

## ACCULTURATION APPROACH IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

**Badr Allehyani**

*The University of Northampton, UK*

**Dr. Dave Burnapp**

*The University of Northampton, UK*

**Professor Janet Wilson**

*The University of Northampton, UK*

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article aims to understand the importance for Saudi students of learning about English/American culture in developing learners' communicative competence. To this end it intends to explore the attitudes of students and parents of students to incorporating English/American culture into the EFL classroom. A quantitative approach was used for the data collection, consisting of a structured-questionnaire presented to 200 student and parent participants. The results of this study show that most students who were surveyed have a strong motivation to learn the English language in order to gain access to the culture of English-speaking countries such as the UK and the USA. Hence, they want to focus on communicative competence rather than linguistic competence in learning English. The majority of student participants who want to learn about the target culture prefer learning this at intermediate school. Also, the results show that some parents treat learning the target culture with suspicion, because of the fear of losing Saudi identity by studying authentic materials. But despite this most parent respondents have positive attitudes to learning English/American culture in the EFL classroom. The originality of this article is including parents in the belief that their participations cannot be ignored because of their influence on their children's views. This study concludes with some useful references to ways of learning English/American culture in the EFL classroom.*

**KEYWORDS:** *acculturation, enculturation, authentic materials, textbooks, Makkah.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The number of Saudi students who study abroad at universities in English-speaking countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia has increased considerably in the last few years. Nafee (2014), for example, reports that the numbers who enrolled to study in the USA increased from 10,000 to 111,000 between 2007 and 2014. Those students who study abroad encounter academic and social challenges such as culture shock and stress. Among the various reasons (such as homesickness and distance from family and friends) is the fact of being unfamiliar with the culture of these Anglophone societies in Saudi Arabia. Brown (1986) mentions that culture shock stems from lack of understanding aspects of social life in other societies. Alyami (2015:12), for example, states that

International students arriving in the UK thus may be in dire need of social support due to the changing environment and the unfamiliar atmosphere, which is not at all similar to their original cultural environment, so that they can adapt to this new society.

In other words, learning English language outside its social context of use does not develop learners' communicative competence. So that Saudi learners may encounter difficulties to communicate in ways that are comprehensible. Dongfeng (2012: 73) mentions that "Language and culture are closely related and can never be separated. Most features of culture are conveyed by language".

### **Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence is a concept coined by Hymes in 1972, and its key focus is on the ability to use the target language within a social context. Communicative competence was introduced in response to the concept of linguistic competence. EFL teachers influenced by Chomsky (1964) had assumed that developing linguistic competence (grammar) would help language users to convey meaning. However, Hymes thought that linguistic competence is necessary but not sufficient for using a language, and that linguistic competence should therefore be identified as a part of communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980: 27) develop this further in stating that "Communicative competence is composed minimally of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and communication strategies, or what we will refer to as strategic competence". Those competences, they argue, should be integrated without excessive emphasis on any one competence. Communicative competence develops learners' second language acquisition and uses (ibid). Along the same lines, Thornbury (2005) states that a language is recognised as a whole text rather than a number of isolated structures. In keeping with these views, Allehyani, Burnapp and Wilson (2017) believe that authentic materials that reflect social life in native English-speaking countries help develop learners' communicative competence.

### **Enculturation vs Acculturation**

This article will consistently use the term "enculturation" to refer to learning the local culture (i.e. the culture of Saudi Arabia) and will use "acculturation" to refer to learning English/American culture. Chastain (1988) distinguishes between enculturation and acculturation; enculturation is learning the native culture, whereas acculturation, by contrast, is learning the second culture.

