

## The Impact of Using Listening Triangle Strategy on Iraqi College Student's Achievement in Language Assessment Courses

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أثر استخدام استراتيجية مثلث الاستماع على تحصيل طلبة الجامعات العراقية في مقررات تقييم اللغة

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كلية الامام الكاظم الجامعة / العراق / بغداد

### Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of using listening triangle strategy(LTS) on Iraqi college student's achievement in language assessment courses. A quasi-experiment was conducted to achieve the goals of the present study. The veracity of its results was determined using *T* scores. The participants were fourth-year English language students at the Imam Al-Kadhumi University College in the 2023-2024 academic year. Sixty students were selected and randomly divided into two groups. Group A, the experimental group with 30 students, used the LTS for their studies, while Group B, also with 30 students, served as the control group and followed traditional learning methods. To meet the study's goals, researchers developed a 10-item multiple-choice test on assessment topics, ensuring its validity and reliability. The results of the post-test revealed that Group A (277) mean scored significantly higher than Group B (25.2). This difference was statistically significant. Therefore, the proposed null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the LTS can help students improve their listening and speaking skills which, in turn, increases their comprehension of language assessment-based topics. The research showed that it is crucial to teach language assessment subjects through the LTS, and additional courses need to focus on implementing this method in public schooling.



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## المستخلص :

(LTS) تناولت هذه الدراسة تطبيق استراتيجيات مثلث الاستماع (LTS) على طلاب الجامعات العراقية في مادة تقييم اللغة. تهدف الدراسة الى معرفة الأثر المعنوي لتحصيل الطلاب في مقررات تقييم اللغة التي تدرس باستخدام استراتيجيات مثلث الاستماع باللغة الانكليزية اجريت تجربة لتحقيق اهداف الدراسة، اذ تم تحديد النتائج باستخدام الاختبار التائي والعينة هم من طلبة المرحلة الرابعة لقسم اللغة الانكليزية في كلية الامام الكاظم ع للعام الدراسي 2024/2023 وتم اختيار ستين طالبا وطالبة وتقسيمهم عشوائياً الى مجموعتين . المجموعة أ :- وهي المجموعة التجريبية مكونة من 30 طالباً استخدمنا فيها استراتيجيات مثلث الاستماع في دراستهم المجموعة ب :- وهي المجموع الضابطة مكونة من 30 طالبا واتبعثُ فيها طرق التعلم التقليدية ولتحقيق اهداف الدراسة قامت الباحثة بتطوير اختبارين اختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي مكون من سؤال واحد وفق اختيار من متعدد واجب بعلامة صح او خطأ مكون من 10 فقرات في موضوع التقييم والتأكد من صدقه وثباته الاختبار تم عرضه على مجموعة خبراء من المحكمين في مجال تدريس اللغة الانكليزي وعلم اللغة اظهرت نتائج الاختبار البعدي ان مجموعة (أ) التجريبية ا ( 277 ) اعلى تحصيل من المجموعة (ب) الضابطة (25.2) وكان هذا الفرق ذو دلالة احصائية ، ولذلك ترفض الفرضية الصفرية وتقبل الفرضية البديلة بمعنى اخر يمكن ان تساعد استراتيجيات مثلث الاستماع الطلاب على تحسين مهارات الاستماع والتحدث لديهم؛ مما يؤدي بدوره الى زيادة فهمهم للموضوعات القائمة على التقييم والاختبارات. اظهر البحث اهمية تدريس مواد تقييم نتيجة استخدام استراتيجيات مثلث الاستماع ويجب التركيز على دورات اضافية على تطبيق هذه الطريقة في التعليم العام.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research problems and significance

According to Burden and Byrd (2010:87), teaching methods involve strategies that focus on teaching concepts, patterns, and abstractions within frameworks which stress on conceptual understanding, inquiry-based learning, and problem-solving. Eison (2010) states that the lecture method is the most widely used teaching approach. For years, it has been employed to convey factual or cognitive information from a teacher to students (Ganyaupfu, 2013:49). This method assumes the teacher is the sole expert with access to essential information, which students need or desire to receive quickly (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006:89). This approach is a singular form of conveying information as it focuses primarily on presenting the subject matter and clarifying the content to students (Richards & Rodgers, 2014:46).

