SAUDI UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES' LANGUAGE LEARNING ATTITUDES: A PREPARATORY YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Abdul Rahman Al Asmari

Associate Professor, Taif University, Taif University, At-Taif, KSA

ABSTRACT

The present study is a comprehensive investigation of the attitudes of Saudi freshmen studying at Taif University towards various dynamics of English language teaching/learning process. Findings seem to have significant implications for English language pedagogy considering the fact that the results of this study provide a detailed survey of psychological underpinnings of Saudi EFL learners at the university level. The purpose has been to better understand the Saudi EFL undergraduate learners' attitudes towards various dynamics of English language pedagogy so that much sought after goal of effective English language learning may be facilitated. The data were drawn from randomly selected 176 freshmen undergraduates who joined Taif University Preparatory Year Program (PYP) for the academic year 1433/1434. A 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was developed to identify the participants' attitudes towards 'English language', 'the culture of English-speaking countries', 'English language teaching/learning', 'the teachers' role' the learners' role' and 'the role of mother tongue (Arabic) in ELT'. The participants of this study exhibited positive attitudes towards English language, native speakers and the culture of English-speaking countries indicating that they bear intrinsic motivational orientations along with strong extrinsic ones. The findings also revealed that the participants preferred to have intensive practice of the target language instead of simple memorization and do not like that Arabic is used in their ELT classes. In addition, some recommendations have been offered such as frequent use of audio-visual teaching aids, interactive activities, pair/group work, online resources etc.

Keywords: Language learning attitudes, Undergraduates, Preparatory year, EFL learners

1. INTRODUCTION

Lots of research studies have addressed to the quality and dynamics of teaching/learning at university level during the recent decades (Biggs, 1988; Sutherland, 2002; Tagg, 2003; Russell, 2004). Russell (2004) reported that this interest in higher education teaching/learning "is partly

associated with attempts to enhance the effectiveness of higher education and to improve outcomes for students" (p. 1). One major area of interest in this regard is the investigation of learners' learning attitudes. Stevick (1980) reported that research has suggested that learners' attitudes and beliefs have strong influence on their learning process because "success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p. 4).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning a second language is different from first language acquisition in several ways as this process is a "learnable school subject in that discrete elements of the communication code (e.g., grammatical rules and lexical items) can be taught explicitly, it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes language learning a deeply social event" (Dörnyei, 2003). This complex process becomes rather complicated for Arab students considering the language distance between English (SVO language) and Arabic (VSO language). The complex process require much more than just classroom teaching. It is strongly suggested that the attitudes of language learners play an important role in making this multifaceted process effective (Dörnyei, 2003). Brown (2000) has offered valuable insights regarding this unusual struggle of learning a foreign/second language suggesting that this complex process does not confine only to mastering the linguistics rules of a foreign/second language but actually "your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting" (p. 1). This discussion strongly suggests that in order to make the process of learning a foreign language smooth and effective it is not sufficient to control and correct the external factors related to ELT but investigating the learner's inner self is also extremely important in this regard.

While talking to the importance of investigating learners' attitudes towards various dynamics of ELT, GÖKÇE (2008) has stated that "this adoption of a new way of 'thinking, feeling, and acting', briefly, a new of way of being may evoke various affective and cognitive reactions on learners' part. The first and maybe the foremost reaction is the notion of attitude ……" (p. 1). Research reports that learners' attitudes play a significant role in their language learning success: positive attitudes towards various dynamics of the target language and its learning/teaching process are instrumental in enhancing their motivation whereas decreased motivation due to negative attitudes tends to make this process more difficult (Gürsoy, 2011). Much research has suggested that attitudinal studies are an integral component of second/foreign language learning pedagogy. Research has also offered valuable insights related to the reasons to understand this important construct of ELT. Weinburgh (1998) states it is unavoidable to investigate learners' attitudes because they influence their behaviors towards learning a language and responsible for increased motivation. Secondly, there exists a positive relationship between learners' attitudes towards language learning and their performance. It has been reported that research has supported that positive attitudes enhance proficiency rather than high achievement shapes positive attitudes towards language learning (Weinburgh, 1998).

This important construct has been defined from various perspectives such as social, psychological, educational etc. GÖKÇE (2008) Reported that "attitudes", as a major area of interest, have been investigated widely by social psychologists since 1990. Etymological history can be traced back as old as 1668 as mentioned in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2000). It has also been **2289**

reported that the word "attitude" was used related to theater stages to describe 'physical postures' in the 1800s but with the passage of time changes occurred in its meaning and later it referred to the 'posture of the mind' (Franzoi, 2003). Elaborating this complex phenomenon, Gardner (1980) defined attitude as "the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic". A much broader and comprehensive definition has been forwarded by Wenden (1991) who posited that this concept is made up of three sub-components, i.e., cognitive, affective and behavioral. Among these three, the cognitive component comprises of the person's opinion, beliefs or ideas towards the object of attitude. Person's feelings and emotions towards the object of attitude constitute the second one namely 'affective component' whereas the final behavioral component includes person's behavioral intentions towards the object of attitude. All these definitions along with numerous others strongly suggest that human actions mainly based on their attitudes and learning a language that is a major human endeavor is also governed by their attitudes towards the target language.

