

## The Perceptions and Beliefs of Saudi Preparatory Year Program Learners Towards Learning English: A Case Study

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### Abstract

Learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) can be a challenging experience. Nevertheless, being proficient in English language guarantees better job opportunities in various fields and thus learners need to acquire an acceptable level of proficiency. Recognizing its significant role in the learners' academic and professional excellence, the English language has gained the status of a mandatory language in the Saudi higher education institutions. As students enter universities for higher studies, they are often required to take prerequisite courses in English to gain a higher level of proficiency. This qualitatively driven descriptive case study investigated the attitudes of EFL students who were enrolled in the Foundation Year Program. This study aimed to examine the learners' feelings, emotions, and attitudes in the light of their academic performance. In total, thirteen male and seventeen female students were interviewed using semi-structured interviews as a main tool for the data collection. They were asked to recall and write their narratives regarding their experience of learning the English language throughout the foundation year program. The socio-constructivist nature of this qualitative case study offered an opportunity to participants to share their stories. Consequently, it highlighted the factors that motivated them for a language learning experience. Moreover, it allowed them to reflect on the challenges that they encountered during their learning odyssey of the English language course as part of the preparatory year program (PYP). Findings from this research study suggest that the participants' motivations to learn English are primarily related to socio-economic reasons. Besides, students were particularly motivated to learn English when they were encouraged by their families and by 'good' teaching practices. Nevertheless, these findings failed to establish an association between the learners' attitudes and their performance on the assessments during the course. This case study adds to the existing literature by examining a context that lacks empirical evidence on the topic of EFL learners' beliefs about English learning. More research in this area is required to determine why this discrepancy occurred.

**Keywords:** EFL, learners' attitudes, qualitative research, sociocultural, Saudi Arabian context

**Cite as:** Massri, R. A. (2019). The Perceptions and Beliefs of Saudi Preparatory Year Program Learners Towards Learning English: A Case Study. *Arab World English Journal*, 10 (3) 220- 232. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no3.15>