According to Bligh (2000:176), students' focus during a lecture declines gradually after initially increasing, with a temporary spike in the last five minutes, resulting in better retention of the beginning and end compared to the middle of the talk (Bligh, 2000:133). The performance of lecturers also decreases after one hour. Students may not concentrate as well during lectures compared to discussions or individual work in class, making lectures less effective (Richards & Rodgers, 2014:90).

Despite the criticism of lectures as a teaching method, Paul (2015:223) notes that universities are yet to discover practical alternatives for most courses. In today's era of global technological advancement, students can instantly access a vast amount of information with just a click, enabling them to expand their knowledge at any time and place. Lecturers and libraries are no longer the sole sources of academic learning; students often bring additional information to class, beyond what is covered in a standard lecture, enhancing their own learning (Novak et al., 2004:65).

Therefore, university instructors should consider and implement different and engaging techniques in teaching and distance themselves from traditional lecture formats. Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS) is a teaching approach used by university professors that encourages students to take control of their own learning by mastering speaking and listening skills. This enables them to actively participate in discussions, observe, and engage with others to enhance their learning experience (Al Kaabi, 2016: 320)

This approach fosters speaking and listening abilities; enhances collaboration among learners; promotes advanced thinking; enables students to observe, describe, interpret, predict, and conclude; and deepens self-awareness through social interactions with others (Al-Bawi & Al-Shammari, 2020: 162).

## **1.2 Aim**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the efficacy of using the LTS on Iraqi college student's achievement in language assessment-based course.

## **1.3 Hypotheses**

The students were divided into two groups, namely an experimental (Group A) and control (Group B) group, and their achievement scores were compared. Group A was taught using the LTS, while Group B was taught using traditional methods. A null hypothesis, wherein there would be no differences that were statistically significant between the achievement of Groups A and B was suggested.

## **1.4 Limitations**

The limitations of the present study are discussed below:

1. The population of the present study was small as it only involved 60 fourth-year students from the English Language Studies Department of the Imam Al-Kadhumi College attending two classes in the morning.
2. All the participants were in the 2023-2024 academic year.
3. The instructional material was limited to a book called “*A language teacher’s guide to assessment*”, which primarily focuses on basic assessments of fourth-year students.

## 1.5 Values

The results of this study could assist university lecturers in using the LTS to enhance students' listening, observation, discussion, and active participation, encouraging them to take greater responsibility in the learning process.

Going forward, researchers can gain valuable insights and experience in teaching various subjects with the LTS, as this strategy promotes speaking and listening skills; fosters collaboration among learners; supports higher-order thinking; aids in observation, description, interpretation, prediction, and conclusion; and strengthens self-awareness by means of social interactions with others.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Strategies for Active Learning

This is accomplished by incorporating a variety of activities which share common elements, encouraging students to engage in practice and reflection on their learning tools. These methods can help students articulate their thoughts in writing, explore personal values and attitudes, and give and receive feedback throughout the learning process. McKinny (1998) describes active learning strategies as educational approaches that involve the learner in tasks beyond merely listening to a lecture (Abu Al-Haj et al., 2016, p. 49).

### 2.2 The Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS)

Listening triangle is a strategy that divides pupils into three groups to encourage them to speak and listen (Al-Shamri, 2011). Al-Ghurabi (2019) defined it as one of the most enjoyable strategies for developing teaching, learning, and listening skills.

In the present study, the listening triangle was used an instructional strategy and required dividing 60 fourth-year college students into three groups. Group 1 was tasked with reading the text well, thereby developing their reading skill; Group 2 was tasked with listening to Group 1 read and asking Group 1 some questions on the contents of the read text, thereby developing their reading and listening skills; while Group 3 was tasked with listening to and observing Groups 1 and 2 and providing feedback and recording the discussion.

