

Assessing Saudi University Students Performance-A Case Study of Taif University Students - Ranah Branch

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Abstract: *This study aimed at assessing Saudi university students performance. The main question the study tries to answer about the students level in English language at Saudi university specially Taif university students in Ranah branch. The population of this study is the English Language students at Taif university Ranah branch. Students' test has been used as main data collection tool for this study. A literature review has been made from previous studies in language skills. The researchers used SPSS to analyze the collected data. According to this analysis the study recommended that Saudi university students can improve their standards in English by focusing on developing English language skills.*

Keywords: assessment, productive, receptive, Ranyh branch

1. Introduction

When students learn a language, there are four skills that they need to complete communication. When students learn English language, they usually learn to listen first, then to speak, then to read, and finally to write. These are called the four language skills. All these skills should be integrated together in order to have a good language background. Alan and Stoller (2005,11) stress that, to best facilitate learning language, content, and real-life skills, projects require a combination of teacher guidance, teacher feedback, student engagement, and elaborated tasks with some degree of challenge. That is to say, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing within content- and task-based activities (Richards and Schmidt 2002).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Listening

Despite its importance as an essential language learning skill, listening comprehension is probably the least stressed skill in the language classroom. According to Brown (2001), students with well-developed listening comprehension skills are able to participate more effectively in class.

An aural comprehension skill is basis for a good listening skill. It similarly like the other language skills, provides a foundation for learning a foreign languages. To develop such a skill, The teacher should provide students with listening to living English used in everyday situations through listening practice such as distinguish sounds, associate meaning with sound, process message, understanding conversational English and infer meaning from speaker's discourse.

The following are the most important skills which the students will need for developing listening comprehension:

- a) The ability to distinguish English sounds such as /b/ and /p/.
- b) The ability to identify the intonational devices of English.
- c) The ability to understand grammatical signals.
- d) The ability to understand collocations of words.
- e) The ability to understand cultural aspects implied by utterances.

2.2 Speaking

Speaking is the delivery of language through the mouth. To speak, people create sounds using many parts of their body, including the lungs, vocal tract, vocal chords, tongue, teeth and lips. Students often think of speaking as the ultimate language skill to be developed. Speaking however, in only a crucial part of the process of language learning. In addition to linguistic and cultural knowledge, there are other requirements that should be available in order to develop this skill. They include the following:

- 1) A competent teacher who is fluent in conversation.
- 2) Ample opportunity for students participation.
- 3) Appropriate classroom atmosphere.
- 4) Using a variety of learning activities.
- 5) Contextualized language in terms of who is speaking to whom, where and why.

Language learners are often too embarrassed or shy to say anything when they do not understand another speaker or when they realize that a conversation partner has not understood them. Instructors can help students overcome this reticence by assuring that misunderstanding and the need for clarification can occur in any type of interaction regardless the participants' language skill levels. Instructors can also give students strategies and phrases to use for clarification and comprehension check.

By encouraging students to use clarification phrases in class when misunderstanding occurs, and by responding positively, instructors can create an authentic practice environment within the classroom itself. As they develop control of various clarification strategies, students will gain confidence to manage the various communication situations that they

may encounter outside the classroom. Scarcella (2003) recommends a balanced approach with respect to teacher intervention in English language classrooms. She points out that many teachers have the misconception that learners can effortlessly pick up English by simply communicating in some fashion in the language.

2.3 Reading

Traditionally, the purpose of learning to read in a language has been to have access to the literature written in that language. In language instruction, reading materials have traditionally been chosen from literary texts that represent forms of culture.

Students learn to read a language by studying its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, not by actually reading it. In the lower level, learners read only sentences and paragraphs generated by textbook writers. The reading of authentic materials is limited to the works of great authors and reserved for upper level students who have developed the language skills needed to read them. On the other hand, Gee (1999) argues that the more we read, the more competent language learners we become. The communicative approach to language teaching has given instructors a different understanding of the role of reading in the language classroom and the types of texts that can be used in instruction. When the goal of instruction is to achieve communicative competence, everyday materials such as train schedules, newspaper articles, and travel and tourism Web sites become appropriate classroom materials, because reading them is one way to develop communicative competence. Instruction in reading and reading practice thus becomes an essential part of language teaching at every level. Reading is an activity with a purpose. A person may read in order to gain information or verify existing knowledge, or in order to criticize a writer's ideas or writing styles. A person may also read for enjoyment, or to enhance knowledge of the language being read. The purpose(s) for reading guide the reader's selection of texts. The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. A person reading poetry for enjoyment needs to recognize the words the poet uses and the ways they are put together, but does not need to identify the main idea and supporting details. However, a person using a scientific article, to support an opinion needs to know the vocabulary that is used, understand the facts and cause-effect sequences that are presented, and recognize ideas that are presented as hypotheses.

2.4 Writing

Writing is an active means of communicating ideas. In its functional sense, it is equated with speech since both are concerned with conveying information. Thus students practice orally, and express through it what they understand and wish to convey. Oral practice is necessary for fluent speaking. It is a prerequisite to mastering the skill of writing. However, errors are more tolerated in speaking than writing. Lew (1999) argues that it is a disservice to allow students learning English to write without the close supervision of teachers, pointing out that students who do

not speak standard English have little confidence and their friends can help them with grammar or usage.

In addition to its communicative function, writing is a major classroom procedure and an important language activity. Writing is considered a significant language skill that should be developed at an early stage of learning the foreign language.

It requires the following:

- 1) An understanding of the orthographic system, i.e. the relationship between sound and written symbols.
- 2) A knowledge of the mechanics of writing: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraph indentation, leaving space between words, syllable division, and other writing conventions.
- 3) A knowledge of possible sentence structures in English.
- 4) Familiarity with grammatical, referential or anaphoric connectors.
- 5) Adequate control of syntax and vocabulary in order to put ideas into writing.

3. The Study

3.1 Problem of the study

Most Saudi students start their university education with weak standards in English language. So, the students need to improve their skills in order to have strong standard of English.

3.2 Objective of the study

The study aims to assess Saudi university students performance in English language.

3.3 Main question of the study

Does Saudi students start university with weak standard in English language?

3.4 The Hypothesis of the study

Saudi students start university with weak standards in English language.

3.5 Significance of the study

This study attempt to help Saudi university students to improve their standard of English language through focusing on how to improve English language skills.

3.6 Tools of data collections

The main tool of data collection is the students' test. It consists of four main parts listening and speaking as a receptive skills reading and writing as productive skills.

3.7 Method of data analysis

SPSS has been used by the researchers to analyze the data employed by the test.

3.8 Population

The population of this study are 52 male and 67 female Saudi students who learn English language in the college of Sciences and Arts (Preparatory Year) in Taif University, Saudi Arabia.

3.9 Data analysis

The pre-test and post-test were administered to a group which consists of 119 students.

In the pre-test the scores of more than forty students (50%) clustered between (30.0 – 40.0) out of one hundred. The frequency curve of the scores is bell shaped but it is skewed to the left reflecting a very weak level of the students. The scores of the students which are clustered below the pass mark. Figure (2.9.1) shows the frequency histogram of the pre-test scores.

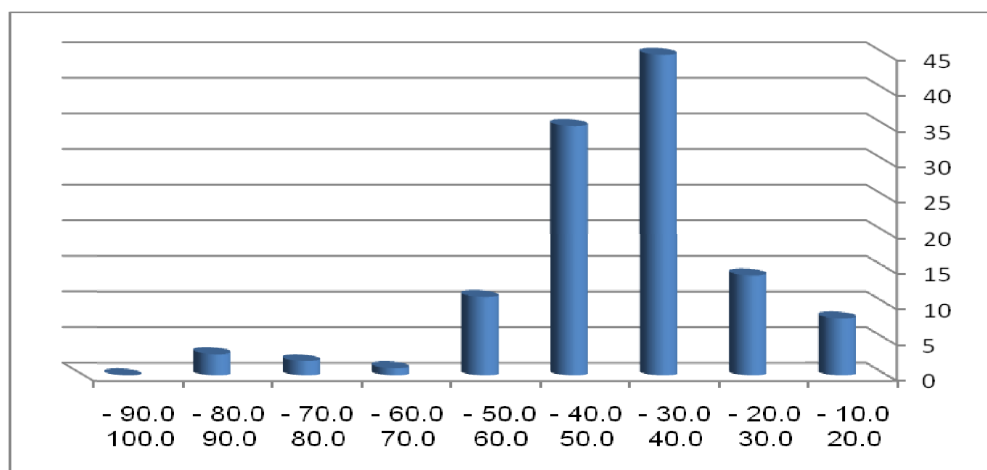
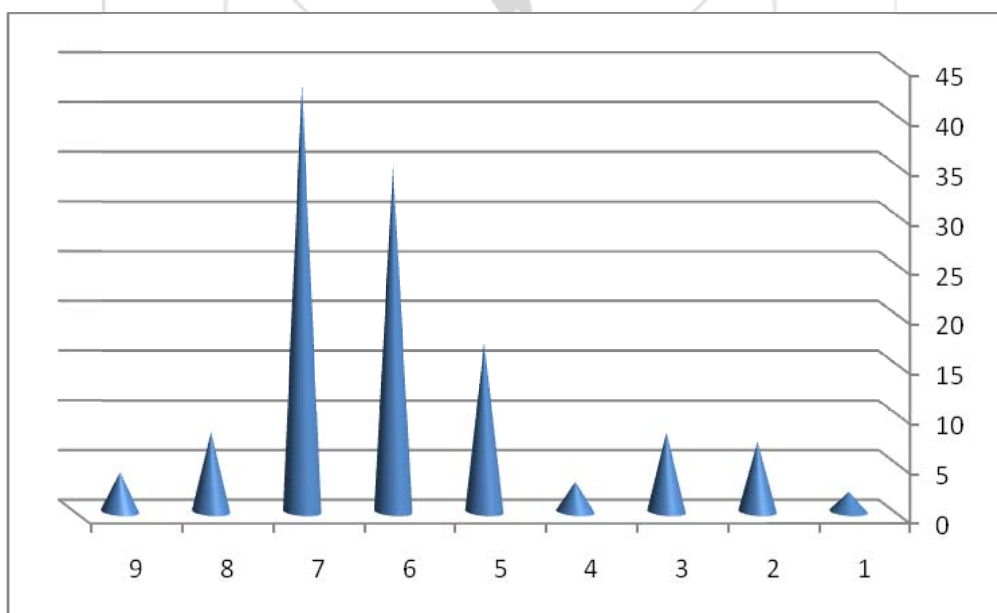


Figure 2.9.1: Distribution of pre-test scores

In the post test the scores of more than seventy five students range between (57%-90%). The bell shaped curve

here is skewed to the right which indicates far better results than those in the pre-test.



4. Findings

The findings of the study are

- According to the analysis of pre-test, Students begin their education at Taif university with weak standards in English language.
- The remedial work done by teachers has good response which appear clearly in the post-test results.
- The integration of English skills makes a big difference in the students' performance.

5. Recommendations

The Integration of the four language skills influences students' performance consequently, EFL teachers should demonstrate the integration of these skills within lessons. Part of integrating the language skills is to involve students in communicative situation and activities.

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Appendix

First exam

STUDENT'S NAME: _____ STUDENT'S ID NO: _____

A. Reading1:

(5 marks)

Read the following text carefully and answer the questions given below.

Hi, my name is Caroline Fay Jackson. I am female my date of birth is the 3rd of June, 1989. I am 22 years old. I am a new student at Milestone English language Centre. My address is 2/33 Centre Road, Clayton, Victoria 3168 Australia. My mobile number is 0416333221. I am happy.

1. When is Caroline's birth day ? it is the 3rd of _____
a) July b) May c) June d) March

2. How old is Caroline? She is _____ years old .
a) 23 b) 22 c) 24 d) 30

3. What is Caroline's address ? It is 2/33 Centre road, Clayton, Victoria 3168 --- a) Australia b) London c) Japan
d) America

4. What is Caroline's mobile number ? It is _____
a) 1223336140 b) 0416323321 c) 0416333212 d) 0416333221

5. What is Caroline's full name ? She is Caroline Fay _____
a) Jackson b) Jackins c) Jackson d) Jaksen

B. Vocabulary: Choose the correct answer.

(5 marks)

1. _____ is the third month of the year.
a) April b) January c) June d) March

2. Ten minus four _____ six.
a) plus b) equals c) minus d) time

3. Today is Tuesday. Tomorrow is _____.
a) Friday b) Sunday c) Wednesday d) Saturday

4. Choose the correct spelling.
a) appearance b) apiearance c) appearence d) appiyanance

5. Leo is from Turkey . He is _____.
a) English b) Turkish c) Egyptian d) Italian

C. Grammar: Choose the correct answer.

(5 marks)

1. I have two _____.
a) child b) Childs c) children d) childes

2. That is _____ book . please give it to him.
a) his b) she c) he d) him

3. Those are beautiful cars _____ must be from Japan.
a) Them b) Their c) They d) He

4. Arabic is _____ language
a) an b) a c) are d) was

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5. Is he male ?yes, _____.

a) he is b) she is c) it is d) he was

D. Writing:

(5 marks)

Write 5 sentences about your friend . The following key words may help you:

End of Questions

Second Exam

A. Reading (5 Marks)

Read the following text carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

Food is part of our culture and nationality. For example, in the north of China people eat noodles, but in the south they eat rice. In the north of France people eat a lot of meat and in the south they eat a lot of seafood. In Scandinavia, Portugal and Spain people eat a lot of fish, but in Central Europe people eat more meat and sausages. For example, in Germany there are over a hundred different types of sausages.

People eat special food to celebrate special occasions. In Italy, people eat doughnuts at weddings to give good luck. In Spain, on New Year's Eve, people eat twelve grapes for good luck. In Poland, people eat beetroot soup or mushrooms to celebrate Christmas.

1- In the south of China people eat _____ .

a) pasta b) a lot of meat c) rice d) noodles

2- In _____ people eat a lot of fish.

a) Chin b) Portugal c) Germany d) Italy

3- In Italy, people eat doughnuts because they _____ .

a) are rich in vitamins b) give good luck c) are not very expensive d) are sweet

4- In Poland, people eat mushrooms _____ .

a) to celebrate Christmas b) for good luck c) at weddings d) to celebrate the New Year's Eve

5- The text is about: _____ .

a) Food in the World b) Special Occasions c) Culture d) Different Countries

B. Vocabulary: Choose the correct answer. (5 marks)

1- A _____ is yellow, round and sour.

a) banana b) carrot c) cucumber d) lemon

2- We went swimming because it was _____ .

a) hot b) cold c) snowy d) freezing

3- My grandfather _____ for a walk every morning.

a) has b) goes c) catches d) travels

4- The flight was _____ because of bad weather.

a) delayed b) reserved c) travelled d) painted

5- This restaurant _____ pizzas everywhere.

a) eats b) delivers c) celebrates d) drinks

C. Grammar: Choose the correct answer. (5 marks)

1. She _____ born in France in 1990.

a) were b) is c) was d) are

2. Suzan works in a hospital. _____ father is a doctor.
a) She b) He c) Her d) We
3. They lived in a big house. _____ house was very big.
a) The b) A c) An d) Ø
4. There were _____ trees in their beautiful garden.
a) many b) an c) much d) any
5. Mohammed _____ going shopping every Friday.
a) like b) liking c) liked d) likes

D. WRITING (5 points)

► - Write five sentences about your life now and in the past. You may write about your age, job, height, weight, hair, likes / dislikes, etc. You may also use this model: *Now I, but when I was young, I.....*

End of Questions