Introducing High-Tech Translation at Undergraduate Level to Enhance Students' Language Competence and Awareness

A Case study geared to improve the standards of English and Arabic of Khulais Undergraduate Students of Faculty of Science & Arts, Department of English & Translation

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of introducing teaching of translation at the undergraduate level by the Department of English & Translation, Faculty of Science & Arts, *King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia* with the aim of exploring and developing aspects of communicative competence and language awareness. The study is applied to 1st year students studying science subjects and humanities. The research hypotheses have been tested against a sample group of 40 respondents out of 160 students. The researchers explored a number of linguistic and non-linguistic, namely socio-cultural factors responsible for the students' lowering standards of language proficiency. Then an intensive language course to acquire the requisite basic skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking was designed in order to place the students at a reasonable position to initiate their remedial translation program.

Keywords: Translation teaching, Communicative competence, Language awareness, High-tech

1. Introduction

The majority of the students who are admitted into the new branch of King Abdul Aziz University at Khulais, Faculty of Science and Arts, have very poor knowledge of English language. Despite the fact that these students have scored significantly high marks in the admission exam to college, they still have very disturbing problems with reading and writing and they can hardly communicate orally. What is more upsetting is that they show a distinct lack of interest for learning. They are not motivated. So many of the students have a very scanty opportunity to study English at the university as they have majored in science subjects. Moreover, they are not well placed to receive knowledge in the area of their scientific majors as long as English is used in these departments as the medium of instruction. For some students, the situation is further blurred by a number of non-linguistic factors which might act as a stumbling block preventing any kind of intervention to set the bar for developing language competence.

There are as many as 160 students who have been admitted to the college this year. Two thirds of these have enrolled in humanities - which include English and literature. The overall level of achievement of this category is generally observed to be lower compared to the science students. One crucial factor is also detected in connection with the majority of the students is that they have been to public secondary schools wherein the quality of teaching is dreadfully shocking. Even the few who have frequented the private schools, their levels do not display any marked disparities from those of their public peers, and both sectors, exam scores have been deliberately rigged or inflated, judging by their poor performance. Though the private schools hire teachers from abroad who are well trained and well placed to perform the teaching operation along the known methods of teaching, they are tempted to follow the footprints of their counterparts at the public schools. Expatriate teachers shall not have their contracts renewed unless they conform to the policies of the administration of the private school which implicitly entail exerting all kinds of efforts to help students acquire higher marks in final exams. So, as a defensive mechanism, expatriate teachers who have quitted their homelands to realize certain financial ends, have to fall into the quagmire of their peer national teachers.

At public schools most teachers, who are nationals, did not receive any rigorous kind of teacher training required to handle their classes effectively. The luckier ones have attended short on-the – job training sessions where their training course has barely touched on the core methods of teaching not to mention the absence of the complete teaching which should be part and parcel of any training course. So they have, if any, a relatively inadequate mastery of the proper teaching methods and techniques. Hence, the use of instruction aids is noticeably ignored as they relied heavily on the text-books and the chalkboard. The learning environment at some of these schools particularly at rural settings is not favorable for imparting or receiving knowledge. Moreover, the objectives of teaching English are not clear to most teachers particularly the aspect of developing the students' communicative competence. So, it is at the secondary level the problem is largely rooted, the thing which does not augur well for any future intervention to stop the ongoing deterioration as this is the stage in which the potential skills for learning are expected to be sown.

2. Statement of the Problem

The data which has informed the present study was, in part drawn from an interview with a senior inspector at the Ministry of Education who was also an old practitioner and is currently the head of the inspection bureau. A questionnaire (designed in Arabic) was distributed to the entire students to fill out. The questions the students responded to are to a great extent similar to those of the interview. The aim is to find out to what extent the answers of the students compared with those of the senior inspector can go well together to arrive at a consistent result.

A part from the scholastic factors mentioned earlier at the introduction, there are of course other aspects responsible for the ongoing deterioration. These include social, cultural, pedagogical and motivation problems. To begin with, the fledgling college is placed at a rural setting, that students who come from the surrounding areas form the bulk of the college students. Almost all these students were born to parents who are plainly illiterate, hence they as it is widely perceived by them as a less important component of the disciplines their attach very little importance to the value of learning in general.

