

Factors Affecting Learning and Teaching of Spoken English as a Second Language in Libya Using a Case of Tripoli

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Abstract

The study is aimed at establishing factors that can influence the teaching of English as a second language regarding writing, reading, speaking and listening in Libya using a case of Tripoli. Libya is an Arab speaking nation. The study is a correlation in design and worked to expound on how different factors are brought together to form the English language. The study took into consideration psycholinguistic, linguistic, classroom and bilingual learning, and sociolinguistic factors perspectives. The participants were 100 Form 5 Secondary students together with 24 English teachers all from secondary schools in Tripoli. Instruments used are questionnaires for teachers, learners and students' performance in the four English macro skills. The following factors were found to be in correlation with learner's learning of English macro-skills: age, the frequency of use, the purpose of use, use of English at home, motivation and career aspirations.

Key words: *macro-skills, performance, learning factors, SLA, language skills, Libyan learners*

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background and Statement of Problem

1.1.1 The Sociocultural Context

Marcus (2005) identified two crucial truths in Pacific history that make the uniqueness of people's culture around the globe. Even though there are many changes in the world, many people have always found pleasure, pride and respect for their language and cultural heritage which are important markers of cultural identity. The feeling of honor and dignity has been personified in the concern expressed continuously in Libya, to nourish and protect such unique language and traditions. Mathewson (2007), uttered this concern during a talk on "Vernacular language in South Pacific education": it is worth appreciating the fact that language is tied up with culture. Hence, the concern regarding language is part of the interest regarding the entire culture, and about the whole way of life.

Taufe'ulungaki (2013), also spoke about the same concern in her talk during a conference on “community language.” Currently, in many parts of the world, vulnerable and small language communities, as well as their cultures, are getting eroded as a result of other powerful languages and culture.

Marcus (2014), referred to this effect as a “modernization era.” All countries in the world are going through modernization leading to an opening of researchers, tourism, and investments. People go to other countries to look for employment; increasing population leading to lack of enough land; an increase in telecommunication; and the high need for money leads to modernization. This process has availed opportunities which attract many people away from a way of living that was based on farming, fishing, and agriculture, to a ‘white-collar’ existence whose achievement in social mobility, status and employment depend on good education. For one to communicate effectively with many people in the world, then English knowledge is a critical component since it is the core media in which instructions are conveyed. It leads to high demand to learn and understand how to use English, and it becomes such a significant need as the desire to understand local dialect for the sake of maintaining cultural heritage.

1.1.2 The Roles of Arabic and English in the Society

Spolsky B. (2003), states that local languages are for oral use. The local dialect is essential in helping people communicate every day at their community, home, government, and stores. In Libya, the Cabinet carries out their daily business in the local dialect, hence making the official language. Spolsky (1997), also indicates the use of written local dialect. Mosques Quran is available written in the Arabic language. Local language is also for community and personal identity and nurturing and maintaining cultural traditions (Svanes, 2013). In the primary school, for instance, the Arabic language is used as an official medium of instruction. Spolsky (2013), states that spoken English is useful for conversation when communicating with visitors, expatriates, and tourists.

According to Tarone (2014), English is not only a subject but serves as a medium of conveying instructions at the secondary level of learning. English is an official medium of instructions at both secondary and primary schools. However, in as much as English might serve as the best medium of communication, Arabic is an official language. English is never put to practice as such. English language teachers get it more comfortable teaching in Arabic. At this point, it is either they teach English using their local language as a medium, or they put in practice both Arabic and English alternately as a medium when explaining (Strong, 2014). Both written and oral English is used in education. English seems to be the written language of trade, commerce, technology and higher administration. Written English is used at the road and street signs intended for visitors and tourists. Like many countries in the world currently, English is used for international communication.

