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EXPLORING STUDENTS' WEAKNESSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT SHAQRA UNIVERSITY (HURIMLAA CAMPUS), SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

This research explores the reasons for the weaknesses of students of English Language at Shaqra University (Hurimlaa Campus), Saudi Arabia. University records show that students' marks in these courses are deteriorating and this research paper explores the reasons that might account for this. Spurred by this phenomenal reality, the researcher developed a questionnaire incorporating twenty questions covering four dimensions: educational factors, cultural factors, social factors and attitudinal factors with the ultimate aim of attributing the students' status to justifiable reasons. The analytical method was adapted through which noticeable results showed that almost half of the sample experienced difficulties with both reading and sentence structuring. Nearly 70% of the students surveyed thought that learning English is crucial for communication and understanding. These results suggest that students are aware of the importance of and need for this language, and that these shortcomings can be attributed to educational factors including schools, university, instructors and modules. This humble research does not, however, answer all questions arising from the general stance of the English Language in Saudi Arabia. Further studies are still needed to cover other educational institutions

Keywords

ESL (English as a Second Language), EFL (English for Foreign Learners), Students' Weaknesses in English Language, Teaching English in Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

English, once merely a regional Germanic language, has become a lingua franca in the contemporary world for a series of well-known and oft repeated reasons, meaning that the study of English has become a necessity rather than a luxury. It is a center language of communication (Susanna, 2007). English is no longer possible to function fully in fields such as aviation, IT, the Internet etc. without excelling in English. Furthermore, many of the syllabuses and courses that are currently taught in areas such as banking, marketing and other business-related subjects have been developed primarily in English.

Nevertheless, English learning is not gaining rigid ground in some parts of nowadays world. Hashemi (2011) identified that students' weakness in English is due to the differences of social contexts and cultural environments. Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita (2012) presented the factors that impact the EFL learners to have poor performance in English language learning as follows: English is regarded as a difficult subject to learn. Learners depend 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 a limited 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 (Strevens, 1980).

English is the only foreign language taught in schools and universities of Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Saudi Arabia (KSA) is a large country and levels of acceptance of the necessity and desirability of learning English vary from one region to another. Often, there is a logical reason for this. Thus, in the seaport of Jeddah, inhabitants are used to dealing with foreigners. This is also the case in the Eastern region, where the presence of the oil company ARAMCO and large numbers of Britons and Americans, have motivated Saudis to learn English. The Saudi capital, Riyadh, is the residence of diplomats and a location for many private schools and universities, not to mention international language institutes staffed by instructors with English as their first language. All these factors have been reflected positively in the levels of

acceptance of the necessity and desirability of learning English there. Generally speaking, Al Wadah (2000), believes that students will be able to communicate and represent their culture to the world using this language.

2. Research Issues

Shaqra University is located in the Central Region of KSA where contact with English-speaking foreigners is minimal. With the exception of the capital, inhabitants of this region have not been subjected to extensive interaction with non-native speakers. Therefore, Shaqra University has to work hard to challenge and change the attitudes of local inhabitants to studying English as a Second Language (ESL). This research represents an attempt by the University as the scope of the research to change the *status quo*. It investigates the reasons for students' poor performance in English and suggests potential strategies for remedying this problematic issue. This study answers questions in a gap area where English learning is lagging behind.

3. Literature Review

Teaching ESL was introduced in KSA in 1946 (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). In 1954, the Ministry of Education outlined the goals for ESL teaching in public schools and designed the curriculum for each grade (Alresheed, 2008). The Ministry of Education's (1971) objective for ESL in the secondary level curriculum states: "To help the pupil gain a reasonable command of English in order to be in a better position to defend Islam against adverse criticism and to participate in the dissemination of Islamic culture" (p. 316). The bolded infinitive phrase is a quotation from the response by the enlightened King Abdul-Aziz to those who opposed learning ESL. Since then, KSA has allocated huge funds for this purpose, but student performance remains far from satisfactory. Despite good overall planning, a targeted curriculum, integrated textbooks, and well-qualified teachers, achievement remains below expectations (Khan, 2011):

Ministry of Education studies have highlighted the poor achievements of students, noting that after six years of learning ESL, some are still unable to write their names in English. In addition, university graduates working in an English-speaking environment with a job they necessitates travel abroad and interaction with English speakers may not be able to introduce themselves in English. It is not an exaggeration to say that some will even be incapable of reading airline tickets for themselves (Okaz, 1991, p. 16).

