Fossilization: a Comparative Study Between Formal and Informal SLA

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Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most

Compassionate all praise is to Allah, the creature of the universe;

and prayers and peace be upon Mohamed His servant and

messenger. First and foremost, this study is wholeheartedly

dedicated to our beloved parents, best mothers and fathers who

have been our source of inspiration, strength and love, who

continually provide us with moral, spiritual, emotional, and

financial support. To our amazing brothers and sisters who

encouraged us throughout our entire lives and throughout this

journey, without forgetting our dearest extended family members.

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friends, who have been so supportive along the way. Last, to all the

precious people in our lives who touch our HEARTS.

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Abstract

The notion of fossilization is one of the most important factors in preventing learners to reach their aim. The present study attempts to compare the degree of fossilization between two language learning settings, in other words, it seeks to compare between learners who studied English in formal settings and those who acquired their language informally, trying to find out which of the two is more fossilized than the other. It is hypothesized that formal and informal language learning are different in regard to fossilization ratio. This dissertation is divided into two main parts: the theoretical part or the literature review and the practical part, the former includes two chapters and the latter is composed of only one chapter. Furthermore, this study follows the quantitative approach and it was carried out using the descriptive design. The required data for the research were collected via two forms of questionnaires; one administered as a hard copy while another through an online submission, the former was distributed to 20 English students at the University of Khenchela while the latter to 20 learners who acquired English in informal settings. After the analysis of the data, the findings show that there is no significant difference in fossilization ratio between university students and learners who acquired English informally, yet, this phenomenon occurs anyway in both learning environments. Consequently, the context in which learners acquire a foreign language has inconsiderable impact on learner's language competence.

Key words: Fossilization, second language acquisition, formal language learning, informal language learning.

List of Abbreviation

CF: Corrective feedback

CPH: Critical Period Hypothesis

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ICEMS: International Conference of Education and Management Science

IL: Interlanguage

ISCED: The international standard classification of education

L1: First Language

L2: Second language

MEP: The multiple effect principle

NL: Native Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TL: Target Language

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General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Statement of the Problem

In the inter-language (IL) process, it is observed that learners are frequently exposed to different aspects of the foreign language (FL) (Grammar, morphology, phonology…etc.) where they continually try to reach a closer approximation of the target language (TL), and ideally should advance gradually until it becomes equivalent or nearly equivalent to the TL.

However, it is a conventional fact that for second language (SL) learners the possibility to reach a native-like proficiency is unattainable in spite of their motivation, ability and opportunity to learn. FL learners' IL process may reach a permanent or temporary restricting phase, where they fail to achieve semi-native like state. In second language acquisition (SLA) research, this permanent cessation of learning is known as fossilization.

Many investigations had been conducted to generate different interpretations about the nature of fossilization; nevertheless, little attention has been given to the relationship between the setting of learning (formal/informal) and fossilization. This research will attempt to explore this relationship by comparing the nature of fossilization between learners who acquired English in formal institutions and those whose language was acquired informally and to investigate fossilization ratio between the two.

2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Two overarching questions guide this study

1. Does the fossilization degree of learners who are learning English formally differs from the learners acquiring it informally?

2. If the answer is yes, how do they differ?

- **Hypotheses**

H1: There is a difference in fossilization ratio between learners who acquired English formally and learners who acquired it informally.

H$_0$: There is no significant difference in fossilization ratio between learners who acquired English formally and learners who acquired it informally.

3. Background of the Study

IL fossilization is a broad term used to describe many forms of arrested progress in L2 acquisition. This arrested progress can occur in one or more specific features of the TL, and many teachers and researchers consider fossilization an unavoidable process. Selinker was the first to discuss the notion of fossilization in his paper Interlanguage (1972); where he illustrated that most SL learners are unable to reach the same level of efficiency of their L1. He defined it as "*a mechanism that underlies surface linguistic material which speakers will tend to keep in their Interlanguage (IL) productive performance, no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of instruction he receives in the target language"* (Selinker 1972: 229).

The SLA literature over the past three decades has seen a good variety of conceptions of fossilization, Ellis (1985:48) believes that:

Fossilized structures can be realized as errors or as correct target language forms. If, when fossilization occurs the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in his Interlanguage has assumed the same form as in the target language, then fossilization of the correct form will occur. If however, the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language, the fossilization will manifest itself as error.

On the other hand, Brown (1994: 218) sees it as a reversible condition, where he believes that fossilization may be overcome if learners are given the necessary positive affective feedback. He also states that neutral or negative cognitive feedback would encourage learners to try again, to restate, to reformulate or to draw a different hypothesis about a rule.

Krashen's acquisition-learning distinction is the theory by which the difference between the two concepts is demonstrated; he states that SL can be performed by either "the acquired system" or "the learned system", the former happens unconsciously and is similar to the children's process when acquiring their first language while the latter is based on formal instructions and requires the understanding of the linguistic items and the rules attached to it.

NB: Throughout this study, the aforementioned terms are used interchangeably.

4. Aims and Objectives

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of fossilization in relation to formal and informal educational settings. It seeks to compare two different types of learners; the ones who acquired English language formally and those who acquired it beyond formal setting and to see the degree of fossilization among these learners.

5. Methodology

Since this study tries to observe natural behaviours without effecting them in any way, it was decided that the best design to carry it out is the "descriptive design", In order to satisfy the objectives of the study, a quantitative research was held, the researcher opted for survey method in order to gather data automatically from participants for the purpose of exploring the attributes of the large population of which the individuals are members. As a mode of enquiry perspective, hard copy questionnaires and online questionnaires were utilized as data gathering tools.

The aim of questionnaires is to collect data from SL students at Khenchela University. Online questionnaires are valuable to collect data from individuals who are learning English away from a systematic institutional environment (informal learners).

The study was conducted at Abbas Laghror University of Khenchela, the researcher was interested in the population of English students at the university and 20 students were selected randomly during the second semester of 2018-2019.

Questionnaires were distributed to the students to extract information; attitudes; perceptions and insights into the possible explanations of the studied phenomenon.

Online surveys were utilized as a mean to collect information and feedback from 20 informal SL learners. The questionnaires were designed on this following website: https://www.zoho.com/survey/.

6. Structure of the study

The overall structure of the study takes the form of two parts. Theoretical part which is made up of two chapters, the first chapter deals with the concept of IL and the notion of fossilization (different views of fossilization, types, classifications, causal factors…), whereas the second chapter focuses on formal and informal SLA (formal and informal education, characteristics, advantages and the role of formal and informal SLA and its relationship with fossilization.) The second part of the study is empirical; it consists of only one chapter that presents the findings of the study, the analysis and discussion of the results. Finally the conclusion gives a brief summary and critique of the findings.

Chapter one: Fossilization

Introduction

Fossilization is believed to be a familiar and frequent phenomenon in EFL acquisition and learning. It is considered as one of the most common linguistic causes of ceased FL learning. Other causes are still being researched. Sociolinguists and scholars agree that fossilization occurs during the process of acquiring a new language and it mainly deals with the language form. This chapter aims to explain the overall aspects of this sociolinguistic phenomenon, its definitions, types, classifications, main causes, and how to overcome the encountered occurrences of language fossilized forms.

1. The Nature of Fossilization

1.1 Interlanguage:

In the field of SLA research the notion of fossilization cannot be discussed without outlining the concept of IL. The term IL was preliminary examined by Larry Selinker in his 1972's article "Interlanguage". It is a linguistic system that refers to FL learner's morphology, phonology and syntax where they try to generate meaning out of there available linguistic data. This system is not merely a combination of NL morphological and syntactic systems with TL vocabulary, rather the IL differs from both learner's NL and TL; it can be seen as a bridge between L1 and L2. Selinker (1972: 214) viewed IL as *"The existence of a separate linguistic system based on the observable output which results from learner's attempted production of a TL norm."*

Ellis (1985) reconsiders the origins of IL theory and remarks two views of SLA. Mentalist and psycholinguistic theories of SLA introduced the first view which marks out that learner's L2 is acquired exactly the same way in which their L1 is acquired, due to an inherent faculty for language acquisition. The second view is established upon a behaviorist theory of SLA where learner's environment and L1 interference and transfer shapes acquisition.

According to Doughty & Long (2005:1) IL is *"The proposal that L2 learners have internalized a mental grammar, a natural language system that can be described in terms of linguistic rules and principles"*. They explained that IL is a unique system, a distinctive kind of the TL created by a particular learner.

Corder (1967) maintains that this system known as IL is constantly progressing to reach closer approximation of the TL. However, during this process the IL is likely to arrive at the temporary restricting phase, temporary cessation of learning of TL generally referred to as fossilization.

1.2. The Notion of Fossilization:

1.2.1. Selinker's Definition

The issue of fossilization has been discussed by several scholars and throughout different periods of time. However, it was Selinker (1972, p: 215) who first referred to it as "*Linguistic items, rules and sub-systems which speakers of a particular L1 tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL no matter what the age of the learner or the amount of explanation and instructions he/ she receives in the target language*". Selinker based his assumption on the fact that learners who achieve total proficiency in TL are only 5%, which leaves 95% of learners apt to failure. Starting from this, he draws a distinction between two latent structures in the brain; the latent language structure and the latent psychological structure. He goes on arguing that only 5% of learners manage to activate the former structure. As for the majority of learners who fail to activate this structure resort to the latent psychological structure and the possibilities to become linguistically fossilized are high. In addition to that, Selinker sees fossilization as inevitable phenomenon that sooner or later would manifest, regardless of the learners' age or the amount of instructions they get.

Following this, Selinker gradually relinquished his 5% claim regarding the proportion of successful SL learners and he hypothesized that it is impossible for any language learner to command the TL as a native does. Selinker (as cited in Han, 2004) stated:

Fossilization is the process whereby the learner creates a cessation of IL learning, thus stopping the IL from developing, it is hypothesized, in a permanent way . . . The argument is that no adult can hope to ever speak a SL in such a way that he/she is from native speakers of that language. In other words, fossilization is inevitable and takes place in whatsoever conditions.

Selinker maintains that fossilization is the product of five central processes involved in SL learning, consisting of: Language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of learning, strategies of communication and overgeneralization of TL linguistic material.

Language transfer refers to the interference of L1 in SLA process; in other words, the use of TL can lead to fossilization. As for training transfer, it is the influence of a "third party", far from both L1 and L2.

Learning strategies are the methods a SL learner adopts during learning the TL. On the other hand, strategies of communication are the strategies learners use while applying what they have learned in a communication- based context, for instance a learner may paraphrase, add or omit linguistic elements to convey intended meanings. Some learners tend to over depend on such strategies when they lack the appropriate linguistic structure to the extent that the substitutional forms become permanent.

Overgeneralization comes as a result of unawareness of the grammatical rules of the TL, it involves applying a single grammatical rule to the entire grammatical paradigm without putting into consideration the entirety number of exceptions, for example some learners use the -ed suffix to indicate past tense to irregular verbs.

Each process of the five central processes produces a fossilized item in the learner's IL; in addition to that, Selinker maintains that the existence of the five processes all together leads to "entirely fossilized IL competence "

To conclude; Selinker came out with a number of ground regulations related to the notion of fossilization:

- SL learners create a permanent IL plateau.

- The fossilized IL exists irrespectively to the age and the degree of exposure to the TL.

- It is difficult, nearly impossible to decide what time fossilization manifest.

1.2.1.1 Simplification:

In his 1993 essay "Fossilization as Simplification", Selinker attempts to explore the phenomenn of fossilization as a form of "simplification" which refers to the tendency of carrying out modifications and alterations on the TL in order to simplify it. Scholars show disagreement regarding the place of simplification; some see it as SL learning strategy, others as a strategy of communication and some scholars argue that it is a kind of language transfer.

1.2.2.   Other Definitions:

Numerous interpretations were given to the notion of fossilization since it was first introduced by Selinker (1972). Most of them highlighted the key aspects of Selinker's definition; others gave the notion different dimensions. For instance, Lowther (1983:127)'s view correspond roughly with Selinker's definition, where both of them up hold that fossilization refrains learners to achieve native like competence in the TL. Lowther argues that *"fossilization as presented in much of the literature is understood to be the inability of a person to attain native like ability in the target language"*.

Nemser (cited in Selinker, 1992:174) described it as "a *stabilized intermediate system"*. Other SLA researchers gave new aspect to the phenomenon, Vigil and Oller (1976:282) perspective of fossilization is that it can be applied to both incorrect and correct forms of language

We will extend the notion of fossilization to any case where grammatical rules construed in the broadest sense become relatively permanently incorporated into psychology real grammar…

…An adequate explanation must account for the incorporation of rules into developing grammar in relatively permanent form regardless of whether those rules conform or do not conform to the norms of the language which is being learned it is not only the fossilization of so-called errors that must be explained but also the fossilization of correct forms that conform to the target language norms"

Ellis (1985:48) based his interpretation on vigil And Oller view of fossilization along with the performance dimension of Selinker (1972)'s dual definition where he provides the following view

Fossilized structures can be realized as errors or as correct target language forms. If, when fossilization occur the learner has reached a stage of development in which feature X in his IL has assumed the same form as in the target language then fossilization of the correct form will occur. If however the learner has reached a stage in which feature Y still does not have the same form as the target language the fossilization will manifest itself as error.

Ellis considers fossilization to be inevitable in the IL process and describes it to have fossilized errors as well as fossilized target like forms. However this opinion is not supported by many researchers instead they believe that the term fossilization should be limited to non-target like forms. According to Hyltenstam (1988:68*)*:

fossilization according to observations is the process that may occur in the SL acquisition contacts as opposed to first language acquisition, it covers features of the second language learners IL that deviate from the native speaker Norm and are not developing any further or deviant features which although seemingly left behind re-emerge in the learners speech under certain conditions. Thus the learner has stopped learning or has reverted to earlier stages of acquisition.

Hyltenstam sees that Fossilization may or may not occur in SLA it is concerned with structures that deflect from the learners L1 but they do not belong to the TL norms. The interpretations and definitions of fossilization faced serious criticism which stresses that they lack sophistication. Thereby making the phenomena non-measurable (K. Gregg 1997, SLART_L discussion). Han (2006:19) suggested a two Tire definition in response to the criticism:

- **Cognitive level**: *fossilization involves those cognitive processes or underlying mechanisms that produce permanently stabilized IL forms.*

It states that fossilization is a mental system consists of more than one procedure.

- **Empirical level:** *fossilization involves those stabilized IL forms that remain in the learner speech or writing overtime no matter what the input or what the learner does;* It connects fossilization with stabilization that is evident in the IL production. Han's two tier definition is also related to fossilization as a product and as a process, the cognitive level is concerned with fossilization as a process whereas the empirical level as a product. The two levels denote a cause-effect relationship in that the cognitive level (process) leads to the empirical level (product).

To sum up the SLA literature is Rich with multiple interpretations and opinions about the nature of fossilization however there is no general agreement on the nature of fossilization nor whether it exists or not.

1.3 Types of Fossilization

1.3.1 Phonological Fossilization

Several studies were conducted to investigate phonological problems that face FL learners. Phonological fossilization is seen as one of the factors that's causes problems to FL learners. The latter according to Wei (2008:128) is *"repetition of phonological errors which results from the incorrect acquisition of pronunciation of L2 usually affected by L1"*. In other words the phonological fossilization is the mispronounced words that FL learners tend to repeat constantly, this occurs from unhealthy L2 acquisition which is related and mostly derived from L1 norms and rules. Pal (2013) conducted a study of the interference of L1 on FL learner's spoken English. The participants were Indian learners, his research attempted to identify the sounds of Hindi language that were the causes of the acquisition of English mispronunciation. The results showed several difficulties that Hindi English learners face with their pronunciation, namely fricative sounds, Constants clusters, vowel sounds that have different spellings...etc. Pal's findings indicated that learners fossilized pronunciation is a result of L1 interference in the process of L2 acquisition.

1.3.2 Grammatical Fossilization

Grammatical fossilization has been a center of focus to a substantial number of studies in SLA research. Schachter (1990). Sorace (1993). Han (2005) asserts that non-native speakers are unable to achieve complete TL grammar, and the errors they produce are permanently settled in their IL, hence they are fossilized. Han & Selinker (1990) analyzed the IL of Siri, a female from Thailand. The results indicated that Siri omitted the subject from

sentences when it was necessary. She also used "to have" when the structure needed was "there be". They claimed that even after pedagogical treatment, Siri continued omitting the subject. According to them this indicates that fossilized grammatical errors are difficult to overcome even with good instruction and treatment.

