SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN YEMENI UNIVERSITIES

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Doctor of Philosophy
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by
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Certificate

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **"SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS"** is original and has been carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of **Prof. PANCHANAN MOHANTY**. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree in this or any other university in part or full.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this Ph.D thesis

To the souls of my parents

To my soul – Twins

To my lovely kids

The many hours that I devoted were the hours that obviously came from their time.

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List of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The present study entitled "Syllabus Design for Teaching the English Language Skills in Yemeni Universities" is an attempt made in the time when English language becomes the significant means of communication all over the world. Almost all countries pay much attention to English language learning and teaching and Yemen is no exception. English language teaching has received much attention in Yemen at both school and university levels. This research study arose from the awareness of the fact that effective courses in English for Yemeni students are in highly demand. Thus, the fundamental goal of this research is to develop better syllabi, effective teaching and learning, and mastering the four skills namely, speaking, writing, reading and listening. However, to be more and competitive with other countries, Yemen needs highly qualified human resources in different fields as well.

One of the valuable qualifications that Yemeni students should acquire is English language proficiency so that they can read and write scientific articles, present their ideas, and network with other professionals. Therefore, English has become an important instrument in the rapidly developing global information society.

If we consider the number of students who join the universities, we find that the majority of them come from the government high schools. These students have already studied the English language for six years. Those students who come from the public schools are very few. The public schools start learning English from the

Kindergarten stage. Thus they get instruction for 8 more years in the English language than the students from government high schools. This holds for all the Yemeni Universities. The point is that, both the groups are put together in one and the same class in colleges, although they differ to a large extent in respect of the amount of instruction and exposure to English as a foreign language. In addition to that, some of these students live in cities and undergo English courses in different English teaching institutes, while those coming from the rural area do not get any such opportunity outside the classroom to use English for communication or to study the basic skills in English at any institute, because the English teaching institutes are not available in the rural areas.

Students from the cities in Yemen get more opportunities outside classrooms to use English for communicative purposes than those who belong to villages. The students from the cities are likely to be more exposed to the culture and the native English speech through media, films, songs, and their social interaction with the tourists than the rural area students. As a result, the urban group has more and better exposure to the use of English than the rural group. Thus, it is clear that students who join the English department at college differ in respect of extent and intensity of their learning experience depending on the place they learnt English at and the length of time they spent learning it.

To know briefly, why the Yemeni students who join the universities are poor in their English proficiency, let us discuss briefly the situation of teaching and learning English in the Yemeni secondary schools.

1.1.1. The Situation of Teaching and Learning English at the Secondary Level

The secondary level education aim to develop all the four skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Ministry of Education assumes that by grade

VII pupils begin to study English in schools for 6 years. The period between class X and the beginning of the first–year degree course should be used to prepare the student for his work at the university and help him/her acquire the necessary command over English.

The training manual gives a detailed account of how teaching should go in the class for all the four language skills. What is important for us to understand is that teaching and learning English in our schools concentrates more on grammatical knowledge than on the functional aspects of the language.

As pointed out earlier, teaching English at the school level was envisaged to teach all the four language skills in order to help the pupils achieve a good command over the language. But in actual practice only two skills are taught, reading and writing. Very little or no attempt was made to encourage listening and speaking in the school because the schools are ill-equipped to impart the other two skills. Especially, speaking needs teachers who are fluent in English and who can become models for the learners. Since getting such teachers was rather impossible, teaching suffered seriously Moreover, a structural syllabus aims to teach language structures as isolated pieces without relating them to functions and meanings they convey with the development of notional/functional approach, as advocated by Wilkins and his colleagues (1981). Teaching and learning of English has undergone a radical change. Modern approaches to language teaching concentrate more on functions and meaning that the language is used to convey than on how grammatical structures are formed. The result has been a shift from a purely grammatical syllabus to a communicative one. Because of that, the researcher concentrates on this shift and uses a communicative approach to language teaching as a goal and guide to this study.

1.1.2.   Problems in Effective Teaching of English

English is taught as a subject in Yemeni schools (from Class VII) and not as a medium of instruction at the secondary stage.