A growing mass of research has offered valuable insights into the fact that investigation of second/foreign learners' attitudes towards the target language, its culture and various pedagogical aspects related to teaching/learning process has important implications for positive results (Gardner, 1985; Spolsky, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Noels et al., 2000; Shaaban and Ghaith, 2003; Dornyei, 2005; Karahan, 2007; Al–Tamimi and Shuib, 2009; Popham, 2011). Significance of learners' attitudes can also be understood from another perspective that educational aims of several education systems ensure that the learners should inculcate positive attitudes towards the target language and the relevant teaching/learning process. GÖKÇE (2008) has reported that the Regulation of Foreign Language Education and Teaching in Turkey makes it "one of the aims of foreign language teaching in formal institutions is to help learners develop positive attitudes toward foreign language teaching" (p. 2). Furthermore, Morgan (1993) has stated that educational aims of the National Curriculum in England and Wales includes that attempts should be made "to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages" (p. 63). Highlighting the importance of investigating EFL learners' attitudes, Morgan (1993) posits that "Pupils' attitudes to the foreign language that they are learning or to the foreign culture(s) with which it is associated are recognized as crucial to language learning success" (p.15). Noels et al., (2000) also strongly suggest that "positive attitudes toward the learning situation have consistently been associated with L2 achievement and related outcomes" (p. 63). (GÖKÇE, 2008) cf (Rahman, 2005) maintains that as learners' attitudes and language-learning situation are closely related to each other; therefore, identification of EFL learners' attitudes "may offer valuable insight into what learners think, how they feel, why they misbehave and why they are successful or unsuccessful (p. 14).

In Arabs countries context, Malallah (2000) investigated Kuwait University undergraduates' attitudes and motivation towards learning English as a foreign language in an Arab context. The findings revealed that Kuwait University undergraduates bear positive attitudes towards English language, its teaching/learning process and native speakers of English. It was also found out that English enjoys a prestigious status in Kuwaiti society and Kuwaiti students have strong intrinsic as well as extrinsic reasons to learn English. Shaaban and Ghaith (2003) carried out an investigation to identify the attitudes of Lebanese college students towards Arabic, French and English. The results indicated that Lebanese students considered French and English more useful for their academic **2290**

careers in the modern world dominated by science and technology as compared to their native language, Arabic. Majority of the participants perceived English as a main source to open the gate of future opportunities for them not only in their educational careers but also in achieving success in business and global communication. Al–Tamimi and Shuib (2009) attempted to investigate petroleum engineering students' attitudes towards learning English language. The participants were 81 petroleum engineering students studying at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology. The findings revealed that majority of the Yamane EFL learners represented by the participants of this study have positive attitudes towards English language, its status in Yamane society and its importance in Yamane educational system. He has concluded that learners' positive attitudes have strong relationship with their success in English language learning. Al–Mutawa (1994) carried out a study to identify the attitudes of Kuwaiti students and the results indicated that Kuwaiti EFL students do not have positive attitudes towards English language and its learning. Majority of the participants of the study even do not consider English beneficial for getting better jobs.

In adjacent contexts, Karahan (2007) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between language attitudes and EFL learning. The study was driven to address to the complaints from the administration, teachers, parents and learners regarding the low English language proficiency of EFL Turkish learners. The study revealed that EFL Turkish learners bear mildly positive attitudes towards English language and its culture and interestingly the participants were not found tolerant towards those Turks who communicate in English among themselves. The findings revealed that lack of positive attitudes among EFL Turkish learners towards English language, its use in everyday communication and English culture may be the main cause of lack of English language proficiency despite the fact that they are exposed to English learning more than other subjects at Turkish schools. The study conducted by Cleary (1996) also showed a slightly different trend. His participants included Malaysian university students who reported that English language is 'conduit' for Western cultural supremacy and supported that being an Islamic country Arabic should be given more importance and equal status with English in Malaysia.

Considering its significance for effective and successful learning, a large number of exploratory studies have been conducted worldwide though a vast majority of these studies have been conducted in the advanced countries followed by Asian, African and Arab countries. Most of the studies have been reported to identify participants' attitudes in relation to their motivation considering the fact that both these constructs are closely linked to each other (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Abu-Rabia, 1997; Kızıltepe, 2000; Liu, 2007; Chalak and Kassaian, 2010; Shirbagi, 2010) whereas several other studies have attempted to investigate participants' attitudes in relation to their English language proficiency (Jordan, 1941; Jones, 1950; Randhawa&Korpan, 1973; Gardner &Smythe, 1975; Burstall, 1975) cited in (Gardner, 1985); (İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu, 2005), gender (Gagnon, 1974; Gardner &Smythe, 1975; Burstall, 1975; Jones, 1950a; 1950b; cited in (Gardner, 1985): Ellis, 1994 cited in (Soku *et al.*, 2011), learners' age, the target language culture (Morgan, 1993; Wright, 1999) and parental influences (Gardner, 1968). Though a growing mass of research clearly indicate that this important construct is being investigated thoroughly worldwide considering its pedagogical significance but there seems a scarcity of research in the Arab world especially in Saudi Arabia where very serious efforts have been made to achieve state-of-the-art English language teaching/learning facilities not only at Saudi universities but also at school level but Saudi students lack the required proficiency level (Al- **2291**