1.2 The Purpose of the Study

- A. To determine
 - I. Their performance in writing, reading, and listening speaking English
 - II. The linguistic as well as non-linguistic factors that relate to students learning of English language macro skills
- B. To compare the perception of learners and secondary English teachers on aspects that connect to the learning of English language macro skills
- C. To put in practice linguistic theory to try and account for:

- i. The performance of learners
- ii. Other aspects that affect the teaching of English language as a second language is on macro skill development.
- iii. Teachers and students view on issues which affect English as a second language macro skill development.

1.3 Research Design and Methodology

The study is correlational and descriptive. It describes the student's prowess in using English language macro skills and explores features which relate to their courage in using the English language macro skills learned. Data was collected from two primary information sources. The test performance of the learners in four types of macro skills of English and assessment of insight not only of teachers but also of students who partake in the process of learning and teaching of English at the secondary school level.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The primary aim of the research is its attempts to identify aspects which might be related with the studying of English language macro-skills by secondary learners. If some elements correlate with learner's performance in English language macro skills, then the factors might be the cause of the challenge faced by learners in learning English language macro skills. It is only an experimental study which could endorse that. This form of information can be vital, both to English teachers as well as the Education Ministry. Also, language writers and planners will benefit a lot. The research will also contribute to the study literature in the area of Second Language Learning.

1.5 Structure of the Report

The background of the study has been given in this Chapter. Chapter two comprises literature review that is of the essence to the focus of the paper. A full description of the research design as well as methodology is given in Chapter three. Chapter four presents the finding of the article, and Chapter five is a detailed discussion of the findings in the light of linguistic theory. Chapter six involves recommendation and conclusions.

Chapter Two Review of literature

2.1 Introduction

The efforts to identify potential and significant factors leading to failure and success in the leaning of the foreign language (FL) or second language (SL) has been part of the research in second language acquisition (SLA) for a long time (Olstain., Shohamy, Kemp, & Chatow, 2014). Since these factors are many, investigations like this should have an understanding of SLA as an occurrence, especially the various features that are involved in the process of acquiring or learning the second language. Through the knowledge of these aspects, one will be in a position to provide a reasonable basis regarding the type of issues to be studied.

Another way of considering SLA is also elaborated by Patkowski (2014) view, "Second language learning is a product of various factors involving the learner and learning institution both working together. What is given by tins view is not different description of SLA from aforementioned, but an alternative method of organizing the same features of SLA as well as explaining them regarding specific relevance to the factors that relate to learners as well as the

environment in which the learning is happening. Various scholars have used this method through different modifications regarding how these factors are categorized and conceptualized.

Pienemann (2017), for instance, gave the difference between elements which are 'internal' and 'external' to the student. External factors are variables like social environment, LI, and biological factors like age. Internal factors include aspects of learners linguistic and cognitive capacities as well as the mental structures. This typology of issues was involved in the multi-dimensional framework used in studying aspects important to learning of the second language.

Another way of grouping Spolsky theory of the second language gives these factors. The theory states that achievements of different outcomes in the learning of the second language are an outcome of four different groups. He expresses the claim in the formula, $K_f = K_p + A + M + O$. K_f represents knowledge, K_p stands for skills, A represents different components of prowess including intellectual, biological and cognitive skills; M represents factors like attitudes, personality, anxiety, and motivation; O represents an opportunity for studying the language.

Pierson, G.S, & Lee, 2015, add that so important are these factors in second language learning that Spolsky states that "each of the parts leads to different results: if anyone is not present then no learning will take place."

2.2 Knowing a second language

Savignon (2018) refers SLA as a non-uniformed and random occurrence. His view signifies the diversity and complexity of learning a second language. The difficulty of SLA leads Beebe, (2007) to state that various interdisciplinary approaches are useful in viewing SLA in a bid to attain a better understating.

What is being replicated by the multiple interdisciplinary methods regarding any study of potential factors leading to failure and success of SLA is that for one to identify what the issues might be, then one must look at SLA from a different perspective. It is only through an accurate survey that a good SLA is attained (Beebe, 2007).