Research has shown that by the time a student joins the University he/she hardly knows 200 words, and he/she is not able to use English effectively in day-to-day communication. It would be wrong to attribute this failure to any one particular problem. In fact, there are many problems that confront the situations of teaching English in Yemen and we are not able to solve these problems yet. Some of them are:

1. Large classes: The size of our classes at the secondary level has become quite unmanageable. The number of students admitted in the classes X, XI and XII is at least 60 or more. It becomes very difficult to manage such a class in terms of discipline and teaching. Students are manifesting mixed abilities and it is not possible for a teacher to cater to the needs of all students. The teacher does not find any scope for individual attention and pair and group work. He, therefore, takes recourse to the lecture mode which he finds more suitable and less time-consuming.

2. Lack of facilities: Most of our schools (Secondary and Lower) are terribly ill-equipped in terms of necessary teaching aids and audio-visual aids. The most common aid available to the teacher is the blackboard. It is too often in a bad shape. Tape-recorders, TVs, wall-charts and other teaching aids, which the teacher would like to use, are often not found in schools.

3. Lack of trained teachers: Even if all schools were provided with different teaching aids, they would mean little to an untrained teacher. At the secondary stage, teachers are appointed on the basis of their bachelor's degree. Professional development does not simply refer to the knowledge of English that a teacher

should possess. It also means developing necessary skills that would make their teaching effective. Most of the teachers remain largely ignorant of the changes taking place in English teaching/learning across the world. They never bother to analyse why English is taught in schools and what is expected of them. Since the teacher does not grow, his/her students also do not grow too. As a result, it should be unrealistic to expect a teacher to set objectives which he himself is not capable of reaching. A teacher who has difficulty in speaking the language is not going to succeed in giving his pupils a command of spoken English.

4. Methods of teaching: This is related to the preceding point. A large number of teachers are still using traditional methods of teaching. Especially, Grammar-Translation Method is present in one form or the other in schools. Grammar teaching takes much of school timing and the four language skills receive little attention. Oral work is ignored and the whole session is devoted to preparing students for the final examination. By and large, teachers refuse to change; they resent it, too.

5. Textbooks: Until recently schools used unsuitable textbooks. Most of these text books contained prose texts, stories and poems written by native speakers of English. They were linguistically difficult and culturally alien.

   It is important that necessary steps are taken to overcome the problems that have been identified above. The following may be considered.

1. Teacher training programs that concentrate not only on providing knowledge but also skills should be undertaken. It should be a continuous process. In training program, a core group of teachers is trained who then train other teachers and the process continues till all the teachers get trained. Though the program is very demanding in terms of time and management, we need to

provide better alternatives. Summer school is one of such alternatives. A teacher should ensure that this teaching is appropriate to his class, well organized and exciting.

2. Adequate facilities should be provided to schools. Good classrooms, audio-visual aids, congenial atmosphere, etc. would go along the way in making the teaching process of English purposeful.

3. Quality textbooks should be prepared that are culturally familiar and linguistically appropriate to their respective levels.

1.2. The Significance of the Study

To improve Yemeni students' English skills, English teachers in Yemen need to search for a suitable syllabus and develop teaching and training approaches that are better than their current syllabuses and approaches. In this study, I aim to do just that. My purpose is to search for a better way to develop high quality English language education in teaching English language skills in Yemeni universities. The research itself is significant because it could lead to improved approaches to teaching Yemeni students how to acquire the English language skills. In addition, the research results may help teachers of English to discover students ideas and attitudes towards English language skills which could be useful for developing the English language skills curricula for students of college of education, arts and languages (if there is one).

The topics investigated: syllabuses of teaching the English language skills, approaches and materials in teaching, communicative approach to language teaching (CLT), and the teaching pedagogies, such as, peer response, teacher-centred, student-centred teacher/student conferences, and so on, are also significant because these aspects of communicative approach to language teaching put students at the centre of learning and teaching.

The communicative approach to language teaching is worth studying because of its numerous advantages. Some of these are as follows:

1. A communicative approach must be based on and respond to the learner's communication needs. These needs must be specified with respect to grammatical competence (e.g. the levels of grammatical accuracy that are required in oral and written communications), sociolinguistic competence (e.g. needs relating to setting, topic, communicative functions), and strategic competence (e.g. compensatory communications strategies to be used when there is a breakdown in one of the other competencies).

2. The communicative approach to language teaching goes well with some techniques such as: tutorial sessions; group discussions; problem-solving; and simulations and role-playing.

3. Communicative interaction gives learners more opportunities to express their own individualities in the class room. The emphasis on communicative interaction provides opportunities for cooperative relationship to emerge, both among learners and between teachers and learners.