Acculturation is defined by Collier et al. (2007: 355) as "an adaption to the presence of two (or more) cultures in the environment". Acton and Felix (1986: 20) also mention that acculturation, is "the gradual adaption to the target culture without necessarily forsaking one's native language identity". Several studies emphasise the importance of the acculturation approach in the EFL classroom. Mekheimer (2011: 44) argues that "second/foreign language learning must not be separated from acculturation". Similarly, Alsamani (2014) and Al-Qahtani (2016) claim that the acculturation approach should be implemented in order to raise learners' cultural awareness. So, Al-Qahtani points out that learners "need cultural guidance to enhance their English acquisition" (2016: 197). Such an approach develops learners' communicative competence and ability to use English as a communicative medium. In confirmation Hesar et al. (2012: 68) say that "While teachers need to seek ways to acculturate their

students, they also need to be understanding and responsive to students' own cultures". As well as the previously-cited advantages of using the acculturation approach inside the EFL classroom, another advantage is that this approach can especially help those students aspiring to carry on their study abroad to deal with negative emotion and stress when this is caused by culture shock. As stated above with reference to Saudi students and confirmed by McClintock (2014), English language learners need be acculturated in order to reduce the culture shock that is caused by insufficient knowledge of the target culture.

On the other hand, others prefer approaches which do not interfere with students' enculturation into their own initial culture. Because there is a fear of losing cultural identity and hence of losing control over education of children, but this is not based necessarily on the practice, or knowledge of the benefits of acculturation. Ahmad and Shah (2014: 12) argue that with the inclusion of the students' own culture, learners may broaden their horizon and general outlook towards their own and other communities represented in the textbook. Therefore, the curriculum designers and practitioners should bear in mind the crucial role of EFL learners' cultural aspects while designing textbooks. In agreement with this view, Sajith (2005) reports that two mothers in Saudi Arabia had negative attitudes about acculturation in the Saudi classrooms, since they thought that their children would be influenced by the foreign culture and forsake their local and Islamic culture.

Table 1 below shows a comparison between the enculturation and acculturation processes.

**Table 1. A comparison between enculturation and acculturation process**

<b>Enculturation</b>	<b>Acculturation</b>
Learning the local culture.	Learning the target culture.
Using local materials.	Using authentic materials.
Reflecting local topics.	Reflecting global topics.
Improving learners' own culture.	Raising learners' awareness culture.
Understanding and appreciating the local culture.	Understanding others' cultures and interaction situations and avoiding culture shock.

### **Statement of the problem**

Despite the ongoing efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education and Saudi teachers to improve learners' communicative competence, especially of those who have been studying English for more than 12 years, many of them still experience difficulties in using the English language in ways that are comprehensible. Also learners who intend to continue studying abroad face academic and social challenges which may be due to the dearth of EFL teaching on the acculturation process. Hence, the key focus of this article is to justify the value of this approach and propose it to be introduced more widely as the benefits have been well attested. Specifically, it will explore the attitudes of learners and parents towards acculturation in the EFL classroom.

### **Purpose of the study**

Many valuable studies focus on the attitudes towards acculturation and use of authentic materials that support acculturation in the EFL classroom from the perspectives of teachers and schoolboys such as Hagler 2014, Mekheimer and Aldosari 2011 and Al-Musallam 2009. However, undertaking research about sensitive topics such as

acculturation should involve parents as well because of their influence on their children. Hence, the research for this article consisted of obtaining data from schoolboys and their parents. In order to ensure there was no bias in relation to the data, two survey questionnaires were distributed; one targeting third-year secondary schoolboys in two boys' schools in the city of Makkah; and another for the parents of schoolboys who were studying in other schools in Makkah. This article intends to discuss and explore four issues in relation to learning English in Saudi secondary schools; learners' motivation in learning English, learners' preferences for a cultural model (acculturation or enculturation), attitudes towards acculturation in the EFL classroom and the preferred level of acculturation identified by learners.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why do Saudi students want to learn the English language?
2. Do Saudi students want to focus on linguistic structure (grammar and vocabulary) as the main component in learning English language or communicative competence?
3. What are the attitudes of students and parents of students towards acculturation in the EFL classroom?
4. To what level do Saudi students seek to be acculturated?