In contradictory view, Fauziati (2011) examined the grammatical errors made by Indonesian students. The findings of the research showed that there errors can be classified into: verb "to be", sentence structure, preposition and pronouns. According to Fauziati, certain errors where destabilized and others were stabilized. He argued that if learners receive adequate treatment almost all of their grammatical errors can be eliminated.

1.4 Classifications of Fossilization

The classifications of fossilization are set by Wei (2008) as follow:

1.4.1   Individual and Group Fossilization:

Selinker (1978) highlights two categories in IL fossilization, individual fossilization and group fossilization. Individual fossilization is related to individual learner's constant IL progress. It is considered from two aspects, first is error reappearance that is concerned with beginners and learners with poor proficiency level in IL, it refers to mistakes or unsuitable IL features that keeps reappearing even though they had been corrected multiple times. Second aspect is language competence fossilization related to more experienced learners that reached high proficiency level in IL. It is concerned with the developmental progress in L2 learners, mostly related to speech sounds, syntactic structures and vocabulary. Wei (2008:127) holds that: *«Repeated errors are often the demonstrations of competence fossilization"*.

Group fossilization is regarded as a phenomenon when fossilization or fossilized language competency becomes prevalent in a society where most of the members of a

community share the same errors and fossilized structures and this leads to the creation of a new dialect.

1.4.2   Permanent and Temporary Fossilization:

Fossilization can also be classified on the basis of its continuance; either permanent or temporary. The former is when deviant forms in the IL structure become persistent and the learner shows no progress. Permanent fossilization can occur as a consequence to social or psychological variables; additionally learners may arrive to a minimum level of L2 sufficient to communicative purposes limited to particular situations, in this case additional L2 acquisition is no longer required.

Temporary fossilization, also called stabilization, refers to the intermediate stage where erroneous plateau is suspended for long or short period of time before it is set right to the correct form.

Different insights have been given regarding the notion of stabilization. Schumann (1978), Stauble (1978) and Perdue (1993) have referred to it as a precursor of fossilization. In contrast, Selinker states that stabilization is not necessarily supervened by fossilization; he maintains that it either leads to fossilized forms or further progress.

2.   Sources of Fossilization

2.1. Causes of Fossilization

2.1.1   Language Transfer

Also known as linguistic interference, language transfer has been one of the main issues in SLA and IL. It takes place when learners transfer or borrow linguistic features from their NL to use into their SLA. Many psychologists believe that language transfer is one of leading causes of fossilization, according to them when a person wants to learn a new knowledge or skill he always fall back on his prior knowledge which is the same case with L2 learners. For

Selinker (1972) learners tend to transfer some of L1 rules of phonology, grammar and vocabulary into their IL. The difference between the two languages is the cause for most errors produced by learners and it leads to fossilization. Ghasemi (2003) points out that:

Transfer can be viewed as a mechanism that leads to fossilization, which means using the L1 as a backup to obtain the TL rules and forms can be fruitless and this will lead to new rules and forms which are not compatible with the one of the TL, and this will lead to the manifestation of fossilization.

L1 transfer maybe positive or negative the former implies that both L1 and L2 share similar linguistic elements that help in SL comprehension and production. The latter however is concerned with the differences between L1 and L2 when the transfer of L1 structures interferes in the process of SLA it was largely considered as a source of errors. In behaviorist's point of view negative language transfer is considered to be proactive inhibition means that what have been learned in the past influences and interrupts what is learned in the future.

The multiple effect principle (MEP) proposed by Selinker and Lakshamanan (1992: 198) suggest that *"when two or more SLA factors work in tandem there is a greater chance of stabilization of IL forms leading to possible fossilization." (Cited in Han 2004:118)*

According to them there is a weak form and a strong form to the MEP:

- **Weak form**: language transfer is a privileged cofactor in setting multiple effects.
- **Strong form:** language transfer is a necessary cofactor in setting multiple effects.

Selinker and Lakshmanan (1992) asserts that the connection between fossilization and language transfer is that when the MEP is working language transfer is most likely to be involved.

2.1.2 Corrective Feedback:

Corrective feedback (CF) is one of the disputed issues that have taken a considerable attention of both scholars and teachers in SLA framework. Many theorists highlight the importance of corrective feedback and call for the need to correct learners' errors either explicitly or implicitly for the purpose of enhancing learners' performance in TL. In contrast with this, linguists like Krashen proclaim the deficiency of CF; this view asserts that CF should not be taken as a teaching technique; furthermore, they believe that the use of CF may negatively affect learners as it precludes their enthusiastic interaction, demotivates and discourages them.

On the subject of fossilization, Gass considers CF as a tool stimulating learners and keep them on the correct way for a successful SLA. Furthermore she adds that it works as a device which detects inconsistencies within one's IL, according to her, without frequent CF, fossilization might occur. Gass and Varonis (1994: 299), moreover, point out that *"The awareness of the mismatch serves the function of triggering a modification of existing L2 knowledge, the results of which may show up at a later point in time"*.

2.1.3 Lack of Instruction

There has been a considerable agreement among researchers that a great number of adult L2 learners are inadequately able to reach a high level of competence in the TL except if they are exposed to formal instruction. Lack of formal instruction is said to be a vital factor in causing fossilization of incorrect language forms. Graham (1981) suggested that one of the major causes for fossilization of incorrect language forms is the lack of formal instruction in English; graham (1981) (as cited in Idowu, 2016: 52) expressed that "*learning simply by contact has led many students to devise IL or idiosyncratic languages with rules often widely different from those of Standard English"*. Formal instruction varies according to the level and needs of the learners, both implicit and explicit instructions are necessary to develop student's

competence in the TL. In her analysis Han (2012) believed that instruction can develop L2 learners acquisition and ultimate attainment, she maintains that adult learners who deceive proper instruction may have primary developmental advantages over Young uninstructed learners. According to Han (2012: 4) *"instruction eliminates learner errors, thereby improving accuracy and averting fossilization".*

2.1.4   Social and Personal Causes:

De Prada Creo (1990) investigated the possible assumptions of the reasons of fossilization in FL learning, he interviewed 25 near native speakers of an L2 participants about different reasons related to the process of fossilization in SLA, elements of self-analysis of the linguistic, sociological, psychological and emotional reasons were included in the study. The results of the study along with the analysis and discussion showed that all the participants believed that their L2 competence was not as good as that of a native speaker in many areas. Furthermore, they all felt that their language Plateaus has ceased in many linguistic aspects. However, in another question they all agreed that the level they reached was enough for their professional career which is teaching. De Prada attributed this to Corder's (1981) theory of fossilization which denotes that once learners are satisfied with their IL level they lose the desire and the motivation to develop it and therefore fossilization takes place, in other words, the individual purpose of SL learning is strongly associated with the time in which fossilization occurs, if a learner "A" needs to learn a SL for tourism and a learner "B" for professional purposes, it is likely that the L2 of learner "A" will cease to develop ahead of that of learner "B".

De Prada concludes by saying that the influence of psychological and social variables upon the process of SLA is much more than that of restricted input and output.

 As another example of psychological and social factors the Prada refers to the concept of "acculturation". Within this prospective, Schuman (1976- 1978) considers the social and

psychological "distance" between learners and the culture of the TL as an important factor in determining the status of the TL.

Social distance refers to the degree of individuals' integration in the society of the TL; psychological distance in the other hand pertains to elements related directly to the learner as an individual. Schumann (1957) listed five elements that may have an effect on the psychological distance of learners: language shock, culture shock, culture stress, motivation and ego permeability.

2.1.5   Other Causes:

Fossilization may occur, not only as a consequence of lack of instructions and absence of feedback, other causes can give rise to such phenomena, among these causes is learning strategies. Learning strategies as its name indicates differs from the previous mentioned causes, thus it is related to learners rather than teachers. The use of learning strategies would massively help learners develop their SL competence. However, according to Sims (1989: 67) "*someplace along the IL continuum, inappropriate or misapplied learning strategy could lead to fossilization of some features (phonological, psychological, morphological, syntactic, lexical or socio-cultural)*".Forms of inappropriate LS would be simplification (as discussed by Selinker) and incomplete rule application.

In line with this, lack of opportunity to use the TL can be listed among the reasons leading to fossilization. The use of TL in the classroom helps students practice what they previously learned. However, creating a foreign atmosphere that demonstrates a genuine communicative context is challenging and makes the quality of language learning less authentic.

2.2   Noticing Hypothesis

The last few years have seen a renewed importance in the role of conscious and unconscious processes in SLA. Learning a FL consciously with attention or unconsciously

without the learner's attention and awareness has been subject to controversy by many researchers. Theories and hypotheses were put forward to facilitate understanding of how these processes of language acquisition takes place. Schmidt (1990) suggested the noticing hypothesis; it is a claim on how input becomes intake. Schmidt claims that conscious awareness (noticing) plays a crucial part in language learning, according to the hypothesis the term noticing refers to *"conscious registration of the occurrence of events"*. In his hypothesis, Schmidt (1990) proposed that language consciousness and active attention to the components of language is essential to the internalization of language and building of the intake. Lewis (2000: 52) explains how the learners of a FL move from noticing to intake *"transition from input to intake through exercises and activities which help the learner observe or notice the L2 more accurately. Ensure quicker and more carefully formulated hypothesis about L2, and so Aid acquisition"*

2.2.1 Noticing Hypothesis and Fossilization

In regard to noticing and fossilization, researchers investigated whether FL learners notice the fossilized features in their speech. A study conducted in Iran by Zia Tajeddin & Maryam Sadat Tabatabaeian (2017) on the effects of noticing on the rate of learner's fossilization, the results showed that learners were incapable to use the correct grammatical, lexical and cohesive forms, and presented their inability to notice their errors which prompted their constant use of non-target like forms. According to Han (2009), when taken into consideration learner's noticing it was demonstrated that they identified less than half of all the errors they produced. The ones that are unnoticed are more likely to be candidates for fossilization. So according to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that it is necessary to raise learner's awareness of their errors so that fossilization can be reduced. The better one notices his erroneous; the fewer fossilized forms he produces.

2.3   The Critical Period Hypothesis

The critical period Hypothesis has been widely addressed by Lenneberg (1967) after it was first introduced to the field of language acquisition by Penfield & Roberts (1959). Lenneberg (1967) suggested that language acquisition should take place in the period from infancy to puberty (age 2 to 13), he believed this period is critical and essential to successful language learning. According to Moskovsky (2001:1) *«The critical period hypothesis in essence contends that the ability to learn a language is limited to the years before puberty after which most probably as a result of maturational processes in the brain this ability disappears ".*

Abundant research shows that older learners are unable to reach adequate and Superior level of language acquisition in comparison to children, despite the controversial surrounding the hypothesis it is indisputable that several adult FL learners speak an IL with fossilized, non-native accent and pronunciation. In understanding fossilization, Long (1990) pointed out that there is a cause-effect relationship between the period of the learners first exposure to the FL and his ultimate attainment. According to this understanding، adult learners begin their FL acquisition with some degree of biological handicap, so learning is Destined to incompleteness and thus to fossilization.

3   Fossilization Reduction:

Another literature related to fossilization has attempted to cover the possible solutions to avoid and overcome it. The solutions vary from scholar to another forasmuch as diversity of learners and their styles of learning play a big role in the process of reduction.

In order to come up with strategies to help SL Learners keep developing their IL and therefore avoid fossilization, it is most effective to start from the causes of this linguistic phenomenon and try then to find solutions to each.

According to Laura Sicola, a language coach and an executive ESL communication skills expert, overcoming fossilization is not impossible and it only requires the adequate methods, time and efforts. She states "*I have found no evidence to support the argument that the person who has fossilized cannot begin to make progress again toward a more target-like second language use, at least in some areas, with the right motivation, input and effort*".

Several researchers emphasize how Learners themselves play a vital role in correcting fossilized errors. Graham (1990) conducted a study on the de-fossilizing persistent pronunciation error, he design a 15 class sessions course in which, he based the model of treatment on learners and the CF they receive, the results of the study showed an improvement in their pronunciation.

Murphy (1991) also believes that developing a SLA pronunciation depends to a great extent on learners and the efforts they put into their learning. According to him *"improvement depends up significant commitment of both time and energy from learners themselves"*, he adds *"awareness and engagement can help them avoid fossilized pronunciation"*.

Wei (2008) considered Selinker's five processes as the main sources of fossilization and based on this he suggested three solutions to overcome the linguistic barriers; appropriate strategy for Learners' performance, sufficient input and natural exposure to TL environment.
In a study conducted in Colombia, Anderson Marcell Cardenas based his research on self-monitoring and self-evaluation strategies to help students correcting their grammatical speech

errors, both strategies have something in common: learners control and assess their own performance in the TL. At the end of the study the participants showed progress in attentiveness and awareness towards their fossilized errors.

The studies above are sufficient to conclude that the role of learners in reducing the degree of fossilization is significantly important and can be a positive factor if applied with the appropriate method.

In another position, teacher's instruction and monitoring were viewed as important as learners themselves in numerous studies. In the International Conference of Education and Management Science (ICEMS 2014) a study on fossilization of EFL learners' oral competence was made investigating the possible approaches to postpone fossilization, the study offered reduction of negative transfer and adoption of proper learning strategies as procedures to overcome the phenomenon, the study also asserts the significance of monitoring work which implies the need of the teacher's supervision for a successful SL acquisition. The study advises teachers to *"Establish some correctness in the production of new items immediately after they are presented, or to correct errors later on"*. At the end, the study concluded "*with the studying of the grammar instructed by the teacher, for those items, the learners will become aware of the incorrect and inexact forms, generally referred to as "fossilized" phenomenon*", this statement indirectly points out to the necessity of the awareness of learners to overcome fossilization.

Furthermore, Zheng (2001) suggested a five steps pedagogical model to destabilize fossilization. First, keeping into consideration learners' needs as a basis to select the convenient tools and methods. Second, Zheng denote the need to test learners' proficiency in order to define their level. A third step would be, according to Zheng, motivating students to help them precede their learning. Fourth, the teacher must take on learning strategies that are inclusive on attitude, approaches and techniques. The last procedure is to help students

develop their pragmatic strategies and language competence. Evidently, Zheng's research favored the contribution of teachers over than learners themselves. However, this kind of literature is criticized for the lack of imperial studies that investigate the validity of such methods and approaches.

What can be concluded from the above-mentioned discussions is that there is no consensus among researchers regarding which strategies, methods or techniques work better in reducing one's fossilized linguistic items, for this, the researcher calls for further studies regarding this matter.

Conclusion

To sum up, fossilization is a concept of huge importance in SLA; it is a universal phenomenon that has attracted the attention of teachers and researchers' alike. This sociolinguistic phenomenon occurs when non-target rules become fixed in the learner's IL. Hence, it is inevitable and cannot be remedied because it appears after the CPH.

Chapter two:
Formal and Informal SLA

Introduction

SL learning can be practiced in different ways; a learner can pick up a language formally by regularly attending a class or engaging with the language far away from any institutional setting (informal learning), both approaches proved their usefulness in the field of SLA. This chapter deals with different aspects of these settings; formal and informal education, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages and the role of formal and informal SLA and how they are related to fossilization.

1. Educational systems

1.1. Formal Education:

The international standard classification of education (ISCED) defines formal education as education that is institutionalized intentional and planed through public organizations and recognize private bodies and in their totality make up the formal education system of a country (2011).

Formal education is commonly associated with a specific category of institutions, such as schools, colleges or universities, it is inclusive of structured, organized and intentional activities, these activities are based on various but specific standard methods that aim at fulfilling certain academic objectives. In addition to this, formal education makes use of examination and assessments to evaluate students and inform them of their errors. It is important also to mention that formal education engages two participants; a student and a teacher who may take several roles during the process, he/she may be a guide, a monitor, assessor, controller or organizer. Learning formally usually follows a text-based methodology which involves teaching explicitly of the structures and grammatical features of a certain FL, furthermore, for teaching English as a FL, formal education focuses and it is limited only to formal and academic English rather than conversational English. Finally, the nature of the formal education environment which is the classroom makes learning limited at both space and time for it occurs during a limited academic period (semester, term, year...).

1.2. Informal Education:

The setting where learning takes place has been a centre of interest to many researchers. Most of them agree that learning is not confined to formal settings such as schools, but it also transpires through daily activities, interactions, self-instruction…Etc. Knowles (1950) highlighted the concept of informal education, from which the term informal learning was drone out. Although he didn't accurately define informal education, yet the term was concerned with informal programs and acquisition of learning through interaction in the community. Coombs & Ahmed (1974) however pointed out that informal education is the commonly recognized process of developing learning, knowledge and skills of learners in a highly unstructured, unsystematic and uninstitutional setting. Knowles asserts that informal environment can be emphasized in several learning situations, the flexibility of the process and the use of experience.

