

Original Research Article

Pronunciation and Conversation Challenges among Saudi EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the difficulties of pronunciation and conversation faced by EFL learners who undertook a Preparatory Year Program (PYP) in Saudi Arabia. It highlights the key issues in pronunciation and conversations (e.g., textbooks, teaching methods, and students' attitude and motivation) and techniques to address these problems. The instruments used in the study were classroom observations and teachers' discussions. The results revealed that, firstly, students still have pronunciation errors while speaking. Secondly, students did not have a sound knowledge of grammar. Thirdly, students' outside environment was influenced by their mother tongue. Fourthly, the teaching methods did not suit their proficiency levels. Finally, they were demotivated and claimed that they had an impossible mission to improve their English pronunciation and conversation. This study provides useful techniques to help learners overcome pronunciation and conversation difficulties.

Keywords: Preparatory year program of Saudi students; pronunciation; conversation; teaching methods; attitudes; and motivations

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1. Introduction

Mastering intelligible communication is the main goal for learners while learning the target language. To achieve this goal, e.g., to use and communicate in an understood way, English language (EL) learners should have correct conversation and intelligible pronunciation. Brown (2014) claimed that, "if you cannot be understood when speaking a language, then you do not speak that language" (p.158). For pronunciation, it is a big

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challenge for learners since it was neglected from the field of research. According to Levis and Levelle (2010) and Deng et al. (2009) marginalization of pronunciation from the field of research is a worldwide phenomenon. Conversation is also a challenge for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and it was found among EFL Saudi students while speaking (Al Fallaj, 2013).

In addition, Arab learners face many challenges during learning English as they encounter problems in both speaking and writing. This fact has been clearly stated by many researchers (Rababah, 2002). In addition, Arabic speaking students have five important reasons behind their low proficiency of EL): 1) inadequate teaching curricula, 2) poor teaching methods, 3) lack of motivation, 4) lack of exposure to English, and 5) lack of information related to the institutes they study (Al Khairy, 2013). These five points were found among PYP students.

Many Saudi universities have EL centers which follow structured, intensive programs of EFL for their students in PYP (Rajab, 2013). For example, all students of applied science in Saudi Arabia must take a Preparatory Year Program. In each academic year, most students have 16 hours for English classes in a week in the whole academic year. Although EL programs emphasize the awareness of phonology and pronunciation (Rajab, 2013), there are some difficulties for students in both pronunciation and conversation while using EL. Consequently, Saudi students' motivation declined and, in some other cases, this leads to a change of their attitudes toward EL learning (Al Kaabi, 2016).

Students of English in Saudi Arabia begin to learn English in the early elementary level in schools (Al Fallaj, 2013). It is well-known that speaking is the key for communication; one of the aims in teaching speaking is to improve the ability of students to communicate well. This will be very necessary for the learners to enable them to express themselves in order to communicate with the outside world. A very close observation by the researcher for Saudi students in the PYP showed that students face difficulties in pronunciation and conversation while using EL.

The errors which were observed related to the English sounds that do not exist in Arabic are /p/, /tʃ/, and vowels (e.g /ε/). The differences in sentence structure and the socio-psycho linguistic barriers also posed big challenges for Saudi students. The current research was

made after observing that many students commit many pronunciation errors and a clear challenge was noticed as they try to converse in English. Therefore, this study attempts to identify the exact reasons behind the problematic areas of both conversation and pronunciation since the colleges in the Arab world focus on EL skills and they try to introduce appropriate techniques that could help learners use English in conversation correctly and speak EL with better pronunciation.

The present research deals with the following important points. Firstly, it deals with pronunciation errors. Secondly, grammar of English will be an important challenge for students, e.g., sentence order, plurals, irregular verbs, etc.. Thirdly, it deals with the environment which could help students learn fast and correct mistakes. Fourthly, the teaching methods used by the college might be one of the problems that cause difficulties in learning process. Fifthly, the attitudes and motivation can possibly be considered as the main factors which also lead students to face such problems. Finally, the techniques to improve students' conversation and pronunciation inside classrooms are also presented in this paper.

Many investigations have been made among EFL learners inside and outside Saudi Arabia. Saudi learners of English encounter many difficulties in learning process related to pronunciation, communication, grammar, attitudes, and teaching methods (e.g., Al Fallaj, 2013; Al Fehaid, 2015; Al Ma'shy, 2011; Al-Shamy, 2012; Hago & Khan, 2015; Hameed & Aslam, 2015; Noor, 1996). Thus, teaching and learning English in Saudi Arabia is not an easy job. Many barriers arise like the sound system of Arabic and English, grammatical differences, environment, teaching methods, motivation of students and exposure to the target language.