Seghayer, 2011; Javid *et al.*, 2012; Javid *et al.*, 2013). This study is an attempt to fill the gap in this regard to identify the causes related to the attitudes of Saudi university students that hinder the required English language proficiency. To do this, the emphasis is placed on PYP students who are taking their first steps towards the Higher Education endeavor.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study is governed by the following research questions related to Saudi university undergraduates' language learning attitudes:

1. What attitudes about 'English Language' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

2. What attitudes about 'The Culture of English-speaking Countries' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

3. What attitudes about 'English Language Teaching/Learning' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

4. What attitudes about 'The Teachers' Role' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

5. What attitudes about 'The Learners' Role' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

6. What attitudes about 'The Role of Mother Tongues (Arabic) in ELT' do Saudi university undergraduates report having?

3.1. Research Design

This survey/descriptive research study aims at identifying the six areas of language learning attitudes of Saudi university undergraduates represented by the participants of this study. Descriptive method of data collection, i.e., technique of a Likert-scale questionnaire has been used in this study. The description of participants, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis is given below:

3.2 Participants

A sample of convenience was used for this survey research that represents the whole population of PYP freshmen students enrolled at English Language Center, Taif University (TUELC) for the academic year 1433/1434. The study is designed to survey randomly selected Saudi university undergraduates from the PYP held at TUELC. The questionnaire was distributed during the study sessions and the participants were given sufficient time to voluntarily fill the questionnaire and the filled questionnaires were collected during the same study sessions. The total number of questionnaire (filled in by the male and female participants) returned was 176.

3.3. Instrumentation and Data Collection

Identification of language learning attitudes has been a major concern for the last several decades and the researcher has developed many instruments to investigate this extremely important factor in EFL pedagogy. For this survey research, previous studies have been intensively reviewed and a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was developed to elicit the participants' responses. The initial version of the questionnaire was presented to an expert panel that was requested to review it for face validity. Their recommendations were considered and the suggested changes were made before it was translated into Arabic by a senior linguistics professor. This translated version of the questionnaire was piloted to determine the reliability of the instrument. Inter-item consistency of the final scale of **2292**

53 indicators was determined with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .89 (See appendix 2). This final version of questionnaire has six parts: each one to identify the participants' attitudes related to the following six areas of EFL pedagogy: a) attitudes towards English language; b) attitudes towards culture of English-speaking countries; c) attitudes towards English language learning /teaching; d) attitudes towards the teachers' role; e) attitudes towards the learners' role and f) attitudes towards use of mother tongue (Arabic) in ELT.

3.4. Data Analysis

The responses of the participants were manually coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 and the descriptive statistics (i.e., the means, standard deviations and percentages) were calculated for this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 describes the items eliciting the participants' attitudes towards English language in terms of minimum values, maximum values, mean values and the standard deviation (SD).

Table-1. Attitudes towards English Language

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	I want to speak fluent and accurate English.	176	1.00	5.00	4.7841	.5334
2	Proficiency in English is one of the most crucial factors for success in the KSA.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0966	.9361
3	It is a good thing that English enjoys a high status in the KSA.	176	1.00	5.00	3.7557	1.1123
4	Proficiency in English is a mark of an educated person.	176	1.00	5.00	3.7216	1.2080
5	I want that English should be medium of instruction in the KSA.	176	1.00	5.00	2.7784	1.3864
6	I want to learn English even if it were not a compulsory course at the university.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0398	1.0973
7	I want to speak English because it makes me respected by my family, relatives and friends.	176	1.00	5.00	3.0170	1.3114

Data Analysis for the items that were included in the questionnaire to record the participants' responses related to their attitudes towards English language showed very positive trend. The first questionnaire item "I want to speak fluent and accurate English" has been assigned an extremely high value of 4.78 with a low value of SD of only .53 showing that the participants have the least inter-rater differences towards this important item. This finding partially confirms the findings of Asmari and Javid (2011) who reported that students assigned medium ranking to the item regarding their studying English for achieving high proficiency in the target language whereas the faculty did not agree with the students in this regard. Furthermore, the same study also found that English-major as well as non-English major university undergraduates assigned moderately higher values to the items stating that they like English language and they enjoy learning it. Items 2 and 6 were also assigned higher values of more than 4 suggesting that English plays an important role in achieving success in the KSA. The findings of the present study are in line with much research that reported that the participants exhibited positive attitudes towards English language and its learning conducted in the Arab world (Malallah, 2000; Shaaban and Ghaith, 2003; Al–Tamimi and Shuib, 2009), in China (Chalak and Kassaian, 2010), whereas certain other studies also showed contradicting results such as Karahan (2007) found that Turkish students do not have very positive attitudes and are not very anxious to learn English. Also, (Al–Mutawa, 1986) also reported the same for Malaysian students. Another important finding is that it has been mentioned that Saudi PYP students want to learn English even if **2293**

it were not a university requirement indicating that they have intrinsic motivation to learn English along with strong extrinsic motivation.

