



Socio-Cultural Constraints in Learning English Language at Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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To cite this article:

Farhad Ullah. Socio-Cultural Constraints in Learning English Language at Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2017, pp. 29-33. doi: 10.11648/j.ijll.20170502.11

Received: April 28, 2016; **Accepted:** July 16, 2016; **Published:** March 15, 2017

Abstract: Language is a reflection of culture, and the role of culture in learning a language can't be ruled out. We usually communicate, what culture offers us. Every speech community has a scope for languages other than their native language, but it varies from culture to culture or language to language. Some languages can easily accommodate while other languages while some fail to do so due to their concord or discord at different linguistic levels, and socio-cultural acceptance. This research focuses on the socio cultural aspects of Jazan as a hindrance to learning the English language for the students of Jazan University.

Keywords: Speech Community, Concord, Discord, Culture, Social Group, Motivation, Language Practice, Ethnographic Sense

1. Introduction

"Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society [12]."

"Integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations [6]."

English language teaching and learning is a bi-lateral activity (with the medium of English textbooks) between teachers and students. It facilitates their acquisition of the English language, improves their capabilities, develop their character and forges a positive learning attitude.

For ideal learning outcomes, only textbooks are not sufficient, but teaching methods need to be complied with the students. We should probe into their cultural conflicts, psychological traits, ethnic thinking modes, cognitive modes and their learning motivation. The prime problem is how to acquire English knowledge, skills and capabilities and find out the rules, in the current stage where students have adapted themselves to the university learning environment.

The socio-cultural obstacles like, social needs, influence of family factors, incompetence of English language structure, lack of interest in English language classes, the Arabic language as a means of instruction and effects of learners' native language (Arabic), are discussed as a hindrance to learning the English language at Jazan University. This paper also discuss 'Language Contact situation' as one of the main issues of Jazan culture which could be an obstacle for learning English language.

Statement of the research problem

The present study focuses on the effects of the Jazan culture (both negative and positive) on learning English as a second Language. The researcher looks at how culture (which includes Language, habits, lifestyle, way of communication) becomes an obstacle for Jazan university students in learning English language. Furthermore, it highlights valuable information about the use of the English language and learning strategies, which could enhance the English language learning process. A student receives his first education at his own family, therefore, the factors, such as living environment and parents' expectations of their children, will lay positive, negative and various limitations on students' learning. The study highlights the ways in which

students feel comfortable in communicating and the study also suggests some strategies which can speed up the process of learning the English Language. Like watching English movies, reading English articles, books and news papers. This research focuses on the socio-cultural barriers in learning the English Language at Jazan University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature Review

Jazan has a rich culture and the people over here, feel easy to communicate in Arabic language. They are not exposed to the English language and exposure to Target Language is a key to success in learning that language. The direct effect of certain learning strategies inside and outside the classroom could play a significant role, not only in developing the language skills but also in working as a social reason.

Many researchers have worked on socio-cultural effects of the second language learners. Soliman has done research on the effects of Saudi culture on learning English language. His study aims at investigating the cultural factors which influence Saudi students towards learning English in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of Saudi teachers and students. The research attempts to examine these factors from Islamic social perspectives by raising questions that examine how positive these factors are and how they encourage and motivate students to learn the English language.

Saudi Arabia has not been affected by any other culture, e.g. European one as it did not come under the rule of colonization. Teaching of English was not welcomed by Saudi society and the public refused it. "There are strong influences of culture on learning English since Saudi culture has not been affected by foreign cultures. There are several factors that affect learning English in Saudi Arabia. One of these factors is culture [9]."

Saudi students of English language prefer to learn English from English native speakers. A research conducted by Alseweed came to the conclusion that Saudi learners of English language consider native speaker teachers more secure, efficient and visible in their job [1].

Research has been done by Aldosari on the empirical study into teachers' and students' perceptions and practices of culture teaching and learning in a Saudi university from an intercultural perspective. Different perspectives of culture, from different fields like anthropology, psychology, and intercultural communication were analyzed, and from the cultural learning perspective three approaches were advised based on an exhaustive review of pertinent literature [10]. This study focused on the statement that cultural learning is a developmental process that requires the development of both cultures-specific knowledge and culture-general skills.

Abdul Aziz Fageeh in his paper discussed that cultural awareness is a significant step towards learning a language. He summarized that the concepts of culture in English language teaching (ELT), acculturation, cultural competence and cultural awareness are the basic steps for bringing effective communication. He further highlights the

differences in Arab and English cultures and the need for cultural awareness. He also suggested how to teach the students cross-culture awareness in EFL teaching and the implementation of this in the practical teaching programs [5].

3. Culture and Learning English Language

Any education process is a set of social and cultural norms among teachers and students of a particular region. As Tudor indicates, "A classroom is a socially defined reality and is therefore influenced by the belief system and behavioural norms of the society of which it is a part [11]." The distinctive complexities of a classroom are caused by these socio-cultural norms and principles, which make the classroom more diverse.

