



## PROSPECTIVE GRADUATES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN BAHRAIN

B. Janaki

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kingdom University, Kingdom of Bahrain

### ABSTRACT

The undergraduate level students in the Kingdom of Bahrain have problems in the acquisition of English as a second language. Most of the Bahraini students, who have spent ample years of learning English (from junior to secondary school), fail to acquire an expected level of proficiency in English when they enroll into the University for higher education. As a result, they are not easily absorbed by the global market.

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to identify the Bahraini students' attitude towards learning English as a foreign/second language in the university which in turn can help in devising the ways and means to bring in the necessary changes to achieve the expected level of proficiency.

**Material & Method:** The samples consist of 50 randomly selected Kingdom University students of College of Business Administration and College of Architectural Engineering & Interior Design. The survey handout is not a questionnaire but a series of statements with a choice of fixed five different responses. It mainly consists of three parts. The first part has 12 statements based on the reasons for learning English; second part has 12 based on how the students feel about English lessons and the third part has 6 statements to analyze how the students feel about learning English.

**Results & Discussions:** The analyses of Parts A, B & C encapsulate that the students are aware of the usefulness of English and feel that the activities they are engaged with during the English classes to be beneficial and are contented with the progress they have been making since their school is in the acquisition of the proficiency of English language. Now, the question arises whether the students are achieving the expected level of proficiency, when they enroll into the university. Thus, this study lays the scope to identify the gap between the school level curriculum and college level expected frame of reference which is to be addressed by the educationists seriously as the findings portray a positive attitude towards English learning from the prospective graduators.

**KEYWORDS:** ELT (English Language Teaching), EFL (English as a Foreign Language), ESL (English as a Second Language) KU (Kingdom University)

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### Article History

Received: 9 Jan 2018 / Revised: 22 Jan 2018 / Accepted: 05 Feb 2018

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### INTRODUCTION

English language is the global link language which has carved out a place for itself amidst local languages in multilingual communities.

Its acquisition can guarantee the ticket to explore the opportunities of “employment, traveling, higher education, and even better life” (Crystal, 1997).

Teaching English in schools starts from the first grade of the private school with three-hour weekly program and continues in the secondary education. Despite this, the school graduates can't communicate in English (Mahmoodi, 1990). They do not know how to use the commonest structures of English. The mistake is in Educational system itself as teacher's target is to “prepare” his students for the examination and not to make them skilled in the use of the language they are learning (Subramanian, 1985).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study attempts to examine the reasons behind the attitudes of the Bahraini students to acquire the expected level of proficiency in English, despite learning it from the first year of junior to last year of secondary school. Even though various efforts have been taken by the Bahraini educationalists for improving the situation of English language teaching for the past few decades, a disappointing situation still exists in the achievement of English learning among the students. So, it is important to explore real reasons behind the poor achievements of the students in English. It is also important to identify the problems the students encounter in the process of learning English.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are presented below:

- To explore the ways of developing ELT in Bahrain at the university level.
- To analyze the perceptions of students about the following:
- Reasons for learning English
- Feelings towards English lessons
- Feelings about learning English

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For systematically describing the situation, a Descriptive Method is used to examine attitudes of the university students towards the English language learning. At the same time, this study could be called as a qualitative research which deals with issues not directly observable.

### **Materials**

The sample in the present study consists of 50 randomly selected Kingdom University students of College of Business Administration and College of Architectural Engineering & Interior Design.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1: Analysis of Part A: Reasons for Studying English**

	Now Please Let me Know why You are Learning English. I'm Learning English Because	I Strongly Think So.	I Think So.	I Cannot Tell for Sure.	I don't Think so.	I don't Think So at all.
1	I want to get good marks in English tests and improve My evaluation in the school report.	37	12	1	0	0
2	I want to be able to understand English movies and TV programmes without looking at subtitles.	31	15	1	3	0
3	I want to enter a secondary school or a university of my choice.	23	12	11	1	3
4	I want to be able to read English books and magazines With ease.	33	10	4	2	1
5	I want to study at a school or a university in a foreign Country if I have a chance.	21	12	9	5	3
6	I want to make friends with people living in foreign countries by exchanging letters and e-mails.	16	18	8	6	2
7	I want to get a nice job with good salaries and good working conditions.	42	6	1	1	0
8	I want to be able to communicate freely in English with people from different countries.	37	9	1	2	1
9	I want to get a job in which I can use my English.	30	13	4	2	1
10	I want to learn about the lifestyles and customs in foreign countries such as England and America.	15	19	11	4	1
11	I want to work either for an international organisation (e.g. the EU) or for a global company (e.g., Nokia).	11	17	15	6	1
12	I want to know how the English language reflects the way of thinking of English-speaking people.	18	18	10	3	1

