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Obstacles in the growth of learning English communication skills for Arab students: An investigative study in Samtah College, Jazan University (KSA)

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Abstract---As we know English is a lingua franca. It is the doorway to the rest of the world. There are several hindrance while learning process for non native speakers. The main aim of the study to make Arab students familiar with the importance English language learning and understand their problems while learning foreign/ second language. This Investigative study focuses on the obstacles in the growth of learning English language skills. Consequently, it would also dwell on the problems that they usually encounter in the process of learning the English language, including all the challenges they typically deal with like problems in grammar, pronunciation, syntaxes, tenses, prepositions, among many others. Further, the case study would also look into the problems why students in Arab countries have difficulties learning and understanding the English language. In order to fulfill the objectives of this study, the researcher would be following descriptive analytical and constructive methods. The research would be ended with some surprising facts and results and recommendations.

Keywords---Arab students, English communication skills, obstacle.

Introduction

As we know the English is a lingua franca now days. English is the doorway to the rest of the world. The main aim of my study to get the students of Arab countries to know how much English language learning is important. This Investigative study focuses on the obstacles in growth of learning English language skills. Here the focus is on learning. Consequently, it would also dwell on the problems that they usually encounter in the process of learning the English language, including all the challenges they typically deal with like

problems in grammar, pronunciation, syntaxes, tenses, prepositions, among many others.

Further, the case study would also look into the problems why students in Saudi Arabia, perhaps including some Arab countries, have difficulties learning and understanding the English language. In order to fulfill the objectives of this study, the researcher followed descriptive analytical and constructive methods. It was prepared 19 questionnaires of close-ended questions in English and translated in Arabic too, which aims at identifying the reasons for the low learning growth of English. The study included level 4 to 8, who are studying English as their major subject.

The questionnaire included five domains; four English language skills (LSRW) and learning growth. The study is focused on the major obstacles in learning English for Arab students. To make my research authentic an investigative study has been done in the Jazan University, Samtah. The research is ended with some surprising facts and results and recommendations.

Review of Literature

There are a lot of problems that confront Arab students in their course of studying the English language. In Saudi Arabia, since Saudis speak their native language at home and during their interaction with their friends, peers, and classmates, there is a little chance to learn English through day-to-day interface. However, most studies regarding ESL students in the Arab world were carried out in Jordan. . In one study conducted by Haq (1982), it was concluded that most Arab students usually fumble in their writing skills. In his study, Haq (1982) also revealed that most English instructors and University officials complained about the continuous deterioration of the mastery in the English language among the students. Another study conducted by Zugboul (1984) confirmed the findings of Haq, and revealed that most Saudian students enrolled in EFL classes have poor oral communication skills, as they usually commit gross lexical errors.

Data Analysis - Findings and Discussion of Investigative Study

The students' and teachers' data are analyzed and results are tabulated and graphed as under. Frequencies and percentages are calculated for analyses:

Table & Graph-1 (Students' Perception)

	Always	Often	ST	Rarely	Never
1	49	16	26	6	6
2	75	14	8	2	1
3	19	12	15	6	48
4	22	12	30	13	46
5	15	21	28	12	24
6	28	20	32	10	18
7	43	15	20	5	18
8	27	23	35	7	6

9	32	25	26	10	8
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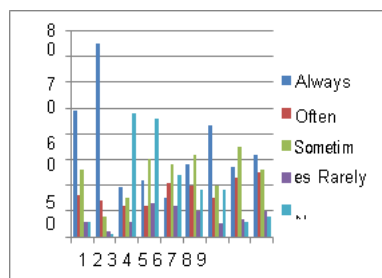
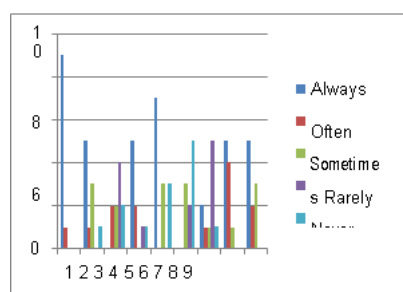