Some countries with Anglo colonial backgrounds, such as Kenya, India and South Africa, are more reconciled with English and some use this as an official language. English is also

flourishing, in Egypt, Jordan and Iraq. However, KSA has no colonial links with Britain, and is known to be a conservative and closed society meaning that it has provide difficult for Saudis to accept that a language other than Arabic should be taught in an Islamic states (Alfallaj, 1998).

There is no evidence that Islam discourages bilingualism; in fact, the opposite is true. However, some Islamic clergy and some Saudis fear that studying English might westernize KSA. This fear arises from the fact that language is considered to be the embodiment of culture and it is believed that English would introduce western values into the Kingdom and corrupt Islamic commitment (Fawwaz, 1996). Saudis are particularly concerned about not following the Dubai model.

This is the main reason why when King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals was tasked with developing the curriculum for Saudi school textbooks, it adopted the approach of combining English language with Saudi culture although it is generally accepted that a language and its culture are inseparable. Student attitudes towards learning ESL are greatly influenced by their understanding of and beliefs concerning this issue. Generally speaking, Saudi students do not feel that English is relevant to their future career. Moreover, they are not expected to continue studying English in higher education, except for those academic courses where English is taught for specific purposes (Zaid, 1993).

ESL teaching in Saudi public schools begins in the final year of primary school, i.e., sixth level. Following recommendations, the Saudi government decided in 2011 to lower this to fourth level. It was decided that this decree would come into effect in the academic year 2012 in some 5000 schools across KSA and would gradually spread to include all primary schools. It is still too early to assess the effects of this experiment but there have been debates about the feasibility of teaching ESL at this earlier stage since ESL programs in KSA have been described as "non-systematic and inadequate" (Al-Hazmy, 2003). According to the text of the decree, fourth grade was selected so that children's mother tongue would not be negatively affected.

There is some skepticism about the ability to fulfill the required criteria for teaching ESL, the absence or inadequacy of which can have serious outcomes. Firstly, this represents some significant difficulties with respect to procuring qualified teachers with adequate language standards and appropriate pedagogic methods. Even after graduating from college, many Saudi teachers still lack some aspects of English, especially the ability to speak it correctly.

Secondly, there is the issue of suitable textbooks and whether these are regularly revised. In regard to the very last point, it has been noted that Zafer (2002) reported that ESL textbooks in

Saudi secondary schools contain subjects relating to desert life, keeping livestock, especially camels, and stories of ancient Arab heroes. Consequently, EFL students are very weak in using English in contexts relating to advanced technology, health, international travel, and the like.

In addition the number of hours dedicated to ESL may be insufficient. Moreover, exams are set at the school level rather than being standardised and this may impact on the student-teacher relationship. Finally, there is a lack of specialist ESL teaching facilities:

A language laboratory was not available in most of the schools. Moreover, those schools which had language laboratories claimed that they were not in use either because of improper maintenance or the lack of qualified theatres to operate the laboratories (Al-Kamookh, 1981, p. 108).

A set of hypotheses have been formulated based on research discussing the reasons why ESL learning is lagging behind in KSA. It has been hypothesized that certain social, cultural and educational issues may account for this phenomenon. This research paper explores the reasons for the continuing poor performance of Shaqra University students in ESL, focusing in particular on a sample of students learning ESL at Hurimlaa Campus.

