

English speaking learning barriers in Saudi Arabia: A case study of Tibah University

Nesreen Saud Alhmadi

School Of Modern Language and cultures
University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Abstract

The English language has certainly become the most influential international language in the world. The teaching of English attracts the attention of researchers for many socio linguistic and pedagogic reasons, especially for the development of higher education in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Various initiatives in non-English speaking countries, including the Arab world, have been launched to promote the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. More specifically, in Saudi Arabia, the critical knowledge of teaching and learning English is considered to be essential in education in order to raise the English language learning proficiency, especially in speaking. The present paper focuses on the English language learning barriers of speaking in particular, where Tibah University is presented as a case study. Accordingly, ten English speaking classes have been observed for the foundation year at Tibah University, in order to find out the reasons behind Saudi students' lack of speaking. The English programme and curriculum, teaching strategies, and students' motivation, anxiety and reticence will be discussed in detail as the most prominent factors that impact upon speaking proficiency and language learning. Therefore, it is essential to study the abovementioned factors to maximise the awareness of some of the potential English learning barriers that Saudi students face. This will help raise the overall academic English language standard, in particular the speaking proficiency, at Tibah University.

Keywords: Anxiety and reticence, Curriculum, Saudi Arabia, Speaking barriers, Students' motivation