

Problems with Speaking Activities in the Saudi EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This study is aimed at analysing the effectiveness of speaking practice exercises, as it is one of the most crucial and learning-oriented aspects in the language education field. The English as a foreign language (EFL) Saudi sector was selected for this study, and all of the respondents were willing to provide their viewpoints in response to the questionnaires provided to them. The entire study was based on considering and acting upon the importance of speaking activities inside and outside the classroom. Results have shown that there are issues and needs associated with speaking activities: speaking tasks and speaking materials.

Keywords: Speaking activities, EFL classroom, EFL learning in Saudi Arabia speaking skills, language attitude

Introduction

The request for this study started with the following vital questions: What shape should my research take, and what area or areas of the theme should the study investigate? Simply put, the theme of choice, speaking, is an immensely complex and wide field to study. Indeed, as we observed, Saudi EFL learners and teachers appeared to experience all the problems that speech education experts have discovered and identified. Because those problems are all important and interrelated, it would be unrealistic to select one particular problem and investigate it in isolation from the others. To understand the nature and causes of the problems that Saudi EFL learners face, it is imperative that we first build a clear picture of the linguistic and cultural background of both the learners and the teachers, including their educational system and its supporting philosophy, the role language plays in their lives, and the teaching and learning environments. We also need to consider the teachers' skills, attitudes, and knowledge; the objectives of the syllabus, the textbooks and teaching materials in use; and the teaching methods and techniques. The list is undoubtedly long. The question becomes where to start. Given the restrictions placed on this research and the limitations of time and resources, we must decide which area of the problem should be studied and prioritized.

It is commonly believed that focusing on the teaching materials is most important, particularly regarding textbooks and texts in audio format. No other supplemental materials are used or usually seen in the language classroom. In fact, when examining the materials in question, many shortcomings were identified. The materials were not authentic, and did not focus on teaching the real-world language. The study found that some of the teaching materials might even de-motivate intrinsically motivated learners.

Because of the study, we now realize that there are problems in the teaching materials and teaching methods. With this new understanding, it was decided to investigate speaking activities in the Saudi language classroom. In doing this, researchers would be able to delve deeper into the attitudes and thinking of Saudi teachers and learners. This study would help develop a better understanding of the teaching environment. A plan was developed, and one of the first issues that the study had to address was that of research methods and techniques.

In the literature on social sciences, a distinction is often drawn between two major types of research, the quantitative and the qualitative. One of the main differences between the two types is that while the former tends to employ statistical data, grounds for statistical analysis in the latter are minimal. Furthermore, where quantitative methods are usually focused on collecting facts (Bell, 1999), qualitative methods are often described as "being more able to make sense of behavior and to understand (it) within its wider context" (De Vaus, 2002:5). Differences between the two approaches also exist in terms of sample size. The sample in quantitative research is usually large but is relatively small in qualitative research. Furthermore, different data collection techniques are often identified with the two approaches. On the one hand, questionnaires are frequently associated with quantitative research; on the other hand, the interview and observation techniques (among others) are usually employed to collect qualitative data. However, these differences do not necessarily suggest that the two approaches operate separately. Rather, it is often argued that more reliable outcomes can be gained when both methods are combined (Punch, 2004). Nevertheless, because this is a small-scale research project, this study has opted quantitative data, employing a short questionnaire as a means of collecting the necessary information.

Purpose of the Research

The present research aims to identify the speaking activities and tasks that dominate the Saudi EFL classroom. It also attempts to establish learners' proficiency levels and their attitude towards English and its speakers. In particular, learners in their final year of formal schooling are the targets of the study. These are 17- to 18-year-old females who have been learning English for the last six years of their lives. Only a few weeks after the present study had been conducted, those females left school to start a new life, most likely as employees, university students, or housewives. The choice of learners at such an advanced stage of formal learning is not without a reason. For, in the literature of language acquisition and L2 teaching, there appears to be a general agreement among researchers that (in normal conditions and situations) speaking skills develop slowly and emerge significantly later than listening skills (Krashen, 1981). This being so, and after six years of L2 instruction, the subjects of this study were expected to have developed an acceptable level of oral fluency. But is this really the case? The present study expects to provide the answer. Additionally, there is an explanation as to why male students have not been included in the study: in Saudi Arabia, coeducational policy is not observed. As such, it would be very difficult to conduct any valid and objective research on a group of male learners. Lack of mixed classrooms does not make this study possible for a female researcher. It is also extremely difficult to seek academic assistance from a male teacher in administering the study questionnaire because of cultural traditions.

