

Sabha University, Faculty of Arts

Department of English

Second Language Learning for Adult EFL  
University Students

A final project submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor in English language with a focus on applied linguistics

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To the Faculty of Sabha University:

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# Dedication

We dedicate this project to Mohamed father (Abdulla Almrpet)

And, Naji family to help us in everything .and to our friends who motivate use and give us the support and courage us.

## Acknowledgement

Thanks to Allah Who brought this project to its fruition. This work would not have been accomplished without the assistance of our supervisor professor (Dr. Yusuf Alhodairy). So we thank him very much for guiding and supporting us.

# Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the problems and factors that prevent or face university students in the Department of English to learn the English language. The method used in this study is "a qualitative method". And the participants in this study are students from the Department of English and they are from different semesters and different genders. The result of the study are the students face problems in "listening and speaking" because of lacking in vocabulary and background in language and less motivation to use the language and they have problem in pronunciation.

## Table of contents

<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Pages</b>
Chapter one	1-1-Introduction.....	1
	1-2-Problem statement.....	1
	1-3-Purpose.....	2
	1-4-Question.....	2
Chapter two	2-1- literature review.....	3
	2-2-Critical Period Hypothesis(CPH)..	4
	2-3-Input Hypothesis.....	4
	2-4-Output Hypothesis.....	5
	2-5-Affective factors.....	6
	2-6-Affective filter.....	8
	2-7- Learner strategies.....	9
	2-8- Cognitive Factors.....	11
Chapter three	3-1-Research Methodology.....	17
	3-1-1- Procedure.....	17
	3-1-2- Design/ Method.....	17
	3-1-3- Participants.....	17
Chapter four	4-1-Data analysis.....	18
Chapter five	Result.....	21
	Conclusion.....	22
	References.....	23

# Chapter one

## **1.1. Introduction**

Language learning is one of the most impressive aspects of human development . It is amazing feat , which has attracted the attention of linguists for generation . First Language Acquisition(FLA) and New Language Learning (NLL) have sometimes been treated as two distant phenomena creating controversy due to their variability in terms of age and environment ,Oxford(1990:4) in distinguishing between FLA and NLL argues that first arises from naturalistic and unconscious language use and in most cases leads to conversational fluency ; Whereas the latter represents the conscious knowledge of language that happens through instruction but does not necessarily leads to conversational fluency of language. Fillmor (1989:311) proposes that this definition seems too rigid because some elements of language use are at first conscious and then become unconscious or automatic through practice.

## **1.2. Problem statement:**

Students who learn English language at Sabha University have faced problem in learning the English language in receptive and productive skills that is, listening and speaking. They lack vocabulary and their contextualization. They also have difficulty when it comes to listening comprehension that is, they are unable to distinct words due to the difficulty of pronunciation.

### **1.3. Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the problems that face Sabha University students in the Department of English students to learn the English language as foreign language .

### **1.4. Research Questions:**

1-What are the factors that hinder the students at the English department learn the language?

2-What are the factors that help the students at the English department learn the language?



## Chapter two

### 2.1. Literature review:

Second language learning is learn the second language after the first language is already setup or learning which comes after our mother tongue. Second language are learned and factors that influence the process .second language learning(SLL) Researchers how communicative competence the ability to interpret the underlying meaning of a message.[Stephen Krashen] claims that second language acquisition is developed consciously and their first language acquisition is developed subconsciously or incidentally . He also claims that learned knowledge converted into acquired knowledge .He means that to achieve language learning you should have more practice by using the second language to be perfect in grammar and the language rules only by practice . this goal achieved incidentally or conscious. It has been noticed that most English language learners often commit linguistic mistakes of syntax and pronunciation as effect of the interference of their L1 this is usually knows as transfer of "interlingua error " [Dulay et al ,1982] In this link Lado 1957 pragmatic.