Saudi Students face speaking difficulties related to grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary (Al-Ma'shy, 2011). In addition, instructional, socio-cultural, institutional, and demographic factors indicate that EFL Saudi students are affected negatively and these factors lead to academic problems (Alrabai, 2016). Hence, improving the competence of Saudi learners in EFL needs strategies that should be systematic, contributing and extensive. These kinds of improvements should be inside and outside the classroom (Alrabai, 2016).

The influence of the source language is the common cause of the difficulties faced by all Arab learners of English (Noor, 1996). As a result, the differences in language system

between Arabic and English might cause various problems while pronouncing some English words (Al Fehaid, 2015). Even though Saudi students learn EL for at least six years, they still have problems in communication. They also lack the fluent and accurate ability in speaking English (Al Fallaj, 2013). One of the reasons is that learning pronunciation does not have a place in the activities of teaching in most of institutes and schools (Al Fallaj, 2013). In other words, the grammatical and pronunciation errors by all Arab learners are due to the differences in systematic structures of Arabic and English (Al Saidat, 2010). In a case like this, the conversation in English will surely be difficult for Saudi students.

In a study about PYP students, AL-Shamy (2012) revealed that Saudi learners of EFL had a high motivation, a high level of instrumentality and integrativeness. Besides, these two instruments showed that students have positive attitudes towards learning situation, English speaking countries, native speakers, the target culture and learning English. Additionally, the study found that EFL Saudi learners faced an English class anxiety. However, the questionnaire and interview did not reveal any kind of anxiety in English use. In addition, these two instruments exhibited that parental encouragement was high.

An investigation also conducted among PYP learners of EFL in Saudi Arabia by Alhawsawi (2013) in order to explore learning experiences of students in Qudar University for Health Science (QU-HS) in Saudi Arabia from three various perspectives: (1) institutional effect of the university on students' learning experiences; (2) family educational background of students by using the cultural capital notion; and (3) students' viewpoints of the interaction with the approaches of teaching used in the EFL teaching program. The data was collected by interview, observation, and document review. The results revealed that, firstly, the adopted policies of the university for the EFL program influence the EL use as instructional and communication medium, the various EFL program provisions, and the EFL instructors' recruitment. These policies have affected the EFL program influenced the learning experiences of students. Secondly, the educational background of family affects the learning experiences of learners in the EFL program. It affects students' approach in their learning. Lastly, the teaching approaches play a significant role in shaping the learning experiences of learners.

Besides, a study to identify demotivators affecting the EL acquisition of Saudi students in PYP was conducted by Daif-Allah and Alsamani (2013) in order to remotivate them. The findings show that there were nine important extrinsic demotivators influencing EFL learning among PYP students: (1) the interruption of regular classes; (2) no corrective feedback for the exams; (3) lack of preparation for the exams of EFL; (4) a large number of students in classes; (5) frequent changing of teachers; (6) a large number of examinees that created the opportunity for students to cheat; (7) unreasonable homework assigned for students; (8) fast speed of teaching; (9) teachers' one-way explanation. The proposed strategies in this research were extremely successful in rebuilding students' motivation, additionally increasing students' amount of learning, improving instructors' promptness, and creating between teachers and students a good rapport. This research confirms that many exams during study in one semester could be one of the demotivators towards learning EL because students will always be busy thinking and preparing for these exams.

A study among Saudi learners by Al Fallaj (2013) indicated that English teachers who have linguistic background knowledge could help the students who face various pronunciation problems. Additionally, it showed that the English sounds that do not exist in the mother tongue were considered difficult for EL students in Saudi Arabia. This kind of study is important in presenting some important difficulties of pronunciation that affect conversation process.

There are some important factors that influence the speaking of Saudi EFL students Bani Younes and Albalawi (2016). Listening ability, conceptual knowledge, teachers' feedback at the time of speaking activities, motivation, mother tongue, anxiety, confidence, and the participation allow students to speak. Secondly, EFL students in Saudi Arabia encounter the following difficulties during speaking: fear of criticism, fear of mistakes, the thinking disability to say anything, mother tongue, and shyness to speak. Finally, the findings of class observations revealed that students' performance of speaking is influenced by the following four factors: poor instructions, time for preparation, insufficient input, and the shortage amount of speaking activities.