One of the initial concerns in hypothesizing what it takes to understand the second language is embodied in the need to state the knowledge a language student has regarding the target language. The inter-language theory is one of the previous trials to elaborate the information regarding the second language in the area of SLA.

The word interlanguage was started by Selinker (2016) in a bid to clarify information regarding L2 as a framework of intermediate grammars and fundamental rules designed by the second language learners as they purpose to understand the second language. Even though this grammar is imperfect and incomplete, Selinker states that it creates a unified whole. Selinker considers this grammar as a product of various psychological mechanisms together with its development is not the same as that of natural language. Adjemian (2016) modifies the views by Selinker on the second language by stating that students' understanding on a second language has a dynamic appeal meaning that students might use items and rules from the first language or overgeneralize a rule from the target dialect when trying to find a meaning.

Tarone E. (2016), agrees with Adjemian that inter-languages work just like natural languages but she contradicts Adjemin for she stresses the idea of variability in the students' knowledge of the second languages. Supporting the notion of variability is the debate that inter-language is analyzable into a set of different styles that depend on the context being used. Tarone E. (2016), for instance, insists that variability in a different language is as a result of style shifting on a

range that is in turn caused by variables shifts in the level of focus which the student gives to expression.

From this brief discussion of inter-language theory, a language student's knowledge of a second language is elaborated as a combined systematic whole working on the same principles of natural communication; variability characterizes understanding of the first language, knowledge of the second language.

Chomsky's linguistic theory, even though it was initially used to describe LI acquisition, has proved to be the commonly used theory to second language information. Weir (2017), states that it is not accurate to perceive 'understanding of English' to be ability or capacity, though it finds a way into ability or capacity that is practiced in language use. In principle, one can have the cognitive structure that you can "understanding of English" fully advanced, with no capability to make use of the structure. This opinion shows the difference between two forms of knowledge in Gregg, (2014), between 'knowledge how' and 'knowledge what.

2.3 Language testing

Regarding the particular reference to any study of issues affecting SLA, Pienemann (2017), states that when a trial is made to sort out issues affecting the development of language proficiency, one always has the problem of measuring proficiency. One of the critical problems in an assessment of a language prowess is as documented by (Brindley, 2015) that the area of Language Proficiency Assessment is laden with excess confusing terminology. Scholars in second language learning, for instance, have suggested ways of making second language teaching as well as testing more 'communicative.' Because a communicative method better reflects the condition of language ability than one which emphasizes the acquiring of discrete language skills.

From a more psycholinguistic viewpoint, Bialystock (2017) suggests a processing model which tries to explain the difference between the second language learners' understanding and his prowess to make use of the language. In the last development of this model, Bialystock (2017) states that knowing the second language comprises two different components: the brain representation of methodical, and organized data regarding the target language; second, the procedure for efficiently and effectively retrieving the same knowledge in the right situation. Since these components are different, according to Bialystok, the process of studying of each of them may be autonomous, apart from that a structure should be shown mentally before its implementation. Concerning the retrieval process of her theory, Bialystok notes that some difference among students might exist regarding their efficiency, which is called 'automaticity' that is the foundation of fluency. As a result of differences in eloquence from and autonomous of knowledge, a language student may be hesitant and accurate, fluent and accurate, or fluent and inaccurate Bialystock (2017).

Sharwood-Smith, (2010) takes from Bialystok and suggests a psychological model which differentiates between control and competence. According to his model, ability, just as it is for Chomsky's theory about generative grammar, is the abstract demonstration of knowledge, in the manner of unanalyzed of analyzed rules, kept in the long-term memory. The control comprises of mechanisms which give room to availability to the understanding in the long-term memory and integrated with various information that has been accessed in the form of utterance comprehension and utterance production (Sharwood-Smith, 2010).

Conversely, the language learners' knowledge of a new language is elaborated in the form of their knowledge of rules and structures of that language. On the other hand, the language learners in described based on how to use the grammar of that language to conduct their functions. It is important to understand that, knowing the grammatical system of a language is not linguistic competence but having the ability to get that kind of knowledge and putting it into practice to partake several functions.