4. A communicative approach is organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know, and emphasizes the way in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately.

5. Communicative language teaching recognizes the teaching of 'communicative competence' as its aim. It is on this level of aim that such a language teaching distinguishes itself from more traditional approaches where the emphasis is heavily on teaching 'structural competence'. Communicative

competence is composed minimally of 'grammatical competence', 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'strategic competence'. The primary goal of communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on the form of competence over the others throughout second language program.

6. In a communicative approach the learner is most likely to be in contact within a genuine communicative situation and have the opportunity to take part in meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent speakers of the language, i.e. to respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic second/foreign language situations.

7. In a communicative oriented second/foreign language program, the learners must be provided with the information, practice and much of the experience needed to meet their communicative needs in the second/foreign language. The learners should also be taught about the second language culture primarily (although not exclusively) through the social studies program in order to provide them with the socio-cultural knowledge of the second/foreign language group that is necessary in drawing inferences about the social meanings or values of utterances.

8. Communicative approach is concerned in the classroom with language 'use', not language knowledge.

9. Providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching.

Teaching of the English language skills should resemble the practice of professionals at work in different situations. This plan inspired me to bring in communicative English pedagogies, such as peer response, peer evaluation, and student/teacher conferences. I hope to be able to learn more about the real potential of these teaching pedagogies from collecting and analysing students' viewpoints about these teacher-selected approaches and whether or to what extent they meet students' needs. Moreover, my attempt to create student-centred instructions also motivated me to study students' ideas and attitudes towards class assignments and course organization. The outcomes from this study could guide me in customizing and updating course content and teaching methodologies to match students' preferences and the society needs.

1.3. Purpose of the study

This study aims to explore the communicative approach to language teaching that may help Yemeni Universities in designing their syllabus for teaching the English language skills. This study was designed to help Yemeni students who are relatively unskilled in English. It is also designed to examine the syllabuses, approaches and materials used at present in Yemeni Universities and give suggestions for designing syllabus for teaching each skill in future.

The insights generated by the description and analysis of the data collected for this study can be used for a variety of purposes to better understand EFL by Yemeni students, to help EFL curriculum and instructional practice, and to provide useful insights for educational policy making.

In order to investigate how Yemeni EFL student respond to the communicative approach to language teaching, the study focuses on classroom observations of their interactions and the use of this approach by the English instructors, the collection and

analysis of teachers' and students' views on the English language skills through questionnaires and interview with the instructors and their students.

1.4. English Language Skills

1.4.1. Language as a Skill

Language is essentially a skill. It is not a content-subject like science, social studies, commerce, etc. which aim at imparting information and fill the human mind with knowledge.

It must be remembered that language skills refer to the following four skills:

Language

Listening   Speaking   Reading   Writing
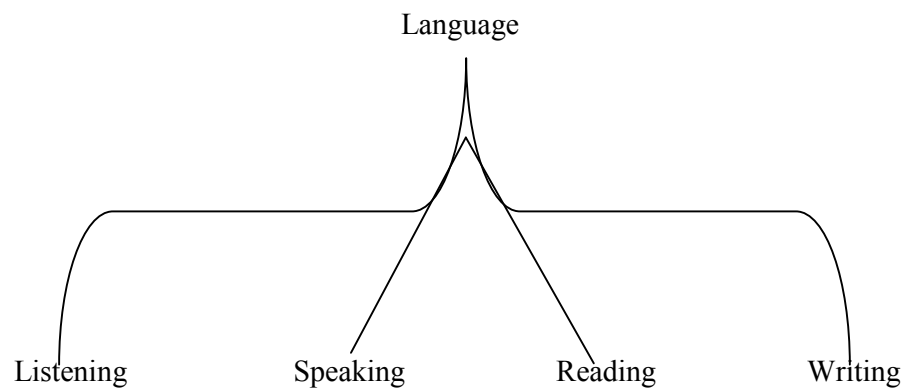
1.4.1.1. Classification of Skills

The four language skills, viz. LSRW can be further classified into two parts:

Skills

Productive Skills   Receptive Skills

Speaking   Writing   Listening   Reading
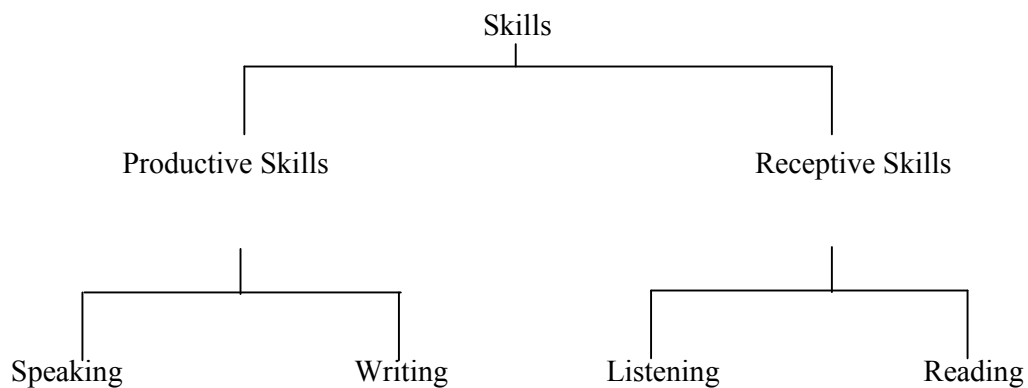
The above diagram makes it crystal clear that there are two main language skills, namely, productive skills and receptive skills. Speaking and writing are called productive skills because while using these skills a learner/user is not only active but also produces sounds while speaking and symbols (letters, etc.) while writing. On the other hand, listening and reading are considered receptive skills because here a learner is passive and receives information either through listening or reading. The person is at the receiving end of the communication channel. The receptive skills such as listening and reading are different to the productive skills, i.e., speaking and writing. The following table gives us a better idea about these skills.

Table 1: Language skills

Skill	Oral	Written
Receptive	Listening	Reading
Productive	Speaking	Writing

Listening and speaking demand the exercise of the auditory (ears) and speech (mouth) organs. Therefore, we call these skills Aural-Oral skills. Reading and writing involve the visual (printed text) and the psycho-motor (mind) organs. Hence, they are called graphic-motor skills.

It must be noted carefully that in most situations we have to use more than one skill simultaneously. For instance, listening and speaking go together. The same is the case with reading and writing. According to Lado (1971:43) "more fundamental than whether the correct order of teaching the skills is listening, speaking, reading and writing is the fact that reading and writing are partial skills and exercising them constitute partial language experiences, whereas speaking and listening are total language experiences. The person that learns the total skills can more easily learn the partial ones than vice-versa".

Lado categorizes the four skills in another way:

```
                          Skills
                            |
          ┌─────────────────┴─────────────────┐
      Proper Skills                       Casual Skills
      ┌─────┴─────┐                       ┌─────┴─────┐
  Listening    Speaking                Reading      Writing
```
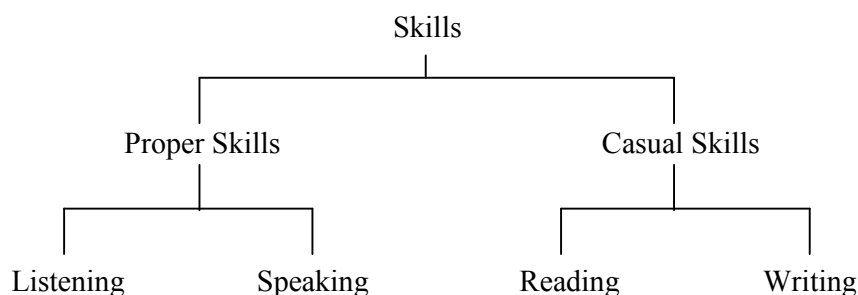
Proper skills are frequently used by all. One just cannot put aside listening and speaking. While reading and writing are casual skills in that they are used casually. One can live without reading and writing but not without listening and speaking. The point is that listening and speaking are more important than reading and writing. It does not mean that reading and writing should be neglected. All the skills should be emphasized while teaching English.

1.5. The Organization of this Thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters and five appendices. Chapter one provides an overview of the study, including the background of the study, the significance of the study, purpose of the study, an overview of English language skills, and the organization of this thesis.

Chapter two is the review of literature. This chapter includes, communicative approach- its development; the principles of communicative approach; the theories of basic communication skills; communicative syllabus design; communicative teaching materials- a brief survey; and communicative methodology. Chapter three contains the description of research methodology including an introduction to the chapter; research site and participants; collecting data; and data analysis.

