

## *Original Paper*

# Saudi Student and Teacher Perceptions of Poor High School Results and Overall Proficiency in English

Alqahtani Mofareh A<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> King Khaled Military Academy, Civilian Studies, English Department, Riyadh Saudi

\* Alqahtani Mofareh A, King Khaled Military Academy, Civilian Studies, English Department, Riyadh Saudi

Received: July 8, 2019

Accepted: July 19, 2019

Online Published: August 21, 2019

doi:10.22158/jar.v3n3p251

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jar.v3n3p251>

### ***Abstract***

*“English is the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools as part of the mandatory curriculum and therefore enjoys a relatively high status” (Carfax Educational Projects, 2016, p. 10).*

*The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL/L2) within the basic curriculum of Saudi Arabia commences in the fourth grade. However, in spite of the best efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop English learning in schools, the language proficiency of Saudi high school leavers remains insufficient to carry out even basic interactions, let alone undertake university study through the medium of English (Al-Johani, 2009; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alhawsawi, 2013; Alrabai, 2016; Khan, 2011; Rajab, 2013). In fact, the recent Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT, 2017) demonstrated an overall average score of 64 of 120 for Saudis who took the TOEFL iBT between January and December 2016. This paper therefore seeks to examine the factors responsible for the low EFL performance of Saudi students on completion of their high school studies. In order to do so, the researcher randomly selected 60 school leavers and 30 teachers who responded to an interview designed to elicit the underlying causes of such poor English proficiency. The results revealed that the reasons fall into a number of discrete categories related to the student, the teacher, the learning environment, and the curriculum.*

### ***Keywords***

*student, lower, poor, proficiency, achievement*

## **1. Introduction**

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the basic Saudi curriculum commences in the fourth grade. It is now taught as a compulsory subject, reflecting the widespread recognition of the

need to learn English effectively, given its increasing dominance as the international language of technology, trade, communication, and higher level scholarship. Quite simply, since English has become the main language portal to the wider world, it is indispensable for any country aspiring to compete on the world stage to equip their workforce with effective English language skills. The Saudi MoE has therefore inscribed English as a core and compulsory subject from the fourth grade up to and including university level. Furthermore, over the years, it has invested substantial funds and efforts into initiatives to improve textbooks and additional supports for English teaching at school.

In these respects, Saudi Arabia aligns with other countries in which English is a second rather than a foreign language; that is, countries which hold little domestic currency but enjoy a relatively advanced economy and aspire to establishing more significant economic impact on the world stage, such as Oman, Taiwan and Thailand. In many such cases, governments have taken similar steps propagate English at early educational level, such as Grade 2 in Taiwan, and to improve the overall standard of English syllabi and school teaching resources. Despite such measures in the Saudi context, however, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the level of English proficiency actually achieved by school leavers, and indeed, across tertiary education and ensuing employment (Alhawsawi, 2013). This is evidenced in a number of ways, relative to perceptions of the appropriate levels of English competency which school leavers should attain, of which three are presented here.

Firstly, it may be argued that Saudi school leavers have attained the appropriate level of English if the majority pass the final English exam of the school system. However, this criterion is flawed since Saudi exams are not calibrated within internationally authenticated system of proficiency assessment such as the CEFR.

Hence, it is not possible to properly ascertain the comparative English proficiency level of students who pass or do well on this exam (Ahmed Sulaiman Al-Nasser, 2015). Furthermore, the Saudi system for examining English is widely criticised since assessment instruments are constructed and administered in such a way as hamper reliable measures of ability.

Secondly, it might be argued that an appropriate level has been attained if Saudis taking professionally devised and internationally recognised English proficiency exams perform at a level that compares well with other EFL countries. Such comparisons clearly show that Saudi Arabians do *not* perform well. For instance, the official report from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) for 2017 (ETS, 2018) records an average score of 69 of 120 for Saudi students; a score which places Saudi Arabia lower than almost all other countries, with the exception of a few small states such as Mauretania and Burundi. By contrast, Oman and Taiwan score 82 and Thailand 78. However, since this exam is not obligatory it is difficult to ascertain how many Saudi students actually take this test with any degree of accuracy. This particular finding may therefore be somewhat misleading. Furthermore, Saudis who do take TOEFL tend to be older than school leavers, such as, university students, for example. Again, this means that in real terms, the average of 69 is a likely overestimate of school leavers TOEFL scores. Moreover, since this is a purely comparative assessment: it does not evaluate

the level of proficiency actually represented by a score of 69 or determine its adequacy in any absolute sense.