## RESULTS

### Students' questionnaire

The overall sample for the students' questionnaire was (n=100). The questionnaire was divided into two sections; questions in the form of multiple choice and the Likert scale.

#### Section A

**Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of schoolboys' responses related to questions in the form of multiple choice**

Variable		Frequency	%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
1. I learn English	because it is compulsory	5	5.0
	to get a better job in my country	7	7.0
	to get high marks	3	3.0
	to communicate with English/American people.	85	85.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
2. I am good at	reading	45	45.0
	writing	30	30.0
	listening	15	15.0
	speaking	10	10.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
3. My knowledge of grammar is	very weak	10	10.0
	weak	12	12.0
	good	53	53.0
	very good	25	25.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
	very weak	3	3.0
	weak	8	8.0

4. My knowledge of vocabulary is	good	55	55.0
	very good	34	34.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
5. I would like my lessons to focus on	grammar	14	14.0
	vocabulary	13	13.0
	English/American culture	16	16.0
	all of them	57	57.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
6. I prefer learning about English/American culture in	primary	20	20.0
	intermediate	44	44.0
	secondary	19	19.0
	university	17	17.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
7. I ----- watch English/American movies in English.	always	41	41.0
	sometimes	20	20.0
	rarely	13	13.0
	never	26	26.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
8. I ----- watch English/American movies in Arabic.	always	20	20.0
	sometimes	14	14.0
	rarely	27	27.0
	never	39	39.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>
9. My knowledge about English/American culture has been formed by	media	69	69.0
	teacher	9	9.0
	parents	4	4.0
	None	18	18.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 includes nine items. The results from the first item confirm that schoolboys have real motivation to learn the English language. More than two-thirds (85.0%) learn English to communicate with English/American people. But 7.0% of the participants learn English to get a better job in their country. Only 5.0% responded that they learn because it is compulsory and the minority (3.0%) state that they learn in order to get high marks. The respondents who were surveyed were also asked what skill they considered they were best at: 45.0% said reading, while 30.0% said writing, 15.0% said listening and 10.0% speaking. Concerning the background in grammar of the schoolboy participants, 53.0% opted “good”, 25.0% answered “very good”, while 12.0% chose “weak” and 10.0% selected “very weak”. The respondents ranked their knowledge of vocabulary: 55.0% selected “good”, 34.0% ranked “very good”, 8.0% rated themselves “weak” and 3.0% as “very weak”.

The schoolboys were asked in the fifth item to decide which components they wanted their class to focus on. The findings show that 14.0% favoured grammar lessons, 13.0% chose vocabulary and 16.0% favoured acculturation. However, more than half of the participants, 57.0%, selected all of them. In relation to this point, the schoolboy participants were questioned about their preferred level of acculturation, with no consensus in their responses. The selections were: 44% preferred intermediate school, 20.0% preferred primary school, 19.0% selected secondary school and university was favoured by 17.0%.

With regard to the frequency of watching movies with English or Arabic subtitles, the results show that 41.0% always watch English/American movies with English subtitles. Fewer than one-third of schoolboys (20.0%) will occasionally watch movies with English subtitles. The minority (13.0%) stated rarely. On the other hand, 26 schoolboys (26.0%) opted for the never response. In summarizing responses from schoolboys who were surveyed about whether they watch English/American movies with Arabic subtitles or not, the results from the eighth item are that 39.0% selected never, 27.0%, selected rarely, 20.0% selected always and 14.0% selected sometimes.

In addition, the results illustrate that 69.0% of the schoolboy participants shaped their cultural knowledge from the media. 9.0% of the respondents answered that this was shaped by their teachers and 4.0% said by their parents. However, 18.0% chose none.