## **2.2. Critical Period Hypothesis: CPH**

(CPH) which may lead to adult resistance of language learning . According to CPH, [Vygotsky 1978 n.p] explain the CPH in different way. He argues that the adults tend to be more analytical in learning language unlike children who tend to be more holistic. Children acquire the language as it is formed and produced by other's whereas the adults often think of how a construction is formed before using it in conversation. The study eventually signals that adults and adolescents were able to make a considerable progress in NLL when they used the language on a daily in social , professional and a academic interaction.[1999:60].

## **2.3. Input Hypothesis:**

Krashen (1985.n.p) maintaining a dissimilar point of view, argues that language can be taught in classroom if comprehensible input is available and if the teacher is able to create meaningful situation in which this language can live and breathe. Beside reducing the 'affective filter' of students to allow the input in "comprehensible input delivered in a low filter situations is the only 'causative variable ' in second language learning. All other factors thought to encourage or cause second language

learn only work when they provide comprehensible input (Krashen 1985:40). Teachers may find that the context of situation is missing and course books materials sometimes promote the segmentation of the language taught. (Ehrman 1996.n.p) asserts that the absence of a social semiotic in the classroom may not prevent students from learning the language .but they do not acquire the culture underlying it. They consequently feel alienation in the process of learning a second language. this may not hinder them from achieving satisfactory levels of proficiency in NLL. Learners have limited processing capacity and cannot pay attention to form and meaning at the same time they tend to give the priority to meaning , when the context in which they hear a sentence help them makes sense of it , they do not notice details of the language from.

#### **2.4. Output Hypothesis:**

Output (1980. n. p) indicates the outcome of what the students has learned. The output hypothesis is action of producing language , speaking and writing , which develops part of the process of second language learning, how proficient learners became. (Swain 1985.n.p).

The comprehensible output (CO) hypothesis state that through producing language either spoken language learning may occur.

When a learner notices and become aware of a gap in his or her linguistic knowledge , he or she is able to modify output and thus will learn something new about the language. ( Merrill Swain) did not claim that comprehensible output is solely responsible for all or even most language learning. But she did assert that co facilitates language learning in way that differ from and enhance input , she defend two function of output:

#### **2.4.1. Noticing function:**

Learners encoder gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say , and so they notice what they do not know or only know partially.L2 learners could not begin to learn a language feature unlit they had become aware of it in the input.

#### **2.4.2. Testing function:**

When learners says something , there is at least a tacit hypothesis underlying the utterance. By uttering something , the learner tests this hypothesis and receive feedback , which allows for reprocessing of the hypothesis.

#### **2.5. Affective factors:**

Motivation , attitude and language anxiety are sometimes referred to as the most powerful affective factors that L2 learning.

The development of affective state or feeling involves a variety of personality factors , feeling about ourselves and about others with whom we come to contact. Ellis(1994:522) point out that learners affective states vary dynamically and have a significant impact on their ability to learn self-esteem appears to be an important variable in second language learning .

### **2.5.1. Motivation:**

In L2 learning is perhaps one of the most fully researched areas of individual differences. For examples (Schumann 1997,xvii) grounding his view on neurobiological studies , claim that motivation strongly controls second language learning . Ellis(1997 a,76) claims motivation to be a highly complex phenomenon . It is dynamic in nature, it is not have but rather something that varies depending on the learning context or task. Adults who enter into learning activity on voluntary basis are usually well motivated and their attitudes towards learning are likely to be positive. Learners who have experienced success in learning have developed confidence in their ability to learn and their motivation is high.

### **2.5.2. Language Anxiety:**

Is the fear or apprehension of using the new language and it ranks high among the factors influencing formal language learning .

Ehrman(1996:92) and Oxford(1999:6) differentiate between types of language anxiety : 'situational or state' anxiety , which arises in response to a particular situation like making a presentation in a front of the class, and 'trait anxiety' which exists when the repeated occurrence of state anxiety causes students to associate anxiety with language performance .

Oxford point out that state anxiety diminishes over time as the learner gain self-esteem in using the language (1999:6). Language anxiety works strongly in discouraging learners from voluntarily participating is going to be heard, evaluated and even criticized by other classmates.

