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Foregrounding Vignette-Based Assessment Tasks in Research Methodology Courses

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Abstract: Research methodology represents a substantial module taught to university students to develop their investigative skills. The instruction of such a subject area culminates in an assessment process that is usually project-based. The evaluation of the learners' methodological knowledge also capitalizes on written examinations. Indeed, the appraisal procedures should focus on the learners' expertise in applying the information grasped from the module of inquiry approaches. Therefore, the present theoretical study advocates the exploitation of scenario-based tasks for gauging the students' attainment in the lectures devoted to the methodology of scientific investigation. It delineates the different assessment practices applied in research methods courses and the benefits of vignette-based performance assessments. Subsequently, examples of scenario-based assignments designed by the writer of this article are presented as instances of activities conceived for appraising the performance of university learners in the written examinations and tests administered in research methodology classes affiliated with distinct disciplinary domains.

Keywords: assessment, knowledge, methodology, performance, scenario.

The methodology of research is a significant body of knowledge that any researcher who undertakes a scientific investigation and intends to adopt a systematic, organized approach to inquiry must master. It refers to the general theoretical framework that constitutes the plan that should be followed by the investigator. It embodies a set of methods specifying the techniques and means of furnishing data. A research method is a specific strategy of undertaking an investigation; methodology and method are usually employed interchangeably; indeed, methodology denotes the philosophy of research, including the theories, methods, and instruments deployed for making a scientific inquiry (Demarrias & Lapan, 2004). The instruction of the methods of inquisition was very prominent in the lessons of experimental psychology in the United States of America by the 1950's; the methodology of research began to be taught as a discrete set of lectures by the end of the 1960's (Peden & Carroll, 2009). Quantitative methods spread at universities by the end of the 1950's and the beginning of the 1960's (Anderson, 2007).

The teaching of qualitative research methods started in the 1970's; it was introduced for the first time at the level of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology; afterwards, it was instituted in more fields like education (Hurworth, 2008). Before the 1980's, the standard pedagogy of research at universities emphasised teaching statistics and experimental techniques; during the 1980's, qualitative inquiry attained further acclaim; consequently, learners studying in the disciplines of nursing, business and education had lectures in quantitative and qualitative research methods (Demarrias & Lapan, 2004). By the beginning of the 21st century, more attention was given to the pedagogy of mixed methods (Nunes, 2009). Research methodology, which can take the structure of a discipline-specific course or a broad subject matter, is taught to undergraduate and postgraduate students (Garner et al., 2009). The instruction of investigative methods to university students varies from one level to another. It takes the form of generic courses presented to undergraduate learners who are often taught a common core programme and are not specialised in a

precise field. Postgraduate students must study a domain-specific research methodology module according to their specialty.

There are several approaches applied to teach the techniques of inquiry. These methods include the lecture-based approach as well as active learning which implies the implication of the learners in conducting scientific investigations like participating in a methodological presentation or taking part in a genuine inquiry (Allen & Baughman, 2016). The problem method which is based on the exemplification of the practice of theoretical notions represents another means of delivering lessons in research methodology (McBurney, 2009). The teaching routine cannot persist without the episode of the testing practice. Thus, the assessment of the students' mastery of the information taught in the courses of inquiry approaches is a compulsory phase. Nevertheless, it is shaped by the lack of common and stable procedures. The process of testing the learners' knowledge of research methodology is very miscellaneous since this discipline does not incorporate a preselected assessment approach unlike the other deep-rooted content areas which rely on pre-set testing techniques involving the utilisation of essays and portfolios (Garner et al., 2009).