Thirdly, and finally, it may be possible to prescribe a benchmark of proficiency and attainment for school leavers in EFL countries and measure Saudi school leavers against this standard. Such a level needs to be defined in an absolute way; for example, in relation to measures of vocabulary size or an established international classification system of levels of English ability such as the widely used Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). English proficiency level purported as suitable for school leavers in any country is one which allows a learner to begin to operate as an independent user of the language, such as reading authentic non-specialist English texts like newspapers or popular novels without excessive difficulty. That corresponds to CEFR level B2 and a vocabulary size of perhaps 5000 words (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010). Another way of approaching this is to consider the proficiency level which universities in English-speaking countries like the US and UK take as the minimum requirement for students entering BA programmes. Again, this is typically CEFR B2, which equates with IELTS scores in the range 5.5-6.5 (IELTS, 2019), and a minimum of TOEFL iBT 72 (Papageorgiou et al., 2015). On this basis, the average Saudi testee iBT score of 69 exceeds the ability than school leavers and falls short of the requisite 72. This is supported by studies including that of Al-Masrai and Milton (2012), who found that Saudi freshmen (first year, level 2) studying English at university had assimilated an average of only 1650 to 3000 English words. While their vocabulary knowledge had extended to 3000 to 5000 words by the time they graduated from their B.A. programme, this level of attainment is actually the target for school leavers.

Thus, the question remains: why does Saudi high school leavers' English language performance fall beneath the required MoE level and that of most other countries? To date, considerable commentary and research has attributed the low efficiency of EFL learning in school in Saudi Arabia to a diversity of multidimensional factors. The present study will therefore outline a number of factors held to contribute to this phenomenon and provide new evidence from data elicited from students and teacher interviews in order to address and overcome these barriers and to improve the learning of English as a Foreign Language across schools in Saudi Arabia.

### *1.1 Previous Research on Factors Leading to Low English Proficiency of High School Leavers*

The various studies which have sought to investigate this topic include that of Al-Nasser (2015). He concluded that teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia faces many challenges and barriers, not least the interference of the mother-tongue as Arabic and English belong to completely different language groups. However, since comparable Arab countries such as Oman, Bahrain, and Palestine score higher on the iBT, and the many other higher scoring countries where the L1 is also vastly different from English (e.g., Thailand and Taiwan) this does not satisfactorily explain Saudi learners' weak performance.

Khan (2011) attributed poor performance to the two main pedagogies adopted by English teachers; namely, the *Translation Method* and *CALT (Communicative Approach to Language Teaching)*, which he maintained would benefit from the addition of the bilingual approach. Ayman A. Ankaw (2015), on the other hand, investigated the academic writing challenges faced by Saudi Arabian students enrolling on mainstream programmes at a particular New Zealand University.

This study comprised approximately 65 Saudi Arabian participants and used semi-structured interviews to elicit both reflections on their English academic writing skills and perceptions of how preparation for academic study at English medium universities could be improved.

### *1.2 Purpose of the Current Study and Research Questions*

Eight years of mandatory state school study equates to 720 contact hours of English language instruction. Yet in the majority of cases, high school leavers are unable to either speak or write an error-free sentence in English or attain a sufficient threshold level of English proficiency to advance to higher levels, such as CEFR B2. While this issue has been explained in a number of ways, the argument of insufficient teaching allocation can be immediately refuted since authoritative recommendations concur that approximately 600 hours should suffice to progress from A1 beginner through A2 and B1 to B2 in the CEFR English proficiency framework (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019). While other explanations have examined the competence of teachers, the suitability of teaching methods, student motivation, the adequacy of the syllabus/textbook, and sundry additional elements, their research is not exhaustive. Furthermore, many explanations are informed by subjective opinions without support from evidence or argument, and the supposed “factors” have been neither properly assembled nor critically reviewed to allow for a comprehensive overview to be made and/or the optimum recommendations to remedy the impasse. While the various educational bodies have held conferences, seminars, and courses to devise appropriate solutions for the causes of unsatisfactory student attainment, this study aims to review and advance knowledge of appropriate solutions to this challenge. As such, it explores the following questions:

- 1) Why do most Saudi students leave high school with inadequate proficiency in English?*
- 2) Why do Saudi students fail to assimilate the English language effectively during their many years of study in school?*
- 3) What recommendations can we make to the relevant stakeholders to address the problems of learning English in Saudi secondary schools?*

### *1.3 Key Terms*

**STUDENT:** a person studying at state school in Saudi Arabia.

**LOW/POOR:** of lesser degree, size, or amount than is expected at a particular educational level, such as the conclusion of high school.

**PROFICIENCY:** a level of English knowledge and skill measured independently of any particular course of instruction on an internationally recognized scale which rates from zero to native speaker-like.

*ACHIEVEMENT*: the degree to which a student has mastered the knowledge and skill delivered by a previous course of English instruction, as measured by the exams associated with that course.

#### *1.4 Objectives*

Through my ongoing interest in linguistics and student activities I observed that English language learning consistently falls beneath the requisite standards, and thus set out to determine the root causes of such poor attainment which I ultimately attributed to either one or any combination of the following factors: student level of interest; teacher efficiency; parents and/or learning environment. In light of this, the present study aims to formulate solutions for this problem. As such, my goal was to extend the scope of my enquiries among samples of all grades in secondary schools to elucidate the current situation and devise practical solutions which contribute to the high school student challenges of learning the English language. Since mastery of English language skills is a foremost priority, it is hoped that rather than just scraping through their final exams, higher standards may be achieved. In short: the objective of this research was to directly confront the problem faced by students in Saudi schools and to offer practicable and systematic solutions to facilitate the best possible learning outcomes. Moreover, the study sought to provide recommendations and proposals to enhance the capabilities of Saudi school students, to raise the standard of English in a well-structured academic environment, and to build upon previous studies which effectively engaged with the issue.

#### *1.5 Context*

English as an educational subject was introduced in the late 1950s (Al-Shammary, 1984) and remains the only foreign language routinely taught in Saudi Arabian schools. Al-Johani (2009) noted that English was initially introduced in the 1930s following the discovery of oil. As its use was primarily within the business setting at that time, the government waited a further 20 years before introducing it to the compulsory state syllabus, and then only at intermediate and secondary level. In fact, the then government's reluctance to teach English at elementary school rested on the belief that it could adversely affect the learning of Arabic. However, due to the global importance of English, the education system has since evolved, and since 2010 English instruction has been extended to earlier school stages (4th grade of elementary school/10 years old). In primary school (4th-6th grade), students begin with two 45-minute English classes per week, and advance to four 45-minute English classes per week at intermediate and secondary level.

It is here noted that many local private schools negatively impact overall student achievement and English proficiency in particular, by employing poorly qualified teachers and awarding inflated grades despite low level performance. A number of international schools in Saudi Arabia are governed by embassies, while others are privately run and host multiple curricula under a single roof. Thus, many local parents opt to send their children to these schools in the misguided belief that the tuition will be superior to state school and due of the international importance of the English language.

## 2. Methodology of the Study

- a. Participants consisted of 60 students enrolled in King Khaled Military academy 2019 shortly after they graduated from high school and 35 English Language Teacher from various institutions such as state schools and universities.
- b. The data collection instrument used in this study is a structured interview: rigidly organised interview with a pre-determined schedule designed to avoid any possible bias of either researcher or interviewee.
- c. Interview questions were designed to elicit the reasons behind the low English proficiency of Saudi high school leavers following eight years of English instruction.

## 3. Limitations of the Study

- a. Thematic Limits: The research focuses on studying the causes of poor English language attainment of secondary school students in Saudi schools.
- b. Human Limits: The study is delimited to high school English teachers and students.
- c. Spatial Limits: Saudi Arabia.
- d. Time Limits: The study was conducted over the course of a few weeks during the academic year with students commencing First Year at King Khaled Military Academy following recent graduation from high school.