The phonological differences between English and Arabic, which affect Saudi EFL students, could be noticed in many cases among Saudi students Al Saidat (2010). For

example, Saudi EFL learners in secondary schools have difficulties in pronouncing 11 consonant sounds Hago and Khan (2015). Besides, they inadvertently insert in consonant clusters of English syllable a vowel sound. The study also cures and prevents some pronunciation difficulties by providing some pedagogical implications which are very useful. The study also pointed out some of the important factors of pronunciation which influence mastering conversation. The main factors which Saudi students face while learning English are the cultural differences between both the English and the Arab (Hameed & Aslam, 2015). However, Saudi learners of EFL had a high motivational level, and positive attitudes to learning situation in the target culture and also in English speaking countries. They also had an anxiety of English class at a fair level (Al-Shamy, 2012).

The pronunciation and conversation challenges of PYP students have received little attention. These main challenges were also discussed after a long observation of five years by the researcher himself and a discussion of teachers in every semester among three different colleges. An investigation with such instruments could also contribute for in-depth valuable information. It could be noticed from the above-mentioned literature review that Saudi students have serious challenges in the process of EL learning. As a result to that, this study aims to investigate the exact difficulties faced PYP students from the instructors' observations and discussions.

2.1 The Challenging Factors for Mastering EL Pronunciation and Conversation

Many factors could affect pronunciation and conversation of PYP students. In the current study, some specific factors such as EL pronunciation, grammar, environment, attitudes, motivation and the teaching methods, were discussed because of their importance in influencing pronunciation and conversation among PYP students. Then, the study suggests some techniques which could help both teachers and learners overcome the challenges.

Pronunciation is defined as "the production and perception of the significant sounds of a particular language in order to achieve meaning in contexts of language use" (Sudrajat, 2016, p.8). A gap in learners' linguistic knowledge could interrupt learners' speaking ability of ESL/EFL (Rabab'ah, 2016). For example, Saudi students have many challenges in learning English pronunciation (AL Fallaj, 2013; AL Fehaid, 2015; Hago & Khan, 2015; Hameed & Aslam, 2015; Noor, 1996). Therefore, "An L2 learner should be able to identify and use the

linguistically significant phonemes of the language appropriately in order to avoid miscommunication and unintelligibility resulting from inadequacy of phonological awareness” (Hamzah, Nashuha, & Abdullah, 2017, p. 130). Pronunciation is also could be the important skill while speaking. According to (Tsojon, & Aji, 2014) “good speaking requires good pronunciation especially when one is communicating with people outside one's immediate linguistic environment or speech community” (p.6). Therefore, paying attention for mastering learners’ pronunciation is significant.

In addition, grammar of English is a big challenge for Arab students. One of the most difficult structural elements for ESL/EFL learners is syntax complexity (Ngangbam, 2016). It cannot be ignored that grammar is a factor which may cause problems in conversation. Teaching in non-native English speaking countries, EL grammar is not an easy task for many reasons that cause the lack of learners' concentration and motivation in acquiring English in the classroom (Chowdhury, 2014). Moreover, the environment and the social interactions could be also reasons behind the problems faced by a learner in conversation as well as in pronunciation using a foreign language.

In other words, social interactions improve significant aspects of learning; the continuous processes of communicating with capable speakers improve understanding (Miller, 2008). Through social interaction, students learn and master many skills on how to claim with evidence and how to make informed questions with each other to refine their own work (Miller, 2008). In countries where people do not speak English as a first or second language, there will be always many challenges to the learners. If there are many channels of communication between learners with each other, the society they interact and live in, the books they study at schools and colleges, and the lifestyle they live, these will help them collapse the errors and students will overcome the problems.

Additionally, learners of EFL need to build their own knowledge by understanding the following important points: speaking, writing, listening and reading (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014). This learning strategy is known as ‘constructivism’ in which learning is a direct contribution towards successful communication that requires several competencies' mastery like linguistic competence (i.e., the knowledge of grammatical rules), sociolinguistic competence (i.e., meaning's interpretation of different language contexts, and functional or

rhetorical competence (i.e., producing messages relevant to personal goals' achievement) (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014).

Besides the methods used in language teaching, the instructors who teach English must pay attention to these methods while teaching. One of the important and difficult areas is communication because of the learning environment and the teaching methods, which might be inappropriate for learning EFL (Rababah, 2002). Lastly, the attitudes and motivation of learners are also considered as factors in improving the conversation and pronunciation in language teaching and learning. The attitude of any student is a main learning part and an important component of L2 pedagogy (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014). They add:

Psychological theories on attitudes, such as Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, specified that people acquire second languages only if they attain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to let the input "in". In his theory, 'affect' includes motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence (p.19).