Although the evaluation of the students' methodological expertise makes use of written examinations in certain contexts, it frequently takes the form of project-based assessment. In fact, asking the learners to write research papers or dissertations helps to reveal their ability to put the methodological principles into practice but this type of assignments may constitute a challenge for some students who may not have the potential to undertake research and may recur to plagiarism or the replication of others' works for the sake of fulfilling the evaluation requirements. This is why it is essential to train the learners to become expert investigators by being efficient problem solvers. This can be achieved through written tests and examinations that tap higher order thinking skills. Consequently, the present study which represents a theoretical article focuses on the role of using performance tasks in research methodology classes. It highlights the importance of scenario-based assignments and the way of exploiting them for the assessment of the students' methodological knowledge through the provision of instances denoting the different kinds of vignettes that can be deployed as appraisal exercises. It must be noted that all the activities presented in the upcoming sections were conceived by the author of the current study. Prior to tackling this subject, it is necessary to outline the main measurement techniques used to test the learners' mastery of the information taught in the research methods module. A sketch of these practices will be displayed in the following title.

2.Assessment Procedures in Research Methodology Courses

The evaluation of the students' knowledge of inquiry approaches does not follow standard parameters as it differs from a discipline to another and from a methodology instructor to another. Nevertheless, it tends to adopt the same measures of educational testing. Consequently, before dealing with the appraisal procedures related to the pedagogy of the methodology of research, it is indispensable to give a general overview of assessment taxonomies. Indeed, educational testing shifted from the traditional measurement paradigm which was very overriding starting from the end of the 19th century to authentic assessment that emerged in the 1980's moving to compute-based testing which appeared by the end of the 1980's. In fact, testing can be classified into various categories related to the specific traits of the measurement process. The first division of evaluation denotes the degree of the formality of the appraisal practice which may be standardized or non-standardized. Standardized tests represent formal tools of estimation while non-standardized tests are informal instruments of judgment.

The second category of testing refers to the purposes and content of the tasks involved in the assessment procedure which may be traditional or authentic. Traditional testing is based on evaluating factual knowledge and learners' progress using multiple choice examinations or pen and paper tests; it neglects the measurement of the students' critical thinking, reasoning and problem solving; alternative assessment which is also called performance-based assessment or authentic assessment calls attention to the learners' production through tasks that ask them to

apply knowledge in genuine contexts taking into consideration the students' metacognition, self-reflection, reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking (Luongo-Orlando, 2003). The third division of appraisal concerns the environment of testing which may be onsite or online. Onsite assessment often takes the form of paper-based or pen and paper testing encompassing face to face examinations that do not rely on digital procedures. E-assessment is also referred to as online assessment, digital assessment, computer-based assessment, electronic assessment or net-based assessment. It means the exploitation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the internet for the purpose of assessing learners (Falcao & Soeiro, 2019).

The fourth category denotes the degree of controlling the testing process which may be proctored or non-proctored. Proctored testing implies in-person supervision or virtual monitoring of the test takers; it often relies on closed book testing which means that the testees are not authorised to employ resources. Non-proctored assessment refers to unsupervised evaluation; it may take the form of open-book or take-home tests; it may be in the shape of online assessment (Arnold, 2014). Open-book tests given the opportunity to utilise assets and source books; take-home tests may be structured in extended and composite complex questions including essays and problem sets; they enable the learners to use their learning materials and respond to the questions without haste (Davis, 2009). The fifth division of assessment practices refers to the period when the measurement procedure occurs; it entails summative testing which follows the instructional programme and formative assessment which takes place throughout the teaching phases. The last category of evaluation represents the way of judging the examinees' responses which may be objective or subjective. Objective testing helps to test factual knowledge; it often relies on the employment of true-false and multiple-choice questions that are scored without difficulty (Light et al., 2006). It inevitably occurs using tests and examinations; subjective testing depends on the scorer's expertise; it may take the form of tests or performance assessments (Suskie, 2018).

Therefore, the appraisal practice may incorporate different patterns depending on the assessment purposes and the type of the assessed knowledge. It is an essential component deployed in all educational contexts including language instruction and content areas. It constitutes a significant process in the research methodology module which may adopt both conventional and alternative forms of assessment at varying degrees of application. In fact, the university learners' understanding of statistical techniques is frequently tested through objective tests such as multiple-choice questions or exercises requiring the students to make calculations and apply statistical procedures using technological tools. Additionally, the appraisal of the students' mastery of the content of the lectures dealing with quantitative research approaches usually relies on one essay question that allows the learners to exhibit their skill in synthesizing the learnt information, providing arguments and displaying their perusal of the subject (Adeney & Carey, 2011). However, the assessment of qualitative inquiry expertise represents a challenging aspect; it is not given much importance as there are not sufficient references dealing with this subject; the sole available sources of information concerning this point are related to the evaluation of learners' projects (Hurworth, 2008).