Chapter four discusses the situation of teaching and learning listening in Yemeni universities which includes an introduction to the chapter; the determination of the

entry level of students of English in Yemeni universities; the nature of listening courses in Yemeni universities; teaching listening comprehension skill; problems associated with the teaching and learning listening in Yemeni universities; and methods of assessing and evaluating students' progress. Chapter five studies the speaking skill which includes an introduction to the chapter; the basis for planning spoken English courses in Yemeni universities; teaching and developing English speaking skills; and testing spoken English. Chapter six discusses the reading comprehension skill which includes an introduction to the chapter; reading courses: goals, methods, approaches, and materials; teaching reading comprehension; reading instruction in the Yemeni classrooms; and understanding students' difficulties in reading in English.

Chapter seven describes the process of teaching and learning written English as a foreign language which includes an introduction to the chapter; the unsatisfactory performance in the writing of English among Yemeni ELT students; views on approaches to teaching writing; teaching writing; teaching Yemeni graduate students to teach composition; understanding students' difficulties in composition writing; and evaluating and grading students' writing. The last chapter is considered as a thorough study for the thesis which contains the conclusions of the study and the recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in six areas. The first one examines the development of communicative approach to language teaching. This includes the definition of this approach, communication, and understanding of communicative language teaching. The second one looks into the principles of communicative approach. This section explains how the principles distinguish communicative approach from other approaches to language teaching. Indeed, the principles were chosen from different writers on the topic and restated mostly in their own words. The third one examines the theories of basic communication skills. This includes the concept of communicative competence; how these theories can be characterized to emphasize the minimum level of communication skills needed to cope with the most common second/foreign language situations the learner is likely to face; the components of communicative competence. The fourth area is the communicative syllabus design. This part discusses issues viz. definitions of a syllabus; approaches to the syllabus; types of communicative syllabus; criticism of notional/functional syllabus; and communicative curricula. The fifth part reviews the communicative materials. This includes the communicative vs. structural materials. The last part in this chapter examines the communicative methodology. This explains the definition of methodology; changes in methodology; communicative methodology; principles of communicative methodology; communicative procedures and techniques; and teacher preparation.

2.1. Communicative Approach – Its Development

In language teaching the term "approach" is commonly used to refer to a general view of how teaching should be carried out. Anthony (1963:94) views an approach as

> "a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning. It states a point of view, a philosophy, an article of faith something which one believes but cannot necessarily prove. It is often not analysable except in terms of the effectiveness of the methods which grow out of it. Some people use it to refer to the principles of syllabus construction and not to the actual classroom teaching materials and methods. In short, an approach is a set of insights derived from theory of linguistic sciences, psychology and other allied disciplines that govern various aspects of language learning and language pedagogy."

The importance of meaningful language use at all stages in the acquisition of second or foreign language communicative skills has come to be recognized by researchers and teachers around the world, and many curricular innovations have been developed in response.

What has come to be known as communicative language teaching (CLT) is a universal effort that has found inspiration and direction in the interaction of initiatives, both theoretical and applied, in many different contexts. Linguists, methodologists, and material writers have contributed to this effort, which it is all the richer.

Referring to understanding of communicative language teaching (CLT), Savignan (1972: 83) points out:

> "central to an understanding of communicative language teaching is an understanding of the term communicative competence."

Communicative competence coined by Hymes (1971). Hymes' presentation of this concept immediately appealed to those concerned with teaching language for "real purposes". He includes knowledge of sociolinguistic rules, or the appropriateness of an utterance, in addition to knowledge of grammar rules, the term

has come to be used in language teaching contexts to refer to the ability to negotiate meaning – to successfully combine knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse rules in communicative interaction.

Chomsky (1965) focuses on the interaction of sentences. When he speaks of the concept of linguistic competence, he talks about the sentence level, grammatical competence of an ideal speaker – listener of a language. But this is not sufficient basis for communication. Communicative competence, on the other hand has to do with more than sentence-level grammatical competence. It has to do with social interaction, has to do with real speaker – listeners who interpret, express, and negotiate meaning in many different settings.

Communication then is a negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, author and reader. This is seen in the many spontaneous interpersonal transactions in which we participate daily.

Hymes also pointed the way towards the study of 'notions; and functions by referring to the complex mappings between the grammatical forms of utterances and their notional and functional purposes.

Widdowson (1979:119) argued that it was a mistake to suppose that knowledge of how sentences are put to use in communication follows automatically from knowledge of how sentences are composed and what signification they have as linguistic units.