### **2.3 Why is the Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS) Important?**

It is a key modern approach that enhances student engagement and effectiveness in lessons, fostering a dynamic and active learning environment. This strategy encourages participation, cultivates positive attitudes towards learning material, and promotes valuable cognitive skills like listening, collaboration, and critical thinking. By facilitating group discussions and encouraging the exchange of opinions, ideas, and information, it caters to diverse learner needs and produces positive outcomes across different proficiency levels. Ultimately, it contributes to the development of educational, social, and psychological aspects (Ambo Saidi & Al Hosanieh, 2016: 430).

### **2.4 Advantages of The Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS)**

1. Creates a productive learning environment which encourages active student participation.
2. Enhances critical thinking, analytical skills, and feedback exchange.
3. Cultivates essential skills, including speaking, listening, thinking, and reflection.
4. Ensures thorough comprehension of topics while identifying and addressing misconceptions.
5. Trains students to become attentive listeners (Atia, 2018:237).

### **2.5 Practical Guidelines on Using the Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS) in A Classroom**

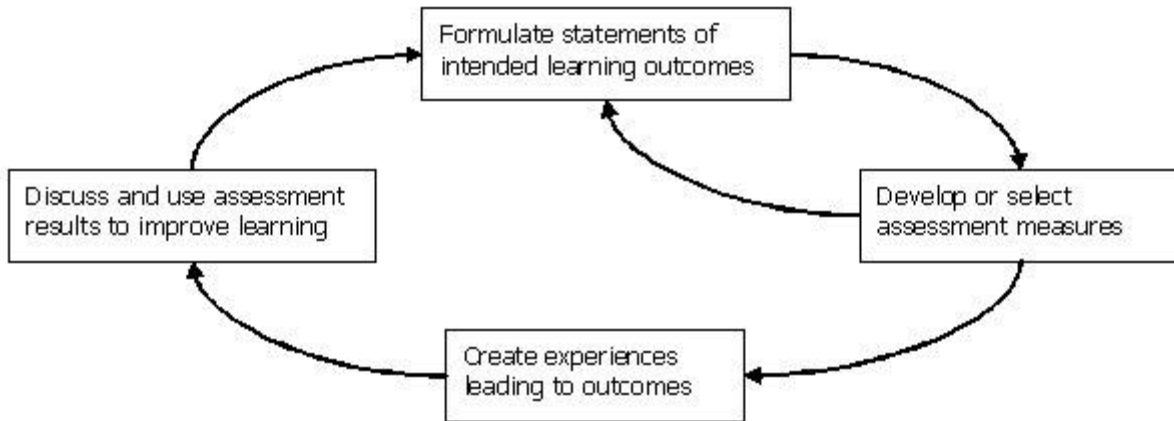
1. The students are split into three groups.
2. Each student is assigned a specific role in the group (the speaker, the listener, the observer).
3. The teacher introduces a concept or question to the class.
4. The first student (the speaker) explains and clarifies the concept.
5. The second student (the listener) asks questions to deepen understanding and clarify the concept.
6. The third student (the observer) monitors the interaction, provides feedback, and documents the discussion.
7. Consider rotating roles among the three students.

### **2.6 Defining an assessment**

Assessment involves collecting and analysing information from various sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of what students know, understand, and can apply from their educational experiences. This process is most effective when the findings are used to enhance future learning (Huba & Freed, 2000:online).

## 2.7 Fundamental components in An Language Assessment

The diagram below outlines the four core elements in a learner-based assessment:



## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Experiment Design

Here, the researcher has presented the experimental technique used in the study. The experimental technique refers to a process where educational research is conducted so that the researcher can test and verify an idea or hypothesis of a causal effect after setting a situation and then comparing the results derived from the treatment and control groups. In this study, the researchers used this experimental research technique for determining if the listening triangle strategy affects the students' assessment concepts comprehension. An experiment is a process that enables a researcher to examine and validate a proposed causal hypothesis by conducting an experiment then comparing the results. The present study conducted an experiment to determine if the LTS affects students' ability to acquire language assessment concepts.

In the present study, the participants were divided into two groups, Group A and Group B. Group A were taught language assessment concepts using a peer-study concept using the LTS, while traditional teaching methods were used to teach Group B. In any basic experimental design, the experimental group (Group A) receives the intervention, while the control group (Group B) does not. The present study randomised the participants into Groups A and B then gave them assessment exams two days before and immediately after the experiment was conducted.