Much research that was carried out in EFL context worldwide suggested that EFL learners possess strong extrinsic or instrumental motivation as compared to intrinsic motivation that govern their attitudes towards English language and other related components (see for example (Zughoul and Taminian, 1984; Zughoul, 1987; Berwick and Ross, 1989; Rababah, 2003; Wu, 2004; Humphreys and Spratt, 2008; Lucas *et al.*, 2010); (Asmari and Javid, 2011); (Javid *et al.*, 2012). All these studies along with numerous others have reported the same findings but the participants of this study showed slightly different attitude towards English language and preferred that they would study English even if it were not a university requirement showing their strong intrinsic liking for the target language. One reason for this changed but very positive attitude of the participants of this study may be due to the fact that they understand the importance of English language for their academic as well future success and unconsciously they inculcate its liking and they are willing to study it not as a university requirement but as an interesting and beneficial activity. It is strongly recommended that ELT faculty especially at university level should exploit this positive attitude to keep their students motivated. The questionnaire items that meant to elicit the participants' responses related to the social status of English language in Saudi society were ranked medium values of less than 4 partially confirming the findings of Asmari and Javid (2011). Another interesting rather contradictory finding is that extremely low value of only 2.77 showed the participants' disagreement to use English language as medium of instruction in the KSA. Apparently it seems contradictory to the overall positive results of this component of attitude but it may be only due to the fact that they consider it difficult to score high marks in English as compared to other subjects and their fear of ending up with comparatively low GPA seems to encourage them to suggest not to use English the medium of instruction at Saudi educational institutions.

Table-2. Attitudes towards culture of English-speaking countries

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
8	I want to learn more about English language culture.	176	1.00	5.00	3.9148	1.0629
9	I want to learn more about events like thanks giving & Halloween.	176	1.00	5.00	2.3920	1.3689
10	I want to know more about English-speaking people because it will help me 1 speak correct English.	176	1.00	5.00	4.1193	.9456
11	I want to watch English films.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0909	1.1277
12	I want to listen to English music.	176	1.00	5.00	3.1080	1.5945
13	I want to learn English so that I am able to know English-speaking people better	176	1.00	5.00	4.2784	.9176
14	I want to learn English to know more about English language culture.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0625	1.0318
15	I want to study ELT books published in the western countries.	176	1.00	5.00	3.2330	1.3211

Table 2 details the attitudes of the participants' responses regarding the culture of English-speaking countries. This sub-category contained eight items and high mean values of more than 4 were assigned to four items: "I want to learn English so that I am able to know English-speaking people better" was ranked at the top in this category indicating that Saudi PYP students represented by the participants of this study are genuinely interested to know more about native speakers of English and their culture as well partially contradicting the findings of Abu-Ghazaleh and Hijazi (2011) who investigated Jordanian students' attitudes and reported that they do not have very positive attitudes towards native English speakers as well as their culture. Rather they consider it a threat to their native **2294**

culture. This finding strongly suggests that the participants of this study exhibited intrinsic motivational orientations confirming the findings of Asmari and Javid (2011) who reported that Saudi university undergraduates favored the items which elicited their liking towards native people and their culture. It has been reported that the cohort of this study wanted to learn English so that they might be able to enjoy English movies, but low mean values were allocated to the items that sought their response towards learning English to listen to English music and read English books. This trend clearly seems to suggest that they do not want to listen to music due to religious reasons and they seemingly lacked a culture of book reading in the Arab world in general. This finding is in line with the conclusion presented by Javid and Khairi (2011) who state that Arab students bear serious lacking in reading skills due to their strong oral tradition and the frequent use of computers and internet. Minimum value of 2.39 was allotted to the item that meant to record their response towards their cultural events like Thanksgiving and Halloween. This has been expected because these are cultural events which are not very well known especially in the Arab world, including the KSA.

Table-3. Attitudes towards English language learning /teaching

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
16	All people have same ability to learn a foreign language.	176	1.00	5.00	2.3125	1.0524
17	Saudis are good at learning English language.	176	1.00	5.00	3.1136	1.0895
18	People who speak more than one language are more intelligent.	176	1.00	5.00	3.4057	1.1943
19	Women are better at learning English language.	176	1.00	5.00	3.3466	1.1209
20	It is easier to learn English language in an English-speaking country.	176	1.00	5.00	4.5000	.7928
21	English language learning is different from learning other academic subjects.	176	1.00	5.00	3.6420	.9085
22	English language learning involves lots of memorization.	176	1.00	5.00	3.8466	1.1183
23	English language learning is effective if English vocabulary is given priority in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	4.1932	.8051
24	English language learning is effective if grammar is given priority in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0852	.9188
25	English language learning is effective if students actively participate in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	4.2045	.8234
26	English language learning is effective if variety of exercises is practiced in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	4.1648	.8951
27	English language learning is effective if English is used outside the class as well.	176	1.00	5.00	4.3750	.8115
28	English language learning is effective if group/pair work is practiced in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	3.9773	1.0581
29	English language learning is effective if modern teaching aids are used in the class.	176	1.00	5.00	4.1761	.9057
30	English language learning is effective if students use online English learning resources.	176	1.00	5.00	3.9148	1.1154