In general, informal learning is a process that takes place naturally, unconsciously and incidentally anywhere at any time. The commission of the European communities (2001:32-33) marked out definition to the concept

Informal learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or Leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead certification but informal learning may be intentional in most cases it is non-intentional.

1.3. Characteristics of Formal and Informal Education:

To understand the complexities of both formal and informal learning identifying some of their characteristics is required.

Formal education is organized, purposeful and that syllabus oriented with specifically identified objectives, units and materials. Objectives describe knowledge and skills what are

intended to be learned. Most of the formal educational courses adopt either learner-cantered approach or teacher-cantered approach. It takes place within a well-organized educational system that sets out an established curriculum or learning plan that functions under the supervision of professional teachers with this specific qualifications and training to facilitate the learning process. Formal education conveys formal instruction through direct schooling and tuition, conscious and well-planned schools and colleges are particularized for imparting formal learning. Assessment is essential to determine whether the learning objectives are accomplished. Though this kind of education is supported worldwide, but in fact it is artificial, not deeply rooted, less effective for different contexts and is mostly theoretical rather than practical.

In contrast, informal education is never organized; takes place outside formal educational setting and it arises from the learner's engagement in activities that are not used for the purpose of learning. In opposition to formal learning, informal learning does not require formal curriculum, learners mostly learn through personal experience and interaction no organized or structured instructions are involved. Moreover, it is mainly characterized by a combination of need, motivation and opportunity; it is spontaneous, personal and incidental. This type of learning might be accomplished in private with a bit of preparation or notice and is associated with a positive learning attitude.

1.4   Advantages of Formal and Informal Learning:

Before carrying out with the study it is a necessary to highlight the advantages of both formal and informal settings. Researchers agree that the environment where the process of learning takes place plays a significant role, as for learning formally, most of the learning happens inside the classroom and it takes place in an organized manner following a curriculum or a program which makes learning much interesting rather than free and

haphazardly, the programs are usually designed by professionals to suit Learners' needs and it is inclusive of different and various elements.

Another characteristic of learning formally is the persistent correction of errors and mistakes as mentioned in the first chapter page 17, CF can improve learners' performance in the TL if used properly. CF is related in some way to another feature which is the role of the teacher. Teachers, tutors or instructors are the most significant characters in formal learning environment, under this element, teacher instruction and encouragement can be listed. The encouragement of the teacher creates a comfortable atmosphere that helps students learn better.

In a study conducted in Malaysia by (Shima Kameli)) on the influence of formal language learning environment on vocabulary learning strategies, one of the participants mentioned that although there is a lack of support by his parents to learn the English language, he is encouraged and given confidence by his teachers in the school. Jim another student who participated in the research described his drama class and his teacher as the important aspects which assist him to learn new vocabulary, more over this statement is consistent with Ohta (2001), who found that the communication between learners and peers and teachers help them enhance their knowledge in the TL. In addition to those of Hall and Verplactse (2000) which states that *"teachers and students work together to create the intellectual and practical activities shape both the form and the content of the TL as well as the processes and outcomes of individual development "*(p.10).

The setting of formal learning is classrooms or any other institution which implies the obligatory of attendance for learners, this compulsion works as a motive for students to improve their linguistic skills in addition to organize their time and content of learning. Informal learning does not take place in a formal setting, it is usually an instructed and self-directed, so learners are free to choose the content and the material they use along with the

appropriate approach to follow in order to learn effectively, in this case learning is more personal and less intimidating. In ESL classroom most of the learning comes from participating in group activities and getting engaged in classroom conversations. In the case of learning a FL some students feel shy about their accent and the way they utter words or get afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers and their teacher, which may prevent them of reaching the required objective set by the teacher, learning informally may be more comfortable to such type of students thus it makes a learner feel at ease and subsequently get motivated to learn better. In addition to this, the process of learning informally happens naturally and unconsciously with less instructions and controlling, this makes Learners much interested and more willing to learn new aspects of theFL.

Another advantage of learning formally can be seen today, thanks to the social media technology and the electronic devices, creating an informal learning environment can be less costly and time efficient, as an example for this, the 'Duolingo' with more than 300 million learners, Duolingo is considered the world's most popular language platform, in a study conducted by the University of city in New York it was found that a person with no knowledge of Spanish would need between 26and 49 hours (or 34 hours on average) on the app to cover the material for the first college semester of Spanish.

2. Formal VS Informal Language Learning:

Formal and informal language learning that are studied by many researchers Rogers (2001) suggested that informal language learning is unstructured and non purposeful but at the same time is the most extensive and essential parts of learning. On the other hand, formal language learning is structured, purposeful and school-based.

Formal and informal language learning are significantly distinguished in terms of the setting of learning, two types are displayed, formal setting according to Light bown&Spada (2001) is the atmosphere where the standard form of the TL is being taught to FL learners. In

contrast, informal setting is seen as the context in which FL learners are exposed to the TL at home or in social interaction. The two concepts are also distinguished by instruction that either focuses on the form or the meaning of language. In light of that, formal language learning occurs in class environment with formal instruction; aside from that informal language learning generally takes place out of the class environment without the need of formal instruction. Formal and informal language learning settings are not separated from each other; Marsick & Watkins (1990) demonstrated that in case the focus is not on the form of the language informal language learning can take place within in the classroom, moreover it can also take place during interactions among peers.

2.1 Autonomy and Self-instruction in Language Learning:

The terms; autonomy and self-instruction have been largely used in the field of education, and SL learning domain is not an exception. In this section, the researcher will shed light on the different definitions, features and distinctions among the two terms.

At the beginning of their article "Autonomy, self-direction and Self-assess in Language Teaching and Learning : The history of an Idea" , Mary José and Philip Riley (1995: 125) stated *"... it would be extremely foolhardy to try to trace these concepts back to any single source or date of origin ..."* and they attributed the reason of this to the complex nature of the two concepts and their entangled relationship with different fields, such as philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology. However, despite this difficulty, the researcher will also try to examine the different ideas and historical developments of points of view regarding the aforementioned terms.

2.1.1. Autonomy in Language Learning:

Given the fact that informal SL learning depends to a great extent on the idea of individualism, it is required to consider the autonomy of learner and its role in the field of

SLA. In a recent article by Phil Benson, he explains that the early history of autonomy in language education is well-documented by (Geremmo and Riley 1995), (little 1991), (Benson 2001) and (Holec 2007) and it began with the council of Europe's modern languages project which led to the publication of Holec's (1971) seminal report. Mary Josie and Philip Riley (1995) state that 20-25 years following the Second World War, the educational research and practice witnesses an intense scrutiny debate and analysis regarding autonomy. Indeed multiple books, articles and papers were published during this period disgusting the nature of autonomy and its relation with FL education. In 1988 a collaborative project of Houghton, Long and Fanning explored the concept of autonomy in relation to individualization, pointing out that the two terms refer to different concepts. In the same context, autonomy was defined as *"self-government"* and *"personal freedom"* (p.75) and autonomous learners were described as students who do not rely only on the sources of authority and are able to make their own judgments about the validity of the knowledge presented to them, on the other hand individualization according to Houghton et al (1988) does not entail making judgments and it merely refers to an emphasis towards the individual as opposed to the group.

Little (1995: 175) argues that learner autonomy does not imply any particular mode of practice but it is instead dependent upon the quality of the "Pedagogical dialogue» between teachers and learners. Dickinson (1987:2) also considered elements such as the "independence" and "responsibility" of learners along with the teacher's "preparation" as important elements to achieve autonomy. Furthermore, Houghton et al (1988) emphasis the role of the teacher, they assert that a highly qualified teacher can help even an independent student to become an autonomous learner.

However, Holec (1981) excluded the role of a teacher or tutor in his definition, thus he defined it as "*the ability to take charge of one's own learning» (p.3)* this definition is still remarkably applied and considered the most cited one.

2.1.2. Self-instruction in Language Learning:

"Discussions about second language acquisition context usually center on the distinction between formal and informal environments and the differential impact the setting might have on learning processes and learner achievements" Leslie Dickinson (1987: 104)

In parallel with this passage, SL self-instruction is one way to learn a FL informally (outside the classroom). Self-instruction has been defined in various ways by different researchers, Deckinson (1987) described it as *a "neutral term referring generally to situations in which learners are working without the direct control of the teacher"*(p. 11), furthermore, he attributed the reasons of using self-instruction to "*the inability of an individual to attend a course*", in addition to its usefulness of handling the individual differences among learners. Later on, Jones (1998) defined self-instruction briefly as "*a deliberate long-term learning project instigated, planned and carried out by Learners alone without teacher intervention*" (p. 378).

Benson (2001) broadened the definition to become *"any deliberate effort by the learner to acquire or master language content or skill"* (p. 76), in addition to this, Benson (2001) draws a distinction between self-instruction and naturalistic learning, thus he characterizes self-instruction as any special designed tools that work as classroom instructor with the strong intention of Learners, while in naturalistic learning he marked the absence of the special designed tools besides the learner's intention.

Regardless of the multiple definitions of self-instruction, there is a consensus that it is the learner who controls the content, materials and methods of what is intended to be learned. From the researcher's point of view, self-instruction is any activity practiced by a learner in an attempt to develop his skills in a particular FL; these activities are characterized by the absence of an institutional control, grades and mandatory assessments and attendance.

3. The Role of Formal Instruction in SLA:

SLA is generally classified into two types according to the acquisition setting. Classroom and naturalistic SLA, one of the main differences highlighted in the two settings is formal instruction which mostly occurs within the classroom. In order to show the effect of formal instruction in SLA, it is necessary to point out that there are three main theoretical positions to the role of formal instruction.

3.1. The Non-interface Position

Krashen (1987) argues in his monetary theory that learners can develop their linguistic ability through two different systems, "learned knowledge" is the conscious process consequent from formal instruction, "acquired knowledge" however is seen as an unconscious procedure incorporated through natural communication. For him these two types of knowledge are separated and that learning does not become acquisition. The monitor hypothesis proposed by krashen asserts that acquisition initiates utterances in L2 and is responsible for fluency. Learning however only functions as a monitor that makes adjustments in the form of the utterances after it has been produced by the acquired system. All in all, the acquired system is responsible for the production of utterances, the learned system checks and corrects errors before or after its production. Newmark (1970) &Prabhu (1987) maintain that the effectiveness of language learning depends on the meaning and focuses on natural communication, Newmark (1970) argues that's grammar instruction and the grammatical form of utterances is unnecessary for successful language learning.

The non-interface position works in contrast with many theories and hypotheses made by many researchers to emphasize the importance of formal instruction in SLA. The non-interface hypothesis ignores explicit to Grammar instruction and that the development of L2 competence is highly dependent on learner's concentrating on meaning rather than the form.

3.2. The Interface Position:

The interface position works in opposition to Krashen's theory, it maintains that learning can turn into acquisition. In other words explicit knowledge turns via practice into implicit knowledge and hence into automaticity. For Seliger (1979) learning grammatical rules helps in acquiring language and activates memory. Stevick (1980) develops another SLA model "levertov machine", according to him learning turns into acquisition through extensive "use", Stevick puts forward that learning is stored in secondary memory where knowledge can be lost if it is not used, acquisition lays in tertiary memory where the material is saved even if it is not used.

Sharwood-Smith (1981) criticizes Krashen's non-interface hypothesis he presumes that information may be transmitted from explicit to implicit knowledge through practice but he also asserts that if this transmission does not occur for long periods of time fossilization will take place instead.

The interface position was judged and criticized on the basis that acquisition is as important as learning, and that the only case with Grammar instruction may be beneficial in SLA is when it is transformed from the conscious to the unconscious.

3.3. The Variability Position:

The variability position came as a reaction to the interface and non-interface positions. Tarone (1983) & Ellis (1984) argue that learner's knowledge and performance are inconstant and depends on the situation; the learner can use different approaches stretching from conscious to unconscious end. Tarone (1983) claims that IL is a Continuum that expands from "careful style" to the "vernacular Style". The use of Internet with patterns depends on the situation and linguistic contexts, learners tend to use careful style in planned discourse and vernacular style in unplanned discourse. Tarone gave more significance to vernacular style

mainly because it is natural, systematic and stable. She also held that formal instruction affects the careful style and has little indirect effect on the vernacular Style.

The variability hypothesis supports formal instruction for being good facilitator of learning. It is assumed that it helps in the development of analyst used in carful Style and automaticity in vernacular Style. This position takes into account learner's needs, and that instruction can be adjusted according to what the learners want to do with language.

4. The Effect of Formal Instruction on Fossilization:

It has been agreed upon by many SL researchers and teachers that instruction prevents fossilization; others believe that instruction may have negative influence on learning and hence aids fossilization. Ellis (1989) strongly believes in the importance of instruction in SL learning, he points out that:

Learners will fail to acquire the more difficult rules (eg inversion and verb-end) once they have achieved communicative adequacy. Learners may need form focused instruction to make them aware of grammatical features that have little communicative importance yet constitute target language norms. In other words, formal instruction serves to prevent fossilization. ... Naturalistic acquisition is often a very slow Process, instruction may not alter the way in which learning takes place, but it may help to speed it up. (1989:4).

Ellis's claim is more of a subjective assumption rather than an observed fact because it lacks empirical and theoretical research, nevertheless some SL researchers believe in this assumption and that it exist a causal relation between grammar instruction, error correction and fossilization. Long (1998) considers the effectiveness of instruction on language acquisition and for overcoming fossilization, he asserts that

... An influence to combat unbalanced memory driven development. Learners are not easily allowed, that is to forget about structure, when their tendency might be concentrate on

communication and meaning. In this way, instruction pre-emptively reduces the likelihood of inflexibility and fossilization in language development.

However, the SLA literature is aware that instruction is not always successful, several works dealing with the role of instruction in SLA shows its limitation. The researchers are generally careful in expressing the positive effects of instruction. One of the pioneering investigators in this respect are a Vigil and Oller (1976), they presented a model of fossilization which concentrated on the role of extrinsic feedback in the development of fossilization. The model's focal point is that interactive feedback that learners receive has an influence on fossilization, Vigil & Oller (1976) asserts that a combination of positive cognitive feedback and negative effective feedback is most likely to Foster fossilization. Fossilization has always been a source of fear too many SL teachers, Van Patten (1988) called it fossilophobia. In contrast to vigil and Oller's model it appeared to be a widespread conviction among several teachers that CF which plays an important role in explicit instruction can prevent fossilization. In this regard, Higgs & Clifford (1982:78) expressed that *"when students are regularly rewarded for linguistically inaccurate but otherwise successful Communication of meaning or intent that the threat of proactive interference in the form of fossilization looms large";* thus some researchers believe that without corrective feedback fossilization will occur.

Conclusion

In conclusion, educators and researchers have long investigated the setting that best promote students learning. Formal and informal educational settings were given the same level of importance, they both offer different strengths to learners SLA process, one can assume that combining formal and informal learning in one method can be a productive way of language learning and therefore reduces the amount of fossilized items.

Chapter three:
Data Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

Research is widely considered to be one of the mostly practiced processes to examine problematic situations and suggest some solutions. Most researches are required to be presented through theory and analysis according to Goddard & Melville (2007, p.1): *Research is not just a process of gathering information as is sometimes suggested. Rather, it is about answering unanswered questions for creating that which does not currently exist. In many ways, research can be seen as a process of expanding the boundaries of our ignorance.* The third chapter exhibits the practical part of the study; it gives an inclusive description of the methodology used to conduct the research, the research design, population, sample and data collection tool. The chapter also deals with the analysis of the data and interpretation of the obtained results.

1. Research design

This research is carried out as a comparative study in order to investigate the difference between approaches used by learners in their English language acquisition (formal and informal education) and to see it's correlation with learner's fossilization ratio.

To pursue more reliable answers to this problem, the quantitative approach was selected. Since it is impossible that the researchers will test and measure a large number of samples, the descriptive research design was chosen to analyse and interpret the obtained results. According to Burns and Grove (2001) the descriptive design is the best way to recognize a problem with perspective to improve its results.

2. Population and sample

A population is identified as the subject that constitutes a known whole. Polit (2001:233) define it as*: "the entire aggregation of cases that meet a specific set of criteria".* A sample is "*the selected portion of the population, the homogeneous group that can represent the whole population*".

The population of this study are both English students at the department of English at Khenchela University and learners who have acquired English informally outside academic settings. Due to the constraints of time and limitation of resources, the sample was only 40 participant divides into 20 English students and 20 learners who acquired English informally. The sample was randomly chosen to avoid bias and ensure easiness in interpreting the data.