**Table 1: Design of the experiment (Abbot & McKinny, 2013)**

Group	Parity	Test	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Post-Test
A	1-Chronological	Pre-test	LTS	Assessment	Post-test

	age 2-Intelligence 3-Previous collection			concepts	
B		Pre-test	Traditional		Post-test

### 3.2 Population and Sample Selection

#### 3.2.1 Population

According to Richard et al. (1992), the population of a study should comprise individuals or subjects with comparable characteristics. The participants of the present study were fourth-year students from the English Language Studies Department of the Imam Al-Kadhumi College in Baghdad, Iraq. The experiment was conducted during the first semester of their 2023-2024 academic year.

The sample of the present study included the students from the two English classes conducted in the morning at the Imam Al-Kadhumi College in Baghdad, Iraq. The students from both the morning English classes were combined. Originally, 69 participants participated in the study. However, as nine were statistically excluded, the remaining 60 participants were randomised into two groups by drawing lots. Group A consisted of 30 students who were categorised into the experimental group, while Group B included the remaining 30 students who made the control group

**Table 2: Participant distribution in Groups A and B**

Group	Intervention	No. of Participants	No. of Participants Excluded	Final No. of Participants	Total No. of Participants
A	LTS	35	5	30	60
B	Traditional	34	4	30	

### 3.3 Data collection

For collecting valid data to carry out proper analysis, the following process was used in the study:

#### 3.3.1 Instrument

A test is used to collect data, which is a method of determining the extent of a participant's ability, knowledge, and performance in a certain field by having them answer a set of pre-prepared questions that are relevant to the domain in question. The answers that the participant provides is then used to ascertain the extent of their development and progress in the understanding and

identifying the assessment concepts and its principles. When participants are asked to answer the tested items at every meeting, their progress can be recorded. In the present study, the participants underwent testing before and after the teacher implemented the LTS to teach assessment-based lectures. The results were then compared to identify differences between the ability of students to acquire and understand the topic as well as assess the effect of the LTS. This is further explained in Appendix 1.

### 3.3.2 Pre-test

In the pre-test exam, the students were required to answer a few multiple-choice questions (MCQ) that related assessed material to ensure the face validity of the pre- and post-test. The pre-test instrument was checked by multiple specialists in ELT and Linguistics to determine its validity. According to the specialists, the test questions were valid, appropriate, and satisfied the aims of the present study. Both groups of participants took the pre-test. The *t*-test formula was used to determine the significant differences between the effects of the LTS on both groups. Group A's mean assessment exam score was 58, while that of Group B was 57.2. At  $p=0.05$  significance level, the *t* was 0.27, which was below 2.00 with 58 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the pre-test scores of both groups did not differ significantly (Table 2).

**Table 3: *T* score of Groups A and B results for the pre-test on descriptive paragraph writing**

Group	N	X	S	df	Computed <i>T</i>	Tabulated <i>T</i>	Level of Significance
A	30	58	23.8	58	0.27	2.00	0.05
B	30	57.2	16.4				

### 3.4 Experiment execution

The experiment began on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and ran for six weeks throughout the first semester of the school year (2023-2024), and ended on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. All the lectures for Groups A and B were scheduled on Sundays.

#### 3.4.1 Control group (Group B)

Group B was taught traditionally, using literary texts and lecture notes. The lecturer presented her lecture using the lecturing model, which is the usual way of teaching and presenting materials, and explained everything herself. The participants were requested to abstain from using any specialised learning techniques. At the end of the lecture, she asked the participants for their feedback.



### **Experiment group (Group A)**

Group A was taught by using LTS which is an active learning strategy that aims to enhance students' speaking and listening skills by dividing them into groups of three. Each student is assigned a specific role in the group, namely, speaker, listener, or observer. The speaker explains a topic, its concepts, and ideas. The listener listens then asks the speaker questions about the topic and to clarify parts that are less understood. Lastly, the observer observes the interactions and takes notes then shares their feedback with the speaker and listener. The lecturer then asks the participants to switch roles and repeats the process.