2.4 Form of knowledge

In using information processing theory of memory and cognition proposed by O'Malley, Walker, & Chama (2016) gives Anderson's differences of 'declarative understanding' and 'procedural knowledge.' According to Anderson's model, declarative knowledge comprises examples of people knowing the definition of words, rules, and facts, and this is the kind of knowledge embodied in the long-term memory as general meaning. In using this kind of knowledge to SLA, then the information in either L2 or LI has a meaningful representation and can be stored as declarative knowledge in the form of schema or propositional networks. This is rule-bound and factual information, and the manner in which it is arranged in the memory can have a great effect on L2 learner's capability to translate it accurately and efficiently into a new language.

2.5 Conclusion

From this review, one can appreciate and begin to see that learning a second language is not an easy task. It also confirms that teaching a second language is very difficult. The complication of the factors involved in during the learning of the second language make it difficult to state as to whether there is a success in the learning of the second language or not. The review has identified both internal and external factors that affect the learning of the second language. Also, this review has given not only general guidelines but also basis upon which the methodology and design of this study have been based.

Chapter Three

Research design and methodology

3.1 Research Design

This is a quantitative research with various approaches.

The primary purpose of this research is in its attempt to establish non-linguistic and linguistic factors associated with learners' learning of English language macro-skills in high schools. For one to establish what the factors might be, the research is designed to investigate whether there is any link between what learners consider to be affecting their studying of the four English learning macro-skills as well as their actual performance in those macro-skills. This necessitated the use of correlation approach.

A further purpose of the study was to give a characterization of the performance of learners in the four English language macro-skills. The process is referred to as a measurement of learners' performance in the skills and the use of the outcome to define the nature of their scores. This method was descriptive as determined. The results gave the basis for the correlational study.

Another dimension used as one purpose of the research was to compare how both English teachers and students perceive factors that are associated with studying of English dialectal macro-skills at secondary schools. The nature of this purpose, as well as the type of data needed, necessitated the use of a survey means of approach.

The last purpose of the research was to account for perception and performance of the learners regarding applied linguistic theories. This needed a literature search in a bid to get a connection between the research as well as its results with available methods in the areas of applied linguistics and linguistics.

3.2 Research Sample

A sample of the study involved 100 in the third year of study in secondary school as well 24 Form 5 English teachers from Tripoli.

3.3 Data sources and types of data for the study

The quantitative data collected for the research were found from three primary sources:

- 1) Test results of learners' performance regarding four English language skills – speaking, reading, and listening.
- 2) Survey questionnaire answered by the students
- 3) A survey questionnaire completed by teachers of the learners.

3.4 Research Instruments

Types of data gathered and purpose of this research necessitated for the use of questionnaires and language tests as the core data collecting tools. Language testing was perceived appropriate because of its ability to give information regarding students' use and knowledge of English as a second language and suitability. The questionnaire was used since it is appropriate for collecting quantitative information.

3.5 Data Collection

The researcher contacted various authorities whose support and approval was necessary so as the undertaking of the study was made more comfortable. The research was conducted at the researcher's financial cost. The Ministry of Education was requested to permit the survey in Tripoli schools. The consent was given two days prior. The researcher wrote to all school principals selected for the research asking for permission. The researcher collected the data for a period of three weeks, March to April 2018.

The teacher and learner questionnaires were piloted by two teachers and ten students from every school. Needed changes were made, and the final version of questionnaires was made.

Questionnaires were brought to schools at each school's convenience. The speaking, writing, reading as well as listening part of the test, as well as the learner's questionnaire, were given in groups at single sitting under the watch of the researcher. Time allocation for the test was two and half hours while 25 – 30 minutes for the questionnaire. The students have informed the purpose of the study before filling the surveys. Everyone listened to the tape before starting the test.