### Section B

#### Learning English/American culture

**Table 3. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of Students' responses related to Learning English/American Culture**

			Degree Approval										Mean	St. dv.
No.	Arrange	Statement	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree			
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	3	Learning about English/American culture is important.	52	52.0	22	22.0	11	11.0	2	2.0	13	13.0	3.98	1.38
2	6	Understanding English language is difficult without understanding English/American culture.	32	32.0	28	28.0	25	25.0	11	11.0	4	4.0	3.73	1.14
3	8	Learning about English/American culture is better inside my classroom.	36	36.0	26	26.0	19	19.0	10	10.0	9	9.0	3.70	1.30
4	5	Learning about English/American culture encourages me (student) to learn English language.	23	23.0	53	53.0	12	12.0	9	9.0	3	3.0	3.84	0.98
5	4	Learning about English/American culture improves my language performance.	39	39.0	32	32.0	18	18.0	5	5.0	6	6.0	3.93	1.15
6	7	Learning about English/American culture enables me	23	23.0	42	42.0	21	21.0	10	10.0	4	4.0	3.70	1.06

		(student) to create discussions about the similarities and differences between English/American culture and Saudi one.	28	28.0	17	17.0	18	18.0	18	18.0	19	19.0	3.17	1.49
7	12	Learning about English/American culture helps me (student) to learn how to pronounce like English/American native speakers.	23	23.0	43	43.0	17	17.0	14	14.0	3	3.0	3.69	1.07
8	10	Learning about English/American culture improves my communication skills.	50	50.0	24	24.0	16	16.0	4	4.0	6	6.0	4.08	1.17
9	2	Learning about English/American culture enables me (student) to communicate with English/American native speakers successfully.	41	41.0	42	42.0	9	9.0	5	5.0	3	3.0	4.13	0.98
10	1	Learning about English/American culture provides me (student) about English/American native speakers' routine and social life aspects.	30	30.0	27	27.0	29	29.0	10	10.0	4	4.0	3.69	1.13
11	9	Learning about English/American culture assists me (student) to be more global.	9	9.0	39	39.0	28	28.0	15	15.0	9	9.0	3.24	1.10
12	11	Learning about English/American culture leads to tolerance towards other cultures.	14	14.0	17	17.0	9	9.0	31	31.0	29	29.0	2.56	1.42
13	14	Learning about English/American culture is boring.	11	11.0	14	14.0	10	10.0	34	34.0	31	31.0	2.40	1.35
14	15	Learning about English/American												



		culture wastes my time.													
				19	19.0	9	9.0	18	18.0	27	27.0	27	27.0	2.66	1.45
15	13	Learning about English/American culture makes me (student) less independent.													
				16	16.0	8	8.0	15	15.0	18	18.0	43	43.0	2.36	1.49
16	16	Learning about English/American culture affects our Islamic and Arabic identity.													
<b>Total</b>														<b>3.43</b>	<b>0.68</b>

Table 3 is concerned with schoolboys' attitudes towards acculturation in the EFL classroom. The results show that in general most participants have positive views about acculturation. Items one to three asked the schoolboys about the importance of acculturation, the relationship between a language and its culture and the favourite source of acculturation. More than two-thirds of the respondents (74.0%) believed that acculturation is important, but less than one-third (15.0%) supposed it is not important. The results from the second item demonstrate that more than half of the participants (60.0%) were aware that understanding English language and the process of acculturation are inseparable, while the minority (15.0%) did not support this view. The results from the third item show that 62.0% of the schoolboys favoured acculturation inside the classroom, and 19.0% preferred acculturation outside of school.

Regarding the question of whether acculturation contributes positively inside the classroom or not, the results show that 76.0% of schoolboy respondents assumed that acculturation encourages them to learn English, but the minority respondents (12.0%) did not agree. To the fifth question, on whether acculturation develops their language performance, their responses show that 71.0% strongly agreed or agreed and only 11.0% disagreed. The findings from the sixth item show that more than half of the participants (65.0%) believed that acculturation enabled them to compare and contrast the local and target cultures; but, 14.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Whether acculturation helps schoolboys learn the standard pronunciation or not, less than half of them (45.0%) supported the seventh item. But 37.0% of the participants did not agree. Items eight to twelve reflect schoolboys' perceptions of the desired benefits of acculturation. The results from the eighth item show that two-thirds of the schoolboy respondents (66.0%) believed that acculturation develops their communication skills and only 17.0% of them did not support this. The schoolboys were also asked if acculturation helped them to communicate with English/American native speakers. The results from the ninth item show that 74.0% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed, with the minority (10%) disagreeing. The results also show that a great number of participants (83.0%) thought acculturation allowed them to understand peoples' lifestyle in English/American societies, with only 8.0% of them disagreeing. In addition, the respondents were asked whether acculturation helps them to be more global, with more than half (57.0%) agreeing and 14.0% disagreeing. In terms of