#### **3.4.2 Steps used to implement the Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS)**

The LTS is an active learning strategy that makes students rely on themselves. It is a form of cooperative education that can be implemented using the following steps:

**Step 1:** The educator divides the students into groups of three, then divides the roles among the students in each group.

**Step 2:** The lecturer printed the LTS then distributed it and the relevant notes to the students depending on their roles. The role of the speaker was to explain the lesson or the questions while the listener's job was to listen to the speaker and discuss the lesson with the speaker to clarify any ideas or questions. Lastly, the purpose of the observer was to write down and identify notes before providing feedback to their colleagues at the end.

**Step 3:** The lecturer presented the main topic or questions after which each student executed their assigned roles. At the end, the roles were switched between the students, so that each student got to play each role at some point and develop their own ideas. A brainstorming strategy was used to organise time between the students.

**Step 4:** The lecturer developed a model lesson plan to teach the students the assessed subject using the LTS.

First: The lecturer fixed the general objectives of all the lectures.

Second: The lecturer outlined the behavioural objectives of the students. By the end of the lecture, the students had to be able to:

- Identify the purpose of the assessed topic.
- Understand the difference between the evaluation, testing, and assessment.
- Know all the types of assessments.
- Understand why the assessments were necessary.
- Understand when the assessments should be conducted.
- Understand the purposes of the assessments.

### **3.4.3 Steps used to implement the Listening Triangle Strategy (LTS)-based lecture**

#### **Step 1: Preparation (20 minutes)**

The lecturer presented the basic concepts of the lecture and asked the students questions related to the concepts and objectives of the lecture, as well as gave brief explanation of the mechanism of the LTS.

#### **Step 2: Implementation (40 minutes)**

The lecturer divided the students into 10 groups comprising three students each. Of the three students in each group, one student was the speaker, another was the listener, and the third was the observer.

The speaker explained the assessment concepts / chapter one in the prescribed textbook which is A language Teacher Guide to Assessment and discussed and analysed it completely. The listener then directed questions at the speaker and discusses the topic and gave their opinion, either rejecting or accepting what the speaker had presented. The observer, meanwhile, observed these interactions and wrote down everything. At the end, the observer provided feedback and a summary of what was presented in the group. All 10 groups repeated this process until all the topics of the lecture had been discussed this way. The role of the lecturer was to monitor, guide, and evaluate what was happening in each group.

#### **Step 3: Conclusion (10 minutes)**

The lecturer provided her feedback and asked the students evaluative questions, such as:

1. What was the assessment about?
2. What is the difference between evaluation and assessment?
3. What was the purposes of the assessment?
4. When do we process the assessment?

#### **Step 4: Evaluation (10 minutes)**

The students were each given questionnaires that made the students evaluate themselves. It comprised the following questions:

1. I can easily distinguish between testing and evaluation. (Options: I can, I can't, or I need more practice).
2. I am comfortable expressing my opinions and asking the opinions of others. (Options: I can, I can't, or I need more practice).
3. I am comfortable interrupting someone to clarify a certain idea. (Options: I can, I can't, or I need more practice).
4. I am comfortable agreeing or rejecting the opinions of others. (Options: I can, I can't, or I need more practice).

5. Activity: Assign two students to discuss a specific topic using the concepts and strategies examined in today's lecture for the next lecture.
6. Prepare the next lesson (Chapter Two).

### 3.5 Post-test

After the lecturer presented the materials to the two groups, she conducted a post-test, which required the students to answer some questions related to assessment exam. It was conducted to compare the effect of the LTS on the assessment scores of Groups A and Group B.

The results revealed that the student's achievement in assessment scores of Group A (277) were significantly higher than that of Group B (25.2), therefore, Group A outperformed Group B. As a result, the Null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings of the present study indicate that the LTS can be used to help students improve their speaking and listening skills. The students also benefited from the procedures included in the strategy, as it enabled them to reach their desired results in self-learning via effective participation in learning.