With the help of the school principals and deputy principals, the questionnaires were passed to teachers who completed them at their own time and the researcher took them back.

3.6 Data Analysis

All the test papers were marked and entered into the computer. The researcher with the help of two independent raters, both experienced Libyan English teachers, were hired to help in rating. On the speaking part, the assessors had to agree on the right answers. Assessment Criteria used in Britain was used (Weir, 2009). The scores given for subject's performance in personal questions of every English language macro-skill were combined to make a single global score. The global rating showed the achievement of every item in the set of skills tested. Every subject

was given its ratings, one for each of the English language macro-skills. The scores were entered into the ffiM computer with the help of SPSS for analysis.

The Data were coded. The answers provided on the scale of five were scored 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in the design from (1) most positive to (5) most negative. Items answered by recognizing suitable substitutes were given 1. The system was used both in teacher and student questionnaires, hence providing quantified outcomes for analysis.

Chapter Four

4.1 Findings of the study

This chapter provides findings of the study and the summary of the findings given.

4.1.1 Performance in Reading

Figure 1 indicates sharing of scores in the speaking performance. Almost half (53.3%) of learners got 50% in this segment. 46.7% got 50% and more. The best score was 97.5%, and the lowest gained 7.5%.

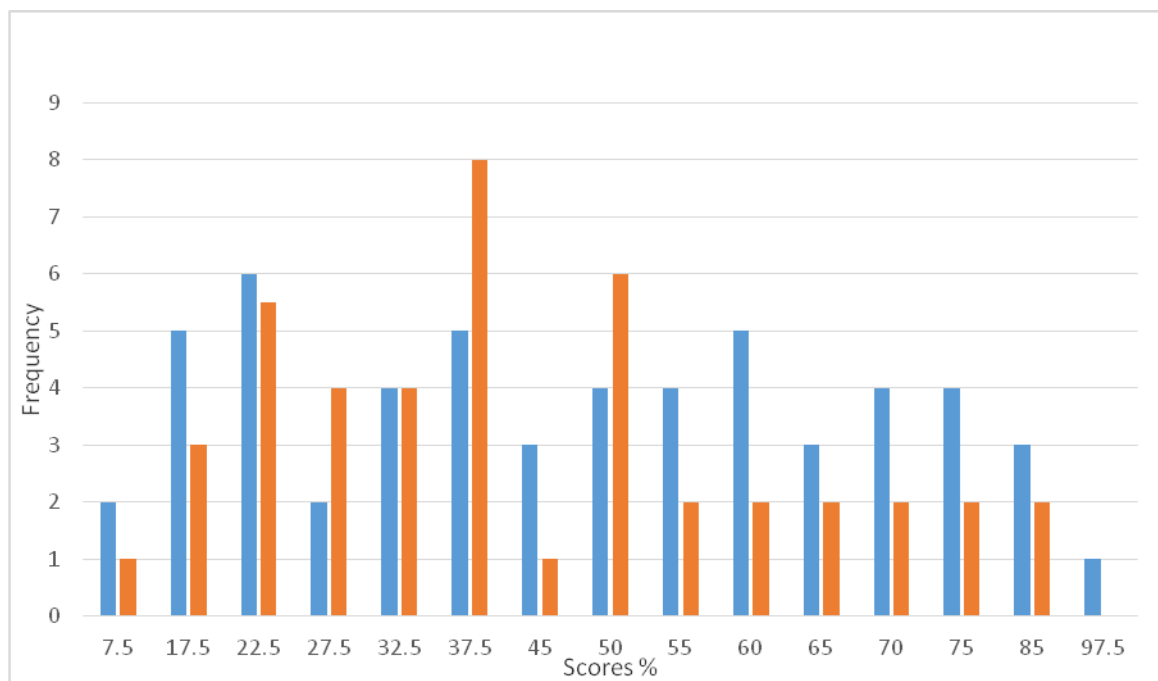


Figure 1: performance in reading

4.1.2 Performance in Writing

Figure 2 shows low performance in writing.