Study Limitations

Research is often described as valid and reliable only when its findings can be generalized to a large population. However, for cultural reasons the findings of this survey cannot be generalized to include males of the same age and educational levels as those of the surveyed females. It may also be added that this is small-scale research, which means that the findings are probably too ambitious to be generalized to the entire population of upper-level, female, secondary students in Saudi Arabia.

Research Methodology

As stated above, this study is concerned with female Saudi EFL learners in their final year of formal schooling. Obviously, reaching out for every girl in all corners of the country is a difficult mission. As such, choosing a representative sample and a representative area becomes the only alternative.

The city of Al Medinah was chosen as the study's venue, and a list of secondary girls' schools was obtained. It was then decided that the questionnaire would be administered in three of the thirty girls' schools. Ministry of Education (ME) employers were contacted and were told of our intention to carry out the survey. In turn, the ME issued an authorization letter permitting the study; at the same time, they wrote to the head teachers of the three schools asking them to facilitate the mission and lend any support the survey needed. When we arrived for the field study during the early days of June 2013, we visited the schools and obtained a list of names of girls in Grade 3 of the secondary stage. In total, there were 432 young females divided almost equally between eleven sections or classes. Four students were selected randomly from each class to bring the total number of candidates to forty-four. Individuals in the population were selected using a table of random number. The selected study sample represented the population

though it was small. This small size was because of the constraints of the Saudi situation since government approval is required for any study.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of seventeen statements. The opening statement aimed at establishing whether or not students found classroom speaking activities interesting. Our expectation was that responses to this statement would enable us to build a clear picture of the learners' levels of motivation. Statements 2, 3, 4, and 5 were concerned with the nature of those activities. Our knowledge relating to the form and shape speaking tasks take enabled us to establish the type and level of interaction in the language classroom. Among other things, it would also provide an idea about the teaching methods and the kind of atmosphere that dominates the class. In statement 6, students were asked to answer the question whether or not they understood the tape-recorded material they were expected to take as models of speech. Teachers' attitudes towards the learners' mistakes was the subject of Statement 7. Statement 8 was concerned with assessing speaking skill, and Statement 9 was aimed at establishing whether or not students' speaking skills were assessed.

Statements 10, 11, 12, and 13 dealt with learners' attitudes and motivation to speak, as well as their feelings, aspirations and concerns. Statements 14, 15, 16, and 17 were intended to obtain information related to two key points: the level of importance learners attach to speaking English, and their attitudes towards English and its speakers. The questionnaire ends with two open questions. One is: When and why do you speak English in the classroom? And the other is: What topics would you like to talk about in the English language classroom?

In formulating the questionnaire, we were guided by insights gained from writings by prominent theorists in the field of language learning and acquisition and learners' motivation and attitude towards speaking English.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the field study, all participants were met with in person, where we explained the aim and importance of the study, presented each with a copy of the questionnaire, and assured them of anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix B). Participants were also given a telephone contact number in case they had any queries. They were asked to complete the questionnaires and return them in person within two days. Forty-three of the distributed questionnaires were completed and returned within the specified time limit. Upon initial inspection, we found that three of the returned questionnaires were invalid and, as such, were excluded from analysis. This brings the number of valid responses to forty (just over 90% of distributed questionnaires, which is considered an adequate response rate). Returned and valid questionnaires were then coded and entered into the computer for analysis using SPSS. To facilitate the discussion, descriptive statistics (particularly frequencies and percentages) were employed.