> "Learners have to be taught what values they may have as predictions, qualification, and reports description and so on."

2.2. The Principles of Communicative Approach

The main principles of communicative approach which distinguish it from the other approaches to language teaching are briefly stated below. They are chosen from

different writers on the topic and restated mostly in their own words. The first seven principles are described by Canale and Swain (1980: 1-38).

1.   A Communicative approach is organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising) that a given learner or group of learners needs to know, and emphasizes the way in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately. On the other hand, a grammatical approach is organized on the basis of linguistic or grammatical forms (i.e. phonological forms, morphological forms, syntactic patterns, lexical items) and emphasizes the way in which these forms may be combined to form grammatical sentences.

2.   In the most general terms we may say that a 'communicative language teaching' is one which recognizes the teaching of communicative competence' as its aim. It is on this level of aim that such a language teaching distinguishes itself from more traditional approaches where the emphasis is heavily on teaching 'structural competence'. Communicative competence is composed minimally of 'grammatical competence', 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'strategic competence'. There is no theoretical or empirical motivation for the view that 'grammatical competence is any more or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic or strategic competence. The primary goal of communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of knowledge for the learner, an outcome that is not likely to result from overemphasis on the form of competence over the others throughout second language program.

3.   A communicative approach must be based on and respond to the learner's communication needs. These needs must be specified with respect to

grammatical competence (e.g. the levels of grammatical accuracy that are required in oral and written communications), sociolinguistic competence (e.g. needs relating to setting, topic, communicative functions), and strategic competence (e.g. compensatory communications strategies to be used when there is a breakdown in one of the other competencies).

4. It is particularly important to base a communicative approach on the varieties of the second language that the learner is most likely to be in contact within a genuine communicative situation and on the minimum levels of grammatical and socio–linguistic competence that native speakers expect of second language learners in such a situation and that the majority of second language learners may be expected to attain.

5. The second language learners must have the opportunity to take part in meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent speakers of the language, i.e. to respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic second language situations. This principle is a challenging one to teachers and program designers, but is motivated strongly by the theoretical distinction between communicative competence and communicative performance. "…We think that exposure to realistic communication situations is crucial if communicative competence is to lead to 'communicative performance'."

6. Particularly at the early stages of second language learning optimal use must be made of these aspects of communicative competence that the learner has developed through acquisition and use of the native language and that are common to those communication skills required in the second language. It is especially important that the more arbitrary and less universal aspects of communications in the second language (e.g. certain features of the

grammatical code) be presented and practiced in the context of less arbitrary and more universal aspects (e.g. the fundamental appropriateness conditions in making a request to the basic rules of discourse involved in greeting a peer).

7. The primary objective of a communicative oriented second language program must to be provided the learners with the information, practice and much of the experience needed to meet their communicative needs in the second language. In addition, the learners should be taught about the language primary (although not exclusively) in the first language program, i.e. taught, for example, about grammatical categories, communicative functions, appropriateness conditions, values of discourse and registers. The learners should also be taught about the second language culture primarily (although not exclusively) through the social studies program in order to provide them with the socio-cultural knowledge of the second language group that is necessary in drawing inferences about the social meanings or values of utterances.

Roberts (1982: 99-105) lists the following principles:

8. The communicative approach must in many ways remain a commitment to eclecticism in practice, though to a set goal in theory as long as it accepts, a great diversity of 'communicative needs' and seeks to meet them diversely.

9. Communicative approach as a whole has developed primarily around the adult learner, largely because it is usually only adults who have closely specifiable communication needs in foreign languages.

10. Communicative language teaching recognizes the necessity for teaching 'language use' (formulating its aims in terms of communicative competence) basing itself on inventories specifying semantic and pragmatic categories

which are arrived at by considering presumed communicative needs. The approach proposes what might be called of a 'teaching content' solution to the problem of communicative incompetence.

Howatt (1984:279) describes two versions of communicative approach – a 'strong' version and a 'week' version. According to him, the weak version stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching. In The strong version of communicative teaching advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that, it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but rather of simulating the development of the language system itself. He describes the weaker version as 'learning to use English' and the stronger version as 'using English to teach it.'