The distribution of scores in Figure 2 reveals a low performance in writing again.

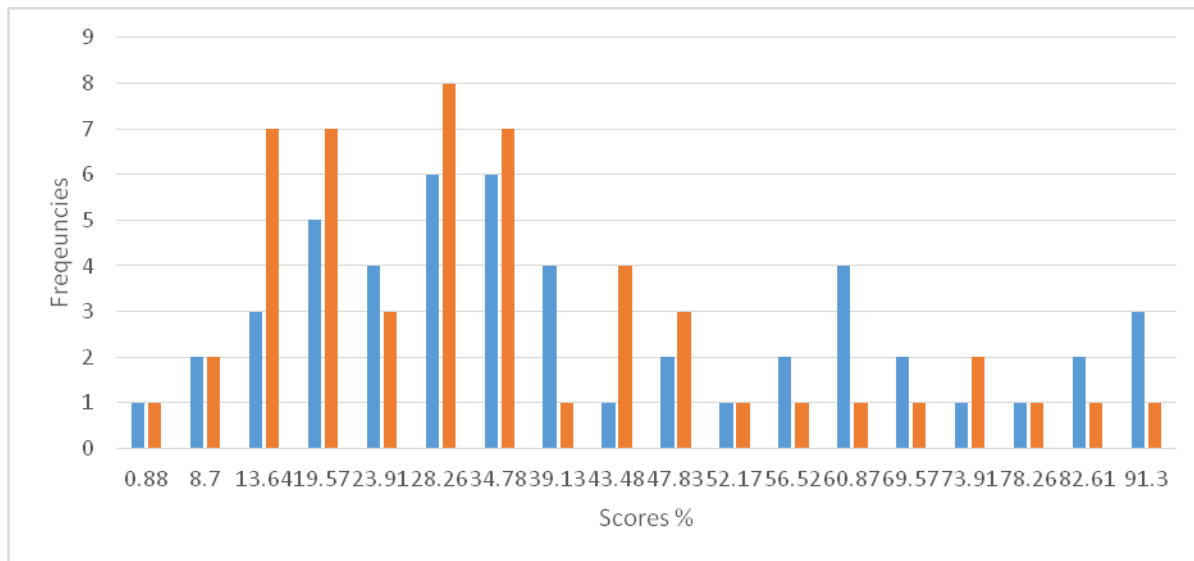


Figure 2: performance in writing

Of all the learners sampled, 74.7% scored less than 50%, and 25.5 got 50% or more. The best score was 91.3% while the least was 8.7%.