It is axiomatic that cultural beliefs have a powerful effect on learners' attitudes to learning." Any modern educator," Hilda Taba suggested, "knows that cultural disparity between the home environment and the schools sets up obstacles to learning". Imbibed elements of a drastically indigenous culture that abhors all that is foreign, parents have failed to give the supportive and appropriate type of parental guidance required for the love of learning. In view of this attitude, the situation for learning English is unutterably not encouraging. Learning English has not formed part of their concerns as long children should excel in. In comparison, they believe, if ever, that specializing in Arabic or religious studies is the kind of learning they should pursue or major in. This is largely because they lack the ability to understand well enough the importance of English in today's world.

It is a self-evident truth, that language is a vehicle of thought and culture. To learn a language effectively you don't have to absorb the culture of the target language so much that it transforms or replaces one's culture, but at least accept its recognized norms. To help students learn the language effectively key cultural issues of the target language should be an integral part of the curriculum. Linguists and anthropologists have long recognized that the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken. Linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). In fact, students cannot have a full grasp of the language unless they fully understand the cultural contexts in which that language operates. Language learners have to realize or know, for example, the culturally proper ways of addressing people, expressing gratitude, making requests, and agreeing or disagreeing with someone. Language as a means of social interaction has to be learnt quite effectively to function properly whether at learning venues or society at large. It must be emphasized that "a person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture of group" (Gray, 1969:24).

In view of the above, national educational policies which are so much uncompromising and dogmatic, have detrimentally acted against certain cross-cultural sets. Accordingly, the authorities quite invariably interfere to erase some of the illustrative pictures in international English language teaching courses on the flimsiest pretext that they are pornographic or offensive. "On the beach", for example, is one such typical theme, among other things. So vocabulary associated with or taught in relation to such situations like sunbathing, customary clothing, particularly women's underwear (bikini, brassiere) will not be introduced and taught. Massive educational reform is required to expose biases, stereotypes and educational policies that can affect the process of learning. This kind of intervention has to be dealt with quite seriously and urgently should the unwelcoming learning situation be improved.

Pedagogically speaking, secondary school teachers at public schools hardly use audio-visual teaching aids in their classes, they even never take the trouble to exploit the illustrations contained in the textbooks for situational teaching. What worsens the situation more is that they do not model quite well the specific themes which they present to their students to enliven their classes and create a favorable learning environment in order to provide an opportunity for the students to practice the language to be learnt in the classrooms, and then in real life situations as this is the ultimate aim of learning a language. Despite the fact that public and private schools are adequately fitted with state-of-the-art audio-visual teaching aids, teachers rely so extensively on the chalkboard, textbooks and Grammar Translation method. Listening and speaking are barely dealt with. There are schools which are provided with language laboratories along with intensive listening and speaking material which can create a motivating authentic environment for learning English if they have been fully utilized.

Furthermore, teachers, ill-disposed to present their lessons energetically can account for the worsening standards of the students oral proficiency. Language practice in the classroom setting is essential for the inculcation of the oral and listening skills which can afterwards be extended beyond the classroom boundaries. The excessive use of Arabic as a medium of imparting knowledge in English classes has likewise further deteriorated the students' oral skill. Being incapable of expressing oneself orally shall further have the effect of lowering the students' motivation. Moreover, overtaken by the feeling of being unable to interact, students may resort to playing with their mobile phones to keep themselves busy during English classes, hence widening the rift for learning a foreign language. So, as time went by, their reluctance to become involved in learning would reach its maximum due to their failure to acquire the rudimentary tools of the language, the fact that they would grow even more demotivated. Consequently, the whole thing becomes hopeless and irreparable.

Additionally, when they should be planning to use ground-breaking teaching methods and techniques to help their students use the language communicatively, teachers devote much time to training students to scoring high marks in the final exam. In this respect, they keep repetitively explaining grammatical patterns and similar structures that can be memorized for the exams.