Table & Graph-2 (Teachers' Perception)

	Always	Often	ST	Rarely	Never
1	9	1	0	0	0
2	5	1	3	0	1
3	0	2	2	4	2
4	5	2	0	1	1
5	7	0	3	0	3
6	0	0	3	2	5
7	2	1	1	5	1
8	5	4	1	0	0
9	5	2	3	0	0



The questionnaires were critically analyzed to find the core problem the major hurdles in growth of learning English language skills. Look at the Table-1 & 2 and graphs above. According to the result- Approximately 50% of students and 70% of teachers of the college are agreed that an overcrowded class is the major reason behind slow pace of growth in learning English language skills. Because of overcrowded classes, it becomes noisy all the time which restricts learning growth of students of English language where 70% of students and 50% of teachers stated that noisy is a reason of low level of students' comprehension. Whereas 48% are said that classrooms are not provided teaching equipment at all, such as Projector, tap-recorder, computer or LCD, OHP etc. and majority of teachers have the same opinion.

When it was asked about the appropriate examination material is being provided to students, study found contradictory opinion of students and teachers. The majority of students are not agree with this they think the material they get is not

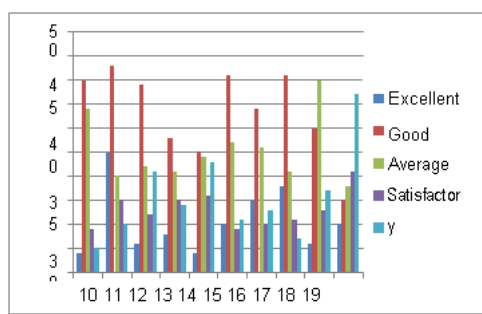
sufficient or affluent for them .On the other sides majority of teachers belief that they are providing affluent material to study .It seems that teachers' level of teaching is a bit higher than students comprehension or students are not increasing their level of learning. 24% of students think that exams and assessments help them to develop their skills but 28% of students and 70% of teachers agreed that exams always follow copy paste method and don't do not help students to think. It is a kind of formal examination for the sake of examination. Whereas about 32% of students stated that exams sometimes focus on quantity not on quality while 28% of students always think that exams focus on quantity not on quality, while 50% of teachers stated that exams never focus on quantity not on quality. That is also the very big problem in assessment and examination system which does help neither students nor teacher to develop language skills.

In the investigative study majority of students stated that teaching and learning is 'Score' centered not learning; only handful students felt it is learning centered. But half of the teachers have the perception of learning more than scoring. It seems that teachers' motive to teach them for learning but due to students behavior and attitude it has become Score centered teaching- learning. Most of students and teachers stated that students have already set in their mind that English is difficult. This is one of the big problems in learning and teaching English language. Both they have set in their mind it is difficult and time taking language to study and learn. On the other side 32% of students and 50% of teachers stated that students' passive attitude for learning always demotivate teachers to try new for teaching, while 26% of students faced it sometimes.

Look at the table and Charts are given below. The analyzed result is from students' Questionnaires:

Table & Graph-3 (Students' Perception)

	Ex	Good	Avg.	Sat.	Poor
10	4	40	34	9	5
11	25	43	20	15	10
12	6	39	22	12	12
13	8	28	21	15	14
14	4	25	24	16	23
15	10	41	27	9	11
16	15	34	26	10	13
17	18	41	21	11	7
18	6	30	40	13	17
19	10	15	18	21	37