4. Methodology

Since the research follows a descriptive analytical method in diagnosing the issues affecting poor performance in ESL in this sample of Shaqra University a questionnaire was devised and developed for this purpose. This was revised, modified and endorsed by experts in relevant fields who ensured that it covered all the dimensions of the stated problem. After a pilot study was conducted on a random experimental sample of 15 students, some amendments were made to items. Dependent variables are represented by the four axes (20 items) included in the questionnaire while independent variables are represented by the campus selected i.e. Hurimlaa Campus. It should be remembered that education in KSA is gender segregated so both male and female institutions have been included. Generally speaking, female students in KSA show more competency in learning English than their male counterparts. It is possible that the different lifestyles for male and females in the Kingdom may account for some of these differences.

5. Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Some 48.8% of the sample study science, the remaining 51.2% humanities. With regards to gender, 57.3% of the sample is male and 42.7% female. In terms of their ESL ability, 27.7% of the sample achieved grade A, 22.7% B, 34.2% C and 15.4% D.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Department	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	Science	127	48.8
	Humanities	133	51.2
	Total	260	100.0
Gender	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	Male	149	57.3
	Female	111	42.7
	Total	260	100.0
Grade	Frequency	Percent	
Valid	A	72	27.7
	B	59	22.7
	C	89	34.2
	D	40	15.4
	Total	260	100.0

5.2 Reliability Statistics

The distribution of the survey items in relation to the axes is as follows:

Table 2: Distribution of Survey Items by Axis

Educational	Attitudinal	Social	Cultural
Q1	Q6	Q7	Q16
Q2	Q8	Q9	Q17
Q3	Q10	Q18	
Q4	Q11	Q20	
Q5	Q12		
Q13	Q14		
	Q15		
	Q19		

The consistency of the data was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. This measurement covered all four axes. The Cronbach's Alpha results are as follows: 0.286 for the educational axis (six items), 0.275 for the attitudinal axis, 0.015 for the social axis and 0.718 for the cultural axis. Total reliability for all the axes is 0.483. Results for the reliability for each item of the four axes are provided in Tables 3-6.

Table 3: Reliability for the Educational Axis

Educational	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	13.1962	9.154	.172	.216
Q2	12.7154	8.714	.226	.173
Q3	11.9538	9.403	.130	.247
Q4	12.1423	8.493	.182	.201
Q5	12.2692	8.923	.132	.245
Q13	12.5885	11.069	-.082-	.384

Table 4: Reliability for the Attitudinal Axis

Attitude	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q6	18.0269	15.293	.035	.295
Q8	18.3577	14.316	.220	.185
Q10	18.0269	14.327	.167	.211
Q11	18.1731	13.163	.348	.105
Q12	18.2038	15.020	.143	.229
Q14	17.9500	16.526	-.057-	.345
Q15	18.1000	15.202	.072	.270
Q19	17.3615	16.008	-.003-	.313

Table 5: Reliability for the Social Axis

Social	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q7	8.7885	5.434	.036	-.042 ^{-a}
Q9	9.2615	4.526	.222	-.399 ^{-a}
Q18	10.2500	8.188	-.294-	.415
Q20	8.6462	4.840	.131	-.228 ^{-a}

Table 6: Reliability for the Cultural Axis

Cultural	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q16	2.0000	1.375	.561	.
Q17	2.0077	1.490	.561	.

5.3 Pearson Correlation

To verify the consistency of the questionnaire, Pearson was employed to show the correlation between each item in the axis and the item average for the same axis. The educational, attitude, social and cultural axes are represented in Tables 7-10. All the items are

statistically significance (0.01), demonstrating the reliability of the questionnaire axes. A positive correlation was found among all the items in the questionnaire, ranging in degree from strong to average.