3. Means of data collection

In order to set forth this research into the outside world, it is necessary to implement accurate research instruments to attain reliable data. Questionnaires were opted for as a tool for collecting data on the phenomenon under investigation. Sommer et Al (2001) define the questionnaire as a self-report data collection instrument which is filled out by the research participants; it is a series of written questions on a certain subject on which the desired opinions are sought. A binary questionnaire was used as a data collection tool; the first questionnaires were addressed to 20 EFL students at the department of English at the University of Abbes Laghrour- Khenchela. Online questionnaire was administered to 20 individuals who are learning English informally.

4. Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study is developed for the sake of eliciting data about learner's fossilization and its relation with formal and informal educational settings. The questionnaire is headed by an introductory paragraph explaining to the participants that it is part of a research that aims at investigating the concept of fossilization and its relation to

formal and informal educational settings. The questionnaire consists of 20 questions that can be divided into three sections. The questions differ from closed-ended, dichotomous and scaled likeret questions.

- **Section one: Q1-Q4**

This section is devised to collect personal information about the participants. Which includes their age, English courses they attended (formal or informal) and for how long?

- **Section two: Q5-Q8**

The second section is an insight into the participant's utility of English, the situations and places on which they use in English and whether they prefer formal or informal instruction in their language learning.

- **Section three: Q9-Q20**

The last section takes the lion's share of the questionnaire because it deals with the core of the study. The questions attempt to identify which participants are more fossilized, and on which aspect of their language acquisition fossilization may occur.

4.1 Implementation of the questionnaire

The hard copy of the questionnaire was distributed to 20 random English students from the department of English at Abbes Laghrour- University of Khenchela. It didn't take them more than 15 minutes to answer. The online questionnaire on the other hand was intended to 20 learners who acquired English informally.

5. Analysis of the Result

Question 1: *What is your age?*

NB .Throughout the questionnaire items analysis procedure, 'A' and 'B' in the tables stand respectively for formal and informal language learners.

Table n°1: Learners Age

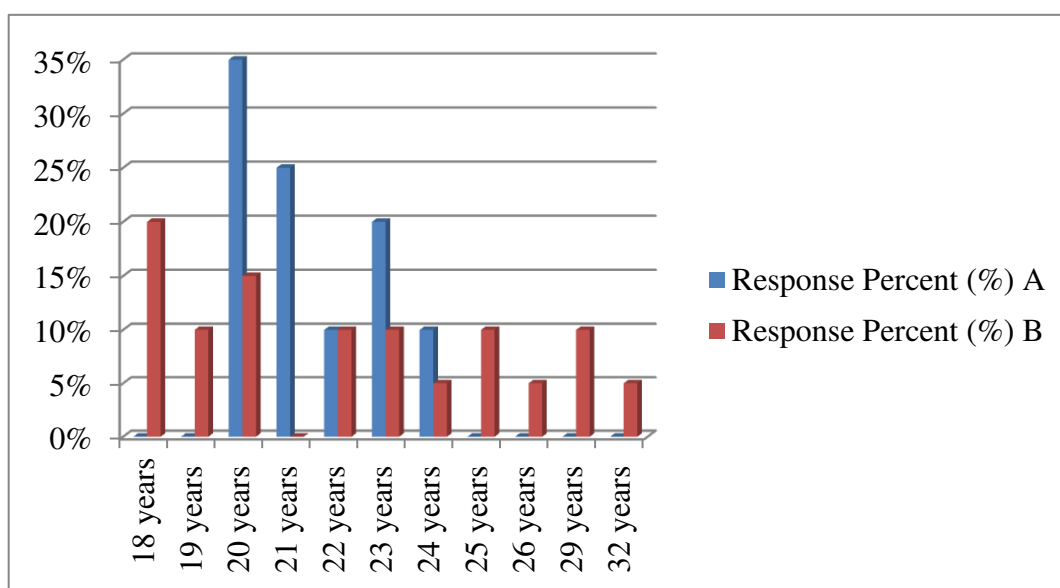| Age	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
18 years	0%	20%	0	4
19 years	0%	10%	0	2
20 years	35%	15%	7	3
21 years	25%	0%	5	0
22 years	10%	10%	2	2
23 years	20%	10%	4	2
24 years	10%	5%	2	1
25 years	0%	10%	0	2
26 years	0%	5%	0	1
29 years	0%	10%	0	2
32 years	0%	5%	0	1

Figure n°1: Learners Age

The age of the majority of the sample ranges between 20-24 of English university students and 18-32 of learners acquiring English informally. Most of group B participants (20%) are 18 years old and another (15%) are 20 years old. The rest ranges between 22/23/24 years old. In regard to group A, great numbers of them (35%) are 20 years old university students and (25%) are 21 years old, and another (20%) are 23 years old.

Item 2: *what type of English courses have you been attending through your academic experience? (You can choose several answers).*

Table n°2: Types of Courses Attended by the participants

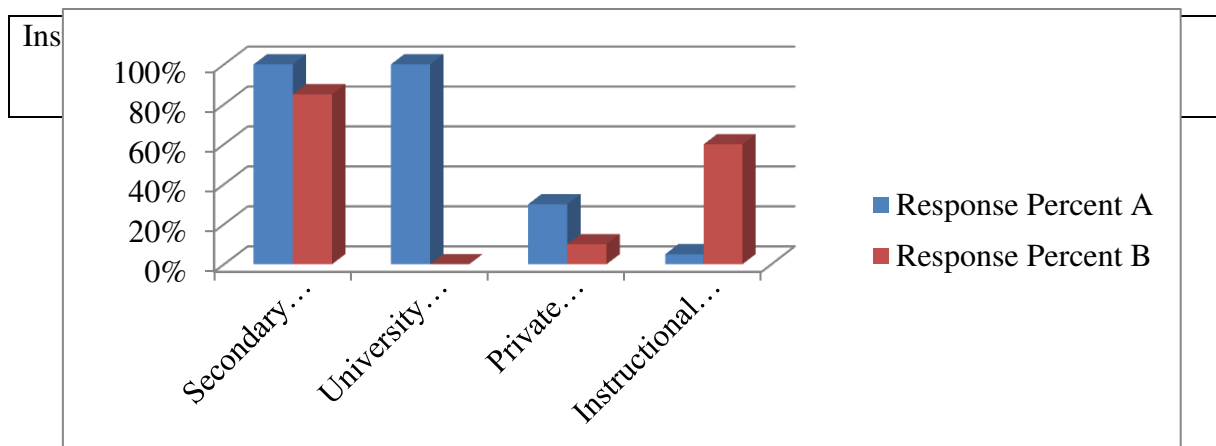| Choices	Response Percent		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Secondary and/or high school courses	100%	85%	20	17
University courses	100%	0%	20	0
Private language school courses	30%	10%	6	2

Figure n°2: Types of Courses Attended by the participants

Table 2° shows the participants' English courses throughout their English language background. The purpose behind this question is to see the amount of English background knowledge they received. The results reveal that all students (100%) attended university, secondary and / or high school English courses, while only (30%) assisted in private language school courses. Simultaneously, results also show that the majority of group B (85%) attended secondary and / or high school English courses as their first source of English background knowledge, unlike group A; group B never received English university courses, and most of them (60%) experienced self-studying; while (10%) depended more on private language school courses.

Item 3*: How long have yo studied English since you first were exposed to language learning?*

Table n°3: Years of English Studying

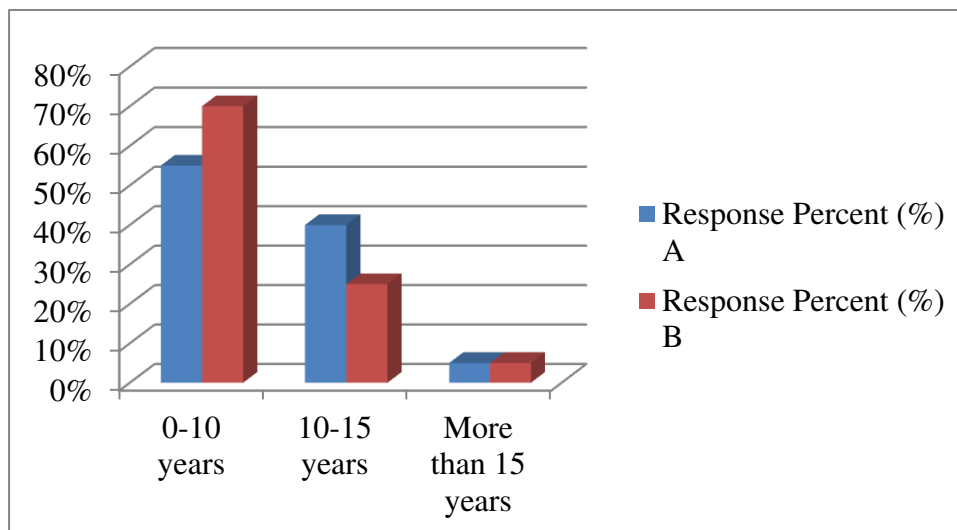| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
0-10 years	55%	70%	11	14
10-15 years	40%	25%	8	5
More than 15 years	5%	5%	1	1

Figure n°3: Years of English Studying

It is observed from the table and figure above that more than half (55%) of the students studied English from 0 to 10 years, also the majority of the second participants (70%) didn't study English for more than 10 years. Some other (40%) of group A and (25%) of group B appear to have better background knowledge with English with an experience of 10 to 15 years. However, similar percentage of (5%) to both A and B show that they have longer exposure to English with more than 15 years of learning.

Item 4: *During this period, how long did you study English formally?*

Table n°4: Learners Formal Study Years

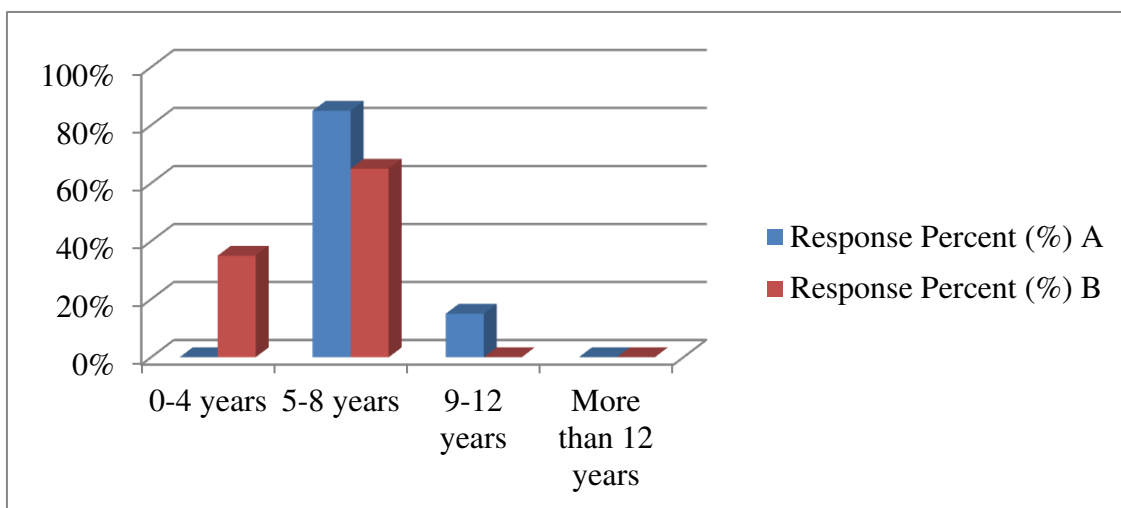| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
0-4 years	0%	35%	0	7
5-8 years	85%	65%	17	13
9-12 years	15%	0%	3	0
More than 12 years	0%	0%	0	0

Figure n°4: Learners Formal Study Years

The aim of this question is to identify how long these participants were exposed to formal English learning. Results show that a great percentage of group A (85%) studied formal English in a period of 5 to 8 years; correspondingly; the majority of group B (65%) studied English in the same period; (35%) of them studied formal English for not more than 4 years. On the contrary, all of the students did not study English for less than 4 years and (15%) of them were exposed to formal English learning for a period of 9 to 12 years. None of the participants neither group A nor group B (0%) studied formal English more than 12 years.

Item 5: *To what extent do you think institutional (formal) education has an influence on your English level?*

Table n°5: Influence of Institutional Education on English Proficiency

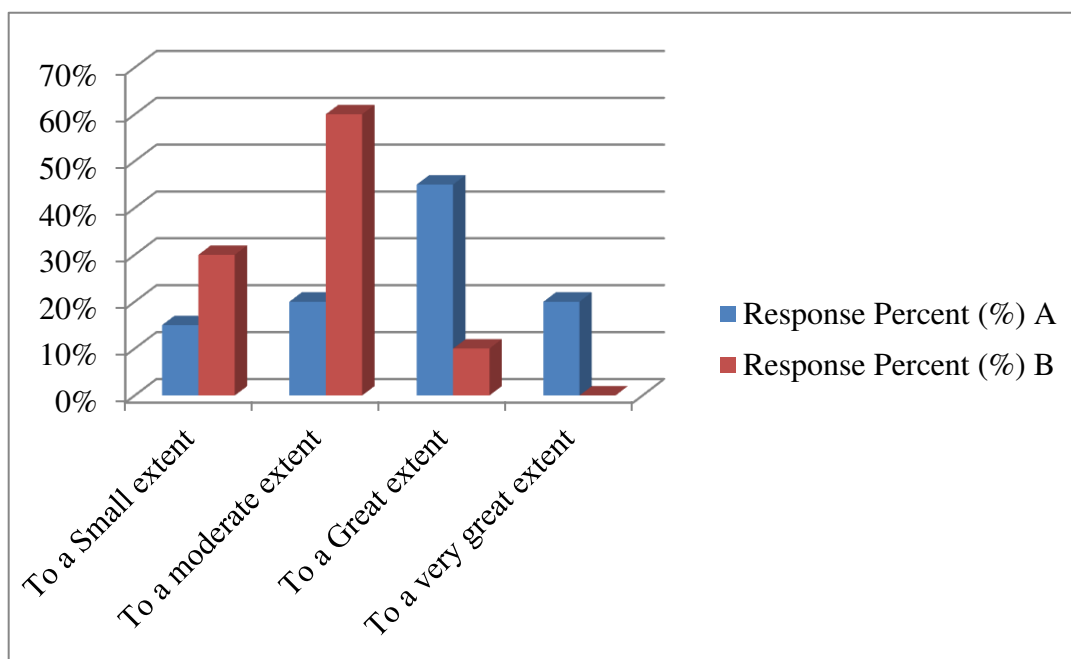| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
To a Small extent	15%	30%	3	6
To a moderate extent	20%	60%	4	12
To a Great extent	45%	10%	9	2
To a very great extent	20%	0%	4	0

Figure n°5: Influence of Institutional Education on English Proficiency

This question aims at recognizing the participants' opinions about the effectiveness of formal education on their English level. Table 5 shows that the majority of group A (45%) believe that formal education has a great influence of their English level. In contrast, only (10%) of group B stated the same. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that the majority of the latter (60%) and (20%) of the former agree that formal learning influence their English language to a moderate extent. In addition, (30%) of group B considers that formal education has only a small effect on their language level, while only (15%) of group A believe the same. It is worth mentioning that (0%) of group B feel formal education to have a very great influence on them.