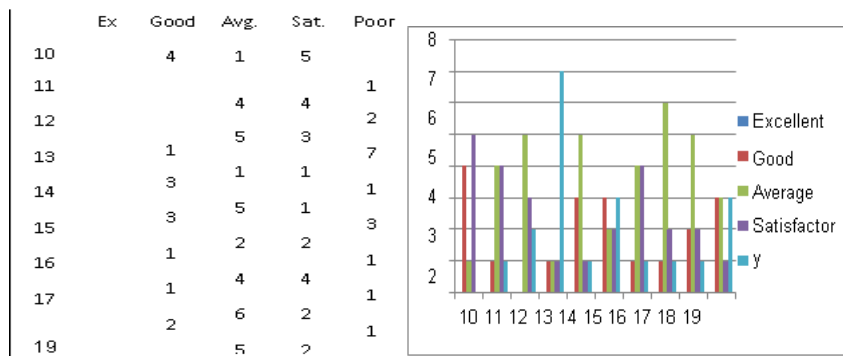


In the investigative study about 40% of students stated that English proficiency skills of teachers are good and 30% of students stated that it is average it looks that they have mixed view about it. Therefore 43% of students are happy that clarity of voice and expression of teachers are good and impressive and they added that the attention of teachers for each students is good , while 22 of them said it is an average and 21% of students considered it as poor . Only 28% of students are happy with good teaching method while 21% of students answered it is an average but 14% of them considered it is poor. Here study gets the mixed view. 25% of students stated that the ability of accepting criticism is good in teachers, while 22% of students said it is average, but 21% of students stated it as poor. It seems they are not clear about their opinion. About 41% of students stated that teaching qualities in teachers are good while 27 % of students considered it as average.

In the study 34% of students stated that attitude of teachers toward students is good while 15% of students considered it as excellent, 26 of students said it is average but 13% of students stated that it is poor. About 41% of students stated that the ability of teachers to solve the query is good while 18% of students said that it is excellent but in 21% 's point of view it is an average, surprisingly 11% consider as a poor technique. The research stated that 40% of students stated that the growth of ECS is average while 30% said it is good, but 17% of students stated that it is poor. 37% of students stated that motivation to participate practice English language in or outside the classroom is poor, while 21% of students answered it is satisfactory and 18% of the students considered it average. It is clearly observed that lack of motivation the students by teacher.

Look at the table and Graph are given below.

Table & Graph-4 (Teachers' Perception)



In the investigative study view of teachers is very important. The study will show on the same point students and teachers would have different paradoxical opinion. According to 50% of teachers listening skill of students is satisfactory and 40% of teachers stated that the rate of speaking skill is satisfactory too. But 50% of teachers stated that the rate of reading skill is the average. Finally, 70% of teachers considered students are poor in writing skill. It seems students would be patient and passive listeners in the classrooms show them good listeners. Half of teachers answered that the ability of students in expression dependably is average. 30% of teachers stated that attention is paid in classroom is good, while 30% of teachers said it is poor, here there is paradoxical result. 30% of teachers answered that ability of students to understand listening passages or context without translations average, while 30% of them said it is satisfactory, on the other hand, 30% of teachers stated that students' ability of understanding listening passages without translation is poor. Majority (60%) of teachers stated that students spend participate effectively during lecture. More than half of the teachers stated that students spend effort in learning English as a language.

Handful teachers think that students accept criticism from teachers in positive attitude. 30% of them said it is average, while 30% of teachers stated that most of students don't accept criticism in positive attitude. Many other reasons too that causes Arab students poor performance of their learning English as a foreign language such as the weakness of curriculum design, lack of English teachers, and lack of students' learning motivation. The following factors also affect the growth of learning language, such as:

- Language background ; cultural knowledge; age; cognitive ability; social; emotional and physical health; school attendance; previous schooling experience; experience with English; experience with the culture of school; language of peers in classroom and school ;level of English use in the community ; socio-economic status of family and community ; support from family and community; expertise of teachers, schools and English language speakers to meet the needs of ESL learners; Last but not the least MTI (Mother Tongue Influence)
- English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn; learners' learning depends on the English teachers as authorities; there is a lack of support to use

English in the home environment and the community; learners have insufficient or lacking of exposure to the language as there is alimited