The students' evaluation in the courses related to the methods of investigation often makes use of traditional and authentic assessment approaches depending on the context. The research methodology module frequently involves testing the learners via written examinations that may entail multiple choice questions, essay tests or a hands-on project-based assessment (Seligman, 2020). The study of inquisition approaches at an undergraduate or postgraduate level substantially ends up with writing a research work or thesis that enables the student to display his/her perception of the inquiry process and the way of putting the different techniques of investigation into practice (Walliman, 2011). Research methods courses can be delivered online; in this case, the learners' mastery of the content of the online lectures can be tested via the use of timed tests or the employment of the knowledge-check procedure that can take the form of soft chalk quizzes (Seligman, 2020). The assessment of the students' methodological

knowledge may rely on a variety of exercises including selected, limited and constructed or extended response tasks. Examples of these types of activities are provided in the following table.

Table 1. Kinds of tasks used to assess methodological knowledge

Task Format	Task Type	Example
Selected response task	Multiple choice question	Choose the correct answer - A research design represents: a- the means used to gather information b- the comprehensive scheme denoting the logical organization of the inquiry process c-the technique entailed in the practical implementation of the scientific investigation.
Limited response task	Gap-filling exercise	Fill in the gaps: - A research paradigm is considered as a….. of scientific inquiry. - The case study method is called a …. because it puts emphasis on the scrutiny of one ……. - An ….. implies a questionnaire asking the informants about their mind-sets and preferences.
	True-false statements	Find out if these statements are true or false. Then, correct the false ones: - Fieldwork which is also referred to as field research implies an approach to inquiry that is based on the researchers' detachment from the probed subjects and the research setting. - The questionnaire is considered as one of the most prominent instruments of research. - Representativeness means the possibility to extrapolate the research results from the studied sample to the target population.
	Elicitation task	Find the concept that corresponds to the given definition: - A qualitative research method that deals with the scrutiny of the culture of a group of individuals. - A person who participates in a study and supplies the researcher with data on the investigated issue. - The act of employing an amalgamation of various strategies for the purpose of gathering information about a specific topic in a unique research work.
	Defining concepts	Provide definitions of the following concepts: - Hypothesis - Variable - Narrative inquiry - Axiology

	Short answer question	- What is the main function of research methodology? - Why is pragmatism viewed as a practical research paradigm? - How does a researcher collect quantitative data?
Constructed response task	Essay question	- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the experimental method in an essay. - Develop a research topic using the following key concepts: Learners' Styles – Oral Performance. Then, write an essay in which you explain the appropriate methodology for studying this issue.
	Project work	- Write a research paper on a topic of your own choice taking into consideration the principles delineated in the presented research methodology courses.

Therefore, the assessment of the students' mastery of the information taught in research methodology courses may rely on the use of a variety of tasks. Nevertheless, it is often shaped by the predominance of project-based evaluation which represents a form of alternative assessment. Indeed, the use of projects for gauging the learners' methodological knowledge helps the teacher to get an idea about the students' ability to put theory into practice and apply the learnt material using their own thinking and research strategies. Nevertheless, it may not supply realistic data about the actual performance of all the learners since some students may recur to plagiarism which will make their productions devoid of originality and authenticity while others may not produce appropriate research papers just because they fail in applying the theoretical principles in a practical context. This is why the learners should be trained to be adept problem solvers through classroom activities that allow them to boost their learning potentials and develop their thinking skills. In addition to this, written tests and examinations involving performance tasks designed according to the scenario-based approach to testing can diagnose the learners' deficiencies in applying the principles of research methodology in a pragmatic way and prepare them to become competent researchers. This issue is presented in the next section.