## 4. Results

This section presents and elucidates the results of the study in relation to the extant literature in this field. The comparison of the views of students and teachers which were used as a means to pinpoint possible overlaps and reasons which fall into the following categories:

### **Student reasons for their low proficiency in English:**

- 1) The absence of an educational goal. It is clear that most of the students learn English just to pass the exam and move from one grade to another. In other words, most of the students do not perceive or accept that higher goal of deferred gratification. For instance, even when aiming to pursue a degree course they do not see any great need to learn English as they assume it will be taught through the medium of Arabic.
- 2) Absence of motivation or incentives among students.
- 3) Students do not take the subject seriously.
- 4) Neglect of the student.
- 5) General lack of student enthusiasm to learn English.
- 6) The practice of language is usually confined to English classes.
- 7) There is a large volume of students in the class.
- 8) There is no consideration for differences in ability among students.

- 9) The absence of reading English books or opportunities to listen/watch to English programmes.
- 10) The existence of psychological barrier: e.g., student reluctance to talk to others in simple English when opportunities to do so present themselves.
- 11) Lack of understanding the importance of learning English language worldwide, and other languages in general.
- 12) Fear of potential embarrassment through mispronunciation or misreading aloud in the classroom.
- 13) Spelling poses a serious problem for a large number of students, mainly in terms of ability to pronounce/spell words correctly as English sounds/phonetics are substantively different from those of Arabic.

**Teacher reasons for low student proficiency in English:**

- 1) Weak preparation of English teachers who are generally untrained in linguistics and thus focus on progressing students through the exam system.
- 2) Difficulties with teaching methods and inability to access the subject correctly.
- 3) Heavy volume of contact teaching hours per week.
- 4) Low professional motivation.
- 5) Negative implications by the teacher.
- 6) Non-native speaker teachers.
- 7) Use of L1 (Arabic Language) as medium of teaching English.
- 8) Lack of teacher attention to weaker students' errors.
- 9) Poor performance of tests.

**School reasons for low student proficiency in English:**

- 1) Lack of appropriate environment and educational aids such as language laboratories and so on.
- 2) Lack of modern education techniques in schools.
- 3) Insufficient classes.
- 4) Large class sizes.
- 5) Lack of means and resources.
- 6) While private schools routinely award students inflated marks in English, students attain considerably lower marks in both the national exams (Giyas) and/or in international exams (TOEFL).

**Family environment reasons for low student proficiency in English:**

- 1) Disinterested parents.
- 2) No knowledge of the English language to assist or practice with their children.
- 3) Family estimation of the importance of the subject.
- 4) No follow-up by the family.

**Curricula reasons for low student proficiency in English:**

- 1) Analysis of the textbooks used has shown that even if the students learned everything in them they could still not attain the required vocabulary size for B2. Since the MoE selects and prescribes all textbooks and syllabi, this suggests that they have not fully considered the optimum attainment level.
- 2) The weakness or inappropriateness of curriculum relevance to the stated objectives.
- 3) The difficulty of assimilating audio texts which students cannot tune in to on English radio or television programmes.
- 4) The evaluation of all textbooks and teaching materials in terms of their efficacy to meet the needs of the learners.
- 5) The absence of English reading materials or English programmes to listen to or watch.

**5. Discussion**

The findings above reveal a number of reasons for poor performance which are related to students perceptions and rationales. These findings align with those of Sajjadllah Alhawsawi (2013) and Ahmed Sulaiman Al-Nasser (2015) and underscore that students English learning needs and objectives must be identified and addressed. Students should be made aware of the centrality of learning English going forward rather than merely satisfying transitory high school requirements. To this end, considerable efforts are needed to modify student thinking and attitudes towards learning English as students are the core of learning.