4.1.4 Performance in Speaking

Figure 4 shows the distribution of scores in speaking performance

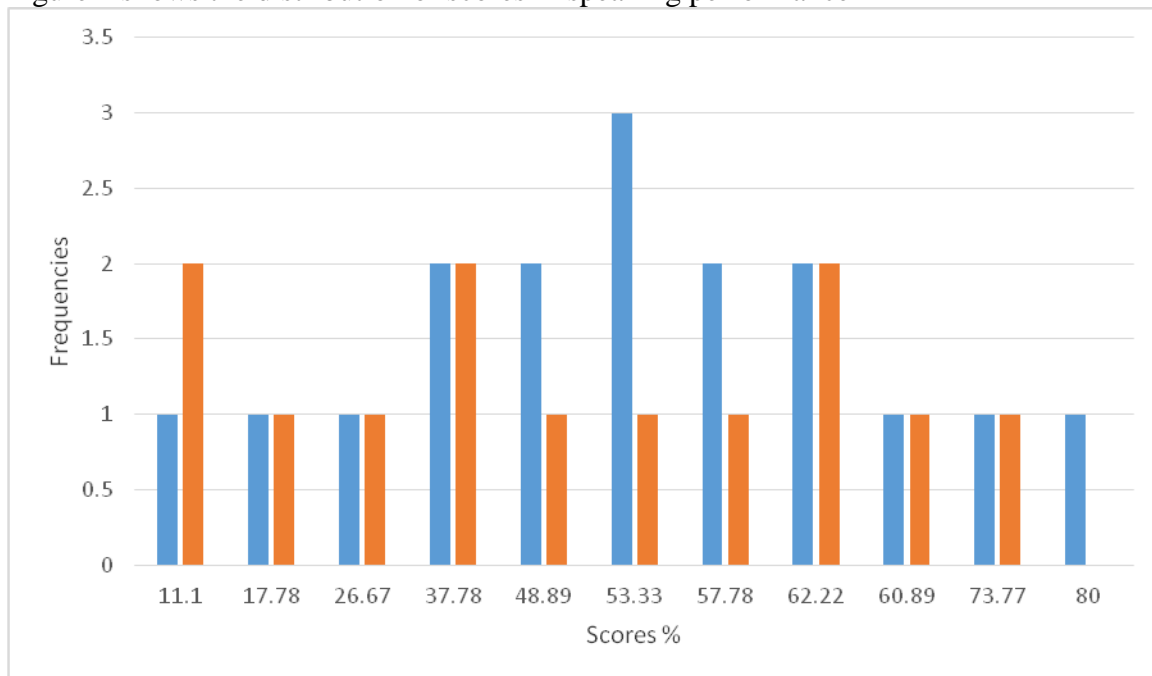


Figure 4 Performance in speaking

Out of 30 students who took part in speaking, 56.7% scored 50 % or more while 43.3 scored less than 50%. The best performance was 80% while 11.1% was the poorest score.

Table 5: Mean, Ranges and Standard Deviation of learners' performance in all the four English Learning Macro-skills

Test	Number	Mean %	S.D %	Min Score %	Max Score %
Speaking	30	49.3	19.5	11.1	80.3
Writing	99	37.6	20.5	0.0	91.3
Listening	99	58.7	21.5	5.0	100.0
Reading	99	46.5	21.3	7.5	97.5

The average score in Table 5 shows that learners got lower marks in writing and higher marks in listening. Their scores in speaking and reading were clustered in the middle of the performance. Because it is only 30 students who took part in speaking test, it was essential to know whether their speaking results was the description of all the 100 students, together with the 70 who did not take part. As a result, the reimagining three skills, as well as the 30 learners who took part in speaking test were contrasted with 70 learners who did not sit the test.

In the reading, the average score was 19.20 for the group of 30, and the score for the other 69 learners was 18.37. Hence no big difference since $t(53.0) = .44, p > .05$

In writing, the average score for the 30 students was 18.33 while the mean score for the remaining 69 learners was 16.93. The test showed no big difference $t(56.66) = .58, p > .05$.

For listening the average score for the 30 learners was 12.57, while the average score for the 69 learners was 11.43. The test gave no big difference, $t(55.03) = 1.22, p > .05$.

Hence it can be decided that the performance in writing, reading as well as listening to the 30 learners was typical of the entire sample. That means that the score of learners was correlated.

It was noted that the most significant number (33.3) of the 99, followed by 17 years old (27.3%), 18 years and above (24.3), 15 years or less (15.1). The period they have spent learning in their secondary school is at least years.

The students gave the following as purposes where they apply English. 42.4 used English for entertainment, 71.7% for studying in school as the rest stated that they use Arabic. 56.6 use English for watching movies. 23.2% said that they don't use English when communicating with their Libyan friends. Only 20.2% reported that they use English at home. 55.6% indicated that they use English when talking with non-Libyan speakers.

50.0% of the subjects indicated that they were well motivated during English classes. 25.2% felt no motivation, and 22.2% were not sure. 74% said English was well taught, 12.1% were not convinced and 13.1% did not accept. 67.7% stated that learning materials were comfortable, 18.2% declined, and 12.1% weren't sure.

Teachers perception

On the other hand, the teacher questionnaire had 40 items and was categorized in the following groups: current use of English, demographic factors, attitude of Arabic language at school, integrative motivation, perception on separate English macro-skills.

The items in the category of perceived capability in English were placed on the scale. It had a reliability coefficient of 0.96; the other issues were analyzed as individual variables.

Out of the 24 teachers who took part in the study, 15 were male, and nine were female. The data showed that 50.1% of the teachers had teaching experience of 10 – 20 years in Libyan secondary

schools. 37.5% had 2 – 9 years' experience and 12.4 had been teachers for 21 – 25 years. All the teachers teach English in the third year level of secondary school.

It was noted that 95.8% of the teachers who took part in the study taught using English, they read for enjoyment, together communicate with Non-Libyan individuals. 83.3% used English when watching English movies, 58.3% used English when conversing with Libyan friends and only 45.8% used the language at home.

Chapter Five

5.1 Discussion of the findings

5.1.1 Students' Performance in the Four English Language Macro skills

The first purpose of the research was to establish the profile of the learners' performance in the four English language macro-skills. Only two sets will be discussed here. The set presents the results of learners' test performance in every English language macro skill. In every macro-skill, the outcome indicated widespread regarding listening scores tending to the group above 50%, writing performances clustering below 50% as the rest are evenly distributed. It was not easy to make a comparison between the scores.

No contrast between macro skills can be made in this study as a result of established comparability between varied sections of the test. Spooky notes that as one of the graded conditions in the general model regarding learning English, the receptive skills (listening and reading) grow before productive skills (writing and speaking) and develop to a higher level. In the global scores found in this research, learners performance in listening was good while performance in reading skills was the same as that of speaking. Performance in writing ability was poor.

Following the fact that writing and reading instead of oral modality skills are ones taught and emphasized, it is essential to know whether the results in literature/visual skills relate to this research. The results of learners' performance in this research were similar to the performance of Libyan Form 3 students in Final Exam; the scores were low.

It is essential to look at test related factors to account for the disparity in the scores. It seems listening test was most comfortable. Also, part A and B of listening questions were not severe. If test questions were not hard compared with other criteria, then the scoring of high scores hearing as well as lower scores in other macro-skills should be anticipated. Hence disparity is in scores.

Supporting theoretical framework given on literacy regarding the idea that a learner's L1 background is apparent in L2 performance, either in L2 discourse or L2 performance Spolsky (2003) classifies 'verbomotor' to be in contrast to high technology. Since Libyan learners came to English language studying at school already with background experience, then the chances are that they learn faster regarding oral and auditory modalities, hence high scores in listening.

Learners' performances in four macro skills were correlated. The most substantial relationship was identified between writing and reading. Students with a high score in some macro-skills also scored well in other macro-skills, and vice versa are correct. Factors like age, ability to read, the frequency of use, motivation, career aspiration and how English is used affects the attitude of learners towards the English language.

Chapter 6

6.1 Conclusions Recommendations

6.1.1 Conclusion

In a bid to establish what influences learning of English as a second language in Libya, the research focuses on determining the link between perceptions of Libyan for three learners in respect to issues that relate to the learning of English at school as well as their performance in reading, listening, writing and speaking. The learners got high scores in listening and low scores in writing. The scores in speaking and reading were clustered. The scores were highly related.

The research is described by performance and survey

1. Students achievement in English language macro skills
2. Non-linguistic and linguistic aspects that are related to learning
3. Research findings

6.2 Recommendations

It is on the grounds of the finding of this research that the following recommendations are made: First, speaking and listening English macro-skills should be examined formally in form 3 at the secondary school since it will enable in assessing the ability of a learner regarding the English language. Second, much emphasis should be placed on the teaching of formal aspects regarding the linguistic code. Third, learners should be encouraged to read as much as possible. Fourth, learners should be encouraged to use English in their communication both at home and school. Fifth, students should be told that English is a career subject, so they change their attitude towards the subject. Lastly, both students and teachers should be made aware of the difficulty of learning the English language, so they come up with solutions.

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