One of the important factors which is useful in carrying out successfully any activity and its importance is the motivation and it is widely highlighted by a huge mass of studies which are conducted in the both fields of foreign as well as second language learning contexts (Al Kaabi, 2016; AL Khairy, 2013). Attitudes and motivation are the main keys and weapons to use in learning a new language.

3. Methods

Classroom activity is considered a pivotal activity that can play an essential role in research (Bollen et al., 2005). This indicates that observation is a significant instrument in the field of research. The instruments used in this research were, an observation of five years during teaching English in the PYP in three independent and different colleges among many sections, each section period is a complete semester. The experience of the researcher in teaching EL in these programs in 2011/2012, 2012/2013, 2013/2014, 2014/2015/, 2015/2016, allowed him to observe the exact pronunciation and conversation levels that students have. As an EL trainer, it was noted that students have problems in pronunciation and conversation while communication in EL. This kind of observation is known as a process of gathering

information through observing places and people in the site of the research (Creswell, 2012). The role of the researcher in the observation instrument was a participant observer. This role meant that the researcher can take part inside the setting he/she observes by involving into the activities. This will also allow him/her to write down notes after the activities (Creswell, 2012).

Secondly, teachers' discussion had a big value to determine the difficulties faced by students in PYP. This is because teachers at the end of each semester were always sitting in order to identify students' challenges and problems. In this instrument, a researcher raises some issues or he/she asks some questions among the group members. The group discussion instrument is a popular method that is used for finding information in every academic field and professional area (Kumar, 2011). It is defined as a strategy used to explore opinions or perception towards the issue in an open and free discussion between the group members and the researcher (Kumar, 2011).

This study included PYP students from three different institutes in Saudi Arabia namely Imam University for one year, Taibah University for four years, and Taibah Community College for one year. The procedures of conducting this study were observing students' pronunciation and examining students for an oral presentation more than three times every semester to evaluate their conversation. Then, discussing with teachers who teach in the institute every semester in order to identify the reasons behind such errors and difficulties committed by students. A bottom-up process was adapted for analyzing the data. This process proposed by Creswell (2012) for qualitative data analysis (see figure 1.1)

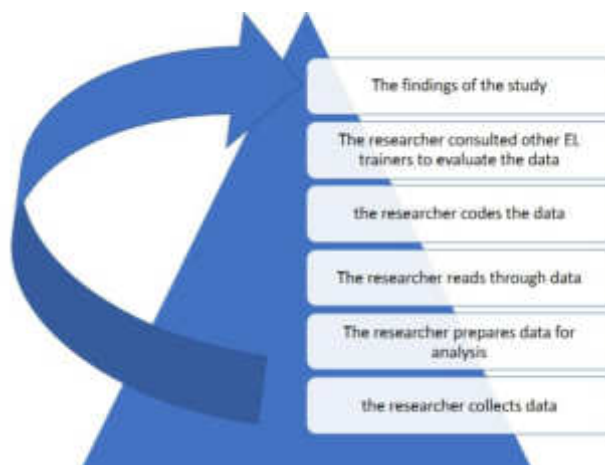


Figure 1.1 Bottom-up process for qualitative data analysis

The study followed some steps for finding the results. The notes were always collected from the teachers after each discussion. The researcher also highlighted the pronunciation errors to see the most pronunciation errors committed by PYP students during their presentations. These pronunciation errors were observed by the researcher and his colleagues since each student should speak in his oral test for at least three times every semester.

4. Findings and Discussion

A. English Pronunciation Difficulties

PYP students' awareness of EL pronunciation is not given a serious attention in teaching due to the schedule which does not suit students' levels, and the focus on exams. In addition, there is a gap between students' actual level and the courses they must take with the intervention of a pack schedule during the semester. Although the first step of teaching and learning EL program is the awareness of EL pronunciation (Hago & Khan, 2015), it could be observed that the learners of English still have difficulties in pronunciation and conversations. The pronunciation difficulties are related to segments (i.e., the sound that does not exist in Arabic language) and stress (i.e., students do not stress the spoken words during their conversation) For instance, some students pronounce the sound /p/ as /b/, e.g., the word 'play' /plei/ is pronounced /blei/, 'pet' /pet/ is pronounced as 'bet' /bet/. In addition, some students pronounced the sound /tʃ/ as /ʃ/, e.g., the word 'such' /sʌtʃ/ is pronounced as 'sush' /sʌʃ/. The word 'van' /væn/ is pronounced as 'fan' /fæn/. As for stress, the word 'present' is pronounced by students with the same stress as a noun or a verb.