- Opportunity to use English outside the classrooms; students have a limitation of vocabulary proficiency as well as English reading materials are not always available; learners have an unwillingness and lack of motivation to learn English as they do not see the immediate need to use the language; lack of motivation for learning or the negative attitude towards the target language learning strategies are the methods that learners use to obtain information; normally high achievers learners use more learning strategies than do lower achieving learners.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to determine the obstacles in growth of ECS among students at the Faculty of Science and Arts, Samtah, Jazan University, Jazan. According data analysis this study reached on following conclusion that- The majority of the participant agreed that the low growth is because of overcrowded and noisy classes, which do not give apt and suitable environment to study. And that causes the lack of understanding during lectures; lack of equipment and proper sitting arrangements. It is concluded that teaching-learning is 'Score' center and examinations are for only to cram the examinations not for the assessment of the learning. So students' are focusing on memorizing the material without any understanding. Majorly 'Copy & Paste Method' is popular system in examination. Students and teachers both have impression that English language hard to learn. This state of mind of them, block the learning process. It is clearly mentioned in the research that students have lack of motivation and purpose to learn English. Student's passive attitude for learning demotivate teachers to try new techniques in teaching , that also give push students not developing in their skills.

Finally, if you are studying English at school, college or university, remember that getting an 'A' grade in English is almost worthless, in terms of communication, if you cannot speak the language. Spoken English is used in the best careers, the best universities, and is increasingly being used at job interviews. So like it or not, English is a very important language to learn how to communicate.

However, it must be important to state that learning L2 or English is not an easy task to do. A student cannot learn English overnight. It may be true that one who is not a native speaker of English can learn the basics of the language in a year, but it would be impossible to attain mastery and high proficiency of the English language in just the same period. It would take years before a student could achieve mastery of the language. The investigative study suggests that the growth of target learners in Samtah College is slow. But it can be developed by collaborative efforts of students, teachers and administration staff. The effort and determination for teaching and learning English language skills definitely will show its true beautiful color.

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Abbreviation

EFL- English as a Foreign Language
 ESL- English as a Second Language
 ECS- English Communication Skills
 ELS- English Language Skills
 LSRW- Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
 LES- Language English Skills
 Avg.- Average, Sat.- Satisfactory, Ex- Excellent

Appendix

Questionnaire for Students and Teachers

Department of English

Rate one of these: Always/ Often/ Sometimes/ Rarely/ Never (For Students and Teachers)

A\Obstacle in growth of Learning and Teaching Related to the classroom environment and Examination:

1. Crowded.
 2. Noisy
 3. Availability of Equipment
 4. The lecture give students a specific material to pass the exams
 5. Exams and Assessments do not help to think or (Copy & Paste method)
 6. Questions focus on quantity and not on quality
 7. Teaching - Learning is 'Score' centered not learning
 8. Students have already set their mind that English is difficult
 9. Students' passive attitude for learning demotivate teachers
- B\Obstacle in

growth of Learning and Teaching:

Parameters (Rate only one): Excellent/ Good/ Average/ Satisfactory/ Poor (For Teachers only)

1. The rate of listening skill of students (generally)
2. The rate of speaking skill of students(generally)
3. The rate of reading skill of students(generally)
4. 13. The rate of writing skill of students (generally) 14. Confidence in expression
5. Attention is paid in classroom
6. Understanding listening passages or context without translation 17. Active participation in class during lecture
7. Efforts in learning English as a
8. Ability to take criticism in positive attitude B\Obstacle in growth of Learning and Teaching:

Parameters (Rate only one): Excellent/ Good/ Average/ Satisfactory/ Poor (For Students only)

1. English proficiency in skills of teachers
2. Clarity of voice and expression
3. Attention is paid on each student
4. Teaching method
5. Take criticism in positive manner
6. Teaching qualities in teachers are
7. Attitude and behavior towards students
8. Ability to solve the query
9. Growth of teaching English skills is
10. Motivation to participate and practice English language in or outside the classroom