"Teachers everywhere are anxious about the parts of the syllabus which are expected to be part of the examinations and at the same time are afraid of taking risk with materials which clearly are not related to the examinations. Learners also generally become impatient with Materials which they think will not be of great help in their examinations (Prodromou: 1995). So, straitjacketed by the frightening prospect of the examinations, teachers and students alike will ignore all the learning materials that are not expected to be part of the exam. It is this skipped material which will help the students develop aspects of oral communicative competence.

Private schools, in this connection, are not better than public schools. Urged by a prospect of very high percentage of enrollment which truthfully corresponds to an increase of their financial revenues, private schools are tempted to adopt the same techniques that blighted the teaching and learning of English at the public schools in an attempt to make their students exam scores go up quite remarkably. So we have a situation in which students have attained significantly high test-scores, yet in stark contrast to poor mastery of the basics of the language. They are bad spellers, writers and readers. Yet again, secondary school teachers neither vary their teaching nor use the appropriate teaching methods. The dominant approach observed to be used across the public and private schools is the Grammar Translation method. Ellis and Tomlinson (1980), suggested some basic skills to be taught to learners so that they can write essays proficiently. Such sub skills include spelling, punctuation, linguistic skills as well as conventions of style. However, these *mechanics* are only capable of being well established through energetic innovative teaching and active use of teaching aids at a very hospitable environment for learning.

The kind of syllabus pursued at the intermediate and secondary Saudi schools is an integrated communicative course which encourages the use of such communicative techniques as the pair work, group work, among others. The students are keen to develop these communicative oral and writing skills, but the kind of teaching and fear of examinations have unavoidably continued to pose insurmountable problems. It was stated clearly by the syllabus designers that by the end of the last course in the series students would be placed in a fairly positive position to use English moderately well to achieve their communicative ends. One of the foreign teachers at a private school argued that students are naturally motivated and keen to perform all the assignments given to them and very enthusiastic to learn. Most of them, particularly those who were born to educated parents and brought up in urban settings hope to proceed with learning beyond the frontiers of their country, and though language activities such as discussions, games, role-play and so on are directly linked with their desired aim, they concurrently felt that skills needed for the exam have the priority to be developed first and foremost.

In view of the above, Al-Khuli (1981) explains, "Experience has shown that both teachers and students emphasize what tests emphasize. In consequence, if there is a leak in the testing system, this will cause leaks in the processes of teaching and learning". Accordingly , teachers are disinclined to devote much time to handling those items which do not constitute part of or related to the exam.

Writing skill is further marred by the teachers little or no efforts to explain new lexical items in English , for example. They immediately jump to providing the equivalent in Arabic. Moreover, students are not encouraged to practice any kind of writing independently. Writing is a teacher tightly controlled activity to prevent the occurrence of mistakes by students. As a technique this sounds logical as it is intended to learn certain language patterns, however, the teacher should relax their grip gradually to allow for control-free practice in order not to strangle the students' innovative faculties. Students should be encouraged to write, quite independently, compositions which actually reflect their vocabulary repertoire and their innovative thinking. Cleve (1992) stressed the use of techniques such as guided controlled and free writing techniques in writing. The implication of this is that controlled expression is required to infuse into the learner the mastery of certain linguistic patterns desirable to generate a clear piece of writing free from all grammatical errors, for example. Malinowski (1991), emphasized that composition writing is a difficult skill to acquire, and recommended therefore, that teachers must use a variety of methods for teaching English Language. The teacher resorts to nominating certain topics for the students where they learn them by heart after making a few changes by the teacher himself. Students' knowledge of grammar is terribly appalling, too. Almost all students are incapable of forming the simplest grammatically correct statements.

As a result, Teachers at the secondary schools have thoroughly failed to bring about a conducive environment for learning, partly because of their poor training and mostly because they were forced to do so to meet the demands of examination and therefore help students acquire high grades. Reyner et al (2001:57), stressed that "many good teachers are adaptive rather than rigid in their approach to teaching children and only loosely base their instruction on a given method". Teachers are no longer knowledge providers. Almost all current literature in second language learning stress one single fact that the teachers' role as one who imparts knowledge will shift to a role in which teachers are facilitators of learning when technology is integrated into the school curriculum. With the application of modern technology in the classroom, instruction can be more student-centered and individualized.