3. Prioritizing The Scenario-Based Assessments of University Students' Methodological Knowledge

Different types of knowledge are manipulated when a learner performs an assessment task; they include procedural and metacognitive knowledge as well as factual and conceptual knowledge. Procedural knowledge means the know-how exerted in a distinct field while metacognitive knowledge corresponds to the individual's understanding of his/her cognition; factual or declarative knowledge refers to the facts about distinct separate content details or small pieces of data; it encompasses the mastery of terminology as well as certain particulars and items (Anderson et al., 2001). It can be represented in the form of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge. Linguistic knowledge implies the mastery of a particular language; extralinguistic knowledge is referred to as the knowledge of the world or encyclopaedic knowledge (Gile, 2009). It denotes non-linguistic facts. Extralinguistic and linguistic knowledge embody conceptual knowledge (Kellogg, 1994). Conceptual knowledge is also labelled structural knowledge (Jonassen et al., 2009). It implies the perception of the meaning of concepts and the awareness of their use in different cases (Estes & Choi, 2014). It includes content knowledge and discourse knowledge; Content knowledge refers to concrete, social and psychological facets of the world; it is shaped in domain and discipline knowledge; discourse knowledge implies information about language structure and use (Kellogg, 1994).

Conceptual knowledge embodies schemas, mental representations and a system of ideas that delineate the expertise that a person acquires concerning the way in which a specific content is planned as well as how divergent

pieces of information are associated in a structured form and how those bits synergize; it may represent a facet of disciplinary knowledge which implies the experts' manner of thinking about a case (Anderson et al., 2001). Persons possessing an intense extent of conceptual knowledge have the skill of problem solving (Estes & Choi, 2014). The evaluation of the learners' content knowledge of the research methodology module cannot take place without taking into consideration the aspect of discourse knowledge which is exploited to convey ideas using language whether in an oral or a written form. This means that conceptual knowledge should be given a real importance. This type of knowledge can be triggered via the use of authentic assessment tasks. Indeed, authentic teaching is ensued by alternative assessment wherein the learners accomplish exercises that are almost identical to the ones they may fulfil when becoming experts in the domain (Daniels et al, 2008).

Accordingly, performance-based assessment judges the way the students employ the language, their potential in completing the task successfully and their capacity to perform actual language activities (Gonzàlez-Lloret, 2015). Authentic assessment represents a learner-centred approach to testing (Rodney et al., 2002). It permits the learners to reveal their competence and ability to put the learnt information into practice like exhibiting their writing performance and inquiry skills (Oakes et al., 2016). It constitutes a crucial means of gauging the students' methodological knowledge. Various techniques and assignments represent performance-based assessment including portfolios, performance tasks and research papers; written scenarios constitute one of the most important kinds of performance-based assessment (Ananda, 2000). Performance tasks and performance assessment are employed synonymously (Pete & Fogarty, 2018). They may be in the form of experiments, projects, exhibitions or written works (Luongo-Orlando, 2003). A performance task refers to an intricate extended response question involving a problem that the students must resolve; it calls for the application of knowledge to a certain case (Glatthorn, 1999). Since it represents a substantiation of the learners' mastery of the learnt information, it functions as a kind of appraisal (Pete & Fogarty, 2018).

Performance tasks enable the teachers to probe the students' procedural and conceptual knowledge (Sousa, 2009). They request the learners to exploit their expertise in dealing with issues, generating products and exhibiting specific skills; the extended format of such a type of activities may entail a problem scenario (Burke, 2009). In effect, a problem scenario which is also referred to as a performance task helps to train the learners on problem solving (Pete & Fogarty, 2018). Testing the students' ability to apply the information taught in the research methods courses can take place through problem solving situations embodied in scenario-based tasks. In fact, the scenario-based form of evaluation corresponds to a genre of alternative assessment; it is involved in educational measurement; it has been conventionally presented in distinct types of exercises such as mathematical word problems and open-ended questions provided in the final part of the chapters of a history workbook as well as written production prompts used in the examinations of English; it represents a variety of performance-based assessment as it squarely evaluates the students' performance on cognitive activities; it also enables the learners to improve problem solving skills through the inspection of a case (Daniels et al, 2008).