Item 6: *How frequent do you use English for the following reasons?*

Table n°6: Learners Frequency of Using English

| Row	Almost daily		Once a week		Once a month		Less frequently		Never		Response count
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
To communicate with People	65% (13)	70% (14)	10% (2)	10% (2)	5% (1)	5% (1)	20% (4)	10% (2)	0% (0)	5% (1)	40
To learn it better	55% (11)	60 % (12)	30% (6)	10% (2)	10% (2)	15 % (3)	5% (1)	15% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40
For search Information	30% (6)	65% (13)	45% (9)	30% (6)	15% (3)	0% (0)	10% (2)	5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40
For your studies	80% (16)	30% (6)	20% (4)	5% (1)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0% (0)	10% (2)	40
In leisure activities	15% (3)	65% (13)	40% (8)	20% (4)	15% (3)	5% (1)	25% (5)	10% (2)	5% (1)	0% (0)	40
With friends	60% (12)	60% (12)	10% (2)	10% (2)	10% (2)	0% (0)	15% (3)	25% (5)	5% (1)	5% (1)	40
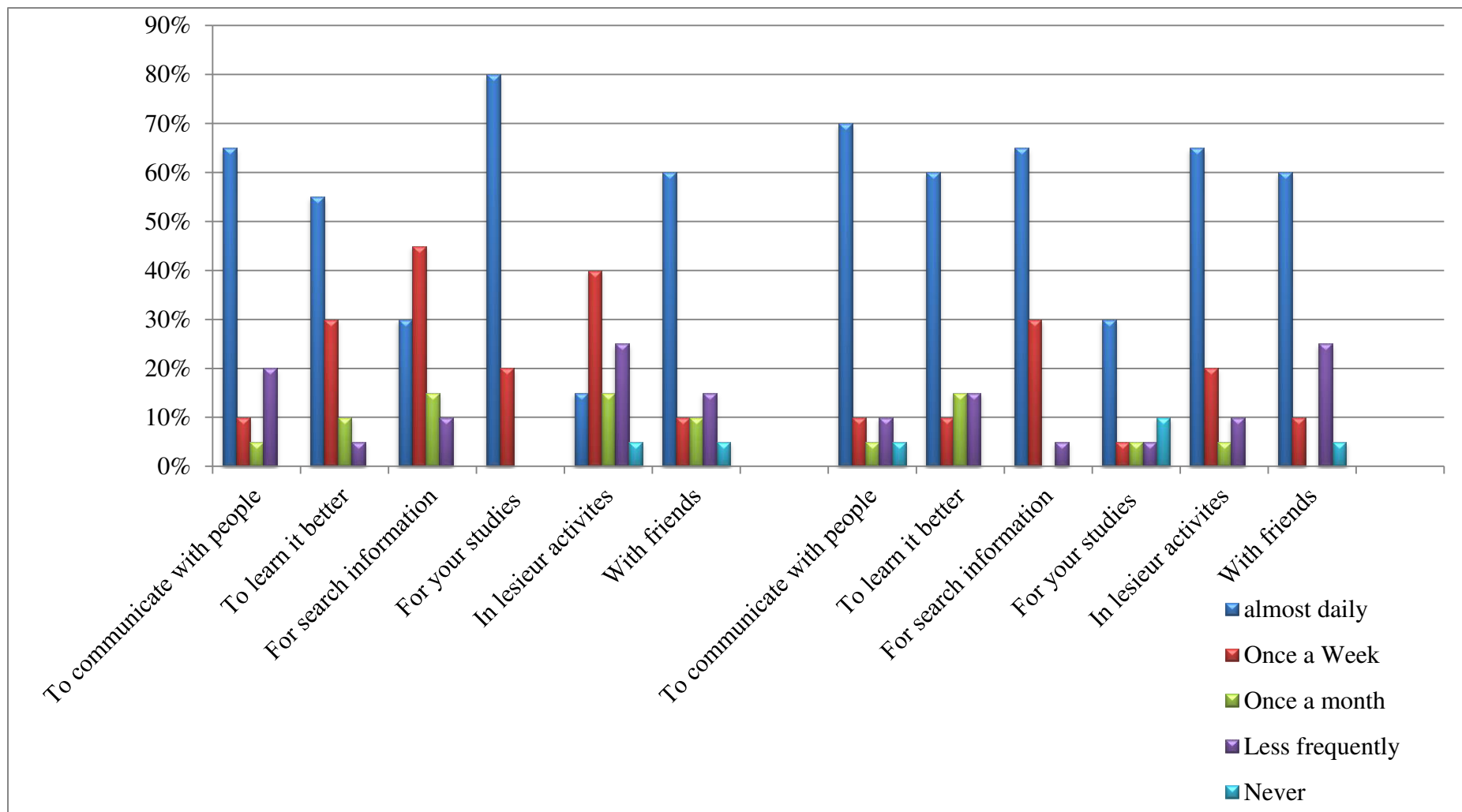
Figure n°6: Learners Frequency of Using English

This question was addressed to see how frequent do learners use English in different situations. The results show a high percentage of group A (65%) and (70%) group B stated they use English to communicate with people almost daily; as to 'Less frequently', it is opted for by (20%) of students and (10%) informal learners. More than half of group A (55%) use English almost daily in order to learn it better, same case for (60%) of group B. For searching information not only (45%) of group A but also (30%) of group B use English once a week, and the majority of the latter (65%) use it almost daily to search for information. It is obvious that greater number of the first participants (80%) use English to study almost daily, this is expected since they are university English language students and since the second participants are learners who acquired English informally, their use of English to study is less frequent with (50%) . English in leisure activities is used almost daily with group B (65%) but the majority of group A (40%) usually use it once a week. For the last situation equal percentage between the two participants (60%) use English daily with their friends.

Item 7: *Where do you usually practice your English?*

Table n7°: Setting of English Practice

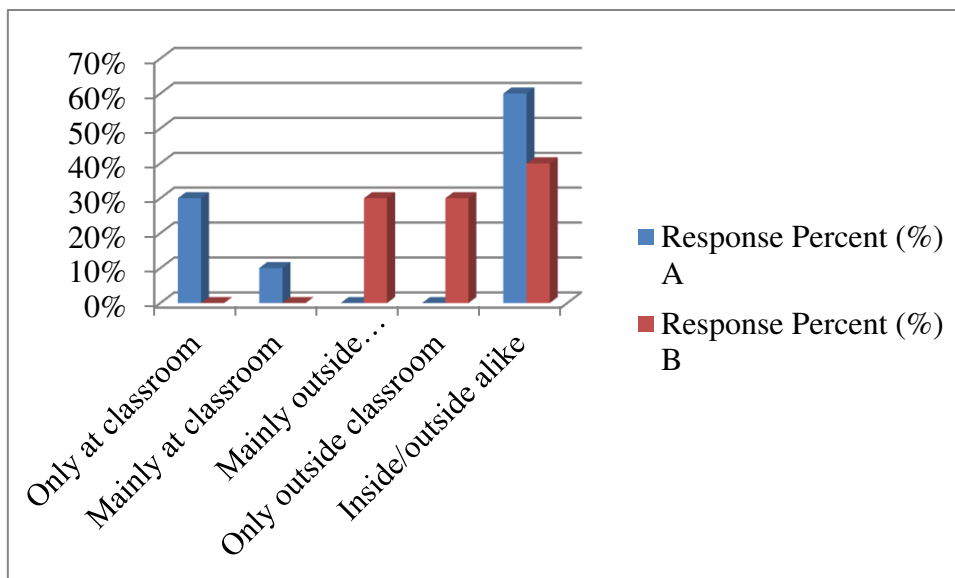| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Only at classroom	30%	0%	6	0
Mainly at classroom	10%	0%	2	0
Mainly outside classroom	0%	30%	0	6
Only outside classroom	0%	30%	0	6
Inside/outside alike	60%	40%	12	8

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Figure n°7: Setting of English Practice

Regarding the participants' answers about the place where they usually practice their English. Great number (60%) of the students and (40%) of learners acquiring English informally practice English inside and outside classroom. (30%) opt for practicing English only at classroom whereas none of group B (0%) use English only or mainly at classroom. (30%) of them practice it mainly outside classroom; in contrast (0%) opt for using it mainly outside the classroom.

Item 8a: *In your opinion, which one of the following do you consider more effective to you for language learning?*

Table n°8a: Learners Opinions on the Effectiveness of Formal and Informal Instruction

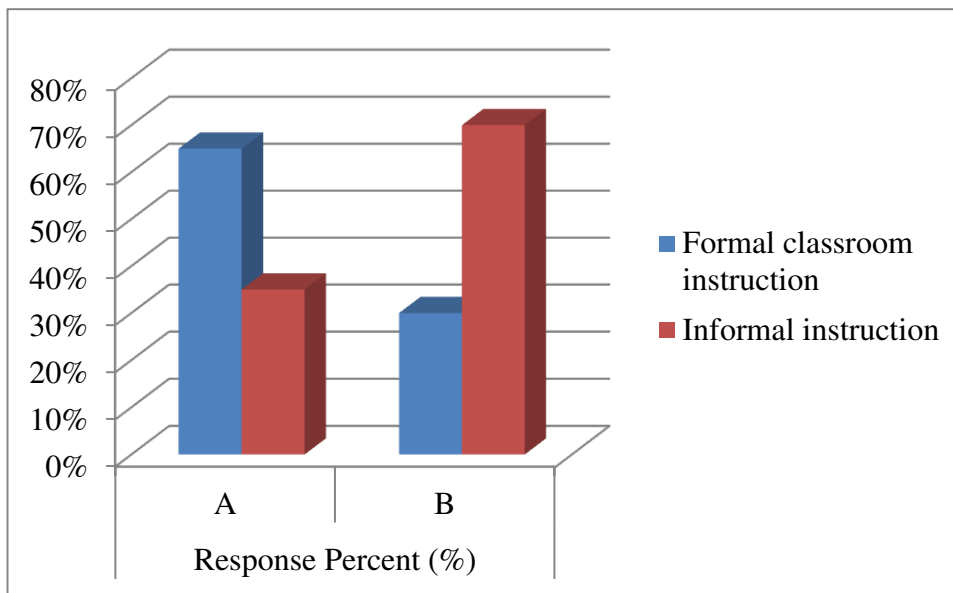| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Formal classroom instruction	65%	30%	13	6
Informal instruction	35%	70%	7	14

Figure n°8a: Learners Opinions on the Effectiveness of Formal and Informal Instruction

The purpose of this question is to see learner's opinions about the effectiveness of either formal classroom instruction or informal instruction on their language learning. The data in table 8 show that the majority of group A (65%) believe that formal classroom instruction is more beneficial for them, whereas (35%) think that informal instruction has better influence on their language learning. Informal instruction was also the choice of (70%) of group B while (30%) of them believe formal classroom instruction to have great influence in the development of their SLA process.

Item 8b: *Please say why briefly?*

The purpose of this open question is to see whether learners prefer formal classroom instruction or informal instruction and why. The majority of university students who agree that formal classroom instruction is useful to them say that students learn better in the classroom, to acquire the correct language from teachers because they are more experienced and have a lot to offer. Others said that it is better to be guided in a formal setting in order to learn the language with correct rules. For learners who are learning English informally, the academic way is the best to avoid mistakes and improve their skills in the most appropriate way.

The small percentage of students who prefer informal instruction say that classroom instruction doesn't always provide them with what they need in their daily life outside the classroom. Others state that informal learning is unlimited and it gives them more space to express their ideas and to learn more. similarly, the majority of learners who acquired English informally preferred informal instruction saying that classroom is limited by time and programmes and that classroom lack an essential factor in the learning any language which is fun, they are exposed to a lot of stress many teachers aren't worth it and most students aren't interested enough to ruin others enthusiasm in doing so.

One Learner said that during his formal English studies in middle and high school he saw that English courses weren't considered important by students and teachers, students would skip them and most teachers get bored when they realize that students don't pay attention to them and hate their courses. On the other hand, other learners mentioned they learned English by themselves without any formal instruction and that each person knows his weaknesses and the best way to overcome them.

Item 9*: How do you evaluate your level in English?*

Table n°9: Learner's Level in English

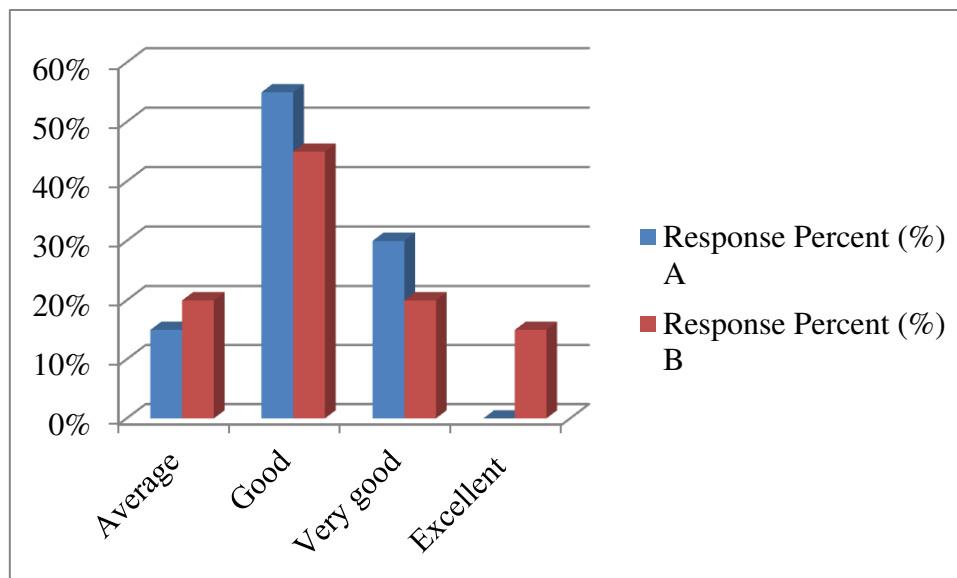| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Average	15%	20%	3	4
Good	55%	45%	11	9
Very good	30%	20%	6	4
Excellent	0%	15%	0	3

Figure n°9: Learner's Level in English

This question is an attempt to gather data about the participant's perceptions on their level in English. The results show that (55%) of group A and (45%) of group B believe they have good level in English, other (30%) of group A and (20%) of group B say that their English language proficiency is very good. The findings also show that (15%) of informal participants have an excellent level in English, surprisingly; none of the students (0%) think that they are excellent English language learners.

Item 10a*: Have you ever come to think that your English language seems not to develop as previous?*

Table n°10a: Development of learners English Language

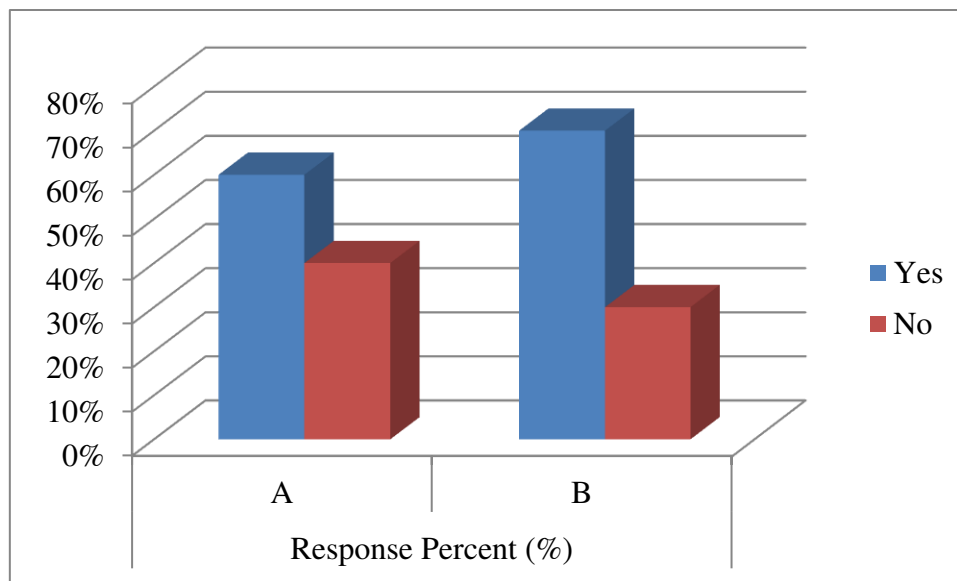| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Yes	60%	70%	12	14
No	40%	30%	8	6

Figure n°10a: Development of learners English Language

The aim behind this question is to see whether learner's English language is progressing as it did previously or not; and if it did, which aspects of language are not developing anymore. The majority of group A (60%) followed by the majority of group B (70%) said yes their English language is not developing as previous, (40%) of the first group and (30%) of the second group disagree and believe that there is a progress in their English language acquisition.