Judging by what is referred to above, the factors responsible for deterioration are varied and critically intertwined rendering the whole situation beyond the scope of quick repair. Working against the tremendous awkward odds mentioned here, shall take a long time to produce a scanty positive change. It is true that teacher training can be addressed and be remedied but the commercialized aspect of education as reflected in teaching for the exam to guarantee high percentage of enrollment in privately run schools hence maximizing their financial lot will continue to pose the greatest risk for education in general, and consequently more morbid types of students are annually funneled into higher educational institutions with the effect of further transmitting the infection there, too. To open up whole new vistas and revive hope of improvement in second language learning, new language policies have to be carefully worked out and have their implementation be made obligatory, and that teachers be made committed to observe them.

3. Remedial Program

In order for the administration of the College to help improve the terribly deteriorating standards of language proficiency amongst the undergraduate students, translation was suggested as one of the many proposed techniques to meet the requirements of the remedial program. It would seem principally impossible to use translation with a variety of students who ignore the basics of the language. However, translation has been proposed as a companion component along with many other *modus operandi* aimed at hoisting the level of the students' language knowledge and intellectual skills. Translation would only be resorted to after the students have undergone rigorous language training and that a sufficient dose of language input was administered. So addressing the ailing linguistic points-reading, writing and speaking through an intensive language course is the *sine qua non* for the success of the translation component.

3.1 Language Component

Interactions- a newly revised, comprehensive program designed to prepare students for academic success in reading, writing, speaking and listening was adopted. All the writing genres are nicely covered along with vocabulary building strategies including even critical thinking. As far as speaking and listening are concerned speaking and pronunciation strategies have been dealt with in an all-inclusive coverage. Grammar and punctuation aspects were given adequate time and treatment. Thematic chapters covering core grammar areas are provided coupled with grammar practice and exercises. This program was initially intended to be heavily applied in a couple of month before beginning the translation component, however the need is sharply felt for yet a third additional month to further sharpen the students' tools of language and avoid a possible relapse. By adopting a tight plan of action compounded by rigorous ongoing supervision, the program has significantly increased the students' language awareness and their communicative competence too even before they have a go on translation. By definition, Language awareness, refers to the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language. Now, some students have started forming grammatically correct sentences, and some have picked up some of the language functions which speakers use to go about their daily life. Some were reported to be using the little language input they have managed to learn to communicate with their peers.

3.2 Translation Component

A part from raising their language standards to a reasonable higher level, it is undoubtedly prerequisite for the students to perform adequately well in translation to have their scope of world knowledge and culture remarkably widened. It is therefore suggested that students should do substantial amount of independent reading in English were they to be able to handle the texts to be assigned to them upon initiating their translation component program. It was also suggested that students be encouraged to use high tech devices in translation such as electronic dictionaries as this is likely to make the process of translation interesting and expected to bring about a noticeable rapid progress. With these luminous modern gadgetry

gadgets, impatient students are likely to stay with their work and do their assignments energetically.

The translation component has been started after two of the language program. The program took as its point of departure, the translation of common simple structures like greeting, asking for information, names of common types of food and simple proverbs from English into Arabic. Some keener students are asked to attempt part of the passages they studied in reading and writing. However, most students have not managed to step beyond translating simple phrases and clauses until the second test was administered. All in all it's a successful start as long as it paved the way for enormous work yet to come. Typical examples of the students' work:

Translate the following into Arabic: (i) Good morning. (ii) How are you? (iii) How old are you? (iv) What is the name of your school? (v) What do you like about your school? (vi) What are your plans for future? (vii) What is your father? (viii) Where are you from? (ix) Who is your favorite athlete? (x) What does he like or dislike about his life and work? (xi) I interviewed a classmate. (xii) I distinguished fact from opinion (xiii) I ordered information from general to specific.