Table 7: Educational Axis: Correlation among Items and Average for these Items

Correlation	Item
Not studying English at an earlier stage of primary schooling has made learning this harder now.	0.491**
ESL course exams are developed by each school, and are relatively easy, allowing students to pass without really learning anything.	0.542**
ESL courses at university are too difficult and need simplification.	0.459**
ESL instructors at university do not interact enough with students, and their methodology is ineffective.	0.547**
The college does not have any language labs to help improve students' ESL skills.	0.501**

** P- value (Sig) at the level of 5%

Table 8: Attitudinal Axis: Correlation among Items and Average for these Items

Correlation	Item
I will enrol in any ESL courses organized by the university.	0.247**
I find it difficult to read, write, structure sentences and memorize words.	0.372**
I use extra-curricular means to learn English such as educational channels, programs and mobile applications. In addition, English is the language set on my personal computer and cell phone. I also use it for on-line socialization.	0.463**
I plan to take ESL courses in KSA and abroad.	0.589**
I need English for daily communication and activities in my community.	0.413**
I dread English courses. I do not attend them or do English homework.	0.266**
I have a private tutor who helps me to improve my English.	0.383**
I have previously studied English in countries where this is the native tongue.	0.312**

** P- value (Sig) at the level of 5%

Table 9: Social Axis: Correlation among Items and Average for these Items

Correlation	Item
Society does not need English as it clashes with our values, traditions and cultural heritage.	0.543**
My family is not acquainted with English and believes it is not important; therefore I do not receive any help at home.	0.664**
Learning English is crucial to obtain a job in a multi-national company after graduation.	0.165**
I think learning English is a waste of time.	0.618**

** P- value (Sig) at the level of 5%

Table 10: Cultural Axis: Correlation among Items and Average for these Items

Correlation	Item
Learning English is my key objective. I believe this will contribute effectively to shaping my future.	0.481**
Learning English is a necessity in the age of globalization.	0.888**
Learning English is vital for inter-cultural dialogue.	0.878**

** P- value (Sig) at the level of 5%

5.4 Correlational Analysis

Table 11 shows that the educational axis is weakly correlated with the social axis. It also reveals that the weakest correlation is between attitudinal and social axes. It is also noted that there is inverse relationship between the social and cultural axes.

Table 11: Pearson Correlation among the Four Axes

	Educational	Attitude	Social	Cultural
Educational	1			
Attitude	.228**0	1		
Social	.275**0	.136**0	1	
Cultural	.0180	.311**	-0.137**	1

** P- value (Sig) at the level of 5%

5.5 Comparative Analysis

Measures were set to determine the importance of each item as shown in Table 12. Questionnaires were collected and analyzed using SPSS. Comparative analysis percentages, averages and standard deviation are shown in Tables 13-16.

Table 12: *Evaluation of Averages using Five-Point Likert Scale*

Evaluation in comments on outcomes	Evaluation in the questionnaire	Weighted Average	Average Range
Very high	Strongly agree (SA)	1	1 - 1.79
High	Agree (A)	2	1.80 - 2.59
Medium	Neutral (N)	3	2.60 - 3.39
Weak	Disagree (D)	4	3.40 - 4.19
Very weak	Strongly disagree (SD)	5	4.20 - 5

SD=Strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral A=Agree SA=Strongly agree

Table 13: Educational axis: Averages and standard deviations for items relating to student evaluation of weaknesses in ESL

Item	Std Dev	Average	SD		D		N		A		SA	
			%	No.	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R
Not studying English at an earlier stage of primary schooling has made learning this harder now.	1.16092	1.7769	5.0	13	6.2	16	10.0	26	19.2	50	59.6	155
ESL course exams are developed by each school, and are relatively easy, allowing students to pass without really learning anything.	1.18832	2.2577	3.1	8	16.2	42	19.6	51	25.8	67	35.4	92
ESL courses at university are too difficult and need simplification.	1.17059	3.0192	7.7	20	30.8	80	32.7	85	13.5	35	15.4	40
ESL instructors at university do not interact enough with students, and their methodology is ineffective.	1.33927	2.8308	11.5	30	24.2	63	23.5	61	17.3	45	23.5	61
The college does not have any language labs to help improve	1.32134	2.7038	8.8	23	21.5	56	29.2	76	11.9	31	28.5	74

students' ESL skills.												
	.570320	2.4955	All									

Key: Std Dev= Standard deviation R = Repetition SD=Strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral
A=Agree SA=Strongly agree