### **2.6. Affective filter:**

In some objective factors , there are also some affective factors in language learning that are like a filter which filters the amount of input in learners brains. People with high affective filter will lower their intake, whereas people with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device. Affective filter hypothesis is first proposed by (Dulay and Burt 1977n.p) and is incorporated by Krashen as one of his five hypotheses in (1985,n.p). Krashen argued that people learning second language only if they obtain comprehensible input and if

their affective filter are low enough to allow the input 'In'. In his theory, affective includes motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. His main viewpoints are as follows:

- 1- A raised affective filter can block input from reaching LAD.
- 2- A lowered affective filter allows the input to 'strike deeper' and be acquired.
- 3- The affective filter is responsible for individual variation in SLL.
- 4- Note that affective filter is not an issue for first language acquisition; children don't have it/use it. Although there are some critiques of his input hypothesis, affective factors are seen to play an important role in learning L2. Comprehensible input may not be utilized by L2 learning if there is a (mental block) that prevents them from fully profiting from it. The affective filter acts as a barrier to learn. The filter is up when the learner is unmotivated, lacking in confidence, or concerned with failure. The filter is down when the learner is not anxious and is trying to become a member of the group speaking.

### **2.7. Learner strategies:**

In Oxford's definition strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed,

more affective , and more transferable to new situation "(Oxford 1990:8).

Ellis definition the concept in the following way " strategy consists of mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language learning or language use" (Ellis 1994:529). In Cook's view, "a strategy is a choice that the learner makes while learning or using the second language that effective learning " (Cook 2001:26).

### **2.7.1. Benefits of strategy use:**

In Oxford definition (1990:8), strategies are oriented toward the overall good of communicative competence thus being highly beneficial. It should be noted , though that strategy use depends on the individual; learners should not be pushed to use certain strategies unless they feel comfortable with using them. (Ellis 1997 a:37) contends that learners employ various strategies to develop their interlanguage. The different kinds of errors learners produce reflect different learning strategies. As an example, omission errors suggest that learners are simplifying their learning by ignoring certain grammatical features that they may not be able to process. Overgeneralization and transfer errors can be evidence of strategy use. The above facts indicate that learners strategies maybe highly useful at early stage of learning when little can be said and done due to limited knowledge of both grammar and vocabulary. At this stage one could argue that such strategies do not promote. Learning ;



however, they help learners overcome communication gaps . success in communication is likely to encourage the learner to continue his/her learning activities and ultimately promote the overall process of second language learning. (Ellis ,ibid,60) has doubts about the effectiveness of certain strategies (e. g communication strategies) on L2 learning. He argue that successful use of communication strategies could in some cases obviate the need for learners to learn the correct target language forms.

## **2.8. Cognitive Factors:**

The hypotheses of the Cognitive Factors Thrust concern how instructional procedures (e.g., decisions about the learner's task, materials, practice, feedback) affect learning events and thus the outcomes of learning. Learning involves the acquisition of knowledge components, an increase in the feature validity and the strength of these components, and the integration of these components through practice. Our basic hypotheses include the following:

**1. Explicitness:** Instruction that draws the learner's attention to valid features that support the relevant knowledge components leads to more robust learning than instruction that does not.

**2. Assistance:** The degree of assistance in the instruction affects learning in relation to student knowledge on specific knowledge components.

**3. Practice:** Practice schedules can be optimized using models of learning based on memory activation assumptions.

**4. Integration:** Knowledge components that are integrated during learning and practice lead to more robust learning and fluent performance across different tasks.