Language is a symbol of a culture as it is just like its function. Elyas and Picard say, "Teaching and learning language is morally and ethically influenced by the culture of a society, so like other languages, English should not be taught separately from its culture [4]."

Saudi culture has not been influenced by English culture, as it has not been part of any English colony, so learning English language here is a challenging job. Richards and Lockhard said, "There are often cultural differences between the belief systems of learners from different cultural backgrounds [8]." The social context of any second language learning affects the beliefs and attitude of a learner regarding the language and also affects the motivation of a learner for learning a language.

4. Research Methodology

In this study, Qualitative research method was applied. It is primarily an exploratory research. The method employed, was to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provided insights into the problem to develop ideas for potential quantitative research. The Research unravelled the trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Some common methods included focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. In this study, the main data-gathering tool used, was a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions and distributed among the students of Jazan University. The questions were both in English and Arabic. The number of participants was one hundred. All the participants were Saudi students from Jazan University.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Do You Think Jazan University Student Have Motivation for Learning English Language

Eighty percent of the participants agreed to the point that yes, they have motivation for learning English Language. The reasons they gave are, some of them want to go to

English countries for higher studies. Some of the motivation factors they gave are, as English is an international Language and they for global communication they want to learn English language. The other reason they gave for the motivation of learning English Language was that they want to get an education and most of the course is in English Language because of which they are eager to learn it. One of the reasons they gave is for business purposes.

Some of the participants said that studying abroad is one of the motivating factors for learning the English Language.

Twenty percent of the participant's responded with no that Jazan University students don't have motivation for learning English language. The reasons they gave was that it is a very difficult language. They said that they are unable to talk in English Language that's why they prefer to talk in Arabic language.

5.2. Do You Practice English Language at Your Home

Seventy percent of the students responded that they don't practice English language at their homes. They said that they don't have this habit of speaking the English language at homes. Some said that it is easy for us to communicate in Arabic Language rather than in English.

Ten percent of the respondents said that sometimes they use English Language at their homes. Most of them were students whose parents are working in different institutions, like schools or universities. Twenty percent of the responded don't use the English language at their homes.

It is one the obstacles in learning English language that they don't practice English language at their homes. Home is a place where they spend most of their time. For a second language learning, it is very important to practice. The more one practices, the more he/she will learn.

5.3. Do You Speak English at Shopping Malls

Twenty three percent of the respondents were on the point of view that they use English Language at shopping malls. They said when asked through an interview, "When do you use English at shopping malls?" The students said, "As at shopping malls we have to communicate with the foreigners so that's why we get some chance to use the English language."

Eight percent of the responded said that we sometimes use English language at shopping malls.

Sixty nine percent said that they don't communicate in English language at shopping malls. They gave some reasons for this that as sometimes it is very difficult for us to say the things in English while shopping that's why they can't communicate in English language.

5.4. Do You Feel Comfortable While Communicating in English Language

Seventy percent of the respondents think that they feel comfortable while communicating in the English language. They said as a university students, we have the capability of expressing ourselves in English language. They added when asked for the reasons, "as most of our teachers are foreigners

and we are communicating with them in English language, that's why it enhances our motivation for communicating in English language."

Thirty percent of the respondents replied as they don't feel comfortable while communicating in the English language. The reason they gave was that they can't fully express themselves in English language and are afraid of talking in English language.

5.5. Do You Think Learning English Language Needs Westernization in Jazan

Forty nine percent of the respondents are of the view that yes learning English language requires westernization in Jazanian society. Five of them were asked in the form of interview to what extent can learning English language westernize Jazanian society? They answered that Language is the important part of a culture and to learn a second language one needs to be the part of that language. When one wants to know about a culture he/she should learn the language of that culture.

The structure of any language that one uses affects the way one behaves and thinks. It gives two important aspects one is the code that reflects the cultural concerns and constraints the people think. The learners are encouraged to watch English movies in order to improve their language skills. Watching English movies aims westernization [7]. D'Ydewalle and Van de Poel suggested that learners acquire more vocabulary while watching English movies. They worked on the effects of watching English movies in order to improve English language. Further, he said, "More new words are acquired when are presented visually than auditory [3]." Moreover, they conclude that older children and adults preferred the original foreign movie with subtitles in the native language.

Adelaide Cunningham thinks, "If a person reads a book and then goes to see the picture of that book, he will understand the book better [2]." So it is concluded that by watching English movies and reading original English books can give an exposure of the English language to the learners.

5.6. Does English Language Cause Changes in the Behaviour and Beliefs at Jazan

In this question forty three percent of the responded said that yes learning and speaking English language at the Jazan causes changes in the behaviour and beliefs. When they were asked through interview how do you think English language causes changes in the behaviour and beliefs? They answered that if we want to communicate with other nation's people, then change will occur. They said while communicating and going to a different culture environment the change in behaviour will be the cause.