Descriptive analysis of the items related to various English language learning/teaching dynamics have been presented in table 3. First four items meant to elicit the participants' reaction towards the learners' ability of learning English as a foreign language. Least mean of only 2.31 has been allocated to the item that sought their response that all people have same ability to learn a foreign language indicating that the participants of this study believe that this ability differed significantly in different people. Likewise, the participants neither favored the supposition that Saudi students or women are better than others in learning English as a foreign language nor did they agree that speaking more than one language is a sign of intelligence. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the cohort of this study does not consider it significantly different to learn English language from that of other academic subjects. Highest mean values were assigned to the items that sought their response regarding learning English in a native country. They believed that it is extremely easy to achieve English language proficiency if it is learned in any English-speaking country.

Another very important finding of this study is that the participants of this study expressed their belief that English language cannot be learned through memorization only. This seems to suggest that they have this belief that learning a language is a skill that needs lots of practice and it cannot be **2295**

mastered by learning only the grammatical rules and vocabulary items. Therefore, English language faculty should exploit this understanding by providing them sufficient number of activities such as role-plays, simulations etc. so that they may be able to use English in real life-like situations. This is endorsed by the results of items 25 and 26 that state that learning English is effective if students are actively involved in a variety of interactive classroom activities. The finding is in accord with the previous research such as a study conducted in the same academic echo system by Javid et al. (2012) which reported that effective English language learning can be assured through interactive classes in which the students are involved in active interaction among themselves as well with their teachers. High mean value assigned to item 27 also supports this factor of interactive use of English for achieving better proficiency. The cohort of this study clearly reported that their English language proficiency will be much better if they have the opportunities to use English language outside the academic setting of the university. The participants also preferred that modern teaching facilities should be employed more frequently in language classes to ensure effective learning of the target language. This result is in agreement with the findings of Javid et al. (2012) who also emphasized to exploit modern teaching facilities for effective ELT. The remaining items of the questionnaire were allocated medium values including the one that states that group/pair work should be used more frequently to ensure better results. Considering the significance of group/pair work by virtue of its ability to increase the students' talking time and overcome their shyness, English language faculty should try their best to explain the importance of these beneficial teaching technique to their students so that group/pair work may be eminently employed more frequently to provide not only the taking-time of all, but also to provide the weaker students to practice the target language with more capable peers and without any fear or inhibition to speak in front of the whole class and their teachers.

Table-4. Attitudes towards the teachers' role

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
31	English language learning is effective if teachers give frequent assignments.	176	1.00	5.00	3.1136	1.3043
32	English language learning is effective if teachers set the learning objectives.	176	1.00	5.00	3.8295	.9882
33	English language learning is effective if teachers control the class.	176	1.00	5.00	3.9148	1.0947
34	English language learning is effective if teachers strictly follow the textbooks.	176	1.00	5.00	3.2670	1.2704
35	English language learning is effective if teachers give frequent quizzes.	176	1.00	5.00	3.5852	1.2253
36	English language learning is effective if teachers correct the mistakes immediately.	176	1.00	5.00	4.3466	.8746
37	English language learning is effective if teachers are friendly.	176	1.00	5.00	4.5170	.8484
38	English language learning is effective if teachers give individual attention to the students.	176	1.00	5.00	4.3352	.9234

The data analysis for the items 31 to 38, which were related to the attitudes of the Saudi PYD students towards teachers' role, has been detailed in table 4. High mean values have been allocated to the last three items of this category whereas all the other items remained less favored. Highest value of 4.51 showed that the participants thought that for effective English learning teachers should be friendly confirming the findings of Javid (2011) who reported that Saudi medical undergraduates prefer to have friendly atmosphere in class and revealed that they prefer those teachers who make learning fun and an interesting activity.

The same findings have been reported by Kikuchi (2005) who investigated Japanese students' attitudes. The findings have been reinforced by the less preferred responses of the participants to **2296**

other two items which state that learning is effective if teachers control the class and strictly follow the textbooks. This strongly suggests that Saudi PYD undergraduates represented by the cohort of this study believe that they learn English language more easily if teachers keep the classroom proceedings flexible and consider the mood and interest of the students so that they are able to fully concentrate on various language activities with full attention and interest. As such, strict atmosphere and fixed schedule is not preferred in the language classes by Saudi students. The finding supports the previous research conducted in the KSA context (Javid, 2011) and Japan Kikuchi (2005).

Second highest mean value remained for the item that posited that learning is effective if teachers correct the mistakes immediately. This attitude seems to suggest that Saudi undergraduates want expert teachers who provide them with right answer immediately. Furthermore, it also transpires that they do not like to try and attempt to reach the right answer themselves and want their teachers to rescue them right away.

The results are consistent with the findings of Javid (2011) who also found out that Saudi medical undergraduates have the same attitudes towards their EFL teachers. This attitude is not very conducive to effective learning because language teaching/learning process is successful if the students get involved in the classroom activities, coordinate and communicate with their peers along with the necessary help from their EFL teachers.