Some students who are willing to proceed with practice beyond sentence level, have attempted translating simple paragraphs like the one below:

........*You can become a better writer by practicing often. For this reason you are going to keep a journal in class. Journal writing is a free-writing exercise. In free writing you write quickly about what you are thinking or feeling*

To allow for the smooth incorporation of the translation element to be applied, tutors at college are encouraged to draw on Arabic wherever possible, as to compare and contrast those points of the two languages that lend up themselves to comparison. Schweers, (1999) stresses the importance of translation teaching in this connection as a vital tool to promote students' sense of language awareness, maintain classroom vital atmosphere, provide a sense of peace and harmony, and validate and enrich the learner's experience. Although this argument goes contrary, in part, to our overall aim of improving the students' language, translation, can still be manipulated in a way as to cater for the enhancement of the basic skills as well boosting students' language awareness. This can be achieved by getting the learners match and contrast language points such as grammar, vocabulary, and word order and sound system with that of their mother tongue. N.J Ross (2000) states that if students are well informed of the variations in forms and structures between their L1 and L2, the phenomenon of transfer, will be kept to a minimum. It is through translation classes only that the similarities and differences underlying both languages in question can be pinpointed quite clearly. This analytical handling of the structures of both languages shall have the effect of widening the learners' language awareness.

Translation in ELT literature is often described as the fifth language skill. Certainly, it is a social skill as long as it broadens the base for understanding between strangers and hence facilitates cross-cultural communication. Despite the multiple claims provided by those

opposing the use of translation as an ELT teaching technique on the ground that it encourages thinking in one language and transferring into another, it is obvious that almost all students learning a foreign language will keep involuntarily translating from L2 into L1. So, it is a self-evident truth which makes the use of translation in foreign language teaching as essential. J.Harmer, (2001) states that "No one doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do." Therefore, it is a natural activity that is going on all the time.

4. Subjects

Subjects for this study are 40 out of 160 preliminary year undergraduate students at King Abdul Aziz University-Faculty of Science and Arts- Khulais. Some are studying   humanities and others science subjects. Translation, customarily, is introduced according to the Faculty regulations at third year, where students have already started prerequisite translation oriented courses of reading and writing both in English and Arabic. However, for the sake of the current program it was shifted to lower classes (1st &2nd levels). The reading texts are handled in such a way as to expose them to different jargons, whereas writing was made to focus on the structure of the English sentence with specific attention to cohesive devices.

At this level, students chiefly study selected topics with a high percentage of exposure to language areas of economy, agriculture, medicine, commerce, arts, media, history, etc.. so that they can have a good grasp of the different jargons embedded in the said disciplines. Initially, as regards the translation operation, students are asked to translate from English into Arabic for a whole semester. This was observed to be relatively easier than otherwise, and more motivating as they get about their work straightforwardly. Students are encouraged to use their electronic dictionaries to the best of their abilities, to render the texts they were handling. Traditional dictionaries have completely disappeared. Google translation was denied at first, and then allowed after they have been taught how to improve it.

5. Hypotheses

In this study the following hypotheses have been tested:

• Students' secondary school final exam scores do not reflect their actual language proficiency. Students have attained high marks while their performance in English classes reflects very poor mastery of the basic language skills.

• Almost all students have lower levels of motivation attributable to a number of linguistic and non-linguistic factors.

• Teaching at the secondary schools, where the problem is deeply rooted, was not carried out along the known language teaching methods and techniques. Teachers were unsuccessful in introducing the favorable environment for learning a language as the preparation of their students for the final exam took a firm grip of their minds. The teaching operation is, thus, chiefly conducted to meet the final exam needs.

• Students' language awareness and communicative competence have been badly ruined as a result of bad teaching that stresses the use of Arabic at every teaching situation.

6. Previous Studies

Most previous studies have been enormously diagnostic in nature, attempted to single out the kind of errors Arab students encounter in their endeavors to learn English as a second or a foreign language. In Jordan, Abud Al-Haq (1982-1) as cited in Rababah , (2003, stresses that 'there are general outcries about the continuous deterioration of the standards of English proficiency of students among school teachers, university instructors and all who are concerned with English language teaching'. All those who set out to handle the issue in question have sufficed themselves by stating that Arab students face serious writing and speaking hurdles,(e.g.Zughoul, 1991, 2003; Rababah, 2001, 2003; AlKhuwaileh and Shoumali, 2000).The present study differs from the previous attempts in that it suggests translation as a workable solution which proved to be successful right from the very beginning.