**Table 4: *T* score of Groups A and B results for the post-test on language assessment test**

Group	N	X	S	Df	Computed <i>T</i>	Tabulated <i>T</i> vaule	Level of Significance
A	30	277.03	84.83	58	2.99	2.00	0.05
B	30	25.2	144.6				

As seen in Table 4, the mean score of Group B was 25.2 (with a standard deviation of 144.6), while that of Group A was 277.03 (with a standard deviation of 84.83). Apart from that, the computed *T* was also higher than that of the tabulated *T* ( $2.99 > 2.00$ ) at  $p=0.05$ . Therefore, the post-test results of all the participants varied. As such, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis should accepted : there is a statistically significant difference between the means scores of experimental group (Listening Triangle Strategy ) and that of the control group.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Stating that good teaching typically results in good learning would not be seen as uncommon. It has been confirmed again that imparting lectures is an important way to share knowledge in universities. Yet, learners might require more participation in class to firm up their learning. The teaching methods chosen by students may greatly affect the results they achieve at the culmination of a course. Therefore, educators have a significant ethical duty to both

themselves and their students when selecting the most efficient teaching approach. The research showed that the LTS greatly influenced how students engage with the language assessment subjects and boost their participation by promoting collaboration among students and between students and teachers. Furthermore, the implementation of the LTS provides a different function for the teacher, moving away from indoctrination towards a more guided and supportive role for the students.

Boosting students' self-confidence and overcoming shyness and hesitation in expressing ideas enhances their ability to think and can be more engaging than simply listening to a lecture. This approach also supports intellectual development, individual expression, and character building. It provides students with opportunities to exchange ideas, strengthens language skills through continuous practice, and fosters deeper learning.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study recommends examining the types of workshops and training sessions that Iraqi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers undergo while teaching to determine if new strategies are discussed and taught. This would facilitate the identification of gaps in these workshops and training sessions and lead to planning future workshops and training sessions that better support Iraqi EFL teachers, especially inexperienced ones. The present study also recommends investigating how LTS are implemented in other disciplines to identify its importance in areas other than language learning.

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### **Appendix (A) pre-test**

Q./Choose the correct answer

1. It seeks to provide evidence of the learning outcomes for reporting and decision-making purposes.
  - a. alternative assessment
  - b. summative assessment
  - b. formative assessment
2. These are easier to mark than to set and permit a wide coverage.
  - a. subjective questions
  - b. objective questions
  - c. semi-objective questions
3. Students are required to show their understanding to the materials that are presented by selecting the right boxes.
  - a. grid
  - b. labeling
  - c. gap filling
4. It requires the students to combine many elements when completing the task.
  - a. discrete test
  - b. holistic test
  - c. indirect test
5. There is no real distinction between test and exercise in:
  - a. easy translation approach
  - b. structural approach
  - c. communicative approach
6. Is used for measuring the ability to identify the correctness of statements, facts ect.
  - a. odd one out
  - b. matching
  - c. true/ false
7. Criterion reference assessments are concerned with
  - a. content of the test
  - b. interpretation of the scoring of test
  - c. developing of the test.
8. The best example of an open ended format is
  - a. composition writing
  - b. MCQ
  - c. matching questions
9. In multiple choice items, the initial part of the item is:
  - a. correct answer
  - b. incorrect choices
  - c. stem
- 10 “Underline the incorrect word” such question form can be used in
  - a. transformation
  - b. matching
  - c. error recognition

### **Appendixes (B ) post-test**

#### **Q./ Answer with (true) or (false) and correct the false ones.**

1. Informal assessment is large scale test and administered in controlled environment.
2. Within essay –translation approach the tests were mainly spoken exercises.

3. Gap filling is useful for testing student's ability to produce sentences by changing sentence structure from into another.
4. There is no real distinction between test and exercise in structural approach of testing.
5. Even though we use communicative language approach in teaching and assessment, the majority of tests still adhere to the structural approach.
6. Guided writing question is an example of RRQ.
7. Informal assessment is large scale test and administered in controlled environment.
8. Within essay –translation approach the tests were mainly spoken exercises
9. The scoring of open ended questions take a long time.
10. Rearrangement testing technique can successfully measure a student's syntactic and semantic command of the language.