Indeed, scenario-based exercises can be exploited in the inquiry methods courses as classroom practice activities that help the teacher not only to prepare the learners to be ready to perform the tasks in written examinations, boost their thinking skills, check their readiness to put theory into practice and solve problems in real life contexts when undertaking research. The use of these activities can assist the instructor in linking the theoretical and practical aspects of the research methodology module as well as motivating the students to provide various ideas and suggestions; moreover, the issues involved in the given scenarios may push the learners to inquire about the ways of coping with similar cases that they may encounter when making scientific investigations. The consistency of the testing condition within the research methods classes may be affected by the acts of cribbing and misappropriation that can be committed by certain students. These issues are considered as challenging aspects not only in this content area but

also in other disciplines. Subsequently, the likelihood of cheating can be lessened by developing assessment exercises that ask the learners to rely on their personal knowledge and associate the theoretical principles to their hand-on expertise (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). Therefore, the utilisation of scenario-based tasks in the proctored onsite written examinations administered in the courses of inquiry approaches may enhance the integrity of the assessment situation by encouraging the students to provide individual responses generated in their own style.

Additionally, plagiarism can subsist in online tests. To discourage cheating in online evaluation, the teachers should not only rely on content-based testing, but they should also use learner-centred assessments (Hulsart & McCarthy, 2013). Consequently, the scenario-based exercises may constitute a means of testing the learners' knowledge of research methodology in non-proctored online examinations as they can prompt the students to avoid plagiarism; they can help to increase the learners' originality due to the substance of these tasks which involves a personal analysis of the given context. Furthermore, scenario-based activities can be exploited in take-home tests to achieve formative assessment objectives relevant to the research methods programme. Indeed, such a type of exercises may be exploited in a variety of ways according to the teacher's intention, the syllabus content and the appraisal purposes. The subsequent title focuses on the provision of a set of instances of scenario-based assignments involving invented data related to the content of the lectures devoted to the techniques of scientific investigation.

4. Exploiting Scenario-Based Tasks in Research Methodology Classes

Scenarios can be deployed in the research methods module for the purpose of training and tasting the learners. They represent an excellent approach used to appraise thinking skills; certain kinds of scenarios can be employed to evaluate content by requesting the learners to gauge their reasoning; they can include tales involving imaginary narratives embodying everyday circumstances (Brookhart, 2014). A scenario may be oral or written. A written scenario corresponds to a performance task composed of a brief passage written in the second- or third-person viewpoint to depict a factual or fictitious situation involving a specific issue followed by a question that recommends the learners to supply a response by writing a word, an utterance, a paragraph or an essay. It may consist of numerical data that have to be treated via the application of statistical measures. An illustration of such a type of activities is presented in the subsequent example.

A teacher used a test to assess second year EFL university learners' oral performance.

The following scores were obtained:

12	10	11	12	14	09	12	08	15	10	08	10	10
07	12	13	11	11	08	08	12	08	11	07	08	07
15	11	13	13	15	10	08	07	07	10	11	14	13
07	13	07	13	14	15	10	13	10	10	12	09	08

As a student researcher, exploit the results of the teacher-made test to produce a mini report. Calculate the mean, the median and the mode as well as the standard deviation. Then, use the given data to draw graphic representations and make inferences.

Figure 1. A Scenario-Based Exercise Entailing Quantitative Analysis

The above activity enables the students to deal with quantitative data analysis; it refers to an instance involving the practice of statistics. In other situations, such a kind of exercises may include non-statistical information. Indeed, a scenario which is also referred to as a vignette represents an account comprising appropriate details; it may

sporadically incorporate impertinent data for the purpose of requiring the testee to recognize the proper information from the unsuitable data (Haladyna, 2011). The following table furnishes a representation of this type of scenarios.