These kinds of errors will affect both pronunciation and conversation as errors in stress placement in English can result in miscommunication especially in noun-verb distinctions as in 'present (n.) vs. pre'sent (v.)'. However, in general, wrong stress placement contributes to the 'foreignness' of the non-native speaker of English which in turn distorts the proper English rhythm (Kalaldehy, 2016). The lack of English competence among students in Saudi Arabia is a main problem which is potentially created by teachers' traditional methods especially in using Arabic to teach EL (Alhawsawi, 2013; Almutairi, 2015; Fareh, 2010).

This indicates that pronunciation and conversation difficulties among PYP students could be due to their previous schools' teaching methods.

Moreover, low-level students in PYP should be given extra time before starting the pacing schedule to help them familiarize with the level of the chosen books and enable them to be encouraged to enunciate the sounds correctly. In addition, pronunciation should be considered an important skill in the syllabus and exams like other skills. Additionally, socio-psycho constraints such as attitudes and motivation were noticed to be seen as barriers for many learners because these students feel shy to imitate native speakers and pronounce new sounds in a way that is not familiar to their classmates' pronunciation.

B. Grammar of the New Language

PYP students need to know grammar correctly to help them converse in a correct way and give them self-confidence. Some of the errors which could be noticed among PYP students are related to the agreement between subject and verb, word order, using the appropriate article, using the correct auxiliary verb, and prepositions. According to researcher's own experience during teaching students in the PYP, the misunderstanding of auxiliary verbs can be also considered as one of the factors of making grammatical errors in speech, i.e., students do not have a clear picture of the uses of auxiliary verbs. For example, it is known that to be verbs (is, are, was, were..), to have verbs (have, has, had), and to do verbs (do, does, did) come as auxiliary or main verbs. Many students are confused when to use auxiliary verb as a main verb or an auxiliary verb, so some students say sentences like: He is play football every day. I am go to school. And if they see a sentence like that "what do you do?", they raise a question oh teacher, why do you use the verb (do) two times?

The lack of grammatical information plays a main role in creating the difficulties and giving students less self-confidence. Additionally, these kinds of problems will be always act as barriers in front of learners preventing them to go one step ahead in their way of learning EL. A grammar was considered one of the most complicated areas for students to learn, and the most complicated aspect in grammar study was learning word order (Chae, 2014). To make students good in conversation, a teacher must improve students' level in grammar to overcome the problems related to the conversation (Chae, 2014).

The problems among teachers and learners in the PYP are associated to the books the students have to deal with, exams which a learner must take, and a teacher must stick to the unit included in the exam. These three main points make the knowledge gap be bigger. The teacher will not have time to give extra information. Instead, they run to follow the pacing schedule and go out of the curricula, while students will always think of the exams.

C. The Environment Where a Student Studies and Lives in

Students of PYP started learning English in public schools when they were at sixth standard and the courses they have taken at schools third of them are taught in their mother tongue. In this case, students will not find the appropriate environment to practice conversation and they will not be qualified enough to use English in their daily life. When students start to learn from sixth standard, this may not make them good speakers as they will spend the first three years learning the basic English words and grammar until they reach a stage in which they feel that we know nothing.

The environment could be very crucial in the process of foreign language teaching. Institutes must create good environmental situations that help students overcome the difficulties they face. Scientific materials in PYP must be taught in English. The decision makers must create a good environment especially in English classes and there must be an activated EL clinic which can help students practice EL and it must be organized logically. PYP students feel that the environment is a big challenge to them. They miss using the target language outside class.

D. The Teaching Methods Which are Used

The multi-level of students in one class will surely affect the teaching process. Teachers should encourage their students to use EL through classes they teach while paying attention to their exact level. There are many cases that students are not good enough to converse in English, so the role of the teacher here is to motivate low-level students and explain the knowledge they need that might take a week or two weeks for explanations, then a teacher can go ahead and encourage them in making conversation and trying to give feedback which helps a lot. The best method to use is the one that is related to the exact students' levels and needs. Many PYP students are not taking courses regarding their exact levels, they need at

least two to four weeks to be able to walk along with these kinds of books. In their situation, some colleges let students immediately start with the book which is chosen to all students regardless their levels. In these colleges, very excellent, good, weak, and very weak levels of students have the same books, syllabus, and exams.

