Teacher's Believes about English as Foreign Language "EFL" and effective Teaching Strategies for "EFL" in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract:

This qualitative study aims, to explore the views of teachers about "EFL" and identify some contextual effective strategies for teaching English as "**Foreign Language".**

In the teaching-learning process of the English language teachers, are expected to play an important role in assisting the students to learn the new language. In school specific teachers are appointed to teach English and they are trained by the education department. Most of the literature or learning material used in the training is from other contexts, there is a lack of literature from the local context as this area has been under-researched in KSA. In "EFL" the local context and culture are viewed as important factors in enhancing the learning of the learners.

Teachers' attitudes and their teaching practices are seen as crucial in enhancing the opportunities for learning in a particular context. However, in KSA teachers' practices and their views about teaching English as "foreign language" have been under-researched.

Keywords:

Culture, English-as foreign language (EFL), English-as Second language (ESL), identity, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), pedagogical content, social context, Teacher's beliefs, EFL, Teaching strategies, KSA

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مستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة النوعية إلى استكشاف/فهم آراء/معتقدات المعلمين حول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية وتحديد بعض الاستراتيجيات الفعالة السياقية لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

في عملية التدريس والتعلم، من المتوقع أن يلعب معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية دورًا مهمًا في تسهيل تعلم الطلاب للغة الجديدة. يتم تعيين معلمين محددين في المدرسة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية ويتم تدريبهم من قبل إدارة التعليم. معظم الأدبيات أو المواد التعليمية المستخدمة في التدريب تأتي من سياقات أخرى، وهناك نقص في الأدبيات من السياق المحلي حيث أن هذا المجال لم يتم بحثه بشكل كافٍ في المملكة العربية السعودية. في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية، يُنظر إلى السياق والثقافة المحلية كعاملين مهمين في تعزيز تعلم المتعلمين.

ويُنظر إلى مواقف المعلمين وممارساتهم التعليمية على أنها حاسمة في تعزيز فرص التعلم في سياق معين. ومع ذلك، في المملكة العربية السعودية، لم يتم بحث ممارسات المعلمين وآرائهم حول تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية.

Introduction about Study variables in the research EFL:

This study investigated the impact of variables affecting foreign language learning from Iranian EFL learners' perspectives and explored the patterns that arise from their responses to questions addressing these variables. At first it was taken for granted that variables affecting foreign language learning are classifiable into internal and external. Therefore, the focus of the study was not on extracting these components but on the role that the variables play in relation to them. The study was carried out by distributing copies of a 30-item Lickert-scale questionnaire among close to 140 postgraduate students of English Language Teaching (ELT) in three universities in Iran. The collected data were then subjected to Principle Component Analysis (PCA). The findings revealed that although internal and external components are identifiable, many of the variables do not heavily load on the principle component to which they theoretically belong. After separating the non-correlating variables it became clear that most of these variables are very important variables. The conclusion was that the nature of variables cannot be the basis of judgment for their importance and that excessive attention paid to internal variables should be balanced against the social and cultural issues that are reflected in external variables.

Research Problem:

Recognising the importance of English language in today's world, English has made part of curriculum and taught as "foreign language" in secondary schools in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). English being a "foreign language", is used limitedly in the daily life in KSA hence classroom becomes the main space where students are expected to learn English. In the teaching learning process of English language teachers are expected to play an important role in assisting the students to learn the new language.

In Private Schools, Teachers are appointed for teaching English and they are trained by the education department. After the training they are expected to implement the learning in the classroom. Most of the literature or learning material used in the training is from other contexts, there is lack of literature from the local context as this area has been under researched in KSA.

In "EFL" the local context and culture is viewed one of the important factor in enhancing the learning of the learners. Teachers' attitudes and their teaching practices are seen crucial in enhancing the opportunities of learning in particular context. However, in KSA teachers' practices and their views about Teaching English as "foreign language" has been under researched. Therefore sometime this hinders the learning of the learners.

Keeping in view the above facts, there is a dire need to investigate how teachers view "EFL" and what is their belief about effective teaching strategies to teach English as "foreign language". Hence, this research attempts to investigate this area in order to shorten the gap.

Research Purpose:

This qualitative study aims, to explore the views of teachers about "EFL" and identify some contextual effective strategies of teaching of English as foreign language.

To achieve the above broader aim the following question are used to guide this investigation/study.

Research questions

1- What are teachers' general views about teaching EFL?

2- What constitutes effective teaching strategies?

Literature review:

The aim of current research is to explore the views of teachers about "EFL" and to identify some contextual teaching strategies for "EFL" in the context of Saudi Arabia. In this section, some relevant literature is reviewed in order to provide context and background for the study.

Teaching and learning in general and particularly a foreign language in is viewed a complex process influenced by different factors. Context is seen as an important factor that influencing teaching learning practices in the field of "EFL". Lee (2011) conducting a case study in Korean schools, concludes that only theory does not work while teaching English as foreign language rather the local context plays a crucial role in influence the teaching learning process. He further states that to consider the context in real sense means to consider the welfare of the learners. Learning is effective when students can relate the content to their daily lives. This

shows that to enhance the learning of "EFL" learners along with the learning theories from other context some local context based instruction practices are also important.

In a qualitative study, investigating the factors that influence the "EFL" instructions, Reichelt (2005) finds that "EFL" pedagogy in a non-English dominant context is influenced by multiple variables. According to the researcher, the place and use of English in a society plays an important role in determining the instructional practices.

Studies have shown that teachers' perception and beliefs about "EFL" and their pedagogical contextual knowledge has an important role in influencing the teaching learning practice of "EFL" in non-English context. For example, a study, conducted in Malaysian public secondary schools (Yuns & Arshad, 2013) investigated "EFL" teachers' perceptions, practices and prospect of learner autonomy in their schools. The study reveals that despite having discouraging situation in schools, teachers' positive beliefs help them to implement the "EFL" course successfully. Similarly, aiming to investigate "EFL" teachers' perception of classroom-based reading assessment, Jia, Eslami and Barlbaw (2010) conducted a qualitative study in the context of USA focusing elementary school (EFL) teachers. The study found that "EFL" teachers highly value classroom-based reading assessment as they consider them accurate and valuable. Such assessment is viewed helpful in their daily teaching of reading. However, teachers term the state-mandated standardized testing system as of little help to English learners.

Another study conducted by Liu (2013) with Chinese university faculty members primarily teaching secondary Language investigated the patterns and role of pedagogical content knowledge in "EFL" teaching. The study finds that pedagogical knowledge plays an important role in effective teaching of "EFL". The researcher further says that policies and culture predominantly influence the pedagogical content knowledge of faculty members. Hence, the study suggests that ESL teacher education needs to provide standardized and effective "EFL" pedagogical knowledge for teachers. Pedagogical practices are seen important in influencing the identity of learns while teaching a foreign language. Trofimovich &Turuseva (2015) argues that pedagogical practices can be transformed according to need of the context. Ethnic or cultural identity positions

sometimes limit learners to speak, read or write but it can be enhanced by setting possibilities of social interaction.

Conducting a case study with Korean middle school students in a U.S. school setting, Pandey (2012) concluded that the general English teaching strategies are not effective to teach non English students rather there is need to devise context based teacher strategies. The researcher, who is also the teacher designated and implemented an "EFL" course for Korean newcomer students in "USA", suggests some teaching strategies based on her research finding. The researcher suggests modelling as strategy to provide students with important practice, conscious awareness, and automaticity of the key formal and functional details of writing. The researcher further argues that teaching through individualized workshops that focus on morphology, grammar, paragraph-based discourse structures, and thesis statement construction can advance the writing fluency of students. She further asserts that the strategies need to be based on the students' needs and interests.

Similarly, Grave (2000) also argues any "EFL" curriculum or course if not developed considering the learners need and interest, cannot be taught effectively. To make an "EFL" course more context base, he suggests system approach as effective approach for course design and implementation in "EFL". This approach allows looking at different aspects of the course such as the culture, needs and interest of learners and theories on "EFL". He further asserts that if cultural and contextual needs are not met for an "EFL" course, it would be less beneficial for learners. He further says that irrelevant content and teaching strategies sometimes increase the anxiety level of learners and affects learning negatively.

Studies have shown that in Saudi Arabia English leaner commonly express their anxiety over learning English as foreign language. Based on a large scale qualitative study, Alrabai (214) concluded that Saudi learners experience moderate to high level of anxiety while learning English as foreign language. The researcher has categorized this anxiety in Saudi students into six areas such as speaking anxiety, social-image anxiety, and negative attitude towards English class, comprehension anxiety and language test anxiety. The researcher suggests a model to overcome these anxieties but they

have very broad suggestion to deal with such issues. It may vary in different cultural context.

Studies have indicated that culture is an import factor in making choice of learning preference in "EFL". A study was conducted in Malaysia by Arumugam et al (2014) investigating how students' cultural norms influence collaborative writing performance in an "EFL" class. The findings suggest that students' learning is embedded in rich culture and attributes. When learners interact with their group they demonstrate the positive cultural values such as unity, tolerance and respect. Where the cultural values help in enhancing the collaboration among the students, at the same time it was helpful to develop their language skills. The study concluded that cooperative group is effective because of the students' grounded values and culture and that culture influence the learners' ways of learning and communicating in formal "EFL" classroom.

The relationship between language learner and the social context around them is viewed as complex phenomena. According to Dravin and Norton (2015) it needs to refine the lens through which second language acquisition is seen in a society. They suggest that language policy makers and teachers should examine the context where language learning and teaching takes place. Trofimovich and Turursva (2015) assert that language learning in influence by how a learner interprets the cultural aspect including personal and ethic identity.

Literature has highlighted that learning a second or foreign language in an ethnically diverse context has implications for teaching learning. In Saudi Arabia, English is a second language to some but also a third language to a significant immigrant population from the surrounding areas. Habtoor (2012) studied the language maintenance and shift of an ethnic minority group (Tigrinya-speaking) in Saudi Arabia who had been shifted from Eritrean, for better future prospects and learning the major language Arabic, but also an international language English which has implications for their identity development. Some people retain their primary language, some shift their language and sometimes learners develop hybrid identity, some learners add to their language resource by learning new languages (Duff, 2015). This has implication for teaching a third language i.e. English.

The teacher's role is seen very crucial in preparing young minds for leaving in this multicultural, multilingual, globalized world. Teachers play vital role in motivating learner to learn a new language and to provide an enabling environment where language is learnt (Grave, 2000). According to Al-Ghamdi (2015) who studied how Saudi students adjust in USA, concludes that when Saudi student are helped to understand the importance of English language they show motivation to learn English as foreign language along with keeping their own cultural identity alive.

Teachers' role is also important in creating identifying relevant and contextual based teaching strategies in "EFL". According to Jia, Eslami and Barlbaw (2010) found the teachers classrooms based assessment in ESL is more effective and relevant than the standardized testing system given by higher authority. The research identified that teacher develop their context and students needs while teaching in the real classroom and other hand the standardized assessment and teaching strategies are on theory based taken from other societies. Hence they suggest that policy makers need to incorporate the views and experience of teaches while making policy for "EFL".

Similarly, Pandey (2012) argue that every context has its own cultural and contextual dynamic therefore some standardized teaching strategies cannot be fit for all. He suggests that teachers must look at the literature to understand the broader issues of teaching "EFL" but they also need to keep in mind the learners' cultural and family background to develop the specific and relevant teaching straggles for teaching English to non-English speaking learners

Grave (2000) is also of the view that an effective "EFL" curriculum /course can only be developed while taking stoke of the current practices in school or society. He suggests that while developing policy or designing "EFL" courses the practices of schools much be explored and teachers teaches experience must be incorporated in the course in order to formulate and relevant policy and "EFL" course.

It is evident that in Saudi Arabia the "EFL" practices have been under researched therefore there is lack of context based literature on this area. The curriculum and teaching practice are mostly based on the literature borrowed from other society. Hence,

there is need to explore the teaching practices in the Saudi schools in order to identify some relevant and context based teaching strategies for "EFL".

Research Method:

The purpose of the study is to understand the beliefs of teachers about "EFL"and effective teaching strategies for teaching English as "foreign language". Keeping in view the nature of the study a qualitative research paradigm is employed. Creswell (2002) asserts that qualitative paradigm of research is helpful in exploring/understanding a social phenomenon in a natural setting through the data in the form of words, pictures representing opinion and interaction.

Within the qualitative research paradigm, the researcher choose case study to investigate the topic as it seems to be the most suitable method for this enquiry. Coehn, Manion and Morrison (2000) and Marriam (2009) are of the view that qualitative case is the method used to study any social phenomenon focusing on a single institution that may be individuals, situation, and organization. In this research my case is an institution which is known for its program and approaches for youth leadership development. According to Yin (2009) a case needs to be unique for its selection. Miller and Salkind (2002) state that "….case study is an exploration of a 'bound system' or a case (or multiple cases), overtime, though detailed in-depth dada collection, involving multiple sources of information…. (p.126).

Keeping the above perspectives and the focus of my study in view the researchers used the case study method to understand the teachers' belief and practice.

Research Design:

In order to understand the teachers' belief and practice regarding "EFL", this study will be conducted in a government secondary school in the urban area in "KSA". As state schools are the major sources to educate students in KSA. Students at secondly level are expected to learn the basic level of English and specific teachers are appointed for teaching English at the level. Hence, a secondary school will be suitable for this study.

Five teachers, who teach in the secondary level, were selected as research participants for this study. It would be ensured

that he every teacher has more than two years' experience of teaching in order to gather relevant data.

Data collection study:

Qualitative research paradigm demands a rich data which is collected using a variety of methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. In qualitative research knowledge is constructed by enquiring and interpreting the words, opinions, experiences and conceptions of people in a social context by asking and observing people (Mason, 2002). For this study, semi-structure interviews, class observation and document analysis will be used as data collection methods.

Keeping in view the nature and purpose of my study, I will use semi-structure interview as the main data collection method. Semi- structure interview allows a researcher to have some pre-determined guiding questions. However, the interviewer has enough chance to probe beyond the answers of the present questions. Semi-structured interviews are mainly used in flexible qualitative designs (Mason, 2002).

Data analysis and Results:

The purpose of this study is to identify the major problems of "EFL" teaching in overcrowded classrooms of Saudi Arabia. Some major problems include: failure to maintain discipline in classroom, demotivation of both teacher and learner, failure to evaluate strengths and weakness of each individual, teachers' struggle to deal with physical and mental stress, failure to achieve course learning outcomes, failure to create sound teacher student relationship and establish effective teaching environment. A total of 35 "EFL" teachers from King Khalid University, teachers teaching in different schools and colleges of Asir (southern) region have participated in this study. Survey questionnaires, discussions and semi-structured interviews are the main research tools for collecting data. The study proposes some remedial measures which include enrolling limited number of students in an "EFL" course, establishing well equipped "EFL" classrooms with required facilities, teaching large classes electronically, training the teachers to teach large classes effectively.

Summary and Conclusion

In this above section, it was attempted to review some literature that discuss the issues related to "EFL" teaching learning focusing the importance of context and role of teachers.

The discussion reveals that teaching and learning

is complex phenomena evolves different factors. Context is one important factor that affects the teaching learning process of "EFL". Teaching of practice or instruction is influence influenced by various factors such as the place and use of English in a society, the local attitudes towards English the history of English language teaching in a society.

Teachers' perception and beliefs about "EFL"also play an important role in teaching practice of "EFL". Teaches content and pedagogical skills are also viewed an important factor the impacts the teaching learning practices of "EFL"in a society.
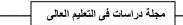
Cultural values and norms are also crucial in determining the teaching learning culture of the society. The culture asset needs to be incorporated in order to maximize the learning of "EFL"learners.

It was also highlighted that one standardized teaching tragedies cannot be fit to all context rather every society has it requires some context based teaching strategies. Hence it required exploring the local teaching learning practice to develop and context based strategies.

Teachers play important part in developing context based teaching strategies from their classroom practices. Hence, it is has recommended to in literature to explore and understand the teaching practices in order to develop a context related and effective teaching practices for "EFL".

In Saudi Arabia, studies have shown that learners experience higher level of anxiety while learning English as foreign language. One of the reasons of this anxiety is the less relevant and ineffective teaching strategies and it requires developing more context-based teaching strategies.

The teaching practice of "EFL" has been less explored area in "KSA" and it there is need to identify some context based teaching practice by exploring the views and practices of the teachers. Hence, to fill this gap I am planning to conduct a study to explore the views of teaching in order to identify some context based teaching practice from the schools of "KSA".

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