2.3. The Theories of Basic Communication Skill

The goal of communicative approach is acquisition of competence, and the development of communication skills and strategies are the means to achieve this end. Here an attempt will be made to collect a variety of definitions of communicative competence available in the current literature on the subject. The theories of communication skills and the components of communicative competence will be discussed.

2.3.1. The Concept of Communicative Competence

The term 'Communicative Competence' was coined by Hymes (1966) in a proposal to broaden the scope of knowledge and skills embodied in Chomsky's definition of "linguistic competence" (Chomsky 1965). Hymes argues that speakers

who were able to produce all the grammatical sentences of a language would be institutionalized if they went about trying to do so without consideration of appropriate contexts of use, and of the socially and culturally determined norms for production and interpretation. He augmented Chomsky's criterion of systematic potential (whether or not an utterance is a possible grammatical structure in a language), with knowledge of appropriateness (whether and to what extent a potential communicative form is suitable), occurrence (whether it is really enacted), and feasibility (whether it is possible under particular circumstances). Hymes' proposal was quickly adopted both by sociolinguists and by applied linguists in the field of foreign/second language instruction. Communicative competence extends to both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak, how one may talk to persons of different statuses and roles, what nonverbal behaviours are appropriate in various contexts, what the routines for turn-taking are in conversation, how to offer or decline assistance or cooperation, how to exercise power, and the like. Hymes points out:

> "Both communicative knowledge and skills which may attribute to a speech community and the communicative competence of individual speakers are highly variable constructs" (Frawley 2003:98).

In the field of foreign/second language teaching, the concept has been applied to the development of communicative approaches to language teaching and testing (e.g. Savignon 1983); these have been widely accepted in most parts of the world.

To illustrate what we mean by the term "communication" and to make it more obvious, the researcher has attempted to collect a variety of definitions of this term, to show the different views for the different scholars.

'Communication' is an exchange between people, of knowledge, of information, of ideas, of operation, of feelings. It takes place in a multitude of ways. For genuine

communications to take place, what is being communicated must be something new to the recipient. Communication is full of surprises and it is this element of unexpectedness and unpredictability which makes communication what it is, and for which it is so hard to prepare the student by conventional teaching methods.

> "Communication is an exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written visual modes, and production and comprehension process." (Canale 1983:4).

'Information' is assumed to consist of conceptual, socio-cultural, affective and other content. Information is constantly changed by factors like 'context of communication', 'choice of language forms' and 'non-verbal behaviour'. In this sense communication involves the continuous evaluation and negotiation of meaning on the part of participants.

According to many scholars especially Morrow (1977) and Widdowson (1978), communication is understood to have the following characteristics:

1. It is a form of social – interaction and is therefore normally acquired and used in social interaction.

2. It involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message.

3. It takes place in discourse and socio-cultural contexts which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues as to correct interpretation of utterances.

4. It is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions such as memory constraints, fatigue and distractions.

5. It always has a purpose (for example, to establish social relations, to persuade, or to promise).

6. It involves authentic as opposed to text book contrived language (Canale 1983:4).

> "In any communicative event, individual participants bring with them prior knowledge of meaning and prior knowledge of how such meaning can be realized through the conventions of language form and behaviour. Since 'communication' is interpersonal, the conventions are subject to variations while they are being used. In exploring shared knowledge, participants will be modifying that knowledge. They typically exploit a tension between the conventions that are established and the opportunity to modify these conventions for their particular communication purposes. Communicating is not merely a matter of following conventions but also of negotiating through and about the conventions themselves. It is a convention – creating as well as a convention – following activity. So in learning how to communicate, the learner is confronted by a variable process." (Breen and Candlin 1980:90)

In order to understand conventions while underlie communication, the users not only have to understand a system of ideas or concepts and a system of interpersonal behaviour, but also to understand how these ideas and this interpersonal behaviour can be realized in language – in connected texts.

> "Mastering this unity of ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge allows us to participate in a creative meaning – making process and to express or interpret the potential meanings within spoken or written text." (Breen & Candlin 1980: 90)

Thus, 'communication' is synthesized, ideational, interpersonal and textual knowledge as related to other forms of human behaviour. In learning how to communicate in a new language, the learner's psychological and social experiences are of grant significance. The sharing and negotiating of potential meanings in a new language implies the use and refinement of perceptions, concepts and affects. Thus, communication is a means through which human activity and consciousness is shared and reflected upon socially. To put this in other words, 'communication' is a socialization process.