In the Sudan, Kambal (1980) has explored the types of errors made by undergraduate students at the University of Khartoum in free compositions. He demonstrated that students made errors in three major areas n, namely syntactic: verb phrase and noun phrase. He reported three types of errors in connection with the verb phrase: verb formation, tense, and subject-verb agreement. Egyptian students have almost demonstrated the same mistakes. Wahba (1998) stresses that ' Egyptian students face certain problems related to pronunciation. Some of these problems are related to stress, others are related to intonation. However, most of these problems can be attributed to the differences in pronunciation between English and Arabic'.

A number of similar studies have conducted across the Arab world in countries like Syria, Yemen, etc. They all have in common the investigative nature which explores the root-cause of the problems while providing no or little solution.

7. Methodology

Two main instruments for data collection were used in the present paper: a questionnaire and an interview with a senior inspector at the inspection bureau. The questionnaire, which was worded in Arabic, has been distributed to the students to fill out in order to solicit responses in relation to the following areas:

1) Type of school (Public as opposed to Private) they attended.

2) Teachers' use of audio-visual aids.

3) Teachers' methods and techniques of teaching (Do they use English language to explain things or resort to Arabic –how often.

4) Do they give assignments and encourage students (motivate) students whether in classes or write praise remarks on students' notebooks.

5) Do they help students with their writing assignments by giving them guidelines or prepare the whole task themselves (compositions) and order students to learn it by heart.

The questionnaire was handed to the students prior to taking a T-test test which was conducted one step ahead of the employment of the proposed intensive language program which is basically designed to improve their lowering standards. The T-test was designed in a way as to examine the four basic skills chiefly as well as the other relevant linguistic aspects. In filling out the questionnaire, students have unanimously admitted that their teachers at secondary schools have excessively drawn on Arabic in their English classes. This can account, particularly, for the poor grasp of the oral communicative competence on their part. This is more so as the students have insufficient time to practice English whether listening or speaking inside the classroom. There is an opportunity to practice their English beyond the classroom setting with expatriate workers who abound in the country and who use English to communicate. However, the painful experience they have had in the classroom is depressing enough to practice any kind of communication in English outside the classroom. Truly, students learn a lot from the teacher's language when delivering classes in English. Students have been observed to imitate the teacher's language of instruction and they even learn and use some of the words which the teacher uses when speaking. So, it sounds logical to assume that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in English classes would have the effect of depriving the students from a considerable language input, thus they cannot speak or understand the spoken language.

As for the results drawn from their performance in the T-test which reflected their limitations and inadequacies, the researcher has grouped them under the following categories to facilitate their analysis:

1) Students performance on the T-test has shown drastic grammatical errors in writing which conform to their poor mastery of English grammar. Accordingly, they can hardly use "the verb to be" correctly, subject-verb agreement is largely missing, the use of tenses is terribly shocking,

2) All students are bad spellers, writers and readers,

3) Vocabulary is horrible, particularly the use of nouns adjectives and word order is completely absent,

4) All students failed to use punctuation properly, namely linking devices ,

5) There are glaring errors associated with the pronunciation and the use of the stress. Most students would for example substitute /havi/ for /hav/, /madi/ for /meid/. The use of stress is irreparable.

After two months of excessive remedial work targeting the four skills - which is chiefly directed towards addressing the above problematic areas, the same T-test was used again to reassess the students achievement: As far as the writing skill is concerned students have been trained in grammar, spelling and tenses with specific reference to areas such as subject-verb agreement, right use of the verb to be. They were instructed how to write simple sentences and then short paragraphs. They were also taught how to recognize and use correct punctuation focusing mainly in the use of capital letters with proper nouns and after periods- not to mention the use of linking devices. The textbooks that were used to develop this skill

and others, are those teaching courses called "Interactions", where each skill is handled separately in one particular course of the series. Raising students' awareness of English phonics and phonemes has thoroughly been handled in reading and speaking classes. Correct pronunciation and sound use of the stress was not ignored. Two more classes were allocated to voluntary reading that was carried out under the supervision of the tutors. In connection with voluntary reading students were equipped with simplified English readers-mainly literature classics to help increase their vocabulary and augment their world knowledge.

8. Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are included in the study:

- Only three skills have been taken in consideration in analyzing the students' performance in the exam, namely reading writing and speaking.

- The sample tested in the exam included only 40 students, 18 science students and 22 students of humanities.

- Some non-linguistic factors (such as family background) has not been explored adequately due to sensitive social barriers.

9. Analysis and Discussion

9.1 Participants

The participants were 40 students (all males- the country's rules and regulations do not favor co-education), the study was conducted with the aim of identifying the students progress and to what extent they have benefited from the remedial course after they have been subjected to a rigorous study for three months including the elements of translation which was mainly introduced here as a technique to help boost their standards along with the other components of the course. Students were randomly chosen from amongst 160. They were given two tests. One before the booster program, and the same test after three months. To facilitate the process of analysis, and for lack of space the population of the present study shall be divided into two categories chiefly:

- Students studying science subjects

- Students studying humanities including literature and linguistics.

9.2 Measures

To cite the students' progress, scores of the T- Test shall be compared with the marks attained by students when the same T- Test was administered for the second time. All the four skills shall be considered here, namely reading, writing and speaking as these have proved to be testable and measurable. In testing reading and speaking special attention was paid to the quality of pronunciation and the use of the stress. In testing writing four topics have been provided for the students to choose from:

- Think of a famous person who inspires you, an athlete, a movie star, then write a composition about him or her. You may say things like where the person lives, what is the person famous for. Talk about his or her family, upbringing, education and so on.

- Describe your town. Where is it? Is it big and crowded or small and quiet? What do you like about it?

- A trip. Where did you go? Who did you go with? How did you go there? Did you enjoy yourself? Do you like to go there again?

- Childhood. Where were you born? Who were you used to play with? When did you go to school? Did you like your classmates? Who of your tutors you still remember? What did he or she use to teach you? Did you like his or her subject?

9.3 Procedures

Students are encouraged to write as much as they can, so long as this process will allow for more errors to accumulate and hence help provide a better opportunity for forming an idea of their progress and give an insight into how such errors can be addressed. All these remedies are conducted with the aim of putting them on the right path to begin the translation program, the last step in their remedial provisional program. In marking their compositions and writing in general orthographical errors have been strictly dealt with. Use of lexical items as regards appropriacy to the context was also observed. Syntax, morphology and style errors were considered, too. However, for lack of space all the errors have been grouped together and handled as a single entity.

10. Results

The pre-Test (diagnostic) was conducted immediately after the students settled in the university right on the first week, before the beginning of the formal college program. The two groups (science and literary students) took the test in one lecture room. The marks of each group were saved in a separate folder, in order to be compared with the same post- test that shall be given after 3 months. The marks of the students as exhibited in the two tests have been subjected to statistical analysis through the application of(SPSS) for the two paired groups.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentages of Respondents

Marks	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 11.00	1	2.5	2.5	2.5
12.00	1	2.5	2.5	5.0
14.00	2	5.0	5.0	10.0
15.00	1	2.5	2.5	12.5
16.00	1	2.5	2.5	15.0
19.00	2	5.0	5.0	20.0
21.00	1	2.5	2.5	22.5
22.00	1	2.5	2.5	25.0
27.00	2	5.0	5.0	30.0
29.00	1	2.5	2.5	32.5
31.00	2	5.0	5.0	37.5
33.00	1	2.5	2.5	40.0
35.00	1	2.5	2.5	42.5
37.00	1	2.5	2.5	45.0
39.00	3	7.5	7.5	52.5
40.00	1	2.5	2.5	55.0
42.00	1	2.5	2.5	57.5
45.00	1	2.5	2.5	60.0
46.00	1	2.5	2.5	62.5
47.00	3	7.5	7.5	70.0
49.00	1	2.5	2.5	72.5
51.00	1	2.5	2.5	75.0
52.00	2	5.0	5.0	80.0
53.00	1	2.5	2.5	82.5
55.00	3	7.5	7.5	90.0
57.00	1	2.5	2.5	92.5
60.00	1	2.5	2.5	95.0
63.00	1	2.5	2.5	97.5
70.00	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre Marks	44.6667	18	13.79685	3.25195
	Post Marks	47.9444	18	15.70864	3.70256