Item 10b*: If yes which aspects of language you think are more hardly improving anymore?*

Table n°10b: Learners Underdeveloped Aspects

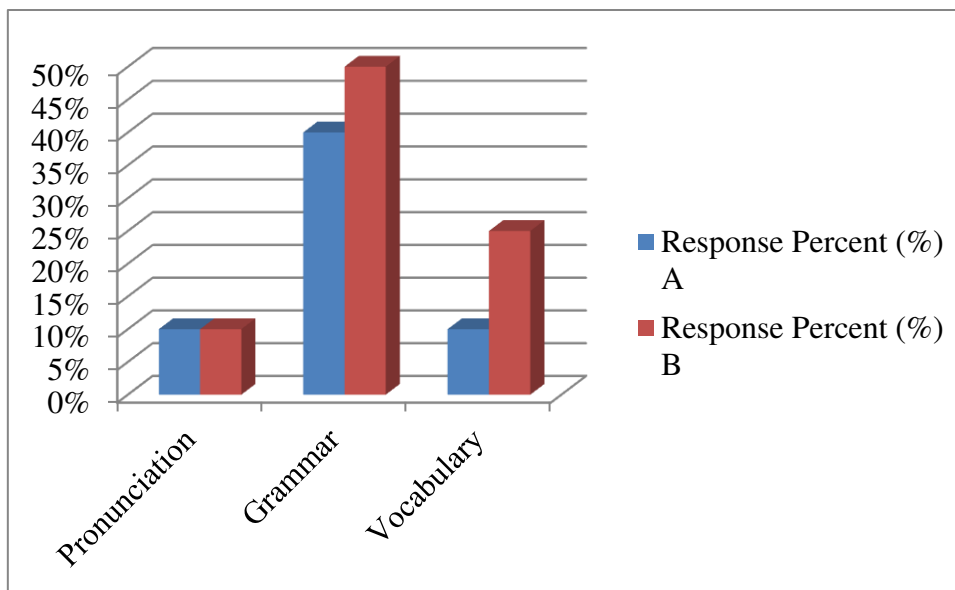| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Pronunciation	10%	10%	2	2
Grammar	40%	50%	8	10
Vocabulary	10%	25%	2	5

Figure n°10b: Learners Underdeveloped Aspects

In relation to the previous question, (40%) of students who said yes feel that their grammar is not improving anymore, same case with (50%) of learners who acquired English away from formal setting. In addition (10%) of group A and another (10%) of group B say that their pronunciation ceased progressing. Additionally (25%) of the second group (B) addressed that they are not acquiring the same amount of vocabulary as before, in parallel (10%) of the first group (A) feel that vocabulary is the language aspect that is not developing anymore.

Item 11: *compare your current English language learning process to its initial stages when you first started learning, which situation applies most to you?*

Table n°11: Comparison of Learners initial and Current Level in English

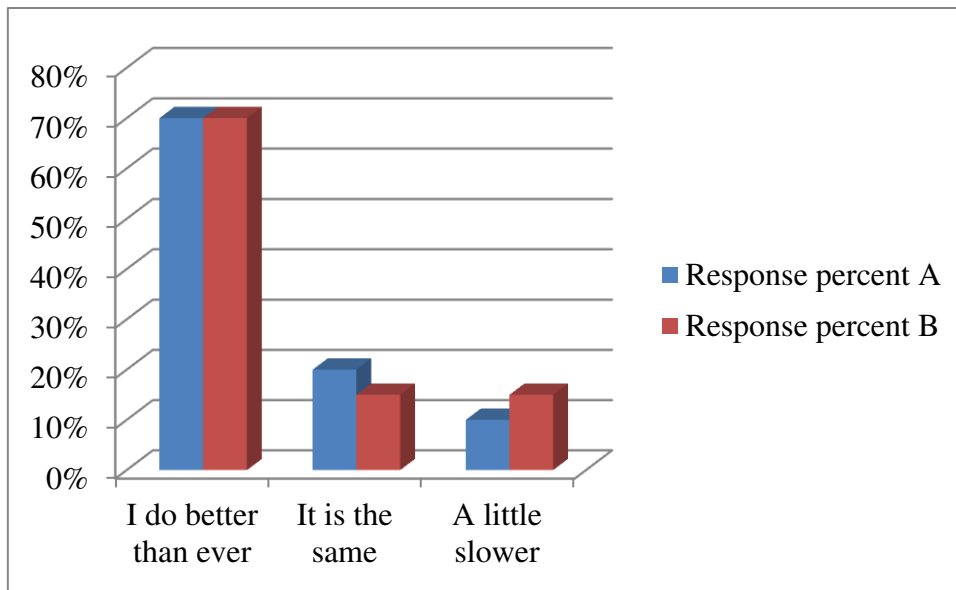| Choices	Response percent		Response count	
	A	B	A	B
I do better than ever	70%	70%	14	14
It is the same	20%	15%	4	3
A little slower	10%	15%	2	3

Figure n°11: Comparison of Learners initial and Current Level in English

This question aims at finding out how the language learning process of the participants is developing. When comparing the participants current English learning process to its initial stages, (70%) of each sample (university students and learners who acquired English informally) said that they do better than ever, (20%) of university students think that it is the same; in contrast to (15%) of those acquiring English informally. In addition (15%) of them said it is a little slower while a less proportion of the students (10%) also think it is slower.

Item 12: *How do you evaluate your skills in English?*

Table n°12: Assessment of Learner's English Skills

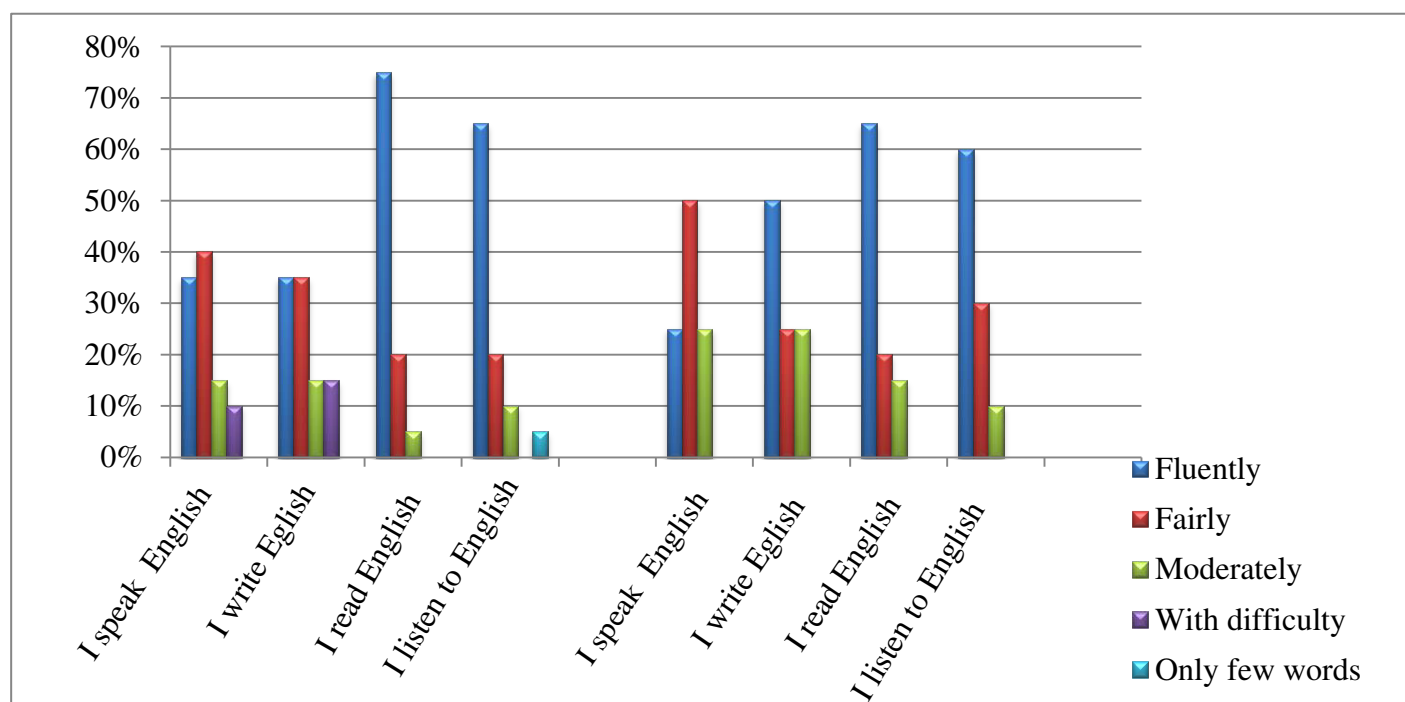| Row	Fluently		Fairly fluently		Moderately		With difficulty		Only few words		Responce count
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
I speak English	35% (7)	25% (5)	40% (8)	50% (1)	15% (3)	25% (5)	10% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40
I write English	35% (7)	50% (1)	35% (7)	25% (5)	15% (3)	25% (5)	15% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40
I read English	75% (15)	65% (1)	20% (4)	20% (4)	5% (1)	15% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40
I listen to English	65% (13)	60% (1)	20% (4)	30% (6)	10% (2)	10% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0% (0)	40

Figure n°12: Assessment of Learners' English Skills

From table 12°, It can be observed that group B have a 'fluent' to 'moderate' level in English; thus (100%) of the participants do not believe that they practice any of the four skills with difficulty or only with few words, furthermore the analysis reveals that half of them (50%) speaks English fairly fluent, the rest (60%) is split out in half between those who believe that they speak English fluently (25%) and those who said that they speak English moderately (25%). In contrast to the answers of group B, table (12) shows that the answers of group A are distributed among all the four options. Regarding speaking (40%) of them speak English fairly fluently, (75%) are fluent and the rest (10%) said that they face difficulties when speaking in English.

When asked to evaluate their level in listening, almost the equal amount of both learners said that they are fluent; with (65%) of group A and sixty (60%) of group B. 6 out of 20 of the latter (30%) are fairly fluent when listening to English, equally, (10%) of both categories see that they speak English moderately and only one university student (5%) understands only few words when listening to English. Regarding writing, half of the second participants (50%) are fluent while (25%) are fairly fluent and the rest (25%) thought that they write English moderately.

When it comes to formal university students, writing skills seems to be less adequate; table (12) above also shows that only (35%) of them are fluent, also (35%) thinks that they are fairly fluent in writing. (15%) have a moderate writing level and the rest (15%) face some difficulties when writing.

Item 13: *which kind of situations do you feel your English skills are inadequate? (You can choose several answers)*

Table n°13: Learners Opinion about the Inadequacy of Their English Skills

| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
When reading in English	20%	15%	4	3
When writing in English	60%	35%	12	7
In situations which require listening comprehension	25%	15%	5	3
When discussing with native speakers	60%	25%	12	5
When discussing with non-native speakers of English	25%	25%	5	5
In situations which require special terminology or jargon	55%	55%	11	11
When traveling abroad	30%	10%	6	2
In all kinds of situations	0%	0%	0	0
I do not feel that my English skills are inadequate	5%	20%	1	4
Elsewhere	0%	0%	0	0
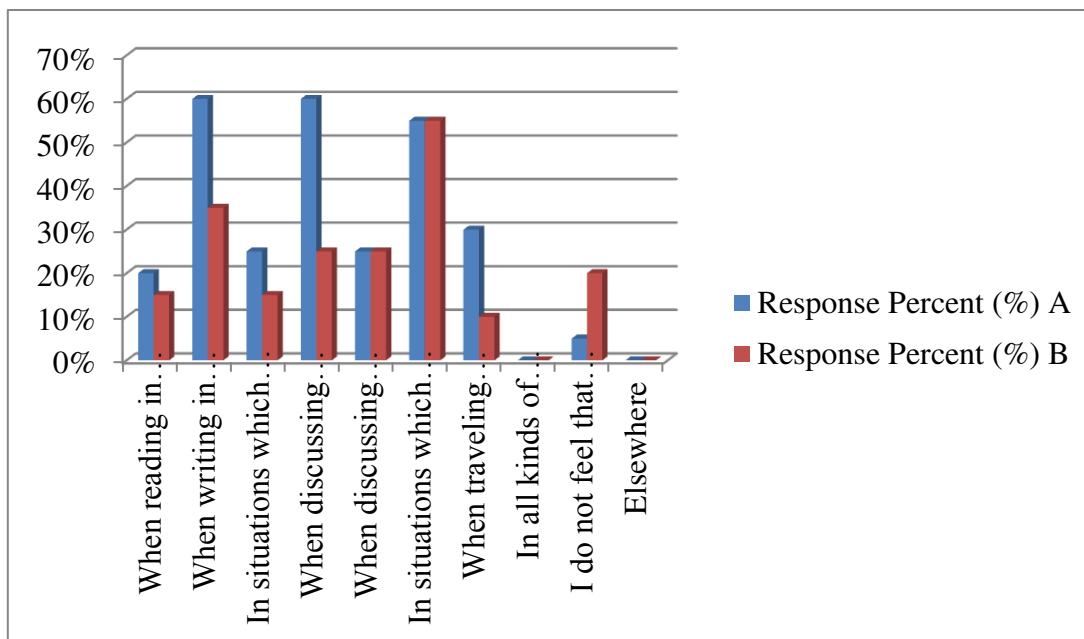
Figure n°13: Learners Opinion about the Inadequacy of Their English Skills

The participants were asked to choose a situation or more in which they feel their language skills are inadequate. (20%) of group A do not feel any inadequacy when using English, a less amount of group B (5%) also believe that they are adequate in all kinds of situations. "Situations which require special terminology or jargon" was the most situation learners acquiring English informally feel inadequate in, with more than half of them (55%), the same situation with the same percentage (55%) applies to formal university students. Surprisingly (60%) of university students feel inadequacy in their writing skills compared to (35%) of second participants. In addition, (60%) of them feel inadequate when discussing with native speakers, in contrast to only (25%) of group B feel inadequate in the same situation. (25%) of the two kinds feel that they are incompetent when discussing with native speakers. Situations which require listening comprehension was chosen by (25%) of learners who acquired English in formal settings, only (15%) of learners who acquired English informally felt their English skills are inadequate when listening to English. (30%) of group A feel inadequacy in their English skills when traveling abroad, while only (10%) of group B feel the same when

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traveling abroad. When discussing with non-native speakers was the situation in which (25%) of both group A and group B felt inadequate in.

Item 14*: Based on your personal opinion, rank the following skills according to their level of importance to you?*

Table n°14: Importance of English Language Skills

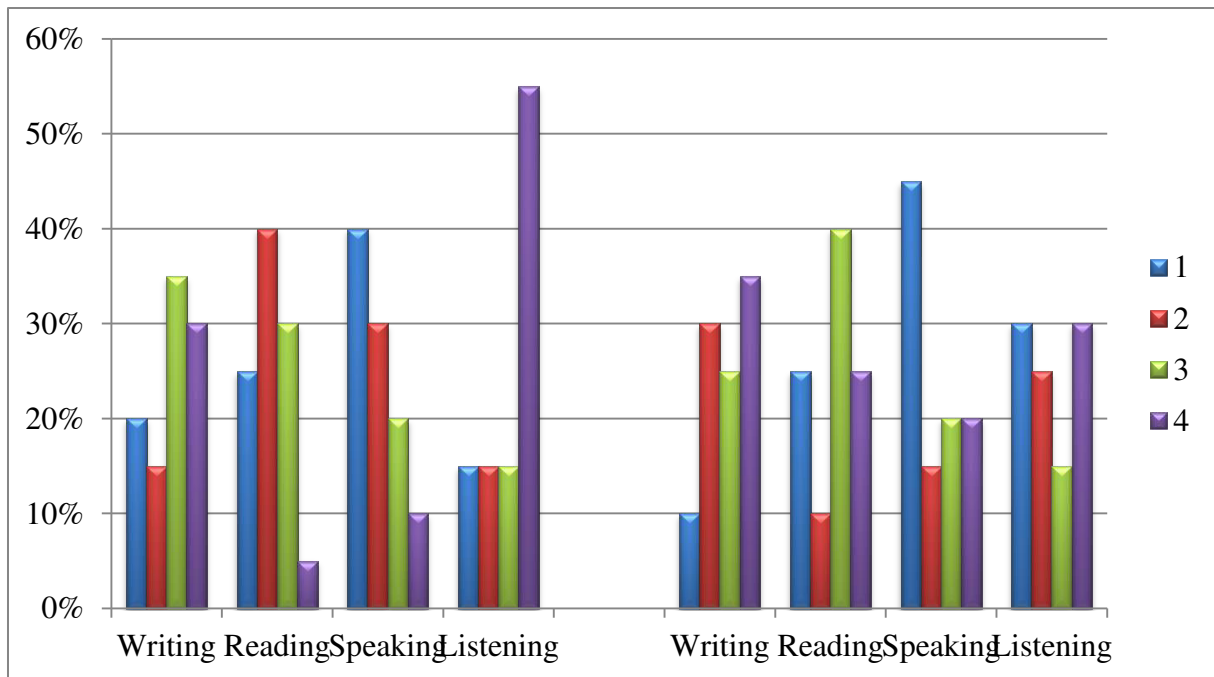| Choices	1		2		3		4		Response count
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
Writing	20% (4)	10% (2)	15% (3)	30% (6)	35% (7)	25% (5)	30% (6)	35% (7)	40
Reading	25% (5)	25% (5)	40% (8)	10% (2)	30% (6)	40% (8)	5% (1)	25% (5)	40
Speaking	40% (8)	45% (9)	30% (6)	15% (3)	20% (4)	20% (4)	10% (2)	20% (4)	40
Listening	15% (3)	30% (6)	15% (3)	25% (5)	15% (3)	15% (3)	55% (11)	30% (6)	40

Figure n°14: Importance of English Language Skills

As it shown in both Table and figure (14) there is no agreement among the first group on the level of importance of each language skill; whereas their answers seems to be varietal. For the second group speaking was the most important skill of the four skills where it was listed as number one by (45%) of them, (30%) thought it is listening, (25%) considered reading as the most important skill, while a few (10%) thought that it is writing. As for university students, (40%) of them view speaking as the most important language skill, another (40%) listed reading second important skill. Concerning the least important skill, (55%) of group A agree that listening is the last language skill, while (35%) of group B saw it is writing.

