware enough and need to continue to motivate them; other teachers think that the problem is not that of awareness concerning the "formative evaluation" only, but the LMD system rules in general. In other words, the students know neither how the LMD system works nor how their teachers evaluate because they have the idea that examinations equal sanctions. So, teachers justify this lack of awareness to many elements including: students' lack of knowledge, teachers' duty to make them know about the benefits of formative evaluation and lack of guidelines. Whereas, some teachers refer it to the whole organization as they said "administration, teachers, and even students sometimes).

As for the importance given to the so-called TD marks in the LMD system, most of the teachers stated different reasons such as:

- Positive so that students make more efforts through home work, and participation, etc
- It reflects the essence of the LMD system i.e., students are supposed to work more than the teachers.
- Keep students in touch with their courses as well as their teachers.
- Urge students to be more serious, hardworking to succeed.
- Represent student's workload (what students do as activities in or outside their classrooms is what counts)
- Activate the learning process, give it more validity, and enhance students' motivation, autonomy and self-confidence.

Since the LMD system is new including its evaluation strategies, we have raised the question about how to deal with the number of credits devoted for each course, and the teachers answered saying that more than 50% of their students do not ignore how the evaluation system works.

When the subject- matter is related to the criteria that should be taken into consideration for the TD mark evaluation, our respondent teachers stated the following: homework, participation, students' involvement and seriousness in learning, besides their pen and paper tests as well as the oral ones.

Moving back once again to our core element of the paper that is the "formative evaluation", we have inquired about the teachers points of view about the effectiveness of such an evaluation tool, they replied positively saying that it motivates the students, makes them more engaged in courses and genuinely active. They added that it is

effective in the sense that it helps even teachers themselves to detect their students' deficiencies and weaknesses, and that they welcome any evaluation that involves students meaningfully in the learning process.

Once again dealing with the criteria to be taken into account when evaluating students in both Classic and LMD systems, 75% of the teachers answered declaring that they do not use the same criteria, while some of them said that they use the same for the simple reason that they are struggling to cope with the LMD evaluation system.

The last item in the questionnaire was about the students' personal work if it is taken into account when putting their final TD mark and to which extent, they replied saying that it is the main and the first important element. Besides, they are trying to concentrate as much as possible on classroom work and observation.

6. General Conclusion:

From the data we have gathered after the analysis of the questionnaire, we come to the conclusion that almost all the teachers of the English Language Department welcome the implementation of the LMD system in the field of foreign language teaching unless they have some remarks about its application. They see that the new system is of a great help especially for their learners in terms of motivation and self-reliance precisely. The new system is based on the learners' personal work to a great extent; teachers think that its implementation would give the students a strong will to be self-reliant rather than spoon-fed learners. Moreover, the special importance given to the formative evaluation will result with good outcomes because the percentage devoted to the so-called "TD mark" has a great impact on their final marks. Therefore, this would be a motivating factor for students to do their best, to make research, to look for knowledge more and more in and outside of the classroom. In addition, the teachers believe in the effectiveness of the "Formative Evaluation" and insist on making their students aware enough of this.

7. Recommendations:

At the end of this paper, we would like to state the recommendations, and we wish they will be taken into consideration in the future:

1. To raise students' awareness of the importance of the "Formative Evaluation".

2. To clarify the elements to be taken into account when evaluating including: the students' attendance, participation, written and oral tests, home work...etc.
3. To state unified criteria to be used by all teachers of the same course at least.
4. To add more time for the courses taught as lectures of large sections.
5. To add more time for the courses taught in small groups in one session of one hour and a half pre week.
6. To inform the students about the percentage devoted for the TD mark of each course at the beginning of each semester.
7. To inform the students in advance about the rules governing the LMD evaluation system to make them ready and well prepared all the time.

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