That is, simply expecting their teachers to give them the answer may hinder their progress in this regard. Accordingly, it is recommended that EFL faculty members should try to change their Saudi students' attitudes and make them realize that they should try their level best to find out the right answer before expecting their teachers to provide them with the one finally. The same trend seems to persist as manifested by the low mean value assigned to the items stating that EFL teachers should give frequent assignments to their students. The results are in line with the findings of the studies to elicit Saudi and Japanese students' attitudes in this regard (Javid, 2011); Kikuchi (2005).

Table-5. Attitudes towards the learners' role

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
39	English language learning is effective if learners set learning objectives for themselves.	176	1.00	5.00	4.1761	.9367
40	English language learning is effective if students attend classes regularly.	176	2.00	5.00	4.1989	.9382
41	English language learning is effective if students communicate only in English in classes.	176	1.00	5.00	4.0852	1.0302
42	English language learning is effective if learners carry out their own learning.	176	1.00	5.00	3.9375	.8954
43	English language learning is effective if learners use online resources as well.	176	1.00	5.00	3.7102	1.1064
44	English language learning is effective if learners enjoy practicing English with English-speaking foreigner friends.	176	1.00	5.00	4.3693	.9102
45	English language learning is effective if learners reward themselves when they do well in English	176	1.00	5.00	3.9773	1.0688
46	English language learning is effective if learners use CD's, cassettes and tapes frequently.	176	1.00	5.00	3.8523	1.1062

Table 5 contains the results of the data analysis of the items that were related to the participants' attitudes towards EFL learners' role for efficient English language learning process. Highest ranking of 4.36 was reported for the item 44 that articulated that the chances of acquiring better English language proficiency increase if the learners have the opportunities to practice English with native English speakers. In addition, the participants also favored the fact that it is important for better **2297**

English language proficiency that the learners should communicate only in the target language inside the classes. Based on that, it is strongly urged that EFL faculty should exploit this very positive realization among the participants and ensure that their students should only communicate in the target language with them as well as among themselves. Furthermore, learners' attending classes regularly have been ranked the second highest in this regard confirming the findings of Javid *et al.* (2012) who reported that one major cause of Saudi English-major undergraduates' low proficiency in English language is their lack of attending classes regularly. They have also strongly recommended that regular attendance should be ensured for better results. Language learning is not limited to strict classroom settings and the students who inculcate the ability of taking care of their learning are much more successful language learners.

The participants also showed medium liking to the ideas that EFL learners should have the ability and skill to carry out their own learning and they should have a role in deciding upon the learning objective for language courses. This finding seem in partial contradiction to the previous research on self-directed learning among EFL learners with an approach that implies a dependence/independence dichotomy, which exhorts EFL learners to be self-sufficient and ELF learners' independence towards the learning process. Though desirable, Clemente (2011) argues that complete dependence should be avoided for better and sustained learning possibilities.

Another important finding is that the participants did not assign higher values to the items that were included to elicit their attitudes towards using online resources and other important audio-visual aids such as CD's, cassettes and tapes for practicing the target language in their own free time to improve their English language proficiency. The results are opposite to what Javid (2011) study identified by investigating Saudi Medical undergraduates who reported to have liking for audio-visual teaching aids to enhance their English language proficiency. The participants also did not favor the idea of rewarding themselves after performing well in the target language tasks and quizzes to maintain motivation.

Table-6. Attitudes towards use of mother tongue (Arabic)

No	Item	No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
47	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to explain vocabulary.	176	1.00	5.00	3.7727	1.2715
48	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to give instructions.	176	1.00	5.00	3.5398	1.2733
49	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to explain grammar.	176	1.00	5.00	3.4205	1.3414
50	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to develop rapport with the learners.	176	1.00	5.00	3.2330	1.2637
51	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to give feedback.	176	1.00	5.00	3.1705	1.2116
52	English language learning is effective if Arabic is used to maintain discipline.	176	1.00	5.00	3.1534	1.2936
53	English language learning is effective if Arabic-English dictionaries are used.	176	1.00	5.00	3.7330	1.2704

Table 6 details the data analysis for the seven questionnaire items that were included to elicit the participants' responses towards the use of Arabic in the various classroom proceedings to ensure better and effective learning.

The participants assigned medium to low values to all the items of this category indicating that they do not favor the use of their mother tongue by the EFL teachers and believe that their learning possibilities will increase if the target language is consistently used in the classrooms. The findings **2298**

are in line with the findings of Javid *et al.* (2012) who investigated Saudi English-major undergraduates and reported that the participants believed that one of the main causes of their inability to be proficient in English language is due to the fact that the faculty members do not always use target language in English classes.