Table 14: Attitudinal axis: Averages and standard deviations for items relating to student evaluation of weaknesses in ESL

Item	Std Dev	Average	SD		D		N		A		SA	
			%	No.	%	R	%	R	%	R	%	R
I will enrol in any ESL courses organized at un.	1.11767	2.3846	3.8	10	11.9	31	30.0	78	27.3	71	26.9	70
I find it difficult to read, write, structure sentences and memorize words.	1.42998	2.5731	12.7	33	18.8	49	14.2	37	21.5	56	32.7	85
I use extra-curricular means to learn English such as educational channels, programs and mobile applications. In addition, English is the language set on my personal computer and cell phone. I also use it for on-line socialization.	1.31756	2.5731	9.6	25	17.3	45	21.9	57	23.1	60	28.1	73
I plan to take ESL courses in KSA and abroad.	1.22018	2.4269	6.2	16	13.5	35	27.3	71	23.1	60	30.0	78
I need English for daily communication and activities in my community.	1.18256	2.3962	5.0	13	12.7	33	29.2	76	23.1	60	30.0	78
I dread English courses. I do not attend them or do English homework.	1.35446	2.6500	11.9	31	16.5	43	23.8	62	20.0	52	27.7	72
I have a private tutor who	1.33414	2.5000	10.8	28	12.7	33	23.5	61	21.9	57	31.2	81

helps me to improve my English.												
I have previously studied English in countries where this is the native tongue.	1.32574	3.2385	20.4	53	25.4	66	27.7	72	10.8	28	15.8	41
	.526360	2.5750	All									

Key: Std Dev= Standard deviation R = Repetition SD=Strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral
A=Agree SA=Strongly agree

Table 15: Social axis: Averages and standard deviations for items relating to student evaluation of weaknesses in ESL

Item	Std Dev	Average	SD		D		N		A		SA	
			%	R	%	R	%	%	R	%	R	%
Society does not need English as it clashes with our values, traditions and cultural heritage.	1.42077	3.5269	34.2	89	24.6	64	14.2	37	13.5	35	13.5	35
My family is not acquainted with English and believes it is not important; therefore I do not receive any help at home.	1.36877	3.0538	15.8	41	27.3	71	23.5	61	13.1	34	20.4	53
Learning English is crucial to obtain a job in a multi-national company after graduation.	1.29729	2.0654	8.8	23	6.2	16	15.8	41	21.2	55	48.1	125
I think learning English is a waste of time.	1.42449	3.6692	39.2	102	24.2	63	15.8	41	5.8	15	15.0	39
	.69258	3.0779	All									

Key: Std Dev= Standard deviation R = Repetition SD=Strongly disagree D=Disagree N=Neutral
A=Agree SA=Strongly agree

Table 16: *Cultural axis: Averages and standard deviations for items relating to student evaluation of weaknesses in ESL*

Item	Std Dev	Average	SD		D		N		A		SA	
			%	R	%	R	%	%	R	%	R	%
Learning English is my key objective. I believe this will contribute effectively to shaping my future.	1.22077	2.0077	6.2	16	5.4	14	21.5	56	16.9	44	50.0	130
Learning English is a necessity in the age of globalization.	1.17240	2.0000	5.0	13	4.6	12	24.6	64	16.9	44	48.8	127
Learning English is vital for inter-cultural dialogue.	1.19480	2.2423	3.8	10	13.8	36	21.5	56	24.2	63	36.5	95
	1.05723	2.0038	All									

6. Discussion

6.1 Educational Axis

With an average of 2.4955, the Shaqra University students agree that the educational system is the direct reason for their poor performance in ESL. This may be due to the fact that the Saudi educational system does not offer a sufficient amount of English learning at the various levels. Students must be motivated and challenged by their teachers to excel in English. Sultana et al (2017) showed that there is a significant relationship between learning style and learning stimulus among students. Chahrazad Mouhoubi- Messadh (2017) pointed out that the part assumed by the teacher, most especially when caring about the learner, is of prominent importance.