Table 3. Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pre Marks – Post Marks	-3.2778	3.92287	.92463	-5.2286	-1.3270	-3.545	17	.002

Table 4. Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Pre Marks & Post Marks	18	.973	.000

The students' performance as shown by the table has improved quite noticeably in the post-test . Aremarkable progress is recorded by science students as the mean scores and standard deviation indicate that there is a significant difference (.000) as refelected by the paired correlations of samples. Students doing humanities have also improved as shown in table (1). The reasons for the science students to be distinctly improved and far better than their peers in humanities is due to ceratin factors including the following:

a) Judging by the above figures, researchers have found out that students who have come from an educated family back-ground stood the chance to benefit greatly from this atmosphere of learning.

b) They were observed to be hard workers.

c) This group enjoyed much parental support at home which had a significant effect on their progress and attainment. They have also come from urban settings and have no direct attachment to the environment of the place where the college is situated.

11. Conclusion

Saudi undergraduate students at the Faculty of Science and Arts-Khulais face numerous harsh problems in using the four basic skills of language learning. What worsens the situation in their case, is that their mistakes have been fossilized over the course of their study as they owe their origin to early intermediate school in which English was first introduced. The situation has become so challenging that it takes a relatively long time to introduce the proper remedy. The situation also reflects a very critical point in relation to the objectives of English language teaching. Though the objectives of language teaching are to a greater extent universal with only relatively minor differences from one setting or country to another, these objectives are indistinct to the majority of classroom practitioners in the Saudi schools. They take as their prime objective the preparation of finalist students to score high marks in the final examination and hence design their teaching plans and approaches to realize the said aim at the expense of effective language teaching, necessary for widening students' language awareness, broadening their scope of world knowledge and strengthening their language competence.

Language teaching at lower grades is not an exception as teachers who are nationals draw heavily on Arabic to instruct their students. The objectives of English language teaching at this stage are also unclear and teachers, apparently scarcely take the trouble to think as to how they can improve their students communicative use of language.

Translation proved to be one of the techniques or strategies that foreign language learners usually switch to when encounter communicative hurdles. In the present paper translation is thought of as a means of enhancing students' language awareness and further improve their communicative competence.

To help improve the overall deteriorating situation a massive reform program has to be adopted first by the Ministry of General Education, where the problem with the deteriorating standards is largely rooted at the intermediate and secondary schools. Teacher training should form an essential component of any reform project. Ongoing supervision and inspection is part and parcel of any successful reform program. Teachers should be trained to adopt student-centered and learning-centered approaches to learning, and have to make use of common techniques as group work, and pair work. This has the effect of reducing the psychological stress of having to face the whole class, particularly amongst shy students. It is very much important that teachers should motivate their students, praising them and acknowledging even their slightest contribution. Some students are shy to speak up their minds or express themselves before their peers. Extrinsic motivation as practiced by the teacher would help encourage such kind of students to progressively take part in classes. This would maximize their performance in English and hence would help them gradually overcome their inhibitions. It is also so strongly recommended that teachers have to draw so excessively on English language in their teaching situations and avoid using Arabic as far as possible.

Teachers should make use of the fact that Saudi students are less shy and anxious. They are even more outgoing, friendly and have love for learning new things. Teachers can exploit this positive reality and make their teaching more attractive by varying the teaching aids, their instructional techniques, resorting to making dialogue with their pupils by asking about their own personal affairs such as how enjoyed their last vacation, talking about their likes and dislikes and even befriend their students. Galliher et al. (1995) emphasizes that classroom practitioners should put themselves in resource brokers' shoes. A possible effect of this is that they should vary their instructional approaches and classroom techniques, and above all they have to be eclectic rather than adamantly stick to one single method or technique. Their teaching methods should be guided by the needs of their students at a certain time or venue. They should also encourage them to communicate in English during break hours and reward those reported those communicate in English.

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