whether acculturation leads to greater tolerance of other cultures or not, the results clarify that nearly half of the participants (48.0%) strongly agreed or agreed, with only 24.0% in disagreement.

On the issue of whether or not acculturation has a negative influence on learners, the schoolboys were asked four questions, and the results suggest that in general they thought it did not. The results from the thirteenth item show that 31.0% said acculturation is boring, but 60.0% did not agree with this statement. Also the results from the fourteenth item illustrate that 25.0% of the respondents thought acculturation a waste of their time, while by contrast nearly two-thirds (65%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion that it does. The fifteenth item clarified that 28.0% of the schoolboy participants supposed acculturation makes the learners less independent. However, more than half (54.0%) did not think so. The participants were asked if acculturation affects their Islamic and Arabic identity or not in question sixteen. 24.0% of them strongly agreed or agreed, but over half (61.0%) of the participants thought it did not affect their Islamic and Arabic identity.

### Parents of students' questionnaire

The overall sample for parents of students' questionnaire was (n=100). The questionnaire was in the form of the Likert scale.

Learning English/American culture

**Table 4. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations of parents of students' responses related to Learning English/American Culture**

No.	Arrange	Statement	Degree Approval										Mean	St. dv.
			Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree			
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	3	Learning about English/American culture is important.	57	57.0	15	15.0	1	1.0	5	5.0	22	22.0	3.80	1.66
2	5	Learning about English/American culture motivates our children to learn English language.	21	21.0	36	36.0	21	21.0	15	15.0	7	7.0	3.49	1.18
3	6	Learning about English/American culture helps our children to pronounce English like English/American native speakers.	33	33.0	12	12.0	3	3.0	26	26.0	26	26.0	3.00	1.66
4	2	Learning about English/American culture increases our	34	34.0	39	39.0	12	12.0	13	13.0	2	2.0	3.90	1.08

		children's cultural awareness.													
			28	28.0	35	35.0	20	20.0	13	13.0	4	4.0	3.70	<b>1.13</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	Learning about English/American culture enables our children to communicate with English/American people successfully.													
			22	22.0	17	17.0	7	7.0	19	19.0	35	35.0	2.72	<b>1.61</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	Learning about English/American culture could harm our children's Arabic and Islamic culture.													
			15	15.0	21	21.0	8	8.0	16	16.0	40	40.0	2.55	<b>1.55</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	Learning about English/American culture makes our children less independent.													
			65	65.0	22	22.0	10	10.0	3	3.0	-	-	4.49	<b>0.80</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	Learning about English/American culture is better inside the classroom under the umbrella of Ministry of Education.													
<b>Total</b>													<b>3.46</b>	<b>0.76</b>	

Table 4 aims to discover the views about acculturation held by the parents of schoolboys. The results demonstrate that in general more than two-thirds of the parents had positive attitudes towards acculturation. The first three items asked the respondents about the importance of acculturation and its contribution in the classroom. The results from the first statement reveal that 72.0% of participants argued that acculturation is important, while 27.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Also, the results show that 57.0% of respondents believed that acculturation motivates schoolboys to learn English. However, 22.0% of the respondents did not agree. Despite the respondents' positive views about acculturation and its role inside the classroom, 52.0% did not think this helped schoolboys to speak like English/American native speakers. But 45.0% of them supported this statement.