There is also a widely-held view that students of English under-achieve because their teachers of English are inadequately trained. Since teachers clearly play a vital role in delivering English language skills, it follows that approaches which do not conform to modern teaching can exert a negative impact on students' understanding of English in their correct form. From personal experience, it is all too apparent that very few teachers of English in the Saudi context attend the specialized language-teacher programmes or pre-service and in-service training which facilitate effective, interesting, and smooth learning. Indeed, Britten (cited in Murdoch, 1994) purports that novice teachers must be fully skilled and equipped. To this end, they must be trained in the use of audio-visual aids, introducing grammatical structures, posing questions and handling student responses, along with the use of teaching dialogues, group work activities organization, and other innovative strategies.

The rubrics and resources of individual schools, and in particular, those of private institutions, combined with the additional burdens of extracurricular activities, can weigh heavily on the teacher and delimit the realization of educative goals. Curriculum deficiencies, including both shortcomings in the curriculum and additional factors related to the language itself and the framework of a general educational system which often lacks clarity around the roles of learner and parents, can also give rise to further constraints.

Studies of the local examination process demonstrate many weaknesses due to the fact that they are moderated by individual teachers and thus lack an objective and professionalised MoE system to set and grade national end of year exams. Hence, the exams do not properly adhere to the prescribed curriculum. Instead watered-down local arrangements such as testing a single unit and even telling the students which unit that will be, are the norm. This essential lack of backstop fosters little incentive for students to study properly in order to pass the exam (Scholfield, 2019).

Social and cultural factors greatly influence people's ideas and behaviors, and include the mother-language and collectively imbedded mores and beliefs. Despite the traditionally held view to the contrary however, there is absolutely no evidence that learning the English language affects students' potential to learn Arabic, especially among younger age groups, or that exposure to English language or culture displaces local language, culture, customs, and/or Saudi identity. The use of Arabic as a medium of education (L1) in language classes has been criticized for encouraging students to think positively about the L1 language, which eventually leads to a completely opposite result. Nonetheless L1 has been widely used in teaching English with 75% of teachers reporting the use of Arabic to teach English in school. This practice inevitably compromises the expected results, giving rise to disappointing final outcomes that are merely exacerbated by an outmoded examination system which compels the student to blindly memorize rather than fully understand and hone their English language skills.

## 6. Recommendations

- 1) Break the fear barrier of the students and develop a smoother approach to appeal to them.
- 2) Upskill teachers with the latest scientific methods.
- 3) Create innovative teaching approaches that help students to improve their language skills.
- 4) The integrated skills adoption of English language curriculum from early elementary stage.
- 5) Adoption of good English language curricula beside modern systems.
- 6) Evaluation and motivation prior to examining and questioning students.
- 7) Audiovisual means used in the classroom.
- 8) Individual assessment of students to identify and address weaknesses.
- 9) Periodic intensive English training and activities to boost low standards of student proficiency and skills.

## 7. Conclusion

In summary, the study postulated a number of reasons for the low standard of English language attainment among the Saudi students and demonstrated why most of them leave schools with low proficiency. In so doing, the researcher has outlined the ongoing problems and contributed to the development of potential solutions. It is evident that student skills and abilities are of vital importance since Saudi student must learn English as a Second Language (L2) in order to remain abreast of global

economic and social progress. This research highlights the various aspects related to the study of the students' academic conditions in terms of acquiring the skills of the English language through the presentation of ideas and questions, and in identifying the problems and challenges that stand in their way. In combining the theoretical and practical aspects of this research, this paper elucidated all the concepts within the theoretical dimension of in-depth research in the hope of enabling English language teachers and learners to better achieve their goals.