Table 2. Scenarios Comprising Pertinent and/or Inappropriate Details

Scenario Type	Example
Scenario-based task involving pertinent details	A researcher opted for overt observation to examine learners' behaviour in the classroom. Nevertheless, it is assumed that such a type of observation may lead to unrealistic data as the students may change their comportment since they recognize that they are observed. How can the researcher ensure the reliability of the collected information?
Scenario-based task incorporating inappropriate details	A researcher who intended to collect data about university students' opinions concerning online learning relied on the use of covert observation as a research tool. Comment.

Scenario-based tasks can take different formats that can be exploited within the research methodology module; they may be presented in a selected, limited or extended response format. The selected response item often involves a scenario-based or vignette-based multiple-choice question; it takes the form of a multiple-choice exercise. Scenario-based multiple-choice questions entail a scenario that constitutes the outset supplying a background for diverse linked questions (Greenberg & Smith, 2008). The limited response format of vignette-based activities frequently requires a short answer, while the extended one which is often embodied in a problem scenario regularly leads to essay writing. The subsequent table summarizes the main kinds of vignettes illustrated with examples.

Table 3. Types of Vignette-Based Tasks

Task Format	Task Type	Example
Selected response tasks	Scenario-based multiple-choice question	You are asked to choose a subject of research to produce a project. You select a topic and you start collecting data. However, you discover that the secondary sources relevant to the chosen topic are very scarce. How do you cope with this situation? - You maintain the selected subject using the accessible materials and your personal experience. - You continue working on the same topic employing the available sources and searching for more references. - You change the subject of research.
Limited response tasks	Scenario-based short answer question	A student researcher who suffers from speaking anxiety must gather data about learners' opinions on educational technology. Which research tool(s) may be more helpful and suitable for such a case?
Extended response tasks	Scenario-based essay question	As a student researcher, you are required to investigate the impact of gender on learning English as a foreign language at the middle school using the transformative paradigm for the purpose of generalizing the research findings. Write an essay in which you delineate the appropriate methodology for studying the issue.

Each type of vignette can be used according to the content of the educational programme and the assessment objectives. Indeed, problem scenarios consisting of inappropriate data may be more suitable for the assessment of methodological knowledge as they tap critical thinking and give evidence about the students' ability to determine the appropriateness of the taken decisions and selected procedures when undertaking research. They can be used to gauge the learners' expertise in research methodology. The upcoming figures will present examples of vignettes that can be exploited for the sake of testing the learners' knowledge on different aspects of inquiry methods and strategies. For instance, scenario-based tasks can deal with the research design. This is illustrated in the following example.

A researcher who intended to adopt pragmatism as a research methodology to undertake a study entitled *Online Teaching* used an unstructured interview to gather information in order to answer the following research question:

- How do EFL learners perceive online and face to face instruction?

Write an essay in which you criticize the researcher's methodology.

Figure 2. A Vignette-Based Activity Tackling Research Design

The above exercise gives the students the possibility to spot the inadequate research strategies and provide suggestions to make the research design more appropriate. Scenario-based tasks can be used to test the learners' knowledge concerning research methods and tools. This can be illustrated in the ensuing instance.

An intrinsic case study entitled *Testing Pronunciation* was conducted. A grammar test was employed to collect data for the purpose of generalizing the research findings. All the testees obtained bad marks. Comment in an essay.

Figure 3. A Scenario-Based Exercise Involving Research Techniques

In the activity, the students must find out the irrelevant information to be able to supply alternative methods and techniques of data collection relevant to the given context. Scenarios can also be used to assess the learners' expertise in handling sampling issues. The following example gives an idea about such an aspect.

The representative sampling paradigm was adopted to secure information that can lead to extrapolate the results of an inquiry dealing with pupils' attitudes towards the writing activities included in the textbook of English. The selected sample involved 30 female participants out of a target population of 1000 first year and second year secondary school learners. Criticize the methodology in an essay.

Figure 4. A Vignette-Based Task about Sampling

The above exercise checks the students' understanding of the criteria that must be taken into consideration when choosing a sample that is appropriate to a specific research perspective. Moreover, vignette-based activities can be

employed to gauge the learners' skilfulness in designing research instruments. The upcoming task illustrates this element.