In relation to the fourth and fifth statements on whether or not acculturation assists the learners outside the classroom, the results clarify that more than half of the participants thought acculturation did contribute positively. More than two-thirds (73.0%) assumed acculturation increases learners' cultural awareness. A small number of the parents who were surveyed (15.0%) did not agree. Also, the results illustrate that 63.0% of participants believed acculturation assists schoolboys to communicate effectively with English/American people, and only 17.0% did not support this statement.

In relation to the question of whether acculturation affects learners' identity or not, the results from the sixth item show that despite the respondents demonstrating willingness to learn inner-circle culture, 39.0% of them said acculturation could harm students' Arabic and Islamic identity. By contrast, more than half of the respondents, 54.0%, believed acculturation does not impact negatively. In addition, the results from the seventh item show that 36.0% of the participants believed that acculturation makes schoolboys less autonomous because one loses touch with identity and Saudi culture. By contrast, the majority (56.0%) did not support this statement. Although some participants had negative views about acculturation, the last item shows that most respondents (87.0%) favoured acculturation inside rather than outside the classroom, with only 3.0% disagreeing.

## **DISCUSSION**

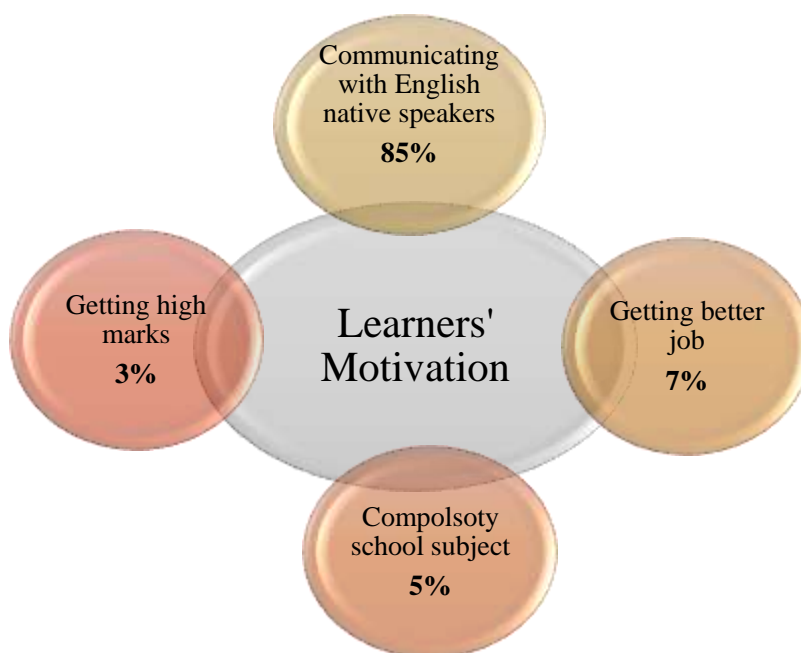
The present study aims to identify students' motivation in learning the English language. Also, it explores learners' preferences in valuing either linguistic or communicative competence in learning English. More broadly, this study attempts to explore the attitudes of learners and their parents in choosing or preferring a particular cultural model for learning English. This article identified three themes in accordance with the participants' preference for a cultural model. They are as follows:

- Learners' motivation
- Learners' preferences
- Attitudes towards enculturation in the EFL classroom

### **Learners' Motivation**

#### **1. Why do Saudi students want to learn English language?**

It is important to explore learners' purpose in learning English before investigating their attitudes towards the acculturation approach because their achievements are influenced by their motivation. In this respect Wagner (1999: 2) points out that "Motivation controls behavior". Generally, English learners aspire to learn English in order to use it, but they differ in their reasons for learning the language. Figure 1. below detects two types of motivation in learning English; interior motivation, represented by the aim of communicating with English native speakers and external motivation represented by goals such as getting a better job, studying a compulsory school subject and gaining high marks. The motivations of the student participants are ranked in this article in line with the degree of responses (from the highest to the lowest percentage). The results revealed that the majority of students who were surveyed learn the English language to communicate with English native speakers in the USA and the UK. The minority of student respondents learn English to get high marks in exams.