## References

- Abdan, A. A. (1993). A filed Study of the Use of Arabic in EFL Classrooms in the Saudi Intermediate Public, Schools. *Journal of King Saud University*, 5(2), 396-426.
- Ahmad, A. M. (2014). Kumaravadivelu's framework as a basis for improving English language teaching in Saudi Arabia: Opportunities and challenges. *English Language Teaching*, 7, 96-110. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n4p96>
- Ahmed, S. A. N. (2015). *Problems of English Language Acquisition in Saudi Arabia: An Exploratory-cum-remedial Study*. College of Science and Arts, Methnab, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia.
- Al Dameg, K. A. (2011). The suitable age for learning foreign languages in public education. *Damascus University Journal*, 27, 753-811.
- Al Murshidi, G. (2014). Emirati and Saudi students' writing challenges at U.S. Universities. *English Language Teaching*, 7, 87-95. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n6p87>
- Al Shumaimeri, Y. A. N. (2003). *A Study of Class Room Exposure to Oral Pedagogic Tasks in relation to The Motivation and Performance of Saudi Secondary Learners of English in a context of Potential Curriculum reform* (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis). University of Leeds, Leeds.
- Al-Ghamari, T. (2004). Integrating writing with other skills. *Muscat Message*, April, 78-81.
- Alhaisoni, E. (2012). Language Learning Strategy Use of Saudi EFL Students in an Intensive English Learning Context. *Asian Social Science*, 8(13), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n13p115>
- Alharbi, H. (2015). Improving Students' English Speaking Proficiency in Saudi Public Schools. *International Journal of Instruction*, 8(1), 105-116. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2015.818a>
- Alhawsawi, S. (2013). *Investigating student experiences of learning English as a foreign language in a preparatory programme in a Saudi university* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.
- Al-Johani, H. M. (2009). *Finding a way forward the impact of teachers strategies, beliefs and knowledge on teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, UK.
- Aljumah, F. (2011). Developing Saudi EFL Students' Oral Skills: An Integrative Approach. *English Language Teaching*, 4(3), 84-89. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n3p84>

- Al-Khairy, M. (2013a). English as a foreign language learning demotivational factors as perceived by Saudi undergraduates. *European Scientific Journal*, 9, 365-382.
- Al-Khairy, M. A. (2013b). Saudi English-Major Undergraduates' Academic Writing Problems: A Taif University Perspective. *English Language Teaching*, 6(6), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n6p1>
- Alkhatnai, M. (2011). *Learning styles of EFL Saudi college-level students in online and traditional educational environments* (PhD Thesis). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.
- Alkubaidi, M. A. (2014). The relationship between Saudi English major university students' writing performance and their learning style and strategy use. *English Language Teaching*, 7(4), 83-95. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n4p83>
- Al-ma'shy, A. A. (2011). *Causes of EFL speaking weakness in Saudi secondary schools in Al-Gunfuthah City* (Unpublished Master's thesis). King Saud University, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Almalki, M. M. (2014). *Teacher perceptions of new English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum in Saudi Arabia* (Master's Thesis). State University of New York at Fredonia, Fredonia, NY.
- Al-Mashary, A. (2006). *The problems of teaching English to the secondary schools students in KSA from teachers and supervisors perspectives* (Master's Thesis). King Saud University: Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- Al-Misnad, S. (1985). *The development of modern education in the Gulf*. London, UK: Ithaca Press.
- Al-Mohanna, A. (2010). English language teaching in Saudi Arabian context: How communicatively oriented is it? *Journal of King Saud University: Languages and Translation*, 22(1), 69-88.
- Almutairi, N. H. (2008). *The influence of educational and sociocultural factors on the learning styles and strategies of female students in Saudi Arabia* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Leicester, Leicester, UK.
- Alnofaie, H. (2010). The attitude of teachers and students towards using Arabic in EFL classrooms in Saudi public schools—A case study. *Novitas-Royal*, 4(1), 64-95.
- Al-Nujaidi, A. (2003). *The relationship between vocabaulry size, reading strategies, and reading comprehension of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia* (PhD Dissertation). Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.
- Al-Otaibi, G. N. (2004). *Language learning strategy use among Saudi EFL students and its relationship to language proficiency level, gender and motivation* (PhD Thesis). Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA.
- Alqahtani, M. (2011). *An investigation into the language needs of Saudi students studying in British postgraduate programs and the cultural differences impacting on them* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Southampton: Southampton, UK.
- Al-Qahtani, M. F. (2013). Relationship between English language, learning strategies, attitudes, motivation, and students' academic achievement. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 5(3), 19-29. <https://doi.org/10.5959/eimj.v5i3.124>