6.2 Attitudinal Axis

With an average of 2.5750, the Shaqra University student sample agree that personal attitudes towards studying ESL have a direct correlation with their poor performance in ESL. The students' attitudes may be similar due to the fact they belong to the same society or because they have all studied under the same educational system.

6.3 Social Axis

With an average of 3.0779, the Shaqra University students agree that social factors have a direct correlation with their poor performance in ESL. This may be influenced by the social class to which these students belong.

6.4 Cultural Axis

With an average of 2.0038, the Shaqra University students agree that cultural factors have a direct correlation with their poor performance in ESL. This may be due to the information that students have access to outside the scope of the family.

6.5 Discrepancy Analysis (ANOVA)

ANOVA was employed to test the research hypotheses, as shown in Tables 16-19.

Table 16: *Specialization effect as to study axes discrepancy significance*

Axis	Discrepancy source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	Sig
Educational	Within groups	2.916	1	2.916	9.250	.0030
	Between groups	81.329	258	0.315		

Attitude	Within groups	0.787	1	0.787	2.861	0.092
	Within groups	70.969	258	0.275		
Social	Within groups	1.217	1	1.217	2.552	0.111
	Within groups	123.018	258	0.477		
Cultural	Within groups	1.115	1	1.115	0.998	0.319
	Within groups	288.381	258	1.118		

Table 17: Specialization report

Department	Mean	No.	Student deviation
Scientific	2.3871	127	.54751
Humanities	2.5990	133	.57444
Total	2.4955	260	.57032

Table 18: Gender effect as to study axes discrepancy significance

Axis	Discrepancy source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	Sig
Educational	Within groups	1	.192	0.192	0.590	0.443
	Within groups	258	84.052	0.326		
Attitude	Within groups	1	.329	0.329	1.189	0.277
	Within groups	258	71.427	0.277		
Social	Within groups	1	6.513	6.513	14.274	0.000
	Within groups	258	117.722	0.456		
Cultural	Within groups	1	18.095	18.095	17.201	0.000
	Within groups	258	271.401	1.052		

Table 19: Gender report

Gender		Social	Cultural
Male	Mean	2.9413	2.2315
	No.	149	149
	Student Deviation	.67621	1.06942
Female	Mean	3.2613	1.6982
	No.	111	111
	Student Deviation	.67453	.96361

Total	Mean	3.0779	2.0038
	No.	260	260
	Student Deviation	.69258	1.05723

6.6 Results

The characteristics of the sample are as follows:

- 51.2% of the students study humanities. Some 57.3% are male. Most of the study sample received a grading of B (Good) in English.
- About 70% of the students have both the ability and the willingness to enroll in English courses held at the university.
- Nearly 50% of the students stated that they faced difficulties in reading and sentence structuring.
- Approximately 60% of the students acknowledge the importance of English language and that it is a crucial element in social communication and scientific progress.
- About 50% of the students are willing to enhance their English as well as enrolling in courses for this purpose.
- Nearly 60% of the students do not believe that studying English poses a threat to Saudi heritage, culture, norms and traditions.
- Approximately 70% of the students maintain that English is essential for intercultural dialogue in the age of globalization.
- Although a large portion of the students realize the importance of English, their level and grades are low. This can be attributed mainly to elements of the educational system: instructors, syllabuses and examinations.
- The educational axis is weakly correlated with the social axis with a correlation coefficient of $r=0.275 < 6$. This may be due to the range of environments in which students were brought up.
- There is a weak positive correlation between the attitudinal and the social axes ($r=0.136 < 6$). Student attitudes most probably vary according to their social class.
- There is a weak inverse relation between the social and the cultural axes ($r=0.137 < 6$). Students have different socio-cultural levels which may explain this result.