A questionnaire was designed for the sake of gathering different types of information about learning the speaking skill in an EFL context. It was presented as follows:

Questionnaire

You are kindly requested to answer the following questions:

1- What do you suggest to improve your oral performance?

2- How do you view the speaking activities? Interesting □ Useful □

3- What are the types of grammar activities that you prefer?

4- Do you face difficulties in learning the speaking and writing skills?

5- Don't you think that speaking is a difficult skill?

6- Do you often practise speaking outside the classroom? Yes □ No □

Criticize the given questionnaire in an essay.

Figure 5. A Scenario-Based Activity on a Questionnaire Design

The above activity gives the learners the possibility to reconsider and modify the delineated questionnaire as a way of displaying their expertise in conceiving such a type of tools. In effect, the testing objectives may vary from a discipline to another. In certain fields, more prominence may be accorded to problem solving abilities; in other areas, the greater preference may be granted to the synthesis of the organization of thought (Flateby, 2011). Indeed, scenarios including irrelevant details can be exploited to assess the learners' mastery of different aspects of research methodology. They can be rated in distinct ways. A clear-cut benchmark delineating the methodological knowledge dimension via sample answers outlining the students' potential responses can be employed. Otherwise, a rating scale may be deployed to display the general features of the learners' productions. The following rubric developed by the writer of this article provides a representation of the scoring of the students' performance in a research methodology examination involving a written scenario-based task.

Table 4. Performance Scoring Rubric

Performance Facet	Criteria	Descriptors	Score
Content	The discrimination of the inappropriate details from the appropriate ones and problem identification	- Non-existent - Very insufficient	2.5 pts
	Argumentation	- Inadequate	2.5 pts
	Supplying alternatives and suggestions	- Satisfactory	2.5 pts
	The evaluation of the provided alternatives and suggestions	- Good - Outstanding	2.5 pts
	Word choice	- Inadequate	1 pt

Linguistic Knowledge	Mechanics	- very limited	1 pt
	Spelling	- Restricted	2 pts
	Grammar	- Adequate	2 pts
	Sentence structure	- Good	2 pts
	Fluency	- Excellent	2 pts

The above table embodies 20 points rating scale that concerns the description of the main attributes related to the dimensions involved in the performance of university learners in the examinations of the research methodology module. In the rubric, content and linguistic knowledge are awarded the same grade. In certain cases, only content is graded; in other situations, language mastery is taken into consideration along with content knowledge which is given more prominence depending on the specified content area. In fact, the conception and scoring of vignette-based activities can fluctuate according to the context. Moreover, the constructed format of scenario-based tasks may help to elicit information about the students' command of the taught content and the target language. They may require the learners to produce lengthy responses in the form of essays or research papers.

5. Conclusion

The evaluation of university students' expertise in research methodology is a complex process that should ascertain the learners' ability to explain and apply the principles related to the inquiry methods. It may take different shapes including written examinations and projects. In effect, training the students to become researchers implies the application of instructional and assessment strategies that promote the learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills to prepare them to cope with future research contexts. Consequently, scenario-based tasks may be exploited to test the students' methodological expertise. They may constitute useful procedures of gauging the learners' ability to apply the knowledge acquired from the lectures dealing with research approaches and judging their readiness to cope with authentic situations when undertaking research. They can aid to trigger the students' conceptual knowledge as they urge them to draw connections between the different concepts learnt in the research methodology courses for the purpose of identifying the issue hidden in the task and solve it. Nevertheless, vignette-based tasks entailing unreal context may not accurately exemplify the authentic issues that can be encountered by the student researchers in the field. Moreover, those learners who are weak at the level of knowledge transforming may find difficulties in coping with the content of this kind of activities. To help the students to perform this type of tasks successfully, their metacognitive knowledge must be highlighted. Additionally, the written scenarios must be carefully designed to meet the testing objectives and the learners' levels. It is indispensable to undertake supplementary research concerning the procedures of assessing university learners' performance in the examinations administered in the research methodology classes.

6. Disclosure of Conflict

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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