- Alrabai, F. (2011). *Do motivational strategies work? An empirical investigation of the effectiveness of motivational strategies in foreign language classes*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Press.
- Alrabai, F. (2014a). A Model of Foreign Language Anxiety in the Saudi EFL Context. *English Language Teaching*, 7(7), 82-101. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n7p82>
- Alrabai, F. (2014b). Motivational practices in English as a foreign language classes in Saudi Arabia. *Arab world English Journal (AWEJ)*, 5(1), 224-246.
- Alsamdani, H. A. (2010). The Relationship between Saudi EFL Students' Writing Competence, L1 Writing Proficiency, and Self-regulation. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(1), 53-63.
- Al-Seghayer, K. (2015). Salient key features of actual English instructional practices in Saudi Arabia. *English Language Teaching*, 8(6), 89-99. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v8n6p89>
- Asmari, A. A., & Javid, C. Z. (2011). Motivational Constructs: A Cross Sectional Study EFL Students at Taif University. *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, XIX(2), 73-104.
- Aydin, S. (2010). *A Qualitative Research on Portfolio Keeping in English as a Foreign Language Writing*. Balikesir University, Balikesir, Turkey.
- Ayman, A. A. (2015). A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (MA). In *The Academic Writing Challenges Faced by Saudi Students Studying in New Zealand, school of Culture and Society*.
- Bacha, N. N. (2002). Developing Learners' Academic Writing Skills in Higher Education: A Study for Educational Reform. *Language & Education*, 16(3), 161-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780208666826>
- Cambridge Assessment English. (2019). *Guided Learning Hours*. Retrieved from <https://support.cambridgeenglish.org/hc/en-gb/articles/202838506-Guided-learning-hours>
- Cayer, R. L., & Sacks, R. K. (1979). Oral and written discourse of basic writers: Similarities and differences. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 13(2), 121-128.
- Cheng, F. W. (2009). Task representation and text construction in reading-to-write. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 13(2), 1-21.
- Edge, J. (1992). *Cooperative Development*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ETS. (2018). *Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT® Tests*. USA: Educational Testing Service. Retrieved from [https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/94227\\_unlweb.pdf](https://www.ets.org/s/toefl/pdf/94227_unlweb.pdf)
- Fageeh, A. I. (2011). EFL learners' use of blogging for developing writing skills and enhancing attitudes towards English learning: An exploratory study. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 2(1), 31-48.
- Fareh, S. (2010). Challenges of Teaching English in the Arab World: Why Can't EFL Programs deliver as expected? *Procedia Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 3600-3604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.559>

- Heffernan, N. (2006). An Integrated Approach to Teaching Academic Writing. *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly*, 8(3), Special Conference Proceedings Volume: Task-based Learning in the Asian Context, 249-258. Retrieved from <http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/PDF/September-2006.pdf>
- Hinkel, E. (2004). *Teaching academic ESL writing: Practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar*. Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410609427>
- Ibrahim, M. (1983). The Role of English Departments in Arab Universities. In Dahiyat & Ibrahim (Eds.), *Papers from the first conference on the Problems of teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities*. University of Jordan, Amman.
- IELTS. (2019). *Common European Framework*. Retrieved from <https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/common-european-framework>
- Kambal, M. (1980). *An Analysis of Khartoum University Students' Composition Errors with Implications for Remedial English in the Context of Arabization*. University of Texas, Austin, Texas.
- Khan, I. (2011). Learning Difficulties in English: Diagnosis and Pedagogy in Saudi Arabia. *Educational Research*, 2(7), 1248-1257.
- Khan. (2011). *Conducted a study to identify the difficulties faced by the students in Saudi Arabia in learning English*.
- Laufer, B., & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, G. C. (2010). Lexical Threshold Revisited: Lexical Text Coverage, Learners' Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 22(1), 15-30.
- Murdoch, & George. (1994). Language Development Provision in Teacher Training Curricula. *ELT Journal*, 48(3), 253-265. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/48.3.253>
- Papageorgiou, S., Tannenbaum, R. J., Bridgeman, B., & Cho, Y. (2015). *The Association between TOEFL iBT® Test Scores and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Levels*. Princeton, NJ: ETS Research Memorandum RM-15-06.
- Smail, J. (1991). Language Exposure and Second Language Learning. *The English Teacher*, XX, 1-11.