Item 15: *When using English, would you be aware of your inaccuracies?*

Table n°15: Learners Awareness of their Inaccuracies

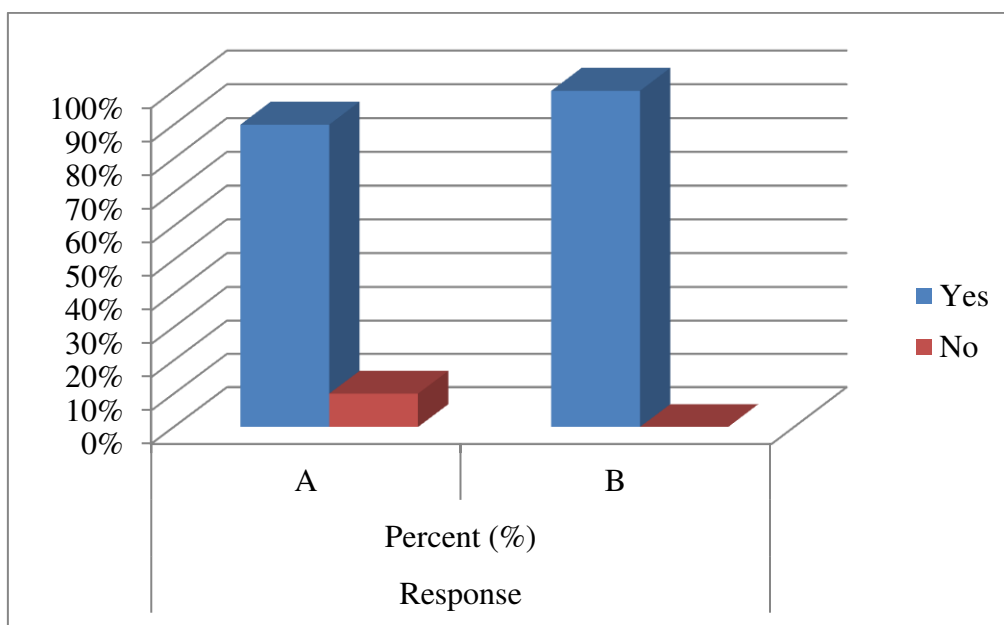| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Yes	90%	100%	18	20
No	10%	0%	2	0

Figure n°15: Learners Awareness of their Inaccuracies

When asked whether participants are being aware of their inaccuracies 20 out of 20 of group B affirmed that they are aware of the mistakes they make when using English, on the other hand, (10%) of group A respondents said that they do not notice their own mistakes. However, the vast majority of them (90%) can recognize the mistakes they make

Item 16: *If yes, how often do you correct your inaccuracies/mistakes?*

Table n°16: Frequency of Learner's Correction of their Own Inaccuracies

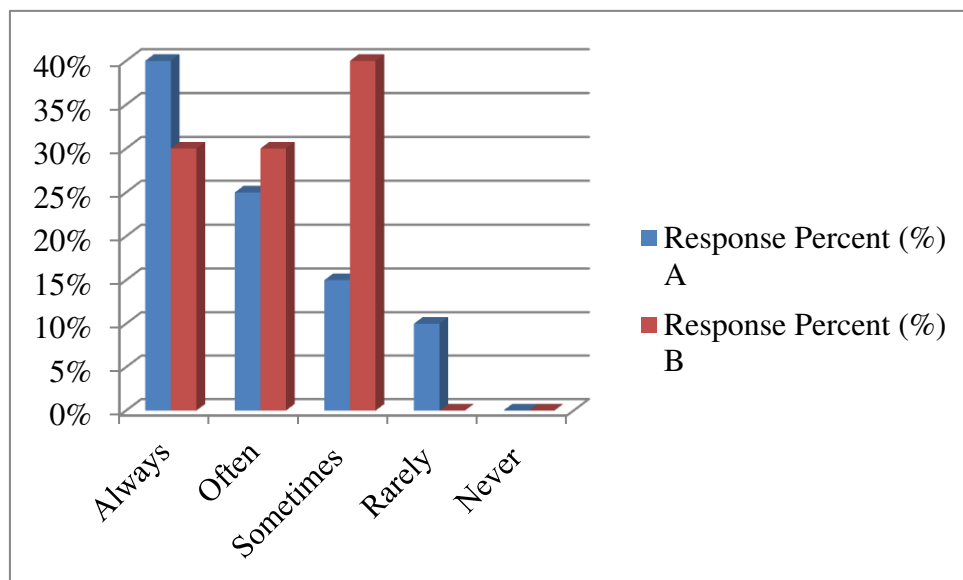| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Always	40%	30%	8	6
Often	25%	30%	5	6
Sometimes	15%	40%	3	8
Rarely	10%	0%	2	0
Never	0%	0%	0	0

Figure n°16: Frequency of Learner's Correction of their Own Inaccuracies

Related to the previous question, this question was attempted to find out the frequency of correcting the participants own mistakes. (100%) of the respondents do correct their

inaccuracies. In both categories, (40%) of them said that they sometimes correct their inaccuracies, the rest was split out between correcting the inaccuracies often and always; (30%) each.

Item 17: *Among the following, which strategy do you mostly depend on in correcting your mistakes?*

Table n°17: Learners Strategies in Correcting their Mistakes

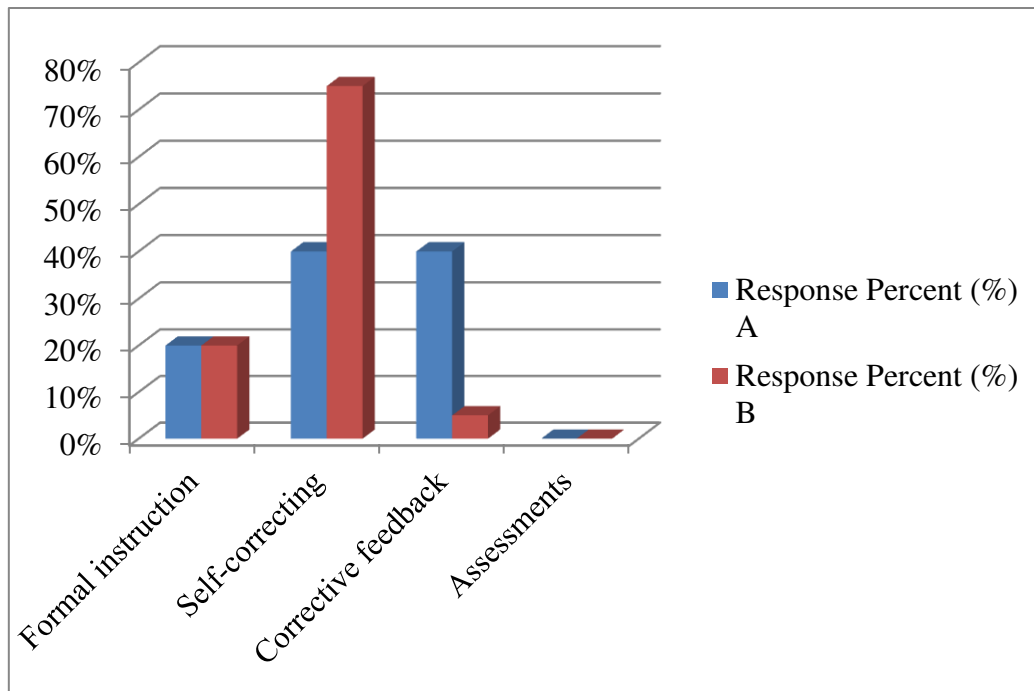| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Formal instruction	20%	20%	4	4
Self-correcting	40%	75%	8	15
Corrective feedback	40%	5%	8	1
Assessments	0%	0%	0	0

Figure n°17: Learners Strategies in Correcting their Mistakes

Based on the results, (75%) of the second category depend on themselves in correcting their mistakes, compared to (40%) of the first category. (20%) of the two categories said that they depend on formal instruction when they correct the inaccuracies they make, only one of group B participant (5%) depends on the CF he/she receives to correct his/ her inaccuracies, in contrast to (40%) of university students. No one of the respondents use assessments as a basis in correcting their inaccuracies.

Item 18: *On which of the following aspects do you focus more? (Please range them using numbers from 1 to 4).*

Table n°18: Learners Focus on Different Language Aspects

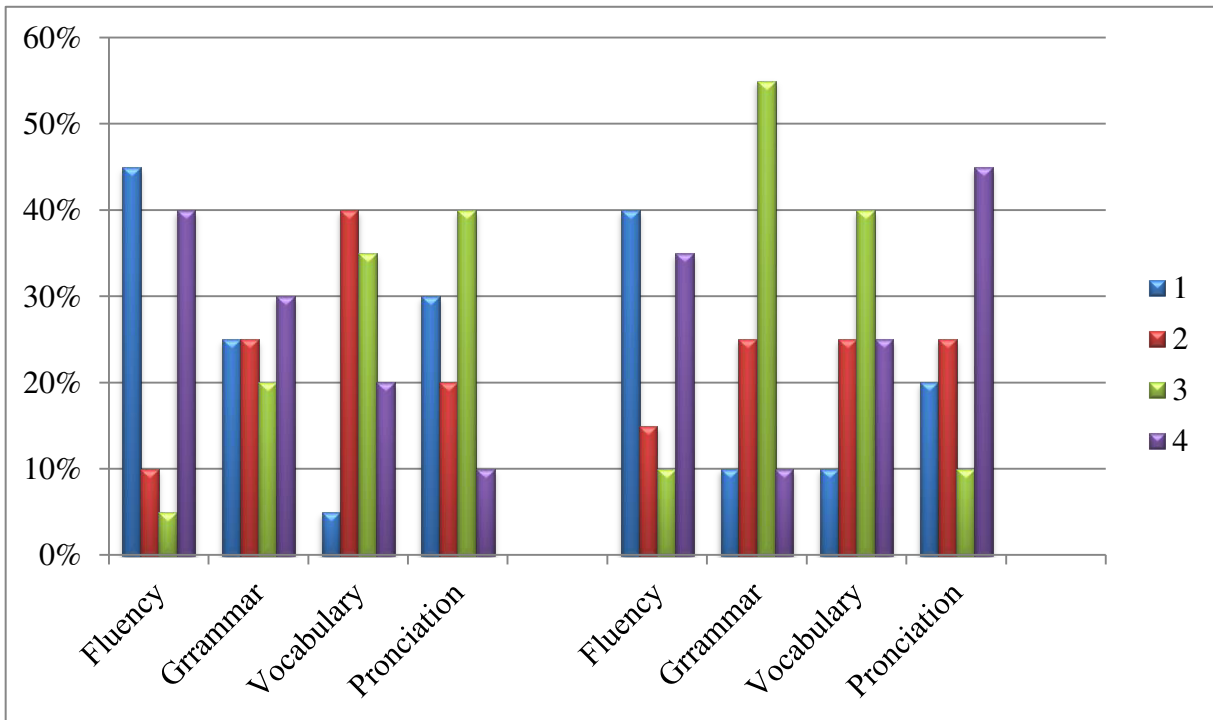| Choices	1		2		3		4		Response count
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	
Fluency	45% (9)	40% (8)	10% (2)	15% (3)	5% (1)	10% (2)	40% (8)	35% (7)	40
Grammar	25% (5)	10% (2)	25% (5)	25% (5)	20% (4)	55% (11)	30% (6)	10% (2)	40
Vocabulary	5% (1)	10% (2)	40% (8)	25% (5)	35% (7)	40% (8)	20% (4)	25% (5)	40
Pronunciation	30% (6)	20% (4)	20% (4)	25% (5)	40% (8)	10% (2)	10% (2)	45% (9)	40

Figure n°18: Learners Focus on Different Language Aspects

In response to this question, (40%) of group B prioritize fluency over than other English language aspects, (20%) focus more on pronunciation, the rest is divided between grammar and vocabulary with (10%) each. Furthermore, (55%) of them agreed that grammar should be ranked in the third status, while (40%) believe it is vocabulary and 9 out of 20 of them (45%) do not give much attention to pronunciation. When comparing group B perspective on the importance of each aspect to that to group A, the results show that (40%) of university students prefer to work on their fluency, while (30%) focus more on pronunciation and (25%) focus on grammar, (40%) of them ranked vocabulary as second, in addition to this, pronunciation was listed as 3rd by (40%) and (40%) focus less on fluency.

Item 19: *When writing, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

Table n°19: Learners' attitudes towards different situations when writing

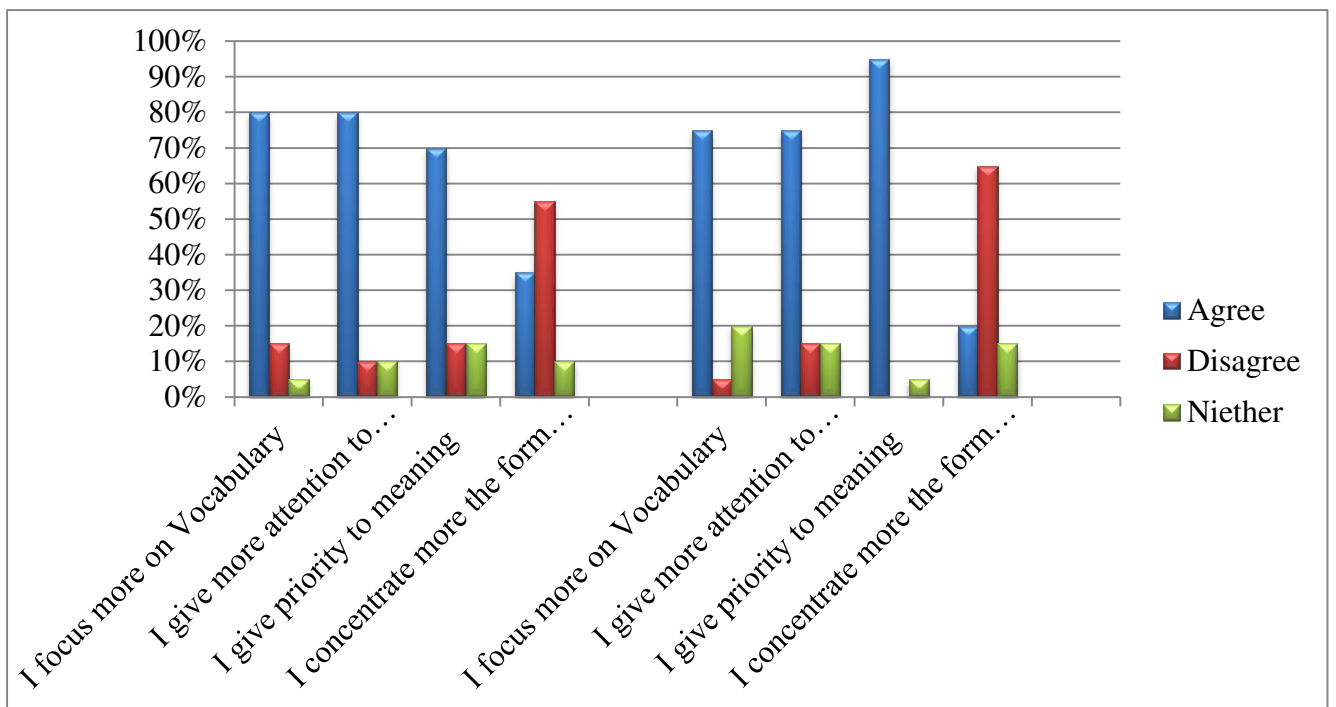| Choices	Agree		Disagree		Neither		Response count
	A	B	A	B	A	B	
I focus more on Vocabulary	80% (16)	75% (15)	15% (3)	5% (1)	5% (1)	20% (4)	40
I give more attention to grammar	80% (16)	70% (14)	10% (2)	15% (3)	10% (2)	15% (3)	40
I give priority to Meaning	70% (14)	95% (19)	15% (3)	0% (0)	15% (3)	5% (1)	40
I concentrate more on the form rather than the content	35% (7)	20% (4)	55% (11)	65% (13)	10% (2)	15% (3)	40

Figure n°19: Learners' attitudes towards different situations when writing

This question aims at finding out participants' perspectives towards different situations when writing in English. (80%) of university students and (75%) of informal learners focus more on vocabulary. (70%) of them and (80%) of university students give more attention to grammar when writing in English, the vast majority of group B (95%) give priority to meaning when writing, compared to (70%) of group A who share the same view. Finally, (70%) of group B and (50%) of group A prefer to concentrate more on the content of their writings rather than the form.