The above responses by the student samples signify that there is a strong liking and need for gaining the proficiency in English. The neutral and negative responses are nearly negligible when compared to the strong positive responses. Hence, more than 75% either strongly think or think that it is necessary to gain good marks in English tests as it can help in the following:

- Understand English movies and TV programmes better
- Enroll into the chosen higher educational institutes
- Read English books and magazines with ease
- Study abroad
- Make friends with people living in foreign countries
- Get a nice job with good salaries and working conditions
- Communicate fluently with foreigners

- Get a job in which the tasks are carried out predominantly in English
- Learn about lifestyles of the West
- Work for a global company
- Know how the English language reflects the way of thinking of English-speaking people

**Table 2: Analysis of Part B: How Do Students Feel About English Lessons?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Now Please Let Me Know How You Feel About English Lessons	I Strongly think So.	I think So.	I cannot tell for Sure.	I don't think so.	I don't think So at all.
1	I enjoy my English lessons.	32	15	3	0	0
2	I enjoy singing English songs in class.	5	14	8	10	13
3	I enjoy doing games and tasks in English in class.	14	14	12	6	4
4	I enjoy communicating with my classmates in English in class.	18	20	7	3	2
5	I want to be able to pronounce English just like Englishmen or Americans.	26	17	4	2	1
6	I think pronunciation symbols are useful for learning correct word pronunciation.	20	23	5	1	1
7	I think activities to translate English into Arabic have helped me to learn English.	22	15	8	2	3
8	I think I understand the English in my English textbooks well enough.	23	15	10	2	0
9	I think English textbooks have helped me a lot to learn English.	25	17	6	1	1
10	I spend more time on doing English homework than on doing homework of other subjects.	8	13	11	9	9
11	I think I have learned how to learn English through my English lessons.	18	19	10	2	1
12	I wish to be taught English from time to time by British or American teachers.	16	16	8	9	1

It can be noted that the responses indicate the strong willingness to participate in English classes as the lessons include English songs, games, tasks, communication, pronunciation symbols and sounds, translation, text books, homework and nearly 32 out of 50 respondents have mentioned that they would like to be taught English from time to time by British or American teachers. The ratio of the positive and negative responses suggest that the students are aware of what happens in English classes and the objectives of the lessons imparted in English classes.

**Table 3: Analysis of Part C: How Do the Students Feel About Learning English?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Now Please Let Me Know How You Feel About Learning English.	I Strongly Think So.	I Think So.	I Cannot Tell For Sure.	I Don't Think So.	I Don't Think So at All
1	I think learning English is important for my future.	44	4	1	1	0
2	I think learning English has improved my Arabic as well.	25	12	5	6	2
3	I think learning English has helped (or will help) me to learn another foreign language.	22	18	6	3	1
4	I have become more interested in what is happening in the world through learning English.	23	18	6	2	1
5	I am satisfied with my English ability I have acquired through my English lessons.	18	20	11	1	0
6	I wish to continue learning English even after I start working in society.	26	15	5	3	1

The responses summarize that the students feel positive about learning English; they are interested in the acquisition of English language and satisfied with the gradual progress they have been making. They have expressed their willingness to continue to use and improve English in the future as well.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analyses of Parts A, B & C encapsulate that the students are aware of the usefulness of English and feel that the activities they are engaged with during the English classes to be beneficial and are contented with the progress they

have been making since their school in the acquisition of the proficiency of the English language. Now, the question arises whether the students are achieving the expected level of proficiency when they enroll into the university. Thus, this study lays the scope to identify the gap between the school level curriculum and college level expected frame of reference which is to be addressed by the educationists seriously as the findings portray a positive attitude towards English learning from the prospective graduators.

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