Assessing EFL Undergraduates in Communicative Language Teaching Classroom

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Abstract
In the Universities across Saudi Arabia, English is a compulsory course at the first level undergraduate education. A student should pass in the first level English course in order to continue his/her chosen field of study. English language courses at the undergraduate level are intended to improve communication skills of the students. Course content is linked to communicative activities and students are expected to participate in the classroom sessions. Students' participation in communicative activities also contributes to their scores. This paper gives an overview of communicative language teaching in Saudi undergraduate classrooms. Regular assessments are necessary to monitor students' progress in English language skills. Since a course book is designed with a variety of communicative activities, each of this emphasizing particular processes and procedures, influence the learning outcomes. An understanding of motivational elements in students' academic career reveals their attitudes in learning a foreign language. A discussion of motivation skills and assessment processes in Saudi EFL classrooms gives insights about the success and failures of communicative activities. This paper also discusses current pedagogical practices and approaches to communicative activities in the EFL classroom. Most often EFL teachers have difficulty in making skilful and effective use of assessment in a CLT classroom to identify students' skills. A theoretical review on the developments in communicative approach presented in the paper outlines its relevance in EFL classrooms. Monitoring the regular progress of undergraduate EFL students is a central aspect of teaching because it is linked to decision making about the choice of processes and procedures that facilitate classroom learning.
Keywords: Assessment, Classroom, Communication, Teaching, Skills

Introduction

The traditional approaches to language teaching have given the value to grammatical competence. Researchers believed that the foreign language learners will find it easier to learn a new language when they are given exposure to drilling and grammar exercises. Traditional theorists in foreign language learning argued that initial errors made would quickly become repetitive in the learner's speech and so recommended grammatical competence from the initial stages of learning a new language. Though grammatical competence was required to produce correct sentences, there was a shift to other aspects of language for communication purposes. According to Cheung and Yang (2003), communicative language teaching began in Britain in the 1960s, as a replacement for the highly-structured method of situational language teaching. They further say that the communicative language teaching requires authentic communication and includes a believable setting, a standard speed in speaking, a range of lexical items suitable for the students' ages, and an overall promotion of learning. Savignon (2002) states that both grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods did not prepare learners for the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning and thus an enthusiasm for an array of alternative methods labelled communicative, has resulted in uncertainty as to what the essential features of communicative language teaching are. According to Savignon, the principles of communicative language teaching apply to reading and writing activities that engage readers and writers in the analysis, expression and negotiation of meaning. Savignon (2002) argues that the communicative language teaching includes metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of rules of syntax, discourse and social appropriateness. The goals of communicative language teaching depend on learner needs in a given context. In Saudi undergraduate classrooms, English is introduced from the first level and learners are expected to have a minimum proficiency to read, understand, speak and write high frequency English words. Communicative language teaching is a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, the ways learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that enhance learning and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. The prescribed English course books for undergraduate education are based on the communicative approach to language teaching. In this context, it is important to be aware of the features of communicative language teaching and its impact on the classroom teaching-learning process.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching gives preference to real life situations. In a communicative language teaching classroom students are required to participate and respond to the interactive sessions. In these interactive sessions, English teachers have to be active facilitators of their students' learning. The role of a teacher is to observe and monitor the progress of communicative activities in the classroom. The responsibility of the students is to participate in an activity and make the communicative exercises lively and productive. According to Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence consists of four indispensable elements: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic. Grammatical competence deals with sentence-level rules. According to Thurrell and Zoltan (1991), grammatical competence involves knowledge of language code (grammar rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.). They further point out that language teaching has traditionally been aimed at improving grammatical competence. Canale and Swain (1980) states that discourse competence deal with rules that govern the relationship among sentences to form a meaning. According to Thurrell and Zoltan (1991), the rules of discourse focus on particular cohesion

devices and coherence rules to produce unified texts. Canale and Swain (1980) state that sociolinguistic competence deals with rules of speaking that depend on pragmatic and socio-cultural factors. According to Thurrell and Zoltan (1991), sociolinguistic competence is made up of two sets of rules namely socio-cultural rules and rules of discourse. They further state that socio-cultural rules specify ways of using language appropriately in a given situation as it is concerned with style, register and degree of politeness. According to Thurrell and Zoltan, language learning materials in modern English course books are designed to develop sociolinguistic competence in the learner. A speaker may encounter many unfamiliar situations and hence be strategic to deal with these situations with appropriate language skills. Canale and Swain (1980) state that strategic competence deals with the way the speaker manipulates language to fulfil communicative goals. According to Thurrell and Zoltan (1991), strategic competence refers to the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems arise in the communication process. They further point out that a lack of strategic competence is explicit when students with a firm knowledge of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary get stuck and are unable to carry out their communicative intent. Thurrell and Zoltan are of the view that training in strategic competence has been rather neglected. Canale and Swain (1980) assert that if the foreign language program aims at enabling learners to reach the level of communicative competence, all four components namely grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence are of high importance.