In learning to communicate, learners acquire knowledge of the conventions which govern communicative performance. Further learners are to do sharing and negotiating of meanings and convention with the fellow participants in

communication. Such sharing and negotiating implies the existence of particular 'communicative ability' as an essential part of competence. Therefore, we may identify within competence both the knowledge systems and the abilities which call upon and act upon that knowledge.

> "The use of these communicative abilities is manifested in communicative performance through a set of skills. Speaking, listening, reading and writing skills can be seen to serve and depend upon the underlying abilities of interpretation, expression and negotiating. In this way we are suggesting that the skills represent or realize underlying communicative abilities. The skills are the meeting point between underlying communicative competence and observable communicative performance, they are the means through which knowledge and abilities are translated into performance and vice versa." (Breen and Candlin 1980: 92)

2.3.2. The Theories of Basic Communication Skills

A theory of basic communicative skills can be characterized at one that emphasizes the minimum level of communication skills needed to get along in or cope with, the most common second language situations the learner is likely to face. Thus, Savignon (1972) is concerned mainly with the skills that are needed to get one's meaning across, to do things in the second language, to say what one really want to say. She puts less emphasis on the knowledge of discourse. Savignon makes explicit reference only to grammatical skills (e.g. pronunciation, vocabulary), communicative functions (e.g. greeting, leave-taking, information-getting and information-giving) and other factors such as willingness to express oneself in the second language, resourcefulness in making use of limited grammatical skills, and knowledge of kinesics and paralinguistic aspects of the second language (e.g. facial expressions, gestures). The criteria she adopts for evaluating communicative performance of her students include efforts to communicate, amount of communication, comprehensibility and suitability, naturalness and poise in keeping a verbal interaction in hand and accuracy (semantic) of information.

Van Ek (1976) states the general objective for the 'Threshold Level' for general second language programs that

> "the learner will be able to survive (linguistically speaking) in temporary contacts with foreign language speakers in everyday situation, whether as visitors to the foreign country or with visitors to their own country, and to establish and maintain social contacts." (Van Ek 1976: 24-25).

He provides perhaps the clearest statement of basic communicative skills. His model emphasizes 'language functions' (or communicative functions) and 'notions' and considers only in second place what language 'forms' must be known to give expressions to these functions and notions. He supplies lists of 'general language functions', 'specific language functions', 'general notions', 'specific notions', 'topic areas' 'settings' and 'roles'. All of these factors are involved in determining the particular inventories of vocabulary, structures, and grammatical categories that he proposes. For more details see Van Ek (1975: 26-28).

Canale and Swain (1980:7) discuss two important principles concerning the theoretical bases of theories of basic communication skills.

> "(1) That these theories can be said to specify a minimum level of communication skills (for example Van Ek, 1976). (2) That more effective second language learning takes place if emphasis is put from the beginning on getting one's meaning across, and not on the grammaticalness and appropriateness of one's utterances."

Canale and Swain appear to equate foreign language learning with second and first language learning with their emphasis on meaning over grammatically. They assume that since in acquiring a first language, the child seems to focus more on being understood than on speaking grammatically and then second language acquisition might be allowed to proceed in this manner. It can be speculated if they extend this view to young and adult second language learners alike.

Canale and Swain clarify the emphasis on socio-cultural appropriateness of utterances by suggesting that

"to hold off an explicit emphasis on socio-cultural aspects of language use at the early stages of second language study in general programs. Instead, one might begin with a combination of emphasis on grammatical accuracy and on meaningful communication and the communicative functions and social contexts that require the least knowledge of idiosyncratic appropriateness conditions in the second language." (Canale and Swain 1980:15).

2.3.3. The Components of Communicative Competence

According to Canale and Swain (1980) Communicative Competence is understood as

"the underlying system of knowledge and skill required for communication", for example knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the socio linguistic conventions for a given language. Canale (1983) calls "communicative performance", "Actual Performance" which is the "realization of such knowledge and skill underlying psychological and environmental conditions such as memory, and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions, interfering, background noises." (Canale 1983 : 5).

'Communicative Competence' is an essential part of 'actual performance', but is reflected only indirectly and sometimes imperfectly due to general limiting conditions such as those mentioned above. Communicative competence refers to both 'knowledge' and 'skill' in using this knowledge when interesting in actual communication. 'Knowledge' refers here to what one knows about the language and about other aspects of communicative language use. 'Skill' refers to how well one can perform this knowