Inquiry is fatal to certainty.

Will Durant (1885 – 1981)
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Editor</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Journal</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12\textsuperscript{th} Annual KSAALT-TESOL Conference Announcement</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Team</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESEARCH ARTICLES</strong></td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Perceptions and Washback of the Paper-Based TOEFL Test</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Dr. Dawn Karen Booth &amp; Dr. Naomi Davis Lee}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study on Blended Learning Professional Development</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Dr. Derek Burnett}</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMENTARIES/SHORT PIECES</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is More Important: Grammar or Vocabulary?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad Shujaat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporating Saudi Arabia’s 2030 Vision in ELT</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sameera Sultan Baloch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive Technology in the Language Classroom</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgios Kormpas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALL FOR PAPERS (Fall 2019 Edition)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Esteemed Colleague,

It is with great pleasure that we present the inaugural issue of KSAALT-TESOL’s Academic Journal (KTAJ). The vision behind establishing this journal was to provide a venue for ELT scholars, passionate about teaching and research in Saudi Arabia, to share their important contributions with each other in a formalized manner.

While we had hoped to have collected more contributions for this issue, we trust that once the journal has been formally advertised, subsequent issues will overflow with valuable contributions from Saudi Arabia’s thriving academic community. This issue’s research investigates learner perceptions of washback and TOEFL testing in Japan as well as the viability of using virtual classrooms to enhance English language proficiency. Commentaries examine the utility of focusing on grammar vs. vocabulary centered instruction, ways to realize Saudi Arabia’s 2030 Vision through English teaching and what effective role certain technologies play in the classroom.

We hope you enjoy the very first KTAJ issue as our editorial team worked tirelessly to put this together, and we look forward to any feedback you have to move us even further along.

Kind regards,

Sulaiman Jenkins
Chief Editor

Spring 2019
ABOUT THE JOURNAL

KTAJ, a biannually disseminated electronic journal, solicits articles that are primarily concerned with the teaching and learning of the English language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or the Arabian Gulf. The journal has two main manuscript formats (research articles and commentaries) that hope to address any of the following research areas (but certainly not limited to): assessment, pedagogy, 21st century skills, culture and language, motivation, mobility and transnationalism, second language literacy, and management.

**Research Articles**
Research articles should be no more than 6,000 words, an original contribution, and not be under consideration with any other academic journal.

**Commentaries/Short Pieces**
Commentaries/short pieces should be no longer than 1,000 words and can be a response to a specific article written in this journal, a letter to the editor, or a general commentary on any pertinent issues related to ELT in Saudi Arabia.

---

**Manuscript Requirements**
- Written in accordance with APA 6th Ed. format
- Written in clear, academic English
- Not under consideration with any other academic journal
- Free of any plagiarism/original work
- Does not exceed word length limitation:
  - Research (6,000 words)
  - Commentary (1,000 words)

**Format of Submission**
All manuscripts are submitted via our online manuscript management system ([https://www.manuscriptlink.com/journals/ksaaltaj](https://www.manuscriptlink.com/journals/ksaaltaj)). Scholars are also invited to send the Chief Editor an email at editor@ksaalt-tesol.org to inquire about writing on a topic of particular interest. The Journal Manager will then notify said scholar about the topic’s suitability.
UPCOMING EVENTS

12TH ANNUAL KSAALT TESOL CONFERENCE
Conference and Pre-Conference
Venue: Sofitel Corniche Hotel Al Khobar
Date: April 19th & 20th 2019

UPCOMING EVENTS

Voices and Perspectives Across Saudi EFL

The Plenary Speakers

Dr. Dana Smith
Professor, Imam Abdulrahman
Bin Faisal University

Emma Fathni
National Geographic Learning

Webinars Speakers

Dr. MaryAnn Christiansen
President of TESOL,
Anahiem University

Dr. Keith Folsom
Internationally Researched-
Scholar, Lecturer and Author

Invited Speakers

Dr. Charles Hall
Professor of English
Al Faisal University

Shideh Shayan
Educational Consultant
Life Coach & Life-Skills Facilitator

For registration, please email us at:
ksaalttesoleconf2019@gmail.com
visit our website www.ksaalt-tesol.org

Pre-Conference Courses

IELTS Trainer Workshop: Writing – IDP Education Ltd

This IELTS professional development workshop has been
developed by IDP IELTS Middle East in collaboration with a
CELTA/Delta Trainer.

This workshop is designed for teachers who are
preparing students for the Academic versions of the IELTS test.
It raises awareness of the format of the IELTS test and task
types, essential skills that are being assessed on the IELTS
test, how these skills are assessed, and then links this
understanding to effective practical strategies for teaching
IELTS preparation in the classroom.

This is an interactive workshop with a high degree of
participant involvement.

Teaching English: The Montessori Way – MEET

Maria Montessori is the pioneer of Montessori teaching
practice. The core focus of her methodology was language
acquisition through an ideal learning environment.

Embodning her principles, language, learning takes a new
way and in this intensive “hands-on” workshop, MEET trainer
will enlighten the teachers on teaching English using
Montessori techniques in the most innovative ways by
assisting teachers using the available materials.

Digital Literacy: Promoting Learner Autonomy – British Council

Part One
Participating will reflect on how to enhance their learners’
21st Century skills (such as critical thinking, collaboration,
communication, and creativity) to help them join the
workforce and be active members of their communities.

Part Two
The focus of Part Two is to demonstrate digital literacies
and how teachers can use mobile apps to promote
learner autonomy. Teachers will experiment with, and reflect
on, a list of useful applications and websites that they
can utilise in their classrooms and with their students.
THE EDITORIAL TEAM

A competent and committed reviewer knows the hallmark of good scholarship and is the backbone of any journal’s operation. With pleasure we present the group of dedicated professionals who made this inaugural issue possible.

We are always looking for competent and dedicated reviewers. If you are interested in becoming a member of the editorial board and reviewing for KTAJ, please send us a message at editor@ksalt-tesol.org detailing your interest and professional qualifications and anything else you believe highlights your academic and professional profile.
Dr. Othman Barnawi
KSAALT-TESOL President

Dr. Barnawi is a major authority on English language teaching in the Arabian Gulf and Saudi Arabia. Having published books with major publishers and a regular plenary speaker for KSAALT-TESOL events, Dr. Barnawi continues to shape ELT in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

He is instrumental as a Senior Consultant for KTAJ’s operation.

Sulaiman Jenkins
Chief Editor

Sulaiman currently works as a lecturer at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran. He has published numerous articles in well known, refereed journals and regularly contributes to ELT academia.

He assumed the position of Chief Editor for KTAJ in September 2018.

Dr. Philline Deraney
Journal Manager

Dr. Deraney currently works as a faculty developer in the Deanship of Academic Development at Imam AbdulRahman Bin Faisal University.

She has published numerous articles and chapters related to ELT and currently serves as a reviewer for several international journals.

She assumed the position of Journal Manager for KTAJ in 2019.

KTAJ Editorial Board

Dr. Peter Edwards
Associate Reviewer (Guest Contributor)
Affiliation
King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals

Dr. Abdullah Alshakhi
Associate Reviewer
Affiliation
King AbdulAziz University

Dr. Basim Alamri
Associate Reviewer
Affiliation
King AbdulAziz University

Dr. Charalabos Kalpakidis
Associate Reviewer
Affiliation
Imam AbdulRahman Bin Faisal University

Sameera Sultan Baloch
Reviewer
Affiliation
Imam AbdulRahman Bin Faisal University

Zonaira Chaudry
Reviewer
Affiliation
Admire Academy
Learner Perceptions and Washback of the Paper-Based TOEFL Test on Student Affect at one Japanese University

Dr. Dawn Karen Booth & Dr. Naomi Davis Lee
Kansai Gaidai University

This paper reports on Phase Two of a mixed method project exploring the influence of the TOEFL PBT on learner conceptualizations and affect at one private university in Japan. A survey administered to 190 undergraduate English majors across two programs explored: the perceived importance and face validity of the TOEFL, anxiety, and comfort in sharing scores. Results indicate positive perceptions of face validity, moderate levels of anxiety, and discomfort in sharing scores. Results also show significant positive correlations between student perceptions of the value and face validity of the TOEFL, and anxiety.

Key words: language testing, TOEFL, washback, Japan, university students, affect, anxiety

1. Introduction

Washback refers to the influence that tests exert on teaching and learning (Alderson & Wall, 1993), or ‘the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning’ (Messick, 1996, p. 241). While the influence of tests on learning has gained much attention in education, it is a relatively new field in language testing. Yet in response to the proliferation of English as a global language, the demand for worldwide English testing has flourished, and now, perhaps more than ever, the growing dominance, use and influence of these tests must be monitored (Shohamy, 2007). One area of washback particularly under-researched is the influence of global standardized tests on learners, which, in the context of the TOEFL at one Japanese university, is explored in this paper.
2. Review of Washback Literature

In an early flagship article, moving toward a refinement of the washback construct in second language acquisition, Alderson and Wall (1993) presented fifteen hypotheses outlining ways in which a language test will influence teaching and learning (pp. 120-121). Included in their hypotheses is the idea that a test will influence learner ‘attitudes’ – a notion later reflected in Bailey’s (1996) model of the processes and products involved in washback labeled ‘affect’. Of the different types of attitudes, motivation has received the most attention in washback literature. No doubt, high-stakes tests are often notorious for narrowing curriculum and leading to negative washback (Messick, 1996; Shih, 2007). However, Read and Hayes (2003) and Li (1990) reported positive feelings about the IELTS exam and Chinese Matriculation English Test respectively, noting increased motivation to learn English. In Li’s study, new enthusiasm for learning English outside the classroom was also evident. Cheng (1998) further found the HKCEE exam encouraged students to work hard to achieve good scores, and Booth (2012) and Iwabe (2005) reported cases of increased motivation for classes unrelated to English as a result of preparing for the TOEIC, suggesting that positive study habits may wash back into other areas of study (Iwabe, 2005).

Shohamy (1993) found mixed results among students in the way they perceived and reacted to the ASL test where 62% of students claimed that the test increased positive motivation, but 38% of students reported experiencing fear, pressure, and anxiety. Mixed results highlight the multifarious nature of washback. For example, Watanabe (2001) found a test could be motivating and have a positive effect on students’ test preparation if it is of the appropriate difficulty for the learner. Ferman (2004) observed that washback on anxiety differed among learners of varying abilities, and the year that students take the test may also influence learner attitudes and affect (Berwick & Ross, 1989). Reynolds (2010) reported that students who were most competent in English and more familiar with the TOEFL perceived more negative washback. In short, a wide range of factors, including those beyond the construct of the test and often interrelated, may intervene in the washback process.
(Shih, 2007; Booth, 2012). Surprisingly, despite the high-stakes reputation of the TOEFL, little research has focused on the washback of the test on learner affect.

3. The TOEFL & Setting of the Study

Educational Testing Services (ETS) produces two of the most powerful and influential language testing tools on the global market: the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Where the TOEIC is a measure of ‘everyday English skills of people working in an international environment’ (ETS, 2008), the TOEFL is designed to measure test takers’ ‘ability to use and understand English in a classroom setting at the college or university level’ (ETS, 2016). It is a high-stakes, gate-keeping measure taken by thousands of students wishing to participate in overseas exchange programs every year. Two formats of the TOEFL include the TOEFL PBT (paper-based test), and the TOEFL iBT (internet-based test). Test developers of the iBT aim to phase out paper-based testing (ETS, 2015) in favor of a test that encourages more communicative, academic English through integrated-skills tasks and a speaking test (Wall & Horák, 2006, p. 1). Yet due to issues of practicality (particularly expense), the TOEFL PBT continues to play an important gate-keeping role, determining the future lives of university students, notably, those wishing to take part in academic classes abroad.

The powerful gate-keeping role of the TOEFL PBT is no less evident in the context of the present study. Students wishing to take part in a one-year exchange program require an average score of 500, while those competing in the two-year study abroad program require a minimum score of 550. TOEFL scores are also necessary for other programs such as university internships, and specialized programs. One course, designed to prepare students for study abroad, is the IES (Intensive English Studies) program, which has a content-based academic curriculum. Another course, the Regular program, focuses on English for Academic purposes both for students wishing to study abroad, and those who do not intend to study abroad. In both courses, the TOEFL plays an important role in securing places in exchange programs. Scores are also used to place students in their second-year classes. Given the high-
stakes nature of the test, we, the researchers and teachers in these programs, became interested in the type of influence the TOEFL might be having on students.

As part of a two-phase, mixed method project, the aim of the first phase (Booth & Lee, 2014) was to collect a rich source of emic qualitative data from focus groups (including IES and Regular program students) from which to base future quantitative research. Qualitative results showed mixed perspectives regarding: (1) positive and negative washback on learner affect; and (2) the relationship between the TOEFL and English classes. With respect to the former, negative perceptions emerged regarding pressure, confidence, motivation, and self-image (see also Shih 2007). At the same time, perceptions of positive washback emerged with regard to motivation, confidence, and a sense of accomplishment (see also Read & Hayes, 2003, and Iwabe, 2005). Mixed results confirmed other studies where factors outside of the test are likely to interplay in the perception of individual experiences of washback (Watanabe, 2001; Booth, 2012). Two factors that were hypothesized to be contributing to feelings of anxiety were the degree to which students felt threatened by competition and sharing scores, and students' year at university (see Berwick & Ross, 1989).

With respect to beliefs about the relationship between the TOEFL and English classes, some students questioned the validity of the test as a true measure of English, and perceived little connection between class and the TOEFL. In other words, they felt the test lacked face validity – ‘the extent to which a test is subjectively viewed as covering the concept it purports to measure’ (Holden, 2010). As such, a common theme to emerge was, “Class is class. TOEFL is TOEFL.” Others, however, perceived a stronger relationship between the TOEFL, their English ability, and English classes. A major focus for the next phase of our research was exploring these ideas across a wider population, guided by the following questions:

1. To what degree do students perceive the TOEFL as useful/important?
2. To what degree do students perceive the TOEFL as a valid measure of English?
3. What degree of anxiety do students feel with regard to the TOEFL?
4. What degree of comfort do students feel sharing TOEFL scores?
4. Methodology

A paper-based questionnaire was administered to a population of 190 first- and second-year undergraduate students in the IES Program (p=88), and Regular English Program (p=102) collectively, during the fall semester of 2014. Table 1 provides an overview of the four groups: IES first year, IES second year, Regular first year, and Regular second year. The largest group (33%) was IES second year (p=63).

Table 1
Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participants (N=190)</th>
<th>Plan to Study Abroad</th>
<th>Target Score Reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) IES 1-Year</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) IES 2-Year</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Regular 1-Year</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Regular 2-Year</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the respondents, 74% were female (p=141), and 88% (p=167) had not yet achieved their target TOEFL score. Across all groups, 76% planned to study abroad (p=145); however, a larger percentage of IES first year students reported plans to study abroad (88%). In contrast, 56% of Regular second year students planned to study abroad. All respondents had taken the TOEFL at least once, 31% (p=59) had taken the TOEFL 3-4 times, and 24% (p=46) had taken the TOEFL 5-6 times. With regard to highest levels of TOEFL achievement, 8% (p=15) reported attaining a score of 401-450; 44% (p=84) reported a score of 451-500; 42% (p=80) reported a score of 501-550; and 6% (p=11) reported scores of 551 and above. With regard to target TOEFL scores, 23% (p=44) of respondents reported target scores of 501-520; 17% (p=32) reported 521-540, and 33% (p=63) reported a target score of 541-560.
Analysis of qualitative data in Phase One was used to create a Likert scale survey, including 75 questions (12 bio questions and 63 construct items). The six-point Likert scale included: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) agree, and (6) strongly agree. To address issues of reliability, questions relating to different constructs were alternated, and both positively and negatively worded items were included to minimize extreme response bias. The survey was translated into Japanese and peer-checked by a bilingual Japanese academic. A key objective was to survey students where the TOEFL was likely to have high stakes, as ‘tests that have important consequences for individuals…will have more impact than low stakes tests’ (Alderson, 2004, pp. ix-x). Accordingly, classes selected included six high-level Regular classes and six mid-low IES classes. Rationale behind choosing higher-level students in the Regular program was that these students are most likely to take part in study abroad programs and require TOEFL scores. Since the IES program is specifically designed for students intending to study abroad, classes were chosen mainly due to issues of practicality and accessibility.