The research plan tests these hypotheses across knowledge domains, as exemplified by the following projects:

**2.8.1. Language background factors in L2 learning:**

This work illustrates the synergies that develop in the PSLC's Learn Lab context, in this case between English as a second language (ESL) director Alan Juffs and other PSLC language researchers. In a prior cluster meeting, Juffs presented ESL classroom data that compared various L1 background students in their performance on transcribing their own speech, a standard piece of instruction in the ESL curriculum. The

result that caught the interest of PSLC researchers (Dunlap, Guan, Perfetti) was the very poor spelling performance of Arabic-background students, relative to Spanish, Korean, and Chinese ESL students, despite comparable levels of spoken language performance. Furthermore, Juffs identified this discrepancy as a long-standing one in ESL instruction. Although one might hypothesize that a key factor is orthographic differences between L1 and L2, this seems unlikely here. Spanish to English is closer, but Chinese to English is farther in L1-L2 orthographic similarity. The first steps toward a new study have been taken with the help of a PSLC summer intern, who coded the errors made in spelling by all L1 background learners. The pattern of errors can be characterized as qualitatively similar, differing across languages quantitatively, suggesting a generalized English spelling problem. This analysis has led to the hypothesis that feature focusing—attention to full spelling patterns—is different across the L1 backgrounds, which we will test in a training experiment that focuses attention on spelling pattern.

### **2.8.2. Second language vocabulary learning:**

Another new project originating within the Refinement and Fluency cluster will study English vocabulary learning using REAP. Based on recent research by Balass on the trade-offs between explicit (dictionary-based) and implicit (inferences from text) instruction in learning new words by monolingual subjects (Bolger et al, 2008), the new work will

apply this tradeoff idea to second language learners. The hypothesis is that allowing learners to view definitions is more effective after they have read a sentence containing the word to be learned. This hypothesis reflects ideas about assistance (giving a definition versus inferring it) and the assumption that learning word meanings from context depends on the overlapping memory traces established by specific encounters with the word (Bolger et al, 2008). REAP allows us to use authentic texts for studies with students of various L1 backgrounds learning English through reading texts in their areas of interest. In our experiments, we will vary the availability of definitions provided on-line as part of the text reading.

### **2.8.3. Explicit instruction and practice schedules in algebra and second language learning:**

Foreign language learning in classrooms has stimulated research on explicit vs implicit instruction, with conclusions favoring the value of explicit instruction (Norris and Ortega, 2000). A major conclusion from PSLC work is that instruction that draws attention to critical valid features—“feature focusing”—is important in acquiring knowledge components for complex tasks. This conclusion has evidence from studies of L2 learning of the English grammar by Levin, Friskoff, Pavlik, studies of radical learning by Dunlap et al and by Pavlik, and by studies by Zhang and MacWhinney and by Liu et al on learning spoken syllables

through pin-yin (alphabetic spellings). Projects in French dictation (MacWhinney) and French grammar (Presson & MacWhinney), Chinese dictation (Zhang & MacWhinney), algebra (Pavlik) and arithmetical computation (Fiez) also reflect this theme. Much of this work has been combined with completely general hypotheses about practice, based on Pavlik and Anderson (2005)'s model that describes the trade-off between the benefit of spaced practice and the cost of longer retention intervals brought by spacing. The resulting optimized practice schedule has been tested in several PSLC studies of vocabulary learning in Chinese (Pavlik, MacWhinney, Koedinger; reported in Pavlik, 2006), cues to French gender (Presson, MacWhinney, & Pavlik). Important is the generality of the optimization model. It applies to all domain content and studies in both algebra and second language learning have been carried out. The new work in second language and in algebra builds on the synergies that have emerged from collaborations between domain researchers (e.g. MacWhinney) and Pavlik around experiments and models for optimizing practice. For Chinese, MacWhinney, Zhang, and Pavlik have developed a tutor for Chinese dictation and vocabulary learning that is being used in 18 sites. Data from these sites will be used to test the results of practice schedules and the form of instructional events (e.g. cues to gender in French) with longer term measures of robust learning. Because each of

the tutors logs results to Data Shop, the student records are a rich source of data for further study, including researchers beyond the PSLC.