- The absence of differences at the significance level of 0.05 in student views on the social, cultural and attitudinal axes cannot be attributed to their academic specialization. In other words, there are no major differences in student responses whether they study science or humanities. This is perhaps related to the fact that ESL courses offered students have similar scope and focus, although numbers of teaching hours may vary. However, the existence of differences at the significance level of 0.05 in student views on the educational axis can be attributed to their academic specialization, showing that student responses were affected by what they study. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that students are at differing academic levels.
- The absence of differences at the significance level of 0.05 in student views on the educational and attitude axes in relation to gender is mainly attributed to the fact that all participating students, male or female, are Saudi. The existence of differences at the significance level of 0.05 in student views on the socio-cultural axis can be attributed to gender and may relate to the different socio-cultural environments in which students have been raised.

7. Conclusion

This research has pinpointed a problem in learning English as a second language in Shaqra University. Part of this problem is attributed to the poor background of the students, part to the lack of labs and other appliances and part to the absence of skilled instructors. It is concluded that the awareness of the importance of the English language is augmenting gradually in the Saudi society. Unfortunately, this awareness is deaccelerated by some social, educational and cultural factors, most especially in regional universities like Shaqra. This research concludes that These obstacles, however, can be ironed out provided that the atmosphere under which they nourish is changed. The limitations that this research encountered are the deeply- rooted convictions related to the study of foreign languages. This image, however, is changing. Other limitations are doing research in a non- campus university covering a vast area of nine governorates and the non-co-educational system which de-facilitate the process of surveying opinions vis-à-vis. Alhmadi (2014) who conducted a research on the speaking skill at Tibah University concluded that the educational status in Saudi Arabia for teaching English could be

reformed. It is anticipated that other studies would tackle the same topic in other newly-established universities so that a comprehensive image is generated about the status of learning English as a second language.

8. Recommendations

- It is suggested that the study of EFL in KSA should be commenced earlier, at the start of primary school. In some neighbouring Gulf States, it already starts at the pre-school phase or at kindergarten.
- It is recommended that EFL exams are standardized for all schools within an educational authority at sixth grade; across each governorate within KSA at ninth grade and throughout the entire Kingdom at twelfth grade.
- It is advised that teachers should be enrolled in methodology courses and must take a TOEFL or ILET exam. These courses and achievements exams should be requirements for promotion and obtaining new posts.
- A language lab and language learning centre should be provided in all schools and used effectively to enhance linguistic skills.
- A social media campaign should be organized to highlight the importance of learning EFL to show that it does not conflict with KSA's Islamic values, and that it can make a significant contribution to a better future career.
- A national educational television channel could be a useful means of reinforcing the study of EFL.
- Shaqra University urgently needs to create a language learning centre like those found at King Saud University and King Abdul Aziz University. This centre should be furnished with language labs and should offer remedial support to weak students. It should also offer extramural courses. These would also minimize the period of language in the scholarship and fellowship and thus reduce the budget.
- Courses addressing target language culture(s) should also be provided in parallel with EFL. Teaching a language without considering the culture in which it is spoken can be difficult. Concepts which are judged to be unacceptable to KSA's Islamic values could be omitted.

- Admission tests should be given to students wishing to attend EFL programmes.
- It is time to consider the possibility of establishing "Experimental Schools" that combine the merits and advantages of both public and private schools.
- Attendance by students at summer courses in English-speaking countries such as USA, UK, NZ, etc. should be encouraged and organized by Shaqra University.

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