The same has been reinforced by the study of Javid (2011) which indicated that Saudi medical undergraduates represented by the cohort of the study do not like their teachers to use Arabic in the classes and consider that the consistent use of the target language by their EFL teachers in the classrooms will enable them to grasp and command English language better and easily. This positive attitudes exhibited by the participants of this study seemingly imply their awareness that language learning becomes effective if their exposure to the target language is maximum in their EFL classes. Much research has indicated that one of the major causes of the failure of Arab students in achieving the required proficiency level in English is their lack of using English language consistently with their teachers and classmates and they frequently resort to Arabic while communicating with their teachers and peers (Sahu, 1999; AlFadly, 2003; Rababah, 2003; Al-Seghayer, 2011; Javid, 2011; Javid *et al.*, 2012). The findings of this empirical study showing positive attitudes of Saudi PYD freshmen towards consistent use of English in their EFL classes is an encouraging sign and should be exploited properly. Further, EFL faculty members are urged not only to use the target language themselves but also motivate and exhort their students to use the target language in their communication with their peers inside as well outside the classrooms so that they may have maximum possible exposure and practice of English that will ultimately help them achieve much sought after goals of better English proficiency.

5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study is a comprehensive investigation of the attitudes of Saudi PYD freshmen studying at Taif University towards various dynamics of English language teaching/learning process . The findings have significant implications for English language pedagogy considering the fact that the results of this study provide a detailed survey of psychological underpinnings of Saudi EFL learners. The participants of this study exhibited positive attitudes towards English language. Another important finding is that it has been mentioned that Saudi PYD students want to learn English even if it were not a university requirement indicating that they are genuinely motivated to learn English. Thus it is recommended that this positive attitude of Saudi EFL learners should be exploited properly to enhance and maintain their inclinations in this regard.

The attitudes of the participants towards the culture of English-speaking countries also showed reasonably high preferences; they assigned high mean values of more than 4 to four items out of the total eight. This finding seems to suggest that the participants of this study bear intrinsic motivational orientations in line with the findings of the first sub-category of this questionnaire. Considering their positive attitudes, it seems easy to get them involved into language learning activities inside as well as outside the classroom to maximize their learning possibilities.

Data generated through the descriptive analysis indicate that the participants showed mature attitudes towards the process of language learning as they did not exhibit any unfound beliefs in favor of any nationality or gender. As for the language learning is concerned, the participants of this study expressed their belief that English language cannot be learned through memorization only. This is also **2299**

a very positive sign on their part because it shows that they understand that learning a language is a skill that needs lots of practice and it cannot be mastered by learning the grammatical rules and vocabulary items only. It is strongly exhorted that English language faculty should exploit this understanding by providing them with sufficient activities such as role-plays, simulations etc. so that they may be able to use English in real life-like situations.

It is further endorsed by their preference that learning English is effective if students are actively involved in a variety of interactive classroom activities. Based on the findings of this survey, it is also strongly recommended that university administrations should provide the classrooms with all the required modern teaching facilities. Furthermore, it also seems extremely important that English faculty should try their level best to exploit these modern teaching aids efficiently according to the needs and exploit pair/group work during the English classes to enable their students to practice English language intensively in a relaxed atmosphere.

It has also been reported that Saudi undergraduates like friendly teachers who maintain relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and do not prefer strict teachers. Those EFL teachers who are reported to be preferred tend to keep the classroom proceedings flexible and consider the mood and interest of the students so that they are able to fully concentrate on various language activities with full attention and interest. It is thus seems important that EFL faculty teaching in Saudi educational institutes should avoid enforcing strict atmosphere and fixed schedules and try their level best to consider the interest of the students while teaching.

This also rquires including more interactive activities in addition to following the assigned textbooks so that the learners' motivation can be kept high. Furthermore, the participants reported that they do not favor the use of their mother tongue by the EFL teachers and believe that their learning possibilities will increase if the target language is consistently used in the classrooms.

It is strongly urged that EFL faculty should exploit this very positive realization among the participants and ensure that their students should only communicate in the target language with them as well as with each other not only in the academic setting of their classrooms but also they should hunt the opportunities to communicate in the target language outside the classroom as well.

They should be convinced of the benefit of practicing the target language in real life setting and be guided to use online sites which provide the facility to chat with their friends from all over the world in the target language. They should create and join special interest groups to compensate for the lack of opportunities to use the target language in the Saudi society.

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Appendices :   Appendix # 1

استبانة حول اتجاهات طلاب السنة التحضيرية نحو تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

1. **المعلومات الشخصية**

مسار السنة التحضيرية: الاسم (اختياري):

البريد الالكتروني: ذكر   أنثى   جنس (ضع دائرة):

2.ضع علامة X امامالاختيارالمناسب

يقوم الباحثون بدراسة اتجاهات متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية نحو تعلم اللغة الانجليزية. يرجى قراءة الفقرات   في الحقل
ثم وضع علامة X المناسب حسب المقياس التالي:

1= لا أوافق بشدة   2= لا أوافق   3= لا اعرف

4= موافق   5= موافق بشدة

5	4	3	2	1	الفقرات	م
موافق بشدة	موافق	لا أعرف	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة	**الاتجاهات نحو اللغة الانجليزية**	أ
					أريد أن أتحدث اللغة الانجليزية بطلاقة ودقة.	1
					تعتبر الكفاءة في اللغة الانجليزية احد أهم العوامل الهامة للنجاح في المملكة.	2
					احتلال اللغة الانجليزية منزلة عالية في المملكة يعتبر أمرا جيدا.	3
					تعتبر الكفاءة في اللغة الانجليزية دليل على تعلم الشخص.	4
					أريد أن تكون اللغة الانجليزية هي لغة التعليم في المملكة.	5
					أريد أن أتعلم اللغة الانجليزية حتى لو لم تكن مقررا إجباريا في الجامعة.	6
					أريد أن أتحدث اللغة الانجليزية لأنها تكسبني احترام عائلتي، وأقاربي، وأصدقائي.	7
موافق بشدة	موافق	لا أعرف	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة	**الاتجاهات نحو ثقافة البلدان الناطقة باللغة الانجليزية**	ب
					أريد أن أتعلم المزيد عن ثقافة اللغة الانجليزية.	8
					أريد أن أعرف اكثرعن أحداث مثل عيد الشكر وعيد الفصح.	9
					أريد أن اعرف أكثر عن الأشخاص الناطقين باللغة الانجليزية لأنه سوف يساعدني على تحدث اللغة الانجليزية بشكل صحيح.	10
					أريد أن أشاهد الأفلام الانجليزية.	11
					أريد أن استمع للموسيقى الانجليزية.	12
					أريد أن أتعلم اللغة الانجليزية لأكون قادرا على معرفة الأشخاص الناطقين باللغة الانجليزية بشكل أفضل.	13
					أريد أن أتعلم اللغة الانجليزية لكي اعرف أكثر عن ثقافة اللغة.	14
					أريد أن ادرس كتب تعلم اللغة الانجليزية التي يتم نشرها في بلدان الغرب.	15
موافق بشدة	موافق	لا أعرف	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة	**الاتجاهات نحو تعلم وتعليم اللغة الانجليزية**	ج
					كل الأشخاص لديهم نفس القدرة لتعلم لغة أجنبية.	16
					السعوديون جيدون في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.	17
					الأشخاص الذين يتحدثون أكثر من لغة هم أكثر ذكاء.	18
					الإناث أفضل في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.	19
					يعتبر تعلم اللغة الانجليزية في بلد ناطق باللغة الانجليزية أمرا أسهل.	20
					يختلف تعلم اللغة الانجليزية عن تعلم المواضيع الأكاديمية الأخرى.	21
					يتضمن تعلم اللغة الانجليزية الكثير من الحفظ.	22
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا أعطيت المفردات أولوية في الفصل الدراسي.	23
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا أعطيت القواعد أولوية في الفصل الدراسي.	24
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا شارك الطلاب بفاعلية في الفصل الدراسي.	25
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تم التدريب على التمارين في الفصل الدراسي.	26
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تم استخدام اللغة خارج الفصل الدراسي بشكل جيد.	27
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تم التدريب ضمن مجموعة زوجية أو جماعية.	28

موافق بشدة	موافق	لا أعرف	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة		
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تم استعمال وسائل تعليم حديثة في الفصل الدراسي.	29
					يكون تعلم اللغة ألانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استعمل الطلاب مصادر تعتمد على الانترنت.	30
موافق بشدة	**موافق**	**لا أعرف**	**لا أوافق**	**لا أوافق بشدة**	**الاتجاهات نحو دور المدرس**	**د**
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا أعطى المدرسون واجبات بشكل متكرر.	31
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا وضع المدرسون أهداف التعلم.	32
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا سيطر المدرسون على الفصل الدراسي.	33
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا اتبع المدرسون بدقة الكتب الدراسية.	34
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا أعطى المدرسون اختبارات قصيرة بشكل متكرر.	35
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا قام المدرسون بتصحيح الأخطاء بشكل فوري.	36
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا كان المدرسون ودودين	37
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا أعطى المدرسون اهتمام خاص بالطلاب.	38
موافق بشدة	**موافق**	**لا أعرف**	**لا أوافق**	**لا أوافق بشدة**	**الاتجاهات نحو دور المتعلم**	**ﻫ**
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا وضع المتعلمون أهداف تعلميه لأنفسهم.	39
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا حضر الطلاب الدروس بشكل منتظم.	40
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تخاطب الطلاب فقط باللغة الانجليزية.	41
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا قام الطلاب بتنفيذ العملية التعلمية الخاصة بهم.	42
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدم المتعلمون بشكل جيد مصادر تعتمد على الانترنت.	43
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استمع المتعلمون بممارسة اللغة الانجليزية مع أصدقاء أجانب يتحدثون اللغة الانجليزية.	44
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا قام المتعلمون بمكافئة أنفسهم عندما يؤدون بشكل جيد في اللغة الانجليزية.	45
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدم المتعلمون الأقراص وأشرطة الكاسيت بشكل متكرر.	46
موافق بشدة	**موافق**	**لا أعرف**	**لا أوافق**	**لا أوافق بشدة**	**الاتجاهات نحو استخدام اللغة الأم (اللغة العربية)**	**و**
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية في تفسير معاني المفردات.	47
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية في شرح التعليمات.	48
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية في شرح القواعد.	49
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية لتطوير علاقات وثيقة مع المتعلمين.	50

					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية في إعطاء تغذية عكسية.	51
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا استخدمت اللغة العربية في حفظ الانضباط.	52
					يكون تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ذا فاعلية إذا تم استخدام قواميس عربي-انجليزي.	53

مع الشكر