#### **2.8.4. Integration of knowledge components:**

Isolated knowledge components are not sufficient to produce fluent use of knowledge. Integrating knowledge components is important both in authentic practice that follows acquisition of knowledge components but, we hypothesize, also in the initial acquisition of components. Some of our prior work in coordinative learning establishes some of the conditions that favor multiple inputs during learning (e.g., Davenport et al in stoichiometry). And experiments on fluency support the value of repeated practice in single-topic speaking as way to support fluency (de Jong, Halderman and Perfetti). In new work we propose to build on progress we have made in the study of fluency in language (de Jong et al) and arithmetic (Fiez). For example, we will follow the discovery by de Jong and colleagues that when L2 speakers repeat a speech on a single topic, their fluency scores increase on a number of measures. We will test the hypothesis that this results from the advantage of retrieving the same conceptual and lexical knowledge and overall speech plan on successive attempts, allowing fluency to increase on procedural components supported by chunking of words to phrases. We are accumulating a large database in the English Learn Lab that will

support the testing of additional hypotheses. The idea that some relatively simple learning (e.g. 3-5 knowledge components) is supported by integration from the beginning is being tested by Liu, Guan & Perfetti in a study of learning to read Chinese characters. The hypothesis is that when students write unfamiliar characters within the same 60-second time period that they read the character and try to learn its meaning and pronunciation, they will show more robust learning measured by reading tasks. Underlying this hypothesis is the idea that the representation of a character (or other objects that follow structural principles) can be perceptual-motor as well as visual.

# Chapter three

## **Research Methodology:**

### **3.1. Procedure:**

The procedure have followed in the research is to ask the students about the problems that faced them in learn the foreign language ,that was follow by interview with students.

### **3. 2. Design/ Method:**

The qualitative has used in method is stable to collect the different point of views about the difficulty that students faced in receive and productive, specific in listening and speaking. For collecting data , interview and observation were used.

### **3. 3. Participants:**

Different participants from different semesters with different gender participated in the study. their ages were from 19 to 22. They were 4 males and 4 females.



## Chapter four

### 4.1. Data analysis:

According to what was discovered about the problems that faced students in "listening and speaking", two methods had been adopted to collect the data, "interview and observation".

#### 4.2.1. Interview:

the students were asked some questions. They are:

1 -what are the skills you have problem with?

2 -why do you think that learners have lack in producing or using the New language?

Student-One

His answer was say that the learners should have more practice and more reading to get more vocabulary to learn the second language.

student -Two

He said that he have problem in grammar and speaking because of lacking in vocabulary.

And the courage and motivation to speak in front of people.

Student-Three

Her answer was in speaking , because of confide and misunderstand the meaning of words and how to use in correct context.

Student-four

His answer problem in reading skill because of lacking in understand the meaning.

And in speaking because of lacking in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Student-five

His said that his problem in reading , grammar and writing.

Because the learners does not have background about the new language. In first semester the teacher does not give the students the chance to read or write to learn more about the second language.

Student-Six

Many learners feel shy to using language . and have some problem in grammar.

Student-Seven

Her think that the few number of lectures for pronunciation and how to produce the language or they do not find a good teachers that them to learn and improve their language.

And lacking in vocabulary and how to use grammar in speaking.

Student-Eight

According to the desire of anyone who want to learn the new language and depend on the person who has the motivation to learn.

He have problem in writing and speaking skills in writing I have problem because of lacking in vocabulary and in speaking because of confined.

#### **4.2.2. Observation:**

In observation we have observer the students at the first semester at English department and check the problem that faced in listening and speaking to learn the language.

# Chapter five

## Result

The research depended on explore problems that face students.

The majority of the students have problems in learn English language it is was limited in "listening and speaking", because they are face lacking in some of vocabulary ,and how to use the words in correct context, and they have problem in pronunciation because of their background in language. And they do not have motivation, they have fear to dealing with learn language, that make them have problem with learn language. Listening comprehension , they have misunderstand the meaning of conversations and questions.

## **Conclusion**

The problems that have been mentioned in the study are the basic problems that prevent the students from learning the foreign language. They have a problem in "speaking and listening." Most of the students have problems in vocabulary and pronunciation, and a problem in using the new language and to use the words in the correct context, and fear to use the language in front of people. They use memorization and rote learning without understanding the meaning.

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