**Figure 1. Learners' motivation in learning English language**

### **Learners' Preferences**

2. Do Saudi students want to focus on linguistic structure (grammar and vocabulary) as the main component in learning English language or on communicative competence?

The previous question examined learners' motivation in learning English. The second question goes further in order to explore the learners' trends in learning the English language. The question arises here: "Do learners want to focus on linguistic competence or communicative competence in learning English?"

The results of the survey show that the majority of students want to focus on communicative rather than linguistic competence which they believe should be only one component of learning English. In order to explore students' background in language skills, they were asked about what language skills they are good at and their knowledge of linguistic competence. The results from the second, third and fourth statements show that more than two-thirds of learners have a good background in reading and writing skills and grammar and vocabulary. In the fifth statement, when asked about what lessons they would like to focus on, less than one-third (15%) said cultural competence and more than half answered linguistic and culture competence. Further evidence that learners want to focus on communicative competence is found in the results from Table 2 which show the respondents' frequency in watching movies with English or Arabic subtitles. More than half of the student respondents watch English/American movies with English subtitles: 41.0% selected the answer "always" and 20.0% selected "sometimes". This indicates that those learners watch movies with English subtitles in order to understand the interactive situations and to develop their communicative competence. By contrast, those who watch the movies with Arabic subtitles may be doing so for reasons of pleasure or because they have difficulties in understanding the content, since they are accustomed to learning English through memorising grammatical rules and vocabulary.

In spite of the important role of linguistic competence, such a competence is not sufficient to use English comprehensibly since language use within the social context requires developing users' communicative competence. Hence, the method of learning English reflects the learners' performance when they use English outside the classroom. For example, if a speaker asks, "Could you close the window?", a listener might reply "Yes". Semantically, the listener might think this was a question (i.e. "are you able to close it (but you don't have to)"), but pragmatically, it might refer to making a request, (i.e. "Can you please close the window now"?). In this respect, Halliday (1996: 92) says that "Language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives; it is to be expected that linguistic structures could be understood in functional terms". Thornbury (2005) notes that words and sentences build blocks of a language but they don't take the language user beyond the sentences because the language is used as a text, not as isolated words or sentences. In the same way, Shumin (2002) mentions that knowledge of grammar and vocabulary does not help learners to use the target language as a communicative medium, hence learners need to be exposed to social interaction.

### **Attitudes about acculturation in the EFL classroom**

3. What are the attitudes of students and their parents towards acculturation in the EFL classroom?

Data was obtained concerning the beliefs of students and their parents about acculturation in the EFL classroom. The parents of schoolboys were involved in this study because of their salient role and strong influence on their children's motivation and experience. In this respect, Alzaharani (2016: 63) mentions that

Most participants stated that their families had a role in their English language education in Saudi Arabia, and that their families encouraged them to learn English outside the EFL classroom for the reason that English needed extra support, as it is not the spoken language in Saudi Arabia.

In general, the results in Table 3 show that more than two-thirds of schoolboys who were surveyed had positive attitudes towards the acculturation approach. Only 15.0% did not believe in the importance of acculturation in the EFL classroom. Over two-thirds of participants also thought that the acculturation approach contributes positively as outlined in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh statements. In addition, the findings revealed that the majority of respondents were aware of the benefits of acculturation when using English outside the classroom as outlined in statements eight to twelve. The responses to statements thirteen to sixteen showed that more than two-thirds of respondents did not believe that acculturation has a negative effect on the learners' local culture.

In relation to the attitudes towards acculturation of the parents of schoolboys, the results in Table 4 illustrate that the majority (72.0%) were aware of the significant role acculturation has on learners' communicative competence. On the question of whether the acculturation process affects the Arabic and Islamic culture of the learners, despite participants' positive views, 39.0% reported that acculturation may affect their native knowledge? about the benefits of acculturation and that they may not trust the media

and Internet. Hence, the majority (87.0%) preferred that the acculturation process should take place under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education.