Littlemore (2003) says that the communication goals of the language user are likely to vary from context to context. Communicative language teaching provides value to social and situational contexts of communication. Communicative competence includes the use of language for a range of different purposes and functions. It also includes knowledge of formal and informal speech, knowledge to produce and understand varied kinds of texts and the ability to maintain communication in spite of limitations in one's language background. The second language learners may use different kinds of communication strategies for being successful in academic and non-academic contexts. According to Williams (2006), an effective way to develop students' communicative competence is to teach communication strategies. Bialystok (1990) points out that communication strategies are used by speakers intentionally and consciously in order to cope with difficulties in communicating in a L2 or foreign language. However, Lessard-Clouston (1997) states that the term language learning strategies are used more generally for all strategies that L2 or foreign language learners use in learning the target language. Lessard-Clouston clarifies that communication strategies are, therefore, just one type of language learning strategies.

Developing communication strategies in EFL classrooms

Williams (2006) states that communication strategies are strategies that learners employ when their communicative competence in the target language is insufficient. This includes making themselves understood in the L2 and having others help them understand. He further points out that learners use communication strategies to compensate any inadequacies they may have in grammatical knowledge and vocabulary. According to Williams, communication strategies aid learners in participating and maintaining conversations and thus improve the quality of communication. This, in turn, enables them to have increased exposure and opportunities to use the L2. Williams further states that such strategies would encourage learners

to take risks in a foreign language and other specific conversation topics or situations. According to Savignon (2002), by definition, communicative language teaching puts the focus on the learner and learner attitude is the single most important factor in learner success. Savignon says communicative curriculum is composed of language arts which include many of the exercises used in mother tongue programmes and focus on forms of English, including syntax, morphology and phonology. Savignon further points out that attention to the particular communication needs of the learners is important in the selection and sequencing of materials. She argues, "every programme with a goal of communicative competence should give attention to opportunities for meaningful English use, to opportunities to focus on meaning rather than on form" (p.4). The most successful teaching programmes are those that take into account the affective, as well as the cognitive aspects of language learning, because these programmes involve learners psychologically as well as intellectually.

According to Ryan (2001), communicative methodology is learner-centred and emphasizes fluency over accuracy. He says that although fluency may be needed, it can create problems of not providing enough concrete feedback for learners to correct their mistakes and keep focused on the immediate classroom task(s). Rooney (2000) points out that the communicative task has ascended to the position of prominence as a unit of organization in syllabus design. Rooney further says that task-based approach of language teaching allows for needs analysis and the evaluation can be based primarily on task-based criterion-referenced testing. Students can be evaluated on their ability to perform a task according to a particular criterion rather than on their ability to be successful in a discrete-point test. Ryan (2001) is of the view that the communicative methodology is an excellent tool for increasing fluency. He further states that it also creates recurring problems that need to be addressed and counterbalanced with different methodology. According to Ryan (2001), overcoming these common recurring problems that plague the existing courses can free the instructor to become more creative while allowing learners to become more competent in the target language. Lessard-Clouston (1997) states that a key goal for the learner within a communicative approach to language teaching is to develop communicative competence in the target L2 or foreign language, and language learning strategies can help students in doing so. He points out that an understanding of language learning strategies is crucial for all EFL teachers who aim to help develop their students' communicative competence and language learning. Communicative language teaching draws on a number of diverse sources, and there is no single set of practices that characterize current communicative language teaching. It can be applied in different ways depending on the teaching context, the age of learners, their level and their learning goals.

Learning a foreign language is a cyclic process because motivation, positive attitudes, and efforts in effective learning may result in increased language attainment. Reilly (1988) points out that language acquisition and maintenance depend on instructional factors, relating to the way in which the language is initially acquired. Thanasoulas (2002) holds the view that learning a foreign language is different from learning other subjects. Narayanaswamy (1973) says that any approach to the teaching of a new language must take into account the needs of the learner and the conditions in which the language is taught. He points out that the needs and circumstances differ not only from country to country but also from time to time within the same country. According to Thomas and Rohwer (1986), the characteristics college students bring to each learning environment that are important to active learning are students' prior knowledge,

metacognitive abilities, motivational levels, and interest in what they are reading or studying. The learning environment depends on the prescribed texts for the classroom teaching and learning process.

Assessment processes in EFL classrooms

Assessment is an integral activity of learning and teaching through which learners get accurate feedback about what they have learned. Assessment is a useful tool to monitor progress and achievements in regular classroom sessions. An observation of students' attitude towards assessment in English as a Foreign Language classroom indicates fear, excitement, frustration and anxiety about the results of the assessment. EFL students worry about the outcome of the assessment rather than understanding assessment as a tool to improve and enhance their language skills. English teachers find assessment as a method to understand students' progress in English language skills. Curriculum designers, though, well aware of the complicated process of assessment in a CLT classroom, prescribe communicative language course books for EFL courses. The general criterion of assessing EFL Arab students in communicative language teaching classroom is often a replica of native speakers' classroom contexts. In most EFL situations, assessment rubrics set for native English speakers is directly implemented in the classroom. A review of the rationale for this type of assessment criterion indicates that most of the English books meant for beginning native English speakers or ESL students are prescribed for EFL classrooms. Most often, EFL students' proficiency levels are below the minimum standards required to understand or communicate in English. English language course books prescribed at the first level (entry level) often focus on basic language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students are expected to communicate on real life situations. A pair work or group work using target language in EFL classrooms is an unfamiliar and difficult task for the students. Tasks or activities in the textbooks are based on the communicative teaching methodology where the role of the English teacher is to monitor the students' participation in real life situations. The course content constitutes language structures that pose difficulty to the students.

Assessment has been an important component to rate the students' knowledge in the teaching and learning process. It outlines students' understanding in a specific course material. Constructive feedback on students' progress and performance have to be built into all assessment activities. Language learning abilities of the student improves when students receive appropriate and focused feedback continuously. In EFL undergraduate courses, graded evaluation activities are scheduled at the end of learning experiences. In communicative language teaching classrooms, teachers often find it difficult to follow a specific rubric due to variations in students' skills. Often, tasks and activities given in the course books do not specify any rubric for assessment. English teachers in EFL classrooms use communicative activities to refine the receptive and productive skills of the students through the effective use of constructive feedback. These feedback sessions should highlight gaps in students' learning progress and performance. However, EFL teachers rarely use specific rubrics during the communicative activities because it may lead to less focus on the students' language expressions. Since the assessment is mandatory from students' school level, English teachers assume that students are well aware of the pre-requisites of a classroom test. As an assessor, it is the responsibility of the teachers to inform the learners about the requirements of the assessment and make them understand why an assessment is done in a particular way. This is important because college students might have experienced

different assessment processes at their schooling. Assessments at the entry level of undergraduate education should make the students aware of the educational value and affects of a test outcome. The awareness of learner responsibilities during assessment activities motivates EFL students to participate actively in a non-threatening environment. The complicated nature of communicative tasks and activities make it difficult for the teachers to pre-determine a specific assessment criterion for a communicative language teaching classroom. However, a specific assessment criterion can be useful to identify students' progress and provide resourceful feedback to the students about their level of competence. Feedback that students get from their mid-term exams must make them clear about their strengths and weaknesses and the areas where they should improve. In a communicative task, where several outcomes have to be assessed by a language instructor, it may take longer time, and the learners feel burdened and stressed. Using a combination of assessment methods may result in disjointed learning experience.

Students' English proficiency in relation to assessment

A student has to cope with too many cognitive tasks at the entry level in undergraduate education. The communicative activities which require students to use target language for the purpose of improving language skills remain a difficult task for the students. All the students are from Arabic medium background and during their transition period to undergraduate education, these students are expected to master minimum proficiency to understand, read, write and speak English words and sentence structures. Language exercises in English course books prescribed at the entry level of undergraduate education are based on communicative language teaching. According to David Nunan (1991), important features of communicative language teaching are learning to communicate using the target language, introducing real life situations into the classroom teaching-learning process and provide opportunities for the learners to focus on the learning management process. However, most of the EFL students do not have language proficiency to communicate in the target language. Further, unfamiliar topics in the form of authentic texts make the communicative task more difficult for the students. Language exercises where students have to interact in the target language remain as unfulfilled outcome in the EFL classroom. The only source of comprehension is translation of English words to Arabic. Language structures and words meant for communicative activities remain a source of improvement in the syllabi because students English language repertoire needed to read a paragraph, write simple sentence structures, pronounce words and respond to classroom instructions. Each of the given communicative activity is linked to sub skills where the learners need to activate their schemata to produce meaningful words for self development. Processing information presented in the form of content require knowledge of Basic English vocabulary. Further, EFL students at the entry level of undergraduate education find it difficult to produce letters of English alphabet. Students who are familiar with letters of English alphabet lack the skills of sequencing these letters in the correct order. Most of these students learn to write their names in English during their undergraduate education. However, there are Saudi students at the entry level who can read, write and speak English proficiently. These students visited English speaking countries to improve their skills. In EFL Saudi classrooms, the mismatch in students' proficiency levels is a hindrance for a CLT classroom. The real life situations that a teacher sets to generate communication often fail due to poor response from the students. According to Idrees and Jamal (2012), many Saudi learners start learning English at primary six or even pre-school but most of them are far from attaining the desired level of proficiency in the target language. They are of the opinion that in spite of spending a huge amount of time and effort

students could not reach the required proficiency levels. Ansari (2012) says that students only need marks to pass the examination. Students are habituated to memorize the answers without learning any English. Consequently, they spend their valuable years in schools without learning anything of English language and when they come to college or university English becomes a problem for them   .

Language learning tasks in relation to assessment tasks

An important goal of communicative activity is to trigger interaction in the target language. The practical tasks given in the course books are meant to stimulate conversation and discussion in EFL classrooms. At the undergraduate level, course books are prescribed to give directions to the teachers and learners to organise learning environment. The content in the English textbooks is integrated with a wide variety of communicative activities to provide language input to the learners. The activities given in the English textbook is intended to give language exposure to Saudi students. However, these activities require students to have basic knowledge in word recognition skills, basic vocabulary, construct English phrases and simple sentences. A beginner EFL teacher may often encounter difficulties due to unfamiliar classroom situations. These teachers though skilful may find it challenging in facilitating the teaching-learning process. During the initial transition phases, EFL teachers have to try and test eclectic methods in the classroom.   Striving to succeed using innovative teaching methods and appropriate materials suitable to the classroom context can bring a positive outcome in Saudi EFL classrooms.   In the EFL teaching-learning contexts, assessment should be used to understand students' strengths and weaknesses. However, most of the assessment procedures in a CLT classroom ends with measuring students' content knowledge and lacks remedial measures to develop language proficiency of the students. English teachers should be conscious of setbacks in the classroom and take necessary steps to enhance learning environment. Since each learning environment differs, teachers should pay attention to the similarities and variations in students' learning styles.   A conscious monitoring of the learning processes during communicative activities can make a pair work or group work interesting and productive.

According to Sheldon (1998) excessive claims made by some authors and publishers that the volumes they produce in English language are suitable for all learners and all conditions brought dissatisfaction among teachers. He further says that textbooks are perceived by many to be the route map of English language programmes and even teacher quality is being assessed by learners in terms of unit-by-unit coverage. Hitomi and Brian (2010) points out that there is an extensive literature on research and materials development, but regrettably little of it provides empirical evidence of the effects of the materials on their users. A teacher who understands the situation of the EFL undergraduate classroom has too many constraints. The semester duration, a large number of students, mid-term tests and end term exams, are other factors that compel the teacher to focus on the given materials. The aims and objectives for improving language learning remain unfulfilled while the students are subjected to formal assessment. Since the teachers find it futile to evaluate students based on the communicative approach, they rely on written tests. Exercises given in the course books are used to assess students' knowledge in mid-term and end-term exams. Any kind of deviation from this kind of an assessment process is unacceptable to the EFL students. These students are habituated to memorize answers during exams. The only creativity few students exhibit is the ability to reproduce correct sentence structures that were memorized. A reflection of teachers approach and students' attitude towards

the assessment process indicates wide gap in the procedures of assessment in a communicative approach and the EFL classroom.

According to Sheldon (1998), the teacher quality in the classroom is assessed by learners in terms of unit-by-unit coverage. There may be discontent among the teachers when they find it difficult to make changes or modify the prescribed EFL course books. A mismatch in the students' level and textbook materials often end up in frustration, failure and disgust among the EFL students. Teachers are helpless when the course structure at an undergraduate level is unevenly distributed. A careful planning by academicians and expert committee is required for appropriate distribution of EFL courses at different levels of undergraduate level. During the transition phases from a beginning level course to the advanced courses, students need to develop their language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. EFL students need to have adequate proficiency to be successful in advanced level courses and the only sources of input to most of these students are the university English language classrooms. In the absence of teacher participation during course book review process, the prescribed course books remain cyclic and may produce a large number of disgusted EFL learners. An important factor that hinders success in language learning is motivation. Motivating students to participate in communicative activities given in the course book can be a stressful task for the English teachers. However, an understanding of motivating factors that create interest towards language learning can make the CLT classroom productive.

Motivating EFL Students
Motivation is a key element that encourages students to learn a foreign language. Motivation in relation to language learning should more often come from oneself and is helpful to achieve one's career goals. It is important for EFL learners to participate in the classroom activities and improve their language skills. The English teacher has to provide enough resources to improve language learning. At the beginning of each semester, students have to be given opportunities to identify and decide the relevant learning goals. To attain the learning goals and promote productive learning environment, Saudi students have to be motivated to participate actively in the classroom activities. Motivation gives them emotional support and aids in their learning goals. Ames and Ames (1989) define motivation as the impetus to create and sustain intentions and goal-seeking acts. They further state that the motivation is a desire to achieve a specific goal. Teachers can give appropriate language input when each of specific goals is explicitly understood at the planning stage. Introducing a pre-task before the main activity can activate students' interest and attention to language input. It also helps in reducing anxiety during the language learning process. Krashen (1985) says that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Reading requires motivation. Struggling EFL students tend to have lots of wishes, needs and goals when it comes to become proficient speakers of English language. Oxford and Nyikos (1989) say that the motivation to learn a language influences one's approach to a communicative task. Motivation is considered as a significant variable that affects language learning outcomes. The studies of Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) point out that L2 learners are highly and appropriately motivated to accomplish a language learning task, and they become very active in exerting cognitive and metacognitive efforts, and are cautious about their current levels of achievement. Mills (1991) says that during a communicative activity students would be open to learning new strategies when they gain control over their own thinking processes.

According to Falk (1978), successful students learning a new language would respect the culture of the target language and have a desire to integrate into the society in which the language is used. Falk says this form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. According to Norris-Holt (2001), when someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, it becomes necessary to operate socially in the community and become one of its members. Norris-Holt says integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. In contrast to integrative motivation, there is instrumental motivation. According to Hudson (2000), the term instrumental motivation is usually characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. According to Norris-Holt (2001), instrumental motivation is common in second language acquisition, because little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or even desired. Norris-Holt further states that integrative motivation is continually linked to successful second language acquisition   However, Norris-Holt (2001) states that it is necessary to view motivation as one of a number of variables which is unique to each language learner.

According to Fisher (1990), the three major sources of motivation in learning are the learner's natural interest (intrinsic motivation), the teacher/institution/employment (extrinsic reward) and success in the task (combining satisfaction and reward). Fisher says that the teachers and school system have drawn on both of the first two sources of motivation while the third source is under-exploited in language teaching. Fisher notes that as human beings, people generally like what they do and therefore are likely to do it again, and put in the effort. Ehrman et al. (2003) state that the intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual and when one realizes success is important for achieving personal goals. Intrinsic motivation values rewards gained through the process of task completion, regardless of any external rewards. Ehrman et al. further point out that students are intrinsically motivated when learning is a goal in itself. Students find intrinsic motivating tasks interesting and challenging, and the reward is the enjoyment of the activity itself or a feeling of competence in doing the task. Ehrman et al. (2003) say that the extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual and students are extrinsically motivated when learning is done for the sake of rewards (such as grades or praise). Extrinsic motivation is not inherently associated with learning itself; that is, when learning or performing well becomes necessary to earning those rewards. Walqui (2000) says a student's total motivation is a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Ehrman et al. (2003) say teachers can increase their students' intrinsic motivation by providing them with learning experiences that promote competence, relatedness, self-esteem, and entertainment.

Pintrich and Schunk (1996) say that the motivation depends on the context; the people involved, and specific circumstances. Weiner (1986) points out that some learners believe learning depends on their own actions or abilities while others believe that their success depends on other people or fate. Oxford and Shearin (1994) identify six factors that impact motivation in language learning.   The six factors are attitudes, beliefs about self, goals, involvement, environmental support and personal attributes. The four areas of second language learning motivation identified by Crooks and Schmidt (1991) are the micro level, the classroom level, the syllabus level and a level involving factors from outside the classroom. The micro level involves

the cognitive processing of language input and the motivation is evidenced in the amount of attention given to the input. At the classroom level, methods and activities employed by the teacher in the classroom influence the motivational levels in the students.   The syllabus level refers to the choice of content in the English course books because it can either trigger curiosity or disinterest in undergraduate students.

Strang (1978) says that for beginners, just knowing how to read is motivating. At the entry level, Saudi students should be given more opportunities to develop reading skills. An awareness to word recognition and sentence structures at the entry level of undergraduate education increases confidence in Saudi EFL learners. Hidis (1990) is of the view that the classroom materials are an important factor in determining how students process information. Hidis opines that students process interesting information differently from uninteresting information. Communication skills are continuously developing skills and require constant practice. An important skill to be developed in CLT classrooms is reading because reading is a lifelong process whereby a student has to practice and refines skills throughout his/her academic career. Alyousef (2005) points out that engaged reading is based on motivational and cognitive characteristics of the reader who is intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially from a text.   According to Oxford (1990a), one of the factors that influence the choice of strategies used among students learning a second/foreign language is motivation. Oxford is of the opinion that highly motivated students in EFL classrooms tend to use a number of strategies during a communicative activity.   According to Fisher (1990), feelings of failure, particularly early on in a student's school career can lead to a downward spiral of self-perception and students may develop an image of themselves as not good at English.   Students who develop a low image about themselves may remain passive during communicative activities. According to Schunk and Swartz (1991), students will have higher levels of motivation if they believe that language exercises are useful in meeting their goals. However, Paris and Turner (1994) point out that students' motivation is dynamic and so changes as the situation changes. Curriculum designers have to consider learners' needs while designing the syllabus or else the learners may not feel motivated to participate in the learning process. The learners must be given opportunities in multiple contexts to help them recognize the relevance and transferability of different skills or knowledge. The ability to transfer one's language skills to other related areas is important because learners need to use English in specific occupational or educational settings.   The resourceful exposure a student gains during communicative activities has been an encouraging factor in CLT classrooms across the world.

Modifications in Undergraduate EFL curriculum

A challenging task of curriculum designers in Saudi undergraduate education is to produce English course books relevant to students' language skills. Reputed publishers from English speaking countries have published English course books to carter to the needs of Middle East students.   However, undergraduate Saudi students often find difficult to comprehend unfamiliar situations described in the course books. Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to promote research from the undergraduate education to make teaching-learning process productive and relevant.   Al-Zubeiry (2012) points out that Saudi Government's initiative to promote English language education is reflected in the document issued by the English Department in the Directorate of Curriculum at the Ministry of Education in 1421 H. (2000). The document states that the English education should foster students' ability to

comprehend and express Basic English, as well as foster interest in foreign languages and cultures. The recognition of the importance of English in the education system is evidenced by the increasing number of newly established English departments in Saudi universities and growing number of language institutions offering English-related courses. In Saudi Arabia, Arabic is the common medium for communication and instruction. English does not play an essential role in national or social life. The average citizen does not need English or any other foreign language to live his daily life or even for social or professional advancement. To reduce the gap, it is necessary to make the following modifications:

- Linking the course materials of 12th grade school with undergraduate course material.
- Incorporating language exercises in a gradual transition from familiar to less familiar tasks.
- Introducing similar communicative tasks and reinforcing the grammatical items learned until the students reach minimum proficiency levels in a specific skill.
- Introducing Remedial Teaching to help the struggling undergraduate learners.
- Introducing English language lab sessions where students listen, understand and produce words using advanced computer software and teacher assistance.
- Beginning level English course book need to introduce glossary in Arabic.
- Giving autonomy to the English teachers to design and modify course content to suit the learners' level.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia endeavor to promote quality education at the undergraduate level is laudable. The sponsorship programs initiated by Saudi government encouraged many of its citizens to pursue higher education in the English speaking countries. The quest to improve English language communication skills to pursue higher education has motivated many Saudi undergraduates to learn English as a second language. The presence of multinational companies in Saudi Arabia and the need to communicate in English with non-native Arab speakers has gained momentum in the local community.   Though English has gained wide recognition across the provinces of Saudi Arabia, Arabic remained important in everyday communication. The English curriculum at undergraduate level is primarily concerned to improve receptive and productive skills of the students. However, students have to realize that availability of large volumes of library resources to enrich knowledge and skills in specific fields of English can be used for career success. In CLT classrooms, EFL students can contribute best in pair and group work when they learn to use the available educational resources effectively.

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