Item 20: *Given the fact that "fossilization" refers to the phenomenon during which certain aspects of the FL were learned in completely or incorrectly, do you consider yourself a fossilized FL learner?*

Table n°20: Learner's Fossilization

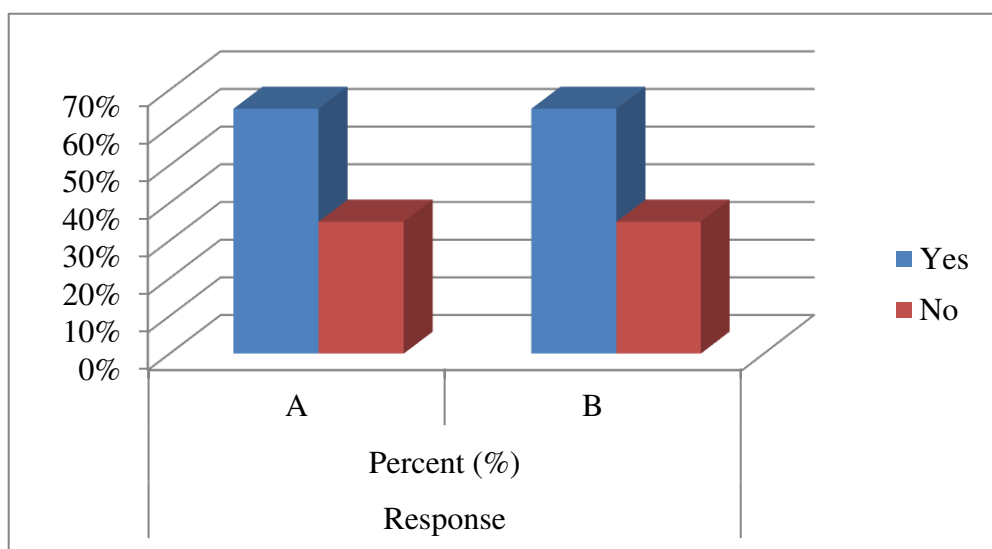| Choices	Response Percent (%)		Response Count	
	A	B	A	B
Yes	65%	65%	13	13
No	35%	35%	7	7

Figure n°20: Learner's Fossilization

This question was a conclusion question in order to decide whether participants feel that their English language learning process is fossilized or not. The exact same number of respondents in both categories (65%), consider themselves as fossilized language learners, while a considerable (35%) feel the opposite.

6. Discussion and Findings:

Based on the findings and results above, it can be seen that there is no significant difference in the degree of fossilization between English learners at the university (group A) and learners who have acquired English informally (group B). The findings also reveal that fossilization occurs in spite of the environment were language learning takes place, this goes in line with selinker's assumption were he stated that 100% of SL learners are exposed to fossilization.

The results indicate that the majority of the respondents of formal as well as of informal learners consider themselves as fossilized language learners, simultaneously, almost the same proportion of both categories believe that their English language seems not to develop as previously.

In addition to this, the two groups appear to have other similarities such as their evaluation of their English language level. It also can be noted that the vast majority of both participants agree that they do better than ever compared to the beginning of their learning process. The results also indicate that both groups use English on a daily basis for different purposes. In addition they believe that their grammar is the least aspect improving among the other language aspects. Moreover, their level in the four skills is approximately the same; from the analysis one can note that both learners are competent in reading and listening, it is also worth to mention that the two learning types have some inadequacy when practicing written and spoken English, of course not ignoring the individual differences. Another similarity appears in question 15, whereat the two groups affirmed their awareness of the mistakes they make.

For the purpose of displaying all kinds of results, some considerable discrepancy between the two samples should also be discussed. First, most of university students recognize the important role of formal education in language learning, while a considerable

amount of informal learners did not think of it as influential. Second, the analysis of the data show that the majority of university students see that formal instruction is most effective for language learning while the informal learners saw the opposite. Another difference lays in the kinds of situations respondents feel their English skills are inadequate in; formal learners face problems when writing in English in contrast to their informal counterpart.

The results of this study come in contrast to some practitioners' claims about the value of formal learning in opposition of informal learning, in this connection, (Eaton, 2010) explains:

For many years only formal learning has been viewed as valid. It used to be that only learning that takes place in accredited institutions and verified by grades and transcripts was considered credible… informal learning, particularly with regard to second and other languages, has even met with scepticism from highly educated scholars who question the value of learning experience that does not involve grammar and textbooks… (P. 18) Eaton further states that, this assumption is changing in the 21st century and informal learning is being emphasized as credited learning method.

As regards fossilization and learning settings, this stand point was not matter of concern to the practitioners of the field and no credible research has attempted to find out whether the degree of fossilization is related to the different settings and in which way. Accordingly, there is no sufficient published literature that can be compared to the results of the present research.

The current study suggest to look at foreign language learning as long term process which require the inclusion of all types of learning, because when every kind is recognized in the field of language learning and when learning beyond the classroom becomes valued as much as formal learning is, learners will be more motivated and inspired to enhance their linguistic skills.

7. Limitations of the study:

This comparative study did meet the researcher's expectations to a certain degree; however, due to the time frame of a master thesis, there are number of limitations. One of the important constraints to this research is the lack of background information on the topic; numerous scholars investigated the phenomenon of fossilization. However, there may be little, if any, prior research on fossilization related to the setting of learning. There are no reliable studies that tried to find out whether formal and informal language learning influences the nature of fossilization or learner's fossilization ratio. This research is unique in the sense that it addresses an issue that did not receive much attention previously. Another limitation rises from the lack of prior research is that there is no previously designed questionnaire related to the topic. The choice of the appropriate questions was challenging, most of the questions are closed, likert scale and multiple choice questions because they are easy to code and are not time consuming. Further limitation to the research is that it is confined to 20 students from the Department of Foreign Languages, Section of English at Khenchela University, and another 20 of learners who are acquiring the English language away from formal settings. The results of this study may not be generalized to represent neither all universities nor all informal English learners.

8. Suggestions for future research:

It is recommended that further research should be undertaken in the following areas:

- A longitudinal study on learner's fossilization in both formal and informal educational settings is recommended because this present research is limited in a short period of time.

- There is no consensus among researchers regarding which strategies, methods or techniques work better in reducing one's fossilized linguistic items, so further research is suggested in this area.

- An experimental study on the role of corrective feedback and instruction to reduce learner's fossilization is suggested.

- Learners who acquire English in formal setting need to integrate themselves in informal education to help in managing different situations that were not addressed in school or at the university.

Conclusion

The third and final chapter is devoted to describe the empirical phase of the study, the data gathered from the questionnaires of formal language learners and online questionnaires of informal language learners were analyzed and discussed. Taken as a whole, the results highlighted that there is no significant distinction in fossilization ratio between formal and informal language learners. Hence the educative settings in which learners acquire a FL has no considerable effect on their language proficiency, though both learners (group A and group B) acquired English in completely different settings with diverse approaches and methods yet, they are both considered to be fossilized. So it is essential for language learners to be flexible in their learning process and to give the same level of importance to formal and informal educational settings. This chapter also deals with some limitations that faced the researcher during his study and provides recommendations for future researches.

General Conclusion

Understanding SLA as a learning process requires a careful and thorough study of the different elements related to it, starting from its complex nature and passing by the synthesis of previous researches to end with a combination of interconnected fields (education, sociology, psychology, etc).

The idea of the current research was arisen as a result of the researchers' personal experience in addition to a thorough reading of previous literature. The research was guided by two questions; the first one was a polar question that pondered the existence of possible differences between learners who acquired English formally and who acquired it in an informal way regarding the degree of fossilization, this question was followed by another question that queried the types of differences, if any. Also, it was hypothesized that there would be a difference between the fossilization ratio of learners who acquired English in a formal way and those who acquired it informally, in addition to this; a null hypothesis assumed that there would be no significant difference between English university students and English informal learners.

Based on the research questions, a comparative study was conducted to determine if the ratio of fossilization differs when changing the learning setting.

Based on a quantitative analysis of the questionnaires distributed to the participants, it can be concluded that the learning settings have no impact on the amount of fossilization learners are exposed to; in other words, there is no difference in the ratio of fossilization between learners acquiring English formally and those who acquired it informally. The results indicate that both learning types are subject to this linguistic phenomenon. Hence, it supports the null hypothesis and by necessity negates the alternative hypothesis.

The data were analyzed and processed without the use of computer software techniques and the study was carried out during one semester. Based on this conclusion and the data presented, SLA researchers should consider conducting a longitudinal study with computerized data analysisto better understand the phenomenon of fossilization in relation to the learning settings, also, further studies could address the links between formal and informal language learning and the differences between them.

The present study provides new insights about the topic discussed and shed light on a novel side of the concept of fossilization, in addition to its contribution to the field of education and SLA.

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Based on the research questions, a comparative study was conducted to determine if the ratio of fossilization differs when changing the learning setting.

As a first step, a theoretical part was devoted to the literally review of the concept of fossilization; its definition, types, causes, ways of reduction and the numerous hypothesis related to it. In addition to this, a review of SL formal learning and its informal counterpart was included in the second chapter of the theoretical part providing an overview of the definition and characteristics of the two educational systems that the study is concerned with (informal and formal SLA), followed by their advantages. This chapter also dealt with the role of autonomy and self-

instruction in SL learning and in parallel, the role of formal instruction in acquiring a SL. Finally, the chapter was concluded with the effect of formal instruction on fossilization.

For the practical part, questionnaires and online questionnaires were utilized as a data collection tool; the same form of the questionnaire was distributed to English university students as well as to learners who acquired it beyond the classroom. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information and opinions from the respondents about their level in English, in addition to other questions.

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The present study provides new insights about the topic discussed and shed light on a novel side of the concept of fossilization, in addition to its contribution to the field of education and SLA.

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Appendix:

Questionnaire

Dear participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. This questionnaire is a part of a research investigating the phenomena of "fossilization" at formal and informal educational settings. There is no right or wrong answer, all answers are equally important and all data will be treated as confidential, it is of the utmost importance that you answer sincerely. The questionnaire will take only 4-5 minutes to answer.

Tick the answers that best align with your personal beliefs or experiences, provide statements when needed.

_____

1. What is your age?…………

2. What type of <u>English</u> courses have you been attending through your academic experience?(*You can choose several answers***)**

☐ Secondary and/or high schoolcourses

☐ University courses

☐ Private language school courses

☐ Instructional courses

3. How long you have studied English since you first were exposed to language learning ?

- 0-10 years ☐

- 10-15 years ☐

- More than 15 year ☐

4. During this period, how long did you study English formally?

- 0-4 years ☐

- 5-8 years ☐

- 9-12 years ☐

- More than 12 years ☐

5. To what extent do you think institutional (formal) education has an influence on your English level?

To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
☐	☐	☐	☐

6. How frequent do you use English for the following reasons?

	Almost daily	once a week	once a month	less frequently	never
- To communicate with people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- To learn it better	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- For searching information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- For your studies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- In leisure activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
- With friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Where do you usually practice your English?

- Only at classroom ☐

- Mainly at classroom ☐

- Mainly outside classroom ☐

- Only outside classroom ☐

- Inside/outside classroom alike ☐

8. In your opinion, which one of the following do you consider more effective to you for language learning?

- Formal classroom instruction ☐

- Informal instruction ☐

- Please say why briefly

…….

……….....

9. How do you evaluate your level in English?

Average	good	very good	excellent
☐	☐	☐	☐

10. Have you ever come to think that your English language seems not to develop as previous?

Yes ☐

No ☐

- If yes, which aspects of language you think are more hardly improving anymore?

- Pronunciation ☐

- Grammar ☐

- Vocabulary ☐

11. If you like to compare your current English language learning process to its initial stages when you firststarted learning, which situation applies most to you?

- I do better than ever ☐

- It is the same ☐

- A little slower ☐

12. How do you evaluate your skills in English?

	Fluently	Fairly fluently	Moderately	With difficulty	Only few words
I speak English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I write English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I read English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I listen to English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. In which kind of situations do you feel your English skills are inadequate?(You can choose several answers).

- When reading in English ☐
- When speaking in English ☐
- In situations which require listening comprehension ☐
- When discussing with English native speakers ☐
- When discussing with non native speakers of English ☐
- In situations which require knowledge of special terminology or jargon ☐
- When traveling abroad ☐
- In all kinds of situations ☐
- I don't feel that my English skills are inadequate ☐
- Elsewhere ☐

14. **Based on your personal opinion, rank the following skills according of their level of importance to you.**

	1	2	3	4
- Writing	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Reading	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Speaking	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Listening	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. **When using English, would you be aware of your inaccuracies?**

Yes ☐   No ☐

16. **If yes, how often do you correct your inaccuracies/ mistakes?**

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. **Among the following, which strategy do you mostly depend on in correcting your mistakes?**

- Formal instruction ☐

- Self-correcting ☐

- Corrective feedback ☐

- Assessments ☐

18. **On which of the following aspects do you focus more?**(Please range them using numbers from 1 to 4).

	1	2	3	4
- Fluency	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Grammar	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Vocabulary	☐	☐	☐	☐
- Pronunciation	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. **When writing, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

:

	I agree	I disagree	neither
- I focus more on vocabulary	☐	☐	☐
- I give more attention to grammar	☐	☐	☐

- I give priority to meaning ☐ ☐ ☐

- I concentrate more on the form rather than the content ☐ ☐ ☐

20. **Given the fact that "fossilization" refers to the phenomenon during which certain aspects of the foreign language were learned incompletely or incorrectly, do you consider yourself a fossilized foreign language learner?**

- Yes ☐

- No ☐

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES!

الملخص

في مجال اكتساب اللغة الاجنبية ، يُفترض أن عملية التحصل على لغة أجنبية محدودة بالنسبة لمعظم المتعلمين ، حيث يفشلون في تحقيق هدفهم المتمثل في إجادة اللغة الأجنبية مثل اللغة الأم. تعتبر فكرة التحجر اللغويواحدة من أهم العوامل المساهمة في منع المتعلمين من الوصول إلى هدفهم. تتناول هذه الدراسة مقارنة التحجر اللغوي فيما يتعلق بالبيئة التعليمية الرسمية والغيررسمية، وهي تسعى للإجابة على سؤال حول ما إذا كانت درجة التحجر اللغوي تختلف بين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة رسمية وتلك التي اكتسبوها بشكل غير رسمي. الهدف الرئيسي هو المقارنة بين المتعلمين الذين درسوا اللغة الإنجليزية في بيئة رسمية والمتعلمين الذين حصلوا على لغتهم بشكل غير رسمي ، ومعرفة أي منهما متحجر أكثر من الآخر. علاوة على ذلك، تنقسم هذه الرسالة إلى قسمين رئيسيين: الجزء النظري أو مراجعة الأدب والجزء العملي أو الدراسة التجريبية، الأول يتضمن فصلين والأخير يتكون من فصل واحد فقط. تتبع هذه الدراسة المنهج الكمي ونفذت باستخدام التصميم الوصفي. تم جمع البيانات المطلوبة للبحث باستخدام الاستبيان والاستبيان عبر الإنترنت ؛ تم توزيع هذا الأخير إلى 40 مشاركًا مقسمًا إلى 20 طالبًا من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة خنشلة واستبيانًا عبر الإنترنت لـ 20 متعلمًا حصلوا على اللغة الإنجليزية في أماكن غير رسمية. بعد تحليل البيانات، تبين النتائج أنه لا يوجد فرق كبير في نسبة التحجر اللغوي بين طلاب الجامعة والمتعلمين الذين حصلوا على اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل غير رسمي. وبالتالي،فإن السياق الذي يكتسب فيه المتعلمون لغة أجنبية له تأثير كبير على الكفاءة اللغوية للمتعلم. أخيرًا، تنتهي هذه الدراسة بمجموعة من التوصيات للباحثين المستقبليين المستمدة من القيود التي واجهت الباحث خلال البحث.