It is clear that most participants have a positive orientation towards the concept of acculturation rather than of enculturation. In the case of the EFL classroom, this concept is more effective than enculturation, since it helps learners keep up with the globalisation of culture. Such approaches also enable learners to use English both semantically and pragmatically. As a result, they use the target language within social interactions. Also, from another angle, acculturation that takes place under the umbrella of Ministry of Education helps to protect learners and enables authentic teaching materials to be adapted in ways that are acceptable to their local culture. By contrast, enabling learners to become acculturated by gaining access to the Internet may be risky because the internet is not able to be controlled. Going back to Table 2, and the last statement, the influence of the environment was measured by questioning schoolboys to select from the list of options of how their cultural knowledge was formed: whether by media, teacher, parents or none of these. The results show that the most influential environmental factor was the media, which 69.0% of schoolboy respondents identified as shaping their knowledge.

It could be argued that acculturation may harm the learners' native language and culture. It is obvious that schoolboys aspire to learn English to communicate with English native speakers. They may want to study abroad so this would support and give them the ability to use English comprehensively. In relation to this point, Unruh and Obeidat (2015: 47) say that

Even with attempts to change pedagogical practices at the university level in Saudi Arabia, students coming from there to the US have a difficult adjustment to make if they have grown up with a pedagogy that emphasizes knowledge as an absolute that is imparted through rote learning methods by teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade.

In the same way, Nouraldeem and Elyas (2014: 67) state that there is a change from the expectation implied by the pedagogy underlying the textbook, "For Saudi learners, they are learning English just for learning, not for imitating and following the character precisely".

#### 4. At what level do Saudi students prefer acculturation?

Based on the results, most of the schoolboys who were surveyed (44%) favoured intermediate school. Less than one-third (20%) wanted acculturation in primary school. Secondary school was preferred by 19% and 17% of those surveyed opted for the university.

The acculturation process is important, it helps learners to live in two cultures; the local culture and the target one. Also, it enables learners, especially those who study abroad, to adapt their behaviour to speak English in a way that is comprehensible. It is better to acculturate schoolboys in secondary school for a number of reasons. Firstly, low level schoolboys should construct their native identity, then at more advanced levels (secondary school and university) they need to be acculturated. Mekheimer (2011:49) argues, "the focus on target culture acquisition (TCA) might be premature because of the imperceptibility of the effects of the native culture (C1) impact". This will help the learners to distinguish between their native culture and the target culture. Benahnia



(2012) and El-Beheri (2013) also believe that teaching the target culture negatively influences the local culture of younger schoolboys. Also, acculturation necessitates discussing aspects of similarity and contrast between these two cultures, at a time when younger schoolboys may not have much knowledge of their native culture and will have difficulty in identifying the cultural similarities and differences. Finally, acculturation requires utilising authentic materials. Such materials are beyond the comprehension of younger learners. Kilickaya (2004), Guariento and Morley (2001) and Thornbury (2002) all assert that schoolboys have difficulty in understanding the use of authentic materials since they include natural language.

## IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

The outcomes of this study might be beneficial for educational authorities and syllabus designers who wish to keep in mind learners' points of view about the acculturation approach when designing teaching materials. Also the results may encourage course-book designers to incorporate the target culture into the school textbooks to facilitate the acculturation approach. Also another implication is that the results may encourage researchers to conduct further work on how acculturation can be implemented in the EFL classroom in order encourage higher levels of achievement in learning English.

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of this article has been to explore the purpose of Saudi students in learning English, to ascertain whether students want to continue to focus on linguistic structure as the key element in learning English, or whether they prefer the acculturation approach, and secondly, to identify their attitudes towards this approach and their preferred level in learning this approach in the classroom. The findings support the argument that the acculturation approach should be initiated in the EFL classroom since, developing learners' communicative competence is inextricably bound up with this approach.

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