5. Results

5.1 Validity & Reliability

A primary aim was to pilot and assess the validity and reliability of the survey instrument for later use across a wider population. In terms of internal validity, three major factors emerged from an exploratory factor analysis using principle component. Factor 1, Perceived Value and Validity of the TOEFL, refers to the degree by which students view the TOEFL as necessary, and the extent to which students believe the TOEFL provides an accurate measure of their English ability. The second factor that emerged was Anxiety related to the TOEFL, and the third factor was Comfort in Sharing Scores. Questions corresponding to each factor are presented in Appendix 1. The number of items, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient, and mean scores for each factor are represented in Table 2. Although the survey was designed to elicit six major constructs, three factors emerged across 38 items. Twenty-five questions failed to form observable variables. In terms of internal consistency, based on parameters suggested by George and Malley (2003), results show that Perceived Value and Face
Validity (Factor 1) and Anxiety (Factor 2) have excellent (.926) and good (.811) reliability coefficients respectively. Comfort in Sharing Scores (Factor 3) has an acceptable coefficient of .787.

Table 2
Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No. Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Perceived Value &amp; Validity</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>4.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Anxiety</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>3.717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Comfort Sharing Scores</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td>2.769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Comparisons Across Groups and Factors

A further aim of piloting the survey was to assess major differences between the four groups as an indication of the type of population(s) on which to focus future studies. A formal ANOVA F-test did not find any significant evidence of differences between groups for Anxiety and Comfort in Sharing Scores, nor did a Kruskal-Wallis H test find any significant differences between the groups for Anxiety ($\chi^2=7.63, p=0.54$).

Table 3
ANOVA: Perceived Value & Face Validity of the TOEFL (Factor 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3333.622</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1111.207</td>
<td>6.734</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>29042.928</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>165.017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32376.550</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An $F$ test (Table 3), however, was significant for Factor 1: Perceived Value & Face Validity of the TOEFL ($F_{(1,24)}=6.73, p<0.001$). The calculated effect size for the ANOVA is ($\eta^2=0.10$), where 10% of the group’s variability can be explained by the ANOVA test. This amount of variability tends to be a medium to large effect size (Cohen, 1988). A follow-up multiple comparisons (post-hoc) calculation, using Tukey’s (HSD) test resulted in significant differences in the factor Perceived Value & Validity of the TOEFL for Group 1 (IES first year). The mean score differed from Group 3 (Regular first year) by 8.72 ($p=0.01$) with a confidence interval of (1.556 – 15.89). The mean score of Group 1 also differed from Group 4 (Regular second year) by 13.33 ($p<0.001$) with a confidence interval of (5.29 – 21.38). A Pearson Product of Moment Correlation (Appendix 2) also shows a moderately positive association ($r=0.268, p < 0.001$) between the Perceived Value & Face Validity (Factor 1), and Anxiety (Factor 2). According to Cohen (1988), this correlation is suggested to be a medium effect size.

Results of descriptive statistics relating to each research question follow.

5.3 Research Questions One & Two: Perceived Value and Validity of the TOEFL

Although the survey was designed to elicit responses about the usefulness/importance, and perceived face validity of the TOEFL as separate constructs, these items emerged as one factor: Perceived Value and Validity of the TOEFL. Descriptive statistics show an overall mean score of 4.353 (somewhat agree > agree) and a range of 1.283. One of the highest mean scores was in response to the question: ‘My TOEFL is important to me’ ($M=4.886, SD=1.0677$). The question: ‘TOEFL is a waste of time’, resulted in a mean score (strongly disagree < disagree) of 1.96 ($SD=.978$), and ‘The TOEFL test is useful to me’ resulted in a mean score of 4.484 ($SD=1.071$). Questions about perceptions of face validity included: ‘An increase in my TOEFL score shows me that my English is improving’ ($M=4.495, SD=.991$); ‘When my TOEFL score increases, my confidence in English also increases’ ($M=4.897, SD=.827$). Students were also asked if they believed particular areas of language study in classes helped improve their TOEFL scores. Results from highest mean scores to lowest included: Reading ($M=4.766, SD=1.104$); Listening, ($M=4.761, SD=.9217$); Grammar
(M=4.560, SD=1.038); Writing (M=4.402, SD=1.097); and Speaking (M=4.359, SD=1.170). The lowest mean scores overall (somewhat disagree < somewhat agree) were in response to: ‘When my TOEFL score is far from my target score, I am motivated to work harder in my English classes’ (M=3.745, SD=1.143); and ‘My desire to increase my TOEFL score makes me study harder in my English classes’ (M=3.772, SD=1.102).

5.4 Research Question Three: Anxiety

With regard to the degree of anxiety and pressure reported by students (Factor 2), descriptive statistics show an overall mean score of 3.717 (somewhat disagree < somewhat agree) and a range of 1.414. However, one of the highest mean scores was in response to: ‘I am often anxious about my TOEFL score’ (M=4.231, SD=1.330). Students also reported a mean score of 4.360 (SD=1.829) in answer to: ‘I feel anxious about my TOEFL score when I am around students whose TOEFL scores are higher than mine’. By contrast, the question: ‘I feel anxious about my English when I am around people with higher TOEFL scores than mine’, resulted in a lower mean score of 3.710 (SD=1.227). The question: ‘When my TOEFL decreases, I feel more anxiety about using English in my English classes’ (M=2.946, SD=1.204) had the lowest mean score overall for this factor.

5.5 Research Question Four: Comfort Sharing Scores

The overall mean score for the degree of comfort students feel with regard to sharing scores (Factor 3) was 2.769 (disagree < somewhat disagree). The two highest mean scores were in response to: ‘When I am happy with my TOEFL score, I feel comfortable sharing it with others (M=3.639, SD=1.2714), and ‘Sharing TOEFL scores with others is useful’ (M=3.656, SD=1.234). The lowest mean scores were in response to: ‘I would feel comfortable sharing TOEFL scores below 450’ (M=2.131, SD=1.247), and ‘I would feel comfortable sharing TOEFL scores from 450 - 499’ (M=2.590, SD=1.375).
6. Discussion

Factor analysis using principle component resulted in three factors: the Perceived Value and Validity of the TOEFL, Anxiety, and Comfort in Sharing Scores. Results show moderate agreement in the importance/usefulness of the TOEFL. Given the high-stakes nature of the TOEFL, higher mean scores might be expected; however, 25% of the population did not intend to study abroad; the TOEFL may have had lower stakes for that group. Higher mean scores for Group 1, Factor 1 may perhaps be explained by the fact that a larger proportion of students intended to study abroad. Results also show moderate, positive face validity regarding the degree by which the content in the TOEFL and English classes overlap, particularly in the case of reading and listening. While students appeared to associate TOEFL content with classes, results suggest that classes were not as readily viewed as a context from which to improve TOEFL scores, which may connect to the idea that ‘TOEFL is TOEFL and class is class’ - an aforementioned theme that emerged in Phase One of the study.

Results also show moderate agreement with regard to feelings of anxiety, and, perhaps not surprisingly, a significant correlation between the Perceived Value & Face Validity of the TOEFL, and Anxiety. Given that high-stakes tests often generate more anxiety for stakeholders due to prohibiting them from certain positions (Reynolds, 2010), it stands to reason that the lower the stakes and importance of the test, the lower the anxiety. Yet a major limitation within the data is the lack of distinction between perceived importance/usefulness of the TOEFL, and face validity, making it difficult to establish whether it is the degree by which students perceive the TOEFL as important that might impact anxiety, or perceptions of face validity, or both.

Results also suggest that certain factors may increase different forms of anxiety. For example, where the population as a whole indicated no major anxiety related to their use of English around people with higher TOEFL scores, they did indicate moderate levels of anxiety about their TOEFL scores when around those with higher scores.
Findings highlight the complex multidimensional nature of learner attitudes, such as anxiety, and the complex array of factors that may interplay in the washback process. Results also show no major difference between groups with regard to levels of anxiety. One hypothesis to emerge from Phase One was that levels of anxiety may relate to students’ year at university (see Berwick & Ross, 1989). Yet no major differences in attitudes emerged.

Finally, despite indicating moderate agreement that sharing scores is useful, participants demonstrated moderate discomfort in sharing scores, particularly scores below 500. One hypothesis to emerge from Phase One was that the degree by which students feel threatened by competition and sharing scores may contribute to feelings of pressure and anxiety. Yet no significant correlations between these factors emerged.

7. Conclusions, Limitations and Implications for Further Research

Attitudes toward test taking are important constructs in conceptual models of language acquisition. No doubt, the TOEFL influences learner attitudes precisely because of the significant weight it exhibits on those who consider it a high-stakes test. Despite the importance of the test, relatively little attention has been paid to the conceptualization and measurement of the washback of the test, particularly from the point of view of the learner. This study aimed to develop a valid and reliable multidimensional measure of student conceptualizations and attitudes with regard to beliefs about the value and validity of the test, anxiety, and comfort in sharing scores. Results suggest positive attitudes of face validity, feelings of anxiety and discomfort in sharing scores. While the survey instrument may facilitate future research on TOEFL washback, additional items across a wider population are recommended to increase reliability. Future studies may additionally benefit from attending to other variables such as student confidence and motivation in order to provide further exploratory data on these constructs.
REFERENCES:


Appendix 1: Survey Questions Grouped by Factors

**FACTOR ONE: PERCEIVED VALUE & VALIDITY OF THE TOEFL**

61. Writing in English classes helps improve TOEFL scores.
57. Learning vocabulary in English classes helps improve TOEFL scores.
60. Speaking in English classes helps improve TOEFL scores.
58. Learning grammar in English classes helps improve TOEFL scores.
10. The TOEFL test is useful to me.
59. Listening in English classes helps improve TOEFL scores.
17. When I am disappointed in my TOEFL score, I study harder for the TOEFL.
62. Reading tasks in my TOEFL test, I study harder for the TOEFL.
56. I can see a connection between my effort in English classes and my improvement in the TOEFL.
1. My TOEFL score is important to me.
15. Studying for the TOEFL helps me understand my English classes better.
32. When my TOEFL score increases, I feel more confident about using English in my English classes.
35. There is no connection between my TOEFL scores and how hard I study in English classes.
20. When my TOEFL score increases, my confidence in English also increases.
21. When I believe content in English classes helps increase my TOEFL scores, I pay closer attention in class.
39. An increase in my TOEFL score shows me that my English is improving.
8. I believe that my TOEFL scores are closely related to my English ability.
4. The TOEFL is a waste of time.
24. My desire to increase my TOEFL score makes me study harder in my English classes.
63. I often see vocabulary on the TOEFL test that I have learned in my English class.
16. The TOEFL test is useful to society.
9. When my TOEFL score is far from my target score, I am motivated to work harder in my English classes.
7. The TOEFL has no influence on my motivation in my English classes.
FACTOR TWO: ANXIETY & PRESSURE

51. I feel anxious about my English when I am around people with higher TOEFL scores than mine.

18. I feel anxious about my TOEFL score when around students whose TOEFL scores are higher than mine.

13. I am often anxious about my TOEFL score.

46. I feel peer pressure to share my TOEFL scores.

47. When my TOEFL score is far from my target score, I lose motivation in my English classes.

6. When my TOEFL score is lower than I expected, my confidence in English decreases.

29. I feel confident about my English when I am around people with lower TOEFL scores than mine.

25. When my TOEFL decreases, I feel more anxiety about using English in my English classes.

FACTOR THREE: COMFORT IN SHARING SCORES

37. I would feel comfortable sharing TOEFL scores from 450 - 499.

26. When I am dissatisfied with my TOEFL score, I still feel comfortable sharing it with others.

11. When I am happy with my TOEFL score, I feel comfortable sharing it with others.

38. I would only feel comfortable sharing a TOEFL score over 500.

14. Sharing TOEFL scores with others is useful.

36. I would feel comfortable sharing TOEFL scores below 450.

54. I do not like to share my TOEFL scores with others.

Appendix 2: Pearson Product of Moment Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Perceived Value and Validity</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Comfort in Sharing Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Value and Validity</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.268**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.268**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort in Sharing Scores</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>-.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Case Study on Blended Learning Professional Development 
Online Course for English Language Teachers

Dr. Derek Burnett
The Fielding Graduate University

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of curriculum designers, facilitators, and teachers regarding the use of blended learning on English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study sought to explore the ways through which blended learning could be used in enriching EFL learning. The study also identified the challenges and successes associated with the use of blended learning. An online survey was used to collect qualitative responses from facilitators in vocational training program in order to assess their perspectives with respect to using blended learning in EFL teaching and learning. Forty-three participants (22 males and 21 females) were selected and surveyed using the snowball sampling technique. The results of the study offered insight into ways through which virtual classrooms could be used in improving English proficiency among adult EFL learners. From the findings of the research, English proficiency for adult EFL learners can be improved by providing them with an opportunity to practice speaking and listening independently, reinforcing learner discipline and resourcefulness, and ensuring that virtual classrooms are designed in accordance with the preferences and needs of learners. Blended learning can also be used to enrich EFL learning by using different methods and learning styles and facilitating interactivity. It is research case study.

Key words: English as Foreign Language (EFL), blended learning, virtual classrooms, curriculum designers, facilitators

1. Introduction

The incorporation of technology in teaching and learning environments is increasing due to the fact that technology has a significant positive impact on learning (Camnalbur & Erdogan, 2008; Graham & Perin, 2007; Hong & Samimy, 2010). For instance, Banados (2006) reported a positive relationship between the improvement of students’ test scores and the incorporation of computers into the school curriculum. Improved levels of student performance have also been associated with
the use of information and communication technologies in the classroom (Somekh et al., 2007). In addition, computer availability in school environments has been linked to school performance (Moran et al., 2008). A comprehensive analysis performed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005) using data from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that on average, students who frequently use computers performed slightly worse in all subjects than students who were moderate users of computers. The authors suggested that the association between the performance of students and the usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is not likely to be straightforward causal relationship or even a simple linear relationship. Consequently, they concluded that there is a threshold at which using ICT in teaching and learning can be beneficial in education, but once it has been crossed its effects can actually become negative (OECD, 2005).

Blended learning is one of the common approaches used in the incorporation of technology in teaching and learning. Blended learning was first used in the business world, specifically in corporate training, after which it was adopted in higher learning, and lastly in the teaching and learning of languages. It is somewhat difficult to trace the precise time when blended learning became common to English language teaching (ELT). Regardless of its use in corporate training, higher learning and ELT, many authors agree that defining blended learning is a difficult task (Neumeier, 2005; Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013). The reason for this difficulty in defining blended learning is due to a lack of agreement on a single, precise definition. Moreover, the term 'blended learning' has yet to be fully adopted in the aforementioned settings. Thus, it is known as b-learning by Banados (2006), e-Learning by White (2006), and mixed or hybrid learning by Wang and Motteram (2006). Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013) attempted to distinguish these terms using percentages, with blended learning being characterized by online activities constituting less than 45 percent of the class meetings; hybrid learning being characterized by online learning activities replacing about 45-80 percent of the face-to-face meetings; and fully online being characterized by at least 80 percent of learning being performed online. In ELT, the definitions of blended learning are succinct. For instance, Neumeier (2005) described
blended learning as a mix of computer assisted learning (CAL) and face-to-face learning in one teaching and learning setting.

There are numerous benefits associated with the use of blended learning in the corporate world, including enhancing the effectiveness of learning (Neumeier, 2005); optimizing the time and cost of the training program (Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013); and business benefits such as cutting travel costs and quick attainment of learning objectives (Banados, 2006). The cost saving feature associated with blended learning is one of the primary motivations for its use in corporate training. In addition, blended learning is convenient because it allows learners to study at a time and speed that suit them best. In higher education, the motivation for using blended learning goes beyond just saving costs. Blended learning facilitates the teaching of a larger student group. In addition, the increase in the use of media in classroom settings has been linked to demographic changes of learners, especially the increase in the number of part-time students. While the reasons for the usage of blended learning in higher education are context-specific, the universal motivations include efficient operation in a global learning environment, enhancing campus experience, and supporting diversity and flexibility (Neumeier, 2005).

The goal of this research was to explore the perspectives of curriculum designers, facilitators, and teachers in a blended course regarding the use of blended teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, this study analyzed the ways through which blended learning can be used in enriching EFL teaching and learning as well as the challenges and successes associated with blended EFL teaching and learning. The significance of this study is twofold. The first importance of this study relates to contributions to literature relating to the use of technology in English teaching and learning by exploring the various ways through which blended learning can be employed to enhance English proficiency. This was achieved by exploring the perspectives of English facilitators enrolled in a blended learning professional development online course of English language teachers. Second, the findings of this study are important for English teachers, facilitators, and instructors. Synthesis of feedback provided by facilitators regarding their experiences
highlighted meaningful areas of improvements that can be used in enhancing English proficiency using blended learning.

2. Methodology

2.1 Design

A qualitative exploratory design was adopted for this study in order to uncover the recurring trends and themes in the collected data. The qualitative research model used in this study is shown in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: The qualitative research model](Source: Author's own creation)

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from three training centers, including a vocational training program, an adult professional English development program, and a preparatory program. The participants comprised of ESL/EFL learners, teachers, principals and administrators from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Instructors who participated in the study were of diverse nationalities including the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, Canada, and Australia. In addition, participants in the study were EFL administrators, curriculum designers, facilitators, and teachers working in a professional English Language Course environment. The snowball sampling technique was used in the selection of participants, which yielded 43 participants. The researcher asked for referrals from initial participants because of the difficulty in accessing the facilitators of blended learning courses. Therefore, the researcher relied on the social networks and acquaintances of initial participants to achieve the desired sample size that guaranteed a sufficient amount of data.
2.3 Procedure

A survey research strategy was adopted for the study, which was administered on an online platform. This was the best alternative owing to the geographical dispersion of participants. An online questionnaire was used to gather the feedback of participants regarding their experiences in blended course formats. The online questionnaire comprised of multiple-choice questions, and structured and unstructured open-ended questions.

1. Basic information of participants such as age, gender, and nationality;
2. Reason for enrolling in an Adult English Language Program;
3. Whether they are comfortable teaching EFL online;
4. Their belief in regards whether teaching EFL online improves English Proficiency for EFL learners;
5. Their perception regarding the ease of communication in an online environment;
6. Their perceptions on the usefulness of an online environment in facilitating interaction with learners;
7. Discussion and sharing in an online environment;
8. Whether blended learning enriches learning;
9. Elements of the program they want improved.

The survey was administered using Survey Gizmo.

3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employed qualitative techniques, which involved the analysis of the responses provided by participants in order to determine the recurring themes, patterns, and trends. The textual responses from the online questionnaire were coded
and analyzed using thematic content analysis and frequency analysis (Fisher, 2007). This entailed a preliminary exploration of the responses provided by participants, coding of the textual data using labels in order to identify themes, searching for trends, patterns and recurring themes, and finally developing a narrative from the data (Babbie, 2010). The experiences of participants on blended course formats provided meaningful insight regarding how blended learning can be designed to help improve English proficiency. Aside from content analysis, the concepts revealed from the data were also tallied using frequency analysis. This was done by searching for frequently used phrases by participants when describing their experiences in blended learning.

4. Ethical Issues

Several ethical issues were taken into consideration in this study. First, participation in the study was done on a voluntary basis. In other words, no participant was forced to take part in the research. They were also provided with an informed consent that outlined the purpose of the study. Second, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants were guaranteed. Measures to secure the data collected were deployed, which involved password protection of the data and deletion of the data after drafting the final report of the study. Direct references that could be used to identify the participants and organizations were avoided.

5. Results and Interpretation

5.1 Sample Description

The characteristics of participants in terms of age, gender and nationality are presented in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants’ Characteristics in Terms of Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2

**Participants’ Characteristics in Profession**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(65.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(9.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(7.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum designer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(16.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own creation

### Table 3

**Participants’ Characteristics in Terms of Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>(51.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(48.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own creation

### Table 4

**Participants’ Characteristics in Terms of Nationality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>(56.8 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(13.5 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(5.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(2.7 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hispanic 1 (2.7 %)
Puerto Rico 1 (2.7 %)
India 1 (2.7 %)
New Zealand 1 (2.7 %)
Peru 1 (2.7 %)
Saudi Arabia 1 (2.7 %)
South Africa 2 (5.4 %)
Total 37 (100.0 %)

Source: Author’s own creation

6. Comfortable Teaching ESL Online

Two subthemes emerged with respect to being comfortable teaching EFL in an online environment. First, some participants stated that they are not comfortable teaching EFL online and subsequently provided reasons for their response. Specifically, they expressed concerns associated with teaching EFL online such as the need for face-to-face interaction in a classroom setting, the absence of personal contact in online learning environments, the inability to ascertain the body language of learners, and the need for a hands-on approach towards the teaching and learning of English. It is evident that participants who were not comfortable teaching EFL online cited the disadvantages associated with online learning. Some of the observations made by the participants are as follows:

‘I have never taught EFL online. I do not feel that I would enjoy this. When I taught French at a middle school in Michigan, so much of what I did relied on facial expressions and reactions I could observe from the students. I could tell if they needed further explanation, or if they did not get the concept at all. Personal contact was very important.’

‘No because I cannot tell by the student’s body language how he/she is reacting to the tasks or lesson I am presenting.’

‘I know that at first it will be challenging as I am used to physically being in the classroom while teaching. I feel that learning a language is best done when you are in
the presence of the teacher versus learning it online. I am not against teaching online, but I do have concerns about them not knowing how to navigate the online course.’

Fifteen participants revealed that they are comfortable teaching EFL in an online learning environment for several reasons such as flexibility, efficiency, and clarity when the technology is working, the ease of online EFL teaching when the Internet connection is working, and the convenience associated with online EFL teaching. Three participants attributed being comfortable teaching EFL online to the learning management systems, which they viewed as playing a pivotal role in teaching large student populations within short time periods. However, six participants noted that while they were comfortable teaching EFL online, they were of the view that the online learning environment is not suited for teaching EFL because of a number of issues such as the technical problems that often impede the teaching and learning situation, and the need for online EFL teaching to be effectively structured. They believed that online learning environments are suited for other courses but not EFL since EFL teaching needs a blended course format. For instance, some of the participants stated:

‘I feel comfortable teaching online courses, but not EFL. I feel EFL classes should be taught in a blended program. It should have a component of face-to-face learning and teaching, due to pronunciation and facial expressions, and using the Total Physical Response techniques to promote comprehension.’

‘I do feel comfortable teaching EFL students online sometimes. I think that some online education is appropriate, but it must be very well structured and have an attentive instructor. Online education may not be effective for everyone.’

7. Using the Online Learning Environment to Improve English Proficiency among EFL Learners

The majority of the participants (67.5 percent) agreed that the online learning environment helps in improving English proficiency for EFL learners; 20 percent disagreed, whereas 13.5 percent were uncertain. Those who agreed that online learning environment helps in improving English efficiency stated that it provides
students with an opportunity to practice speaking and listening independently, facilitates access to course materials during their own time, and increases learner motivation. Some respondents also stated that the online learning environment encourages more authentic language use than the learner who is in an environment bounded by classroom time and space constraints. A number of the responses provided by those who believed that the online learning environment helps in improving English proficiency included:

‘Yes, it does improve English proficiency when it is part of practice drills used for attaining skills, but not as the only means of learning the English language.’

‘Yes, it does. It increases learners’ autonomy. It provides more time and space for learners for practice and retention. Particularly, it works against the affective filter, working as a barrier, learners may encounter in face-to-face cases.’

‘Yes. Learners can have 24/7 access to recordings, course materials, and practice activities. For the motivated learner, out-of-class access to these resources can prove extremely valuable.’

‘Yes, I believe it would be helpful because at the very least there is an opportunity for EFL students to practice their English and to have online resources that they can refer to whenever they want to learn not only in face to face [sic] classes.’

A subtheme expressed by participants is that the effectiveness of the online learning environment in enhancing English proficiency depends considerably on the learner. In this respect, respondents stated that the online learning environment requires a lot of discipline from the learner for English proficiency to be attained. Other factors that determine the effectiveness of the online learning environment in improving English proficiency for EFL learners include resourcefulness of learners; students’ preferences; and how the course is formatted—well designed and standards-based.

Another subtheme that emerged from the responses is that the online learning environment partly improves English proficiency for EFL learners. In this respect, participants were of the view that the online learning environment can only enhance English proficiency after a particular threshold level of English proficiency has been
achieved. In addition, one respondent noted that the online learning environment could only improve the writing and reading proficiency and not speaking proficiency.

8. Ease of Communication in the Online Environment

The majority of the participants (75.7 percent) indicated that communication in the online environment is not easy. This can be attributed to several impediments such as Internet connection problems and difficulties when trying to express themselves in the online learning environments. In addition, respondents noted that instructors in an online environment are not in a position to provide learners with spontaneous and real-life experiences. Other communication challenges in the online learning environment mentioned by participants included sociocultural and technical impediments affecting online learning, lost communication cues, inability to determine verbal cues, the likelihood of misinterpreting communication, lack of one-on-one semantics resulting to the possibility of words being confused, and issues with language proficiency. For instance, one participant noted:

‘Many other communication cues are lost, so it is rife with pitfalls for EFL learners (body language, tone, etc.), but also, these days a lot of communication is done online, so it is important to practice in that environment. For example, many learners will be assisting in online tech support in English, or business people or engineers will be a part of virtual teams.’

Nevertheless, some participants noted that communication in the online environment is easy because of transparency, easy access to learning materials, and because written communication was easier than verbal communication, eliminated communication barriers for students who are not comfortable speaking face-to-face and enhanced participation since anxiety associated with face-to-face classroom is eliminated. In addition, anonymity helps in eliminating the fear of making mistakes, which enables learners to experiment with language. Preconditions for effective communication in the online environment were also mentioned, which included learning being synchronous, a good Internet connection, constant feedback, instructors being aware of the learners’ abilities, interests of students in computer
interaction, and use of communication devices such as webcams, microphones, and speakers.

9. Blended Learning in Enriching Learning

There was agreement among participants that blended learning helps in enriching learning and they cited a number of reasons such as blended learning incorporates different methods and caters for different learning styles, diverse approaches make learning interesting, and that blended learning offers learners with multiple sources of learning. In addition, blended learning can be used to extend traditional classroom room, whereby learners can practice what they have learned online at their own pace and time. Respondents also noted that blended learning facilitates interactive and independent learning, which in turn, enriches learning. Other ways through which blended learning enriches EFL learning is through flexibility and feedback. Nevertheless, one respondent raised an important concern, which involved putting learners with the different language acquisition levels in one blended course:

‘It is often challenging to include students who possess varying levels of language acquisition in one classroom setting. It takes a skilled facilitator to efficiently work in this environment. Students at varying levels learn from each other, but teachers must be careful to make sure that students do not depend or rely too much on the stronger students, or that the stronger students do not overshadow those who are beginners.’

10. Discussion

The responses provided by participants helped in meeting the study’s objectives, which included exploring ways through which virtual classrooms can be used in improving English proficiency for adult EFL learners, exploring ways through which blended learning can be used in enriching learning in and outside the classroom, and the challenges and successes that facilitators face when using blended learning. The findings of the research highlighted several ways through which virtual classrooms can be utilized in improving the English proficiency of adult EFL learners. First, the findings suggest that providing learners with an opportunity to practice on their own
can be help enhance English proficiency, which can be implemented by promoting self-study. Sharma (2010) also provided a similar recommendation by suggesting that EFL blended learning ought to begin by preparing learners with a presentation followed by outlining the discussion topic and then giving them an opportunity to practice fixed phrases independently. Virtual classrooms can be used to improve English proficiency fostering learner resourcefulness and discipline. This finding is consistent with the views expressed in literature. Khan (2014) pointed out that learners in an online learning environment are provided with an opportunity to make individual decisions and be responsible for their own learning. These learning environments are often characterized by fewer behavioral problems as well as the flourishing of learning. English proficiency among adult EFL learners in online classrooms can be enhanced by reinforcing learner motivation. As a result, when using virtual learning environments for EFL teaching and learning, learner motivation and discipline are important variables that ought to be taken into consideration. Moreover, enhancing English proficiency poses the need for learners to have effective time management skills as well as intrinsic motivation. In this respect, the adult EFL learner must understand the importance of learning English for purposes of assimilating into the society and the culture of the country they are residing. The formatting of the course also plays a pivotal role in enhancing English proficiency. The design of the virtual classroom should take into consideration the preferences of learners. For instance, if learners prefer modules to be delivered using face-to-face instruction, then the course should be formatted in such a way that face-to-face instructions constitute the larger percentage of the blend.

Blended learning can be used to enrich EFL learning in two ways: using different learning styles and using multiple sources in learning and exploring information. For instance, what is taught at the classroom can be extended and practiced online by the student at his/her own pace and convenience. Blended learning involves a mix of both online and offline instruction, traditional and online instructional mix, and a combination of diverse learning environments. These diverse forms of instruction can be blended to enrich EFL learning. Interactive multimedia can be incorporated to enhance the autonomy of the learner—this point out the second way through which
blended learning can be used to enrich EFL learning. Blended learning focuses on communicative practice and learner-centered approach. The basic features of blended learning affirm its suitability for adult EFL learners, who are self-directed and independent (White, 2006). Blended learners provide freedom for learners to direct themselves, which is a core requirement for adult learners. Thus, blended learning helps in encouraging the engagement of adult EFL learners in the learning process. Blended learning can also be used in enriching adult EFL learning through constant feedback and flexibility.

This study also revealed a number of challenges and successes associated with the use of blended learning in EFL teaching and learning. Technology-related challenges are the most common such as the need to have a working technology, technological problems, and Internet connection issues. These technological challenges have also been acknowledged by Mortera-Gutierrez (2006), Hampel and Stickler (2005) and Westbrook (2008). Communication-related challenges in blended learning, especially in the online learning environment were mentioned in this research. Learners are likely to have difficulties expressing themselves in an online learning environment. In addition, online learning environments pose limitations for instructors in that they are not able to provide learners real, spontaneous experiences. Other communication-related challenges mentioned associated with the online environment in blended learning include sociocultural and technical impediments that have an effect on online learning, likelihood of information being misinterpreted, issues with limited language proficiency, likelihood of words being confused since one-on-one semantics is lacking, loss of communication cues, and the inability to access verbal cues. Notable successes associated with the use of online learning were also reported in the study, which include convenience. Sharma and Barrett (2007), emphasized the convenience feature associated with asynchronous blended learning owing to the fact that it enabled students to study at the time and pace of their choice. The ease of communication in the online learning environment has also been highlighted in this study, which include eliminating the communication barrier for students who are not comfortable speaking in face-to-face settings, offering learners with optimal chances for participation by removing the anxiety associated with face-to-face classroom
settings; and removing feat of making students because of the anonymous nature of the online environment; this plays a pivotal role in encouraging learners to adopt a more experimental approach to language learning.

11. Conclusion and Implications

The study contributes to literature relating to blended English language teaching and learning. Teachers, facilitators, and curriculum designers who participated in this study provided helpful insight regarding how blended learning can be used in enhancing the English proficiency among adult EFL learners. The findings of this study suggest three ways through which English proficiency of EFL learners can be achieved. First, facilitators must make sure that learners are provided with opportunities to practice listening and speaking. Second, facilitators must strengthen and reinforce discipline among learners and encourage them to be resourceful. Lastly, facilitators should make sure that the virtual classrooms are well designed in accordance to the preference of learners.

REFERENCES:


COMMENTARIES/SHORT PIECES
What is more important: grammar or vocabulary?

Muhammad Shujaat
Taif University

Communicative competence has several strands including grammar and vocabulary. For effective communication to take place, both grammar and vocabulary are important with the caveat that sometimes grammar alone cannot ensure communication but vocabulary can help convey meaning on several occasions.

Traditionally, students often demand more grammar assuming that grammar is the only issue with their language or resource they need for effective communication. Moreover, grammar is often viewed narrowly: tenses, verb conjugation, etc. In practice, however, learners sometimes express themselves clearly despite lack of grammar when there is minimal syntax or inflection involved. For example, to the answer the question: "Why were you late?" a learner might say, "I was late because of __________." In this case the grammar is correct, but because the learner lacks the lexical resource, the communication is unsuccessful. On the other hand, a learner with a better lexical range might reply: Sorry, traffic problem, in which case the communication will be successful even though little grammar is unlisted. Several such examples could be quoted to support the proposition that at lower levels lexis and fluency need to be prioritized keeping in view the needs of the students and the context. For one, once the famous linguist David Wilkins said David Wilkins (1972) puts it this way: "While without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 111). Linguistic research has also established that meaning is primarily conveyed by lexis (Lewis, 2002; Nation, 2001; Barcroft, 2004; Wilkins, 1972). Given this linguistic insight and the practical nature of the need for a strong lexis, a strong vocabulary base can serve the interests of learners more and they can sound closer to native-level targets of language proficiency. Widdowson (1990: 95) asserts the same opinion:

“Teaching which gives primacy to form and uses words simply as a means of exemplification actually denies the nature of grammar as a construct for the mediation of meaning. I would suggest that the more natural and more effective approach would be to reverse this traditional pedagogic dependency, begin with lexical items and show how they need to be grammatically modified to be communicatively effective”

Sometimes, though, if learners are going to sit a language proficiency exam or another exam where the requirements are specified, learners will need both for effective communication. In such a situation, and as neuroscientists confirm to us, both vocabulary and grammar need to be learnt at declarative and procedural level: the words and grammar need to be processed for the meaning (facts) and put in a particular order and form for active use (skill) (Ullman, 2005; 2006). Grammar is the knowledge and actual active use of vocabulary and without sufficient knowledge and
automatic use of grammar, even a large vocabulary cannot ensure successful communication.

Similarly, for comprehension purposes, too, learners need to have sufficient vocabulary to be able understand a text as grammar alone will not be sufficient to ensure the understanding of a text and this a larger vocabulary may be particularly more helpful in understanding certain reading texts.

As discussed above, grammar also plays a crucial role in conveying meaning and for effective grammar use, it has to be noticed in context, learnt explicitly and used actively. For this to happen, learners will need exposure to language and focus on form in context. For example, learners will benefit from reading or listening to a text for meaning first and, then, they grammar may also be focused on. Experience suggests that input-flooding and making the grammar point salient can help learners acquire grammar to the level of automaticity through over-learning. The same procedures need to be applied for learners to see words in context for better recall as learners associate meaning with context and this helps learners free-up processing time for more effective-communication as they get time for more ideas and as such their communication is effective.

Therefore, we can conclude that both lexical and grammatical aspects of effective communication complement each other with the insight that grammar alone is not sufficient for effective communication.

REFERENCES:


Incorporating Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 in ELT

Sameera Sultan Baloch
Imam AbdulRahman Bin Faisal University

English as an International Language

It is an established fact that English is the language that is spoken and understood around the globe. At present, the path of progress and prosperity of any nation is deemed to incorporate learning of English as a foreign or second language in the curriculum. It is the language which has expressed and witnessed development in education, science, entertainment, tourism, print and electronic media, business, travel, internet and technology. No nation can stand alone in these areas of development. The nations have to interact with other people to flourish, develop and get their rightful place in the civilized world. Language is a primary source of communication which does not only distinguish humans from animals but also enables and empowers human beings to express, present, articulate and share their ideas and knowledge effectively.

English has the status of international language around the globe because of its pragmatic usage. It has become an important mode of communication amongst nations. It is the language which possesses a huge variety of accents, dialects and literatures. Earlier, it was only American and British English but now there are varieties of English. Local language and literature play an important role to offer diversity in a foreign language. English has this capacity to adapt the local language and literature and appears in a new variety of English. Hence, there are British, American, Canadian, Australian, Indian, Pakistani, South African and so many other Englishes.

This is the status of English language today. It has the capacity and ability of acquisition, borrowing and adapting vocabulary from other languages and brings a diverse and subtle shade of meanings and contexts. Every variety of English has its own literature and culture. Language and culture go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated from each other.

The emergence of English as an international language has opened the doors of English Language Teaching as an autonomous field of study and the most essential genre of knowledge. English is being taught and learned around the globe at different levels and capacities. On the one hand, it is the first language or mother tongue of some countries and on the other hand, it is the second or foreign language for others. Whatever the case is, English has become a crucial part of curriculum taught at any level, in any program, or in any country around the world because English is the language of science and technology. Eminent scholars Photis Lysandrou & Yvonne Lysandrou (2013) emphasize the importance of English as a lingua franca and the link learning of English with global economy and process. In this scenario, the connection between English and Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia becomes obvious. The
significance of English in Saudi Arabia cannot be denied. A planned and proper layout is needed in the field of ELT to achieve the goals and objectives of Vision 2030. If Saudi Vision 2030 is a path towards progress, prosperity and enlightenment, ELT in Saudi Arabia could be a tool or source to reach to the destination.

**Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia and ELT**

Saudi Arabia is an emerging power of the Arab world because of its transforming vision, reformatory spirit and strategic position in the world. With the materialization of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia is steering towards a new emergence. Modernization in every walk of life is opening new horizons of business and knowledge in the kingdom. In this situation, English Language Teaching has to play a pivotal role in the development of the nation and country equally. ELT then must include themes of Vision 2030 in its content. English is being taught in Saudi Arabia at schools, universities and vocational institutions. English can potentially contribute in the success of Saudi Vision 2030 (Alzahrani, 2017).

Saudi Vision 2030 is presented by Mohammad Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs under the patronage of Kind Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. The Vision 2030 is based on three pillars. These pillars (Vision 2030, 2016) include the position of Saudi Arabia in the Arab and the Islamic world, the determination to become a global investment powerhouse, and conversion of the unique strategic location of Saudi Arabia into an international center connecting three continents, Asia, Europe, and Africa.

It is also determined in the vision (Vision 2030, 2016) that new horizons of the economy will be explored instead of relying on oil resources. Aramco will be transformed from an oil producing company into a global industrial empire. The Public Investment Fund will be converted into the world’s largest autonomous world fund. Half of the manufacturing of military need will be done in the Kingdom to generate more job opportunities for the nation and retain more resources in the country. In addition, it is pledged that digital services will be expanded to cut off tiresome formalities and extensive transparency, and accountability reforms will be adopted to evaluate the performance of the government agencies.

The main text of Saudi Vision comprises three main themes: “a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation” (Vision 2030, 2016).

In my opinion, incorporating Vision 2030 in ELT will not only give English a unique Islamic pragmatic touch but also enable youth to get their rightful place in the job market. Themes of Vision 2030 revolve around the development of Saudi society in economic, social and academic spheres of life.

According to the vision (Vision 2030, 2016) “a vibrant society with strong roots” in Islamic faith, heritage, values and culture takes pride to serve Umrah visitors with their warm hospitality, better transportation and lodging facilities. The ancient
historical and cultural inheritance of Saudi society which includes Saudi, Arab and Islamic legacy is a source of enormous pride of the nation in its identity. This legacy has given Saudi society cultural wealth and diversity. The national identity will be preserved by keeping up national values and principles, promoting social development and elevating the Arabic language. A happy and fulfilling life will be provided by promoting culture, entertainment, healthy lifestyle, security and environmental sustainability. Taking care of family needs, developing children’s characters through education, empowering society, and caring for health sectors (Vision 2030, 2016) will lead to building a strong and productive society.

Integrating this theme of ‘a vibrant society’ in ELT will give Saudi learners exposure to such a language which not only facilitates them to communicate with the international community at the holy sites (i.e. Makkah and Madinah), but will also enable them to learn about other cultures of the world. English for Specific Purpose (ESP) could offer a well-designed course which will enable personnel employed at holy sites to serve pilgrims in a more professional and efficient manner. A nation cannot stand alone to achieve its goals and objectives in today’s global world. To promote Arab culture and Arabic language, different genres of Arab literature can be translated in English. It will not only be a source of knowledge to pilgrims but will also enrich English language and literature.

The theme of “a thriving economy” in the vision covers the sub-themes: “rewarding opportunities, investing for long term, open for business, and leveraging its unique strategic position.” It is pledged in the vision that rewarding skills, competencies, and equal job opportunities will be provided to children to achieve their personal goals. High quality education, vocational training, refining national curriculum, training teachers and educational leaders, scholarship programs (Vision 2030, 2016) are some of the important points to be focused on to achieve the goals of a flourishing economy. Boosting small scale businesses, involving Saudi women in the development of society and economy, and attracting global talent by providing better living facilities for their families are also covered under the sub-theme, rewarding opportunity. Long-term investment plans will be ensured. Reliance on oil will be reduced in economic growth. Tourism, technology, mining, manufacturing sectors will be made pillars of the economy. Gas and oil sectors will be localized. A congenial business atmosphere will be provided to national and foreign investors to make Saudi Arabia open for business and be one of the largest economies in the world. The strategic and geographic location of Saudi Arabia which connects three continents, Asia, Europe and Africa, will bring maximum benefit to a booming economy. This geographic location has given a unique edge to the Saudi economy. It will be used to get utmost benefits by making Saudi Arabia a unique regional logistic hub, integrating regionally and internationally and supporting national companies.

ELT has a huge scope in the second major theme of the vision. According to this theme Saudi Arabia will be made an industrial hub for three continents. In that scenario English must play a major role. English will be the medium of
communication, business, and correspondence. Tourism, mining and manufacturing sectors will be boosted. Different courses of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) can be included in the curriculum of university programs or degrees. English for Business, Marine Life, Tourism, Hospitality, and Technology can be designed along with English for Medicine, Engineering etc. These courses can cater the needs of job market also.

ELT can be potentially a source of success in the theme of a thriving economy. “Education that contributes the economic growth” is also a sub-theme (Vision 2030, 2016). It is also determined that rewarding skills will be provided to children. Knowing a foreign language is a rewarding skill. Moreover, English is an international language. ELT can also bridge the gap between the curriculum and the job market. Different ESP courses can be included in the degree programs which will enable a university graduate to get a job according to his/her qualification or degree. The jobs of translators, ambassadors, tourist guides, event managers, lawyers and visa consultants will be in abundance. If the youth lack the required skills, they cannot play a productive role effectively. For the above-mentioned jobs, knowing English is a prerequisite and important skill. Hence, ELT in Saudi Arabia has a potential to play its role effectively in catering to the needs of a flourishing economy, blooming society and determined nation. Incorporating Saudi Vision 2030 in ELT will pave the way to progress and prosperity of Saudi Arabia, bring new heights and achievements to the nation, and make education more meaningful, consequential and purposeful.

REFERENCES:


Disruptive Technology in the Language Classroom

Georgios Kompas
Al-Yamamah University

Technology is a vital part of education, and it is widely used in the classroom especially in the language one. For many years, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been an essential module in most Masters’ education programs and is considered as a mandatory part of the curriculum. Different means of technology are used in the classroom daily, from different forms of digital material (videos, websites, worksheets), platforms (Moodle, Edmodo, Blackboard), and assessment (Feedback, Quizzes, progress tests) are only a few examples that are currently available in the 21st century. Technology, in general, was not primarily invented to be used exclusively in the classroom; for example, mobile phones, tablets or even computers were primarily used for other purposes.

From an empirical perspective, research has shown that most UK students use social media (Madge et al, 2009); however, students rarely use social media for educational purposes (Jones et al, 2010). Interestingly, in a study conducted by Selwyn and Gorad in 2016, only 7 years after the 2009 study found that Facebook is used by students to support their learning in Australia, as well as, students prefer to demarcate their technology use. From the research provided it is evident that there are discrepancies from different groups of students depending on when and where the research was carried out. To add to that, there is some theoretical background to support this notion. Prensky (2001) coined the terms Digital Natives (DN) and Digital Immigrants (DI). DNIs refer to population that were born where technology use was prominent and abundant. DIs are populations that technologies were somewhat unfamiliar. The two categories seem to have a different perception of the use of technology and may clash when it comes to a classroom environment. Teachers should not have an expectation to reach the level of technology of their students. There is no need for it and they need to see technology as a medium and not a panacea of teaching and learning.

There is a plethora of applications that are readily available and need minimal training from the teacher’s perspective. What teachers always need to remember is that they need to have explored the website or application prior to its introduction to the students. Some very good examples of these applications/websites are: Kahoot, Quizlet, writeandimprove.com, Quiz Your English, Canva, AnswerGarden, and Grammarly.
REFERENCES:


CALL FOR PAPERS (FALL EDITION 2019)

KTAJ invites local and international scholars to submit original unpublished manuscripts on various teaching and learning issues, within the context of Saudi Arabia or the Arabian Gulf, for our Fall issue which will be published by October 1, 2019. We will accept submissions for 1) conference proceedings from this year’s 12th Annual KSAALT-TESOL Conference, 2) full length research articles, 3) commentaries and short pieces, and 4) guest contributions.

Below is a general timeline guide by which contributors can follow to make the necessary preparation for submission:

Submission deadline: August 1, 2019
Acceptance notification: August 31, 2019
Deadline for revisions: September 7, 2019
Publication: October 1, 2019

Contributors can find Author Guidelines here: http://ksaalt-tesol.org/
Contributors can upload their manuscripts to our manuscript management system here: https://www.manuscriptlink.com/journals/ksaaltaj

GENERAL MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

• Written in accordance with APA 6th Ed. format
• Written in clear, academic English
• Not under consideration with any other academic journal
• Free of any plagiarism/original work
• Does not exceed word length limitation: Research (6,000 words) Commentary (1,000 words)

GENERAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All manuscripts are submitted via our online manuscript management system. Scholars are also invited to send the Chief Editor an email at editor@ksaalt-tesol.org to inquire about writing on a topic of particular interest. The journal manager will then notify said scholar about the topic’s suitability.
KSAALT (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Association of Language Teachers), a non-profit professional service organization for English language teachers, was created in 2006 with a handful of dedicated educators who had a desire to serve, educate, and connect English language teachers in Saudi Arabia through professional development with interactive and engaging general meetings, workshops, and mini and annual conferences.