E. The Attitudes and Motivation of a Student

PYP students of English are less motivated because of the following reasons. Firstly, they have many exams in each semester and these exams decide their college field in the university according to the results they are going to obtain, so students will be always focused during their exams. Secondly, their environment is not supporting them to master EL. Thirdly, they try to focus on how to pass in English exams more than focusing on how to master EL itself. Fourthly, both teachers and students are looking forward to reaching the units included in the exam more than focusing on mastering the language skills. For example, PYP students take in an academic year 8 books for three different levels (Q Skills for success). Each book has 10 units (i.e., 80 units altogether). These eight books were used at PYP in Taibah University. Hence, decision makers should look carefully at these points to achieve the real goals of teaching and learning another language.

Learners must know that this language is important for many reasons: study, in a job they look for, in traveling and so on. Many PYP students do not have a long-term view of the future, they live the moment they have. The reason behind the lack of motivation is the environment they live in and the errors of the language they make. The reason behind the lack of the positive attitude is that they do not have a long-term view of the future. Therefore, this study highlights the significance of English motive and attitude as important parts during the learning process of a language.

F. The Techniques Which Help to Overcome These Challenges.

There are many ways that help learners and teachers in solving the problems and finding good strategies to face the difficulties and challenges that occur during students' conversation and pronunciation. New teachers need to (1) gain an understanding of instructional strategies related to specific subject matter, (2) develop an understanding of how to address individual

differences, (3) increase their knowledge of formative and summative assessment practices, and (4) learn how ongoing collaborations with teaching colleagues, school administrators, and parents can provide the necessary support for students, particularly those who are not succeeding (Miller, 2008).

It could be noticed that there are four procedures that lead to overcome the obstacles. The procedures might help PYP students in mastering conversation and pronunciation in EL. Many points could also help as good techniques. For example, "Mix It Up Strategy" uses as many communicative exercises as he/she can such as role-play, information gap activities, Q&A session, etc. "Keep the Student on Their Toes" checks their understanding by asking other students to rephrase the activities they achieved, listened or did by their colleagues. Thirdly, "Let the Students Do the Work", is the plenary of the lesson and students in this part end the lesson by asking each other questions related to the material covered. In this case, they will listen to each other's accents, not just to the teacher's. In addition, teachers summarize the student's comments without correcting each mistake in their conversations to avoid making students waiting for your comments and ignoring other's conversations. Finally, Work on Everyone's Difficulties, if a group of students has a particular problem in pronunciation, a teacher can solve this problem. If others have other problems, he / she also can solve them. A teacher has to work with each one's problem (Pulick, 2005).

It could be said that the above-mentioned points are good ways and strategies to overcome the difficulties among teachers and students in both pronunciation and conversation matters. The biggest challenge for teachers is the levels of the students. Before starting teaching the course, low level students need more time and hours to stick to the good level of other students. In this way, students will get good chances to make them participate in classes and they see themselves achieving something which can guide them to look forward and go ahead in using EL. One of the aims in teaching any language: Arabic, English, Russian, Hindi or Chinese etc. is to make learners proficient in all or some of basic language skills: speaking, writing, reading and understanding (Ngangbam, 2016). The second challenge is the environment they live in, because students do not have an appropriate environment when they leave their college. These ways and strategies cannot be applied unless PYP students' levels are improved before running the books and environment.

5. Conclusions

When teachers, learners, and institutes keep in mind like these problems and challenges, they can guide new learners and book designers to encounter these difficulties and find simple ways to make learners overcome the problems of conversation and pronunciation. For example, the grammar of the new language will be always a barrier unless the students, teachers, and institutes find excellent ways which can guide students to be very good speakers of EL. In addition to that, teachers may use very good methods in teaching and colleges may recommend good books, but if a student still does not have motivation toward learning ELF, this will be an obstacle in the way of improving students' knowledge, pronunciation, and conversation in EL.

The findings of the current study reveal that PYP students have challenges related to: (1) the lack of grammatical knowledge such as auxiliary verbs, sentence structures, and misunderstanding of pronouns; (2) inappropriate environment to practice conversation; and (3) the teaching methods used. PYP students have positive attitudes to learn EL but because of the challenges they face, they feel that they have an impossible mission to achieve the exact goals of learning a new language.

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