Seven percent of the students were on the point of view that they can't say anything regarding this point. Fifty percent of them responded that learning English language does not cause any change in the behaviour and belief at Jazan University.

According to Richard and Turner, "Much of what we know and how we relate is a result of a Western model of

thinking—that is, many of us interpret events and behaviours through a European (American) lens [13]." The learners think that when you're mixing with English society must require changes in the behaviour and belief.

One of the participants says that

When you are learning English language, you have to compare yourself with them.

And according to his point of view this comparing contributes to the change in the behaviour and belief of a learner. According to my point of view, this change can't happen if a learner is proud of his own culture and traditions.

In Saudi Arabia and especially at Jazan it is not possible that learning English language can cause any change in the behaviour and beliefs of the youngsters. As they are strong followers of the religion and the customs and traditions of their own, it will have a very slight effect for the learners of English language at Jazan University. The other participants said that when a learner goes to the Western native country, then it may affect the behaviour of that learner, and I agree with this point of view as visiting other country may cause some changes in the behaviour, one has to adopt himself into the culture of that country.

5.7. Do You Think Visiting Native Countries Contribute to Learning English Language

Ninety five percent of the participants said that visiting native countries contribute a lot to learn English language. They responded that it plays an important role to visit native countries and to practice English language they're in the learning process. When they were asked through interviews "why do you think so?" They answered that visiting those countries can give you an opportunity to practice all the skills of the English language.

Five percent of the participants said that visiting native countries is not compulsory for learning English language. They said that if we start practicing the target language here in our own country then it will be very easy for us to learn this language.

5.8. Do You Think Social Networks Like Face Book and Twitter Help in Learning English Language

Today is the world of science and technology and technology has brought a revolution in the lives of people. Social networks are easily accessible sites which a person can access from anywhere having internet facility. Eighty

four percent of the participants responded to this question with yes and said that these sites contribute a lot to the learning of the English language. They said that through these sites we are communicating internationally, with the people from other countries, that's why we are using the English language.

Sixteen percent of the respondents replied with no that social networks like Facebook and Twitter don't contribute in learning English language.

The Majority of the participants agreed to the point that social networks help in learning English language. So Social networks like Facebook and Twitter help in learning English language up to a great extent.

5.9. Do You Enjoy Learning English Language

Seventy five percent of the participants replied that they enjoy English language class. Five percent said that they sometimes enjoy the class while twenty percent of the respondents answered that they don't enjoy the English language class.

6. Conclusion

The result indicates that most of the learners of English language at Jazan University are facing some socio-cultural limitations. The factors are, fear of practicing English language, speaking English is not the part of the culture at Jazan, westernization, and going abroad are the most prominent factors that are hindrances in Learning English language at Jazan University.

These are the hurdles faced by the students at Jazan University. These hurdles can be eradicated by proper planning like to show the importance of learning English language to the students, to give extra focus on the practice of English everywhere, and to give extra classes for watching movies, competition for writing and speaking skills.

Appendix

Questionnaire on Socio-Cultural Constraints in Learning English Language at Jazan University

The aim of this survey is to look at cultural and social differences at Jazan which may influence the way you learn English language.

Table A1. Questionnaire.

Personal details	التفاصيل الشخصية
Gender	النوع (ذكر-انثى)
Age	العمر
Number of Years learning English	عدد سنين تعلم الانجليزية
Educational Qualifications	المؤهلات العلمية
Reasons for Learning English	اسباب تعلم الانجليزية

Table A2. Questionnaire.

Q1: Do you think Jazan University students have motivation for learning English Language?	س1: هل تعتقد ان لدى طلاب جامعة جازان دافع لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟
Q2: Do you practice English at your home?	س2: هل تمارس الانجليزية في البيت؟
Q3: Do you speak English at shopping malls?	س3: هل تتكلم الانجليزية في مراكز او مجمعات التسوق؟
Q4: Do you feel comfortable to communicate in English Language?	س4: هل تشعر بالراحه عندما تتواصل باللغة الانجليزية؟
Q5: Do you think learning English needs westernization in Jazan?	س5: هل تعتقد ان تعلم الانجليزية يحتاج تغريب في جيزان؟
Q6: Does English Language cause change in the behaviour and belief at Jazan?	س6: هل اللغة الانجليزية تسبب تغيير في السلوك و المعتقد في جيزان؟
Q7: Do you think visiting native countries contribute to learning English language?	س7: هل تعتقد ان زيارة البلدان الناطقه بالانجليزية (الام) تساهم في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟
Q8: Does social networks like facebook and twitter help in learning English language?	س8: هل شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي مثل الفيس بوك و تويتر تساعد في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟
Q9: Do you enjoy learning in English language class?	س9: هل تستمتع التعلم في محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية؟
Q10: Do you think English course books that describe life and situation from an English western point of view effects your life?	س10: هل تعتقد ان مقررات الانجليزية التي تصف الحياه والحاله من وجهة نظر الغرب الانجليزي تثر في حياتك؟

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