Study Findings

a) Speaking Activities

As seen from their responses to Statement 1, only nine respondents (22.5% of the study sample) were of the opinion that speaking activities were 'always' or 'often' interesting, and an equal number of participants stated that those activities were 'somewhat' appealing. Opinions of the remaining twenty respondents were divided equally between those who thought that speaking

activities were 'very rarely' interesting and those who found them 'totally boring'. To say the least, interest in learning activities generates a positive attitude, breeding enjoyment and satisfaction; it enhances one's morale and motivation, and it encourages individuals to apply more effort to the learning process (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Deci and Ryan, 1985). By contrast, a lack of interest can discourage learners from participating in the learning task, potentially resulting in boredom, stress and anxiety (Cazden, 1988; Bandura, 1997). If we agree with these views, we come to realize that the first finding of the present survey is already disturbing. Simply put, the majority of those surveyed showed very little interest or no interest at all in their language classroom speaking activities. More than that, as we shall see in the discussion below, some of those who took part in speaking activities were not actually driven by a genuine interest. As a matter of fact, there is doubt as to whether any real speaking activities take place in the Saudi language classroom. More about this point will be addressed in the course of the discussion. Meanwhile, let us see what the respondents talk about, when and how.

When participants were asked whether they practiced speaking in pairs, the majority answered in the affirmative. However, almost every other respondent (19 in number and 47.5% of the entire sample) reported that they 'sometimes' engage in pair-work; seven (17.5% of the sample) gave 'often' as an answer; and eight (20% of the sample) mentioned that the activity 'very rarely' takes place. However, for those who are not familiar with the Saudi teaching culture, these results may be somewhat confusing.

By 'pair-work', one might think that respondents mean a conversation between two individuals or a dialogue of some sort. Far from it, the term only means that two students are asked to enact a written dialogue or, in other words, read it aloud. Here, the reader may find it easy to make a counter-claim. For instance, he/she might ask this logical question: Is it not possible that the pair-speaking activity is an extension of the written dialogue or otherwise related to it, and not necessarily just reading it aloud? Indeed, had the answer to this question been a 'Yes', this study's researchers would have agreed that meaningful speaking activities take place in the Saudi EFL classroom. However, the answer is an emphatic 'No'. The responses to Statement 5 reveal that almost all respondents agreed that all speaking activities must conform to the contents of the written text. In other words, the pair-speaking activity only means that two students play roles as they read aloud or re-produce the text (dialogue) verbatim. Shifting back to Statement 2, we discover yet another surprise: 15% of the study sample (6 students) stated that they never perform pair-work activities. In other words, for some teachers, role-play and pair-work speaking activities are not known or are ignored.

If written dialogues are enacted (read aloud) by pairs of students as stated above, then it stands to reason students may also work in groups of three or more (depending on the number of individuals taking part in the written conversation or discussion). However, participants in this study indicated that this is not the case at all. As we see in their responses to Statement 3, almost all (39 in number, representing 97.5% of the sample) agreed that they 'never' practice speaking in groups. Closer examination of the written texts reveals that (scripted) exchanges in dialogues, discussions, or debates takes place only between two individuals. Given this, we must assume the respondent who replied that she 'very rarely' practices group speaking activities was referring to choral practice. We will now explain why.

To obtain more information on learners' attitudes and the nature of speaking activities in the classroom, respondents were asked to answer this question: When and why do you speak English

in the classroom? (See item number 18, Appendix B). Following is an inventory of their answers. Figures between brackets indicate the number of respondents who made the comment:

- I speak English when I answer the teacher's questions (40).
- I speak English when my teacher asks me to read (40).
- I speak English when I am asked to imitate the teacher or a classmate (37).
- I speak English to prove that I know the answer (14).
- I speak English to practice/learn the language (12).
- I speak English to please my teacher (9).
- I speak English because it is a good/beautiful language (5).
- I do not know why I speak English (4).

Respondents made other interesting comments as well. For example, three noted that their purpose for learning spoken English was to persuade their (Internet) friends to convert to Islam. Another two stated that promoting Saudi culture was the objective. One indicated that she wanted to practice English so that she could teach her grandmother the language. Nonetheless, respondents' comments were quite revealing, and they led us to at least two important and indisputable conclusions. One is that learning in the Saudi English language classroom is teacher-centered; it promotes rote learning and rehearsal. It does not allow for creativity, problem-solving or independent thinking. The other conclusion is that, contrary to the claim made by Saudi textbook writers and syllabus designers, speaking activities are far from being communicative or interactive. In fact, it would be unrealistic to describe rehearsal, imitation and reading aloud from the text as speaking activities. Rather, in agreement with Abbott (1981), such activities should be viewed as "speech training" and not real communication. Even when we do view them as a speech training exercise, that classification is problematic. As rightly noted by Al Mutawa and Kailani (1989), for Arab teachers and learners good speech means pronouncing every single letter and stressing every single word. To this, the study adds that skilled speakers usually talk (often from the text) very slowly and loudly.

b) Speaking Materials

It is rational to suggest that learners are expected to take their teacher's English and tape-recorded materials (which are an essential part of the syllabus) as a good example of speaking models. This begins with the teacher, whose role is to teach grammar and vocabulary, ask text-based questions, correct mistakes, and encourage recital and memorization. In terms of teaching conversational English, this teacher's skills do not give her much to offer. Shifting our attention back to tape-recorded materials and the issue of whether or not they were comprehensible (Statement 8), only two respondents (5% of the sample) reported that the recordings were 'always' comprehensible, and another six (15% of the sample) thought they 'often' understood the taped language. On the other hand, fifteen reported that they were 'sometimes' able to understand the recorded texts, and eleven (37.5% of the sample) indicated that understanding was a rarity. For the remaining 6 respondents (15% of the sample), tape-recorded materials were completely incomprehensible. Here, it is worth mentioning that the materials in question are the recordings of the written texts learners are working from in the classroom. In a sense, this gives learners the false impression that the spoken language is a written text read aloud. Here, the influence of Classical Arabic is probably clear; in most formal situations, speaking becomes reading a written text aloud.

Regarding the (speaking) teaching materials in the Saudi language classroom, we notice that these are not authentic and that they have been designed to teach grammar and pronunciation (even at an advanced stage of learning). On the question of grammar, many theorists now agree that language acquisition does not require tedious drills or the extensive use of conscious grammatical rules (Krashen, 1981). It has also been argued that knowledge of grammar is pointless unless it is accompanied by an understanding of culturally specific meanings (Breen, 1985; Byran and Morgan, 1994). Researchers have also noted that non-authentic materials fail to engage learners in real learning. Furthermore, the teaching materials that had been designed for our respondents were far from being enjoyable or interesting, failing to motivate learners (Peacock, 1997). In this connection, because Saudi society is extremely patriarchal, it is understandable that teaching materials would be biased towards males. For instance, in pre-recorded dialogues, the recorded speakers are male; in written dialogue, the exchanges take place between two males. It is also likely texts focus around largely male issues and interests such as football and adventure. It is unrealistic to expect those teaching materials and activities to arouse female learner's curiosity and interest. In fact, when our respondents were asked to state the topics they would be willing to talk about in the language classroom (item 19), their answers were as follows: family matters (38 responses); shopping (31); clothes, jewelry and shoes (30); food and cooking (27); films and actors (26); people and social problems (18); and other countries and cultures (14).

c) Attitude towards Mistakes

As seen in their responses to Statement 7, all participants reported that their teachers stopped and corrected them every time they made a mistake. This result is not surprising; as stated earlier in Saudi culture, mistakes are not tolerated and are considered a serious problem and a source of shame. This, in no doubt, explains why the majority of respondents stated that they would speak only if the teacher asked them to do so (item 18). Indeed, as speakers of L2, we all know very well that language learners make many mistakes; however, mistakes are a sign that one is learning (Chomsky, 1959; Selinker, 1972). We also know that error correction has little effect on language acquisition (Krashen, 1981). That said, this study does not suggest mistakes should be ignored; if learners received no correction at all, then they likely would not know they had made mistakes. On the contrary, my argument is that hypercorrection and negative attitudes towards mistakes can generate stress and leave learners with the impression that they are being branded as low achievers, potentially resulting in lowered self-esteem and confidence (Bandura, 1997; Ausubel, 1963), which could discourage them from participating in learning activities (Cazden, 1988). It is more important for teachers to be patient and tolerant while, at the same time, encouraging learners to learn from their mistakes.

d) Assessing Speaking Skills

Thirty-seven respondents (92.5%) stated that their speaking skills were never assessed, and only three indicated that assessment took place, though very rarely. This result raises an important question: when learners know that their efforts will not be rewarded, why do they make the effort to learn? This is precisely what the majority of respondents told us in their responses to Item 18. It is true that some respondents reported that they answered teachers' questions or read the text because they liked the language or wanted to learn it. However, given the discussion above, many learners are not actually engaged in real speaking, nor have they been introduced to it.

e) Place of Arabic

Occasional use of the native tongue in the EFL classroom is inevitable. Some would even argue "there is very seldom any harm in giving a meaning by translation" (Abbott, 1981:229). However, it does appear that in the Saudi EFL classroom Arabic has become the medium of instruction. In their responses to Statement 9, a total number of 32 respondents (80% of the sample) noted that they and their teachers use Arabic most of the time. This practice has far-reaching consequences. First, it means that learners are not given enough time to practice the target language. Second, it does not encourage learners to develop the skill of guessing or inferring the real meaning as they listen or read. On the contrary, it may only encourage them to become over-dependent on Arabic. On the question of translation and meaning in particular, it is worth making an important point.

In English, certain groups of words--synonyms--may share a general sense and can be used interchangeably in a limited number of contexts. However, linguists agree that the conceptual differences between those words make it more realistic to talk about "partial" and not "complete" synonymy, e.g. the words 'begin,' 'start,' and 'commence' are not entirely the same (Garins and Redman, 1986). However, the Arabic language poses a completely different situation: complete synonymy exists and synonymous words are abundant (Kharma, 1978). Furthermore, Arabic is marked by globality. For example, the synonyms 'hithaa' and 'niaal' may be used to refer to all types of footwear. In English, this is not the case. In other words, many English words do not have an equivalent in Arabic and when translated, they do not convey the real meaning at all. The point here is that with straight translation from English into Arabic, teachers are not doing their learners a favor.

Table 1. Speaking materials and activities. F = Frequency, P = Percentage.

Statement		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
1. English speaking activities in the classroom are interesting.	F	6	7	9	10	8	40
	P	15%	17.5%	22.5%	25%	20%	100%
2. In the classroom, we practice speaking in pairs.	F	2	9	20	6	3	40
	P	5%	22.5%	50%	15%	7.5%	100%
3. In the classroom, we practice speaking in groups.	F	0	1	2	4	33	40
	P	0.0 %	2.5%	5%	10%	82.5%	100%
4. In the classroom, I practice speaking with my teacher.	F	20	14	6	0	0	40
	P	50%	35%	15%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%
5. In the classroom, speaking activities must conform to the content of the written text.	F	29	8	3	0	0	40
	P	72.5%	20%	7.5%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%

6. Recorded texts are comprehensible.	F	2	6	13	15	4	40
	P	5%	15%	32.5%	37.5%	10%	100%
7. When I speak and make a mistake the teacher corrects me.	F	38	2	0	0	0	40
	P	95%	5%	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%
8. Examinations include a test for my speaking skill.	F	0	0	3	5	32	40
	P	0.0 %	0.0 %	7.5%	12.5%	80%	100%
9. The teacher/ students use Arabic in the classroom.	F	12	20	8	0	0	40
	P	30%	50%	20%	0.0 %	0.0 %	100%

So far in the discussion, we have seen that learners rarely practice their English in the classroom. When they do, it is only to read a text or answer the teacher's questions, but otherwise do not engage in the activity because of any satisfaction that has been derived from learning and exploring, or because they find the activity interesting or enjoyable. The vast majority of our learners do not appear to be intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 1985). If this is in fact the case, it is not surprising that learners fail to achieve the minimal level of oral proficiency. In support of this claim, evidence comes from the learners themselves. For example, 73% of our sample (a total number of 29 respondents) admitted they found it difficult to express themselves in English. Furthermore, 15% (6 students) did not know whether or not they could express themselves in English, which is a clear indication that this latter group of learners has been ignored and marginalized to the extent that they were not given a chance to put their knowledge to the test (Statement 10). In the absence of intrinsic motivation, and in the presence of low self-esteem, such learners are left only with the hope of external help. This is precisely what 65% of those surveyed (26 respondents) told us (Statement 12). As regards the seven respondents who said they did not know whether or not they needed help and encouragement to improve their spoken English (17.5% of the sample), it is likely they have either given up or lost hope for help altogether. Unfortunately, it is unlikely teachers will be ready or able to provide help at all. Even worse, because speaking skills are not consistently assessed, there is no way we can reasonably expect learners to engage in the process of leaning (speaking) to obtain good grades. Also disturbing is the fact that learners do not receive support or encouragement from their teachers, but they also appear to have lost faith in their abilities. As many as 31 respondents (77.5% of the sample) reported that they feel embarrassment when they are asked to speak English (Statement 11); when we asked respondents whether they thought they would become fluent English speakers in the future (Statement 13), only nine gave a positive answer, which indicates they are highly motivated to learn. On the other hand, sixteen respondents (40% of the sample) appeared to be convinced that they would always be non-achievers and/or that English is not for them. It is also possible these students are satisfied with the little English they do know. As regards the remaining fifteen participants who gave the "Do not know" answer, it is possible that they have no clear plan for the future; unfortunately, it is likely that some of them will eventually join the ranks of those who have lost hope.

Table 2. Perceived competence and self-efficacy

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Do not Know	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
10. I find it difficult to express myself in English.	F	2	3	6	19	10	40
	P	5%	7.5%	15%	47.5%	25%	100%
11. I feel embarrassed when asked to speak English in the classroom.	F	4	5	0	20	11	40
	P	10%	12.5%	0.0 %	50%	27.5%	100%
12. I feel I need help and encouragement to improve my spoken English.	F	3	4	7	12	14	40
	P	7.5%	10%	17.5 %	30%	35%	100%
13. I am confident I will be a fluent speaker of English.	F	7	9	15	5	4	40
	P	17.5%	22.5%	37.5%	12.5%	10%	100%

The last four statements are designed to establish the level of importance learners have attached to English and to measure their attitudes towards English and its speakers. As regards the first point, a total number of 25 respondents (60% of the sample) indicated that English plays or will play a role in their lives (Statement 14). These students are motivated learners who have a reason or need to learn. On the other hand, 14 respondents (almost one third of the sample) indicated that learning the language was a waste of time. Given that these individuals likely lack intrinsic motivation and purpose for learning, it is probable that they will remain de-motivated, and their presence in the classroom is but a formality. A similar number of respondents (15 individuals or 37.5% of the sample) reported an overtly negative attitude towards English (Statement 14). Obviously, this group of respondents should include many, if not all, of those who thought that it was not important for them to speak English. However, we do not expect that segment of respondents to be motivated or seek enjoyment in speaking the language. On the other hand, 57% of the sample (23 respondents) has a positive attitude towards English; we expect these students to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. Nevertheless, when the question of attitude towards English speakers was raised, we noticed a sharp increase in the number of those who provided a negative answer. In comparison to the 37.5% of respondents who reported a negative attitude towards the English language, 50% of respondents did not view speakers of the language favorably (Statement 16). Conversely, whereas 57.5% of the sample said they had a positive attitude towards the language, that rate drops down to 45% when it comes to attitudes towards its speakers. However, we still expect this latter group of respondents to be highly motivated and find it likely that many of them are currently seeking or will be seeking opportunities to improve their linguistic knowledge.

Table 3. Attitude towards English and speakers of English

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Do not	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
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				Know			
14. I think it is important that I speak English.	F	4	10	1	14	11	40
	P	10%	22.5%	2.5%	35%	27.5%	100%
15. I have a positive attitude towards English.	F	7	8	2	12	11	40
	P	17.5%	20%	5%	30%	27.5%	100%
16. I have a positive attitude towards speakers of English.	F	8	12	2	11	7	40
	P	20%	30%	5%	27.5%	17.5%	100%

Conclusion

Over the last twenty years, in order to address these concerns new language courses were continually introduced into Saudi classrooms with the claim that the latest program was more communicative and more effective than the former. Yet the results have remained almost the same. Where have we failed? During the past year, the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) course enabled educators to develop a better understanding of teaching situations, to identify the sources and causes of problems, and to draw an action plan for the future. The existing Saudi teaching culture can be blamed for problems with second-language acquisition (L2 acquisition) in the government schools.

Throughout this research, this study focused on only a portion of the problems related to speech, but there is more work to be done. Apart from reading the written text aloud and answering the teacher's questions, learners have not been given enough opportunity to practice the language. Such developments cover a wide range of issues, including the nature of the language, language behavior, L2 acquisition research, language models, the teaching methods and techniques, and assessments. Of particular interest is the area of reading; for example, for Arabic speakers, reading English is a long and painful process performed with little understanding. We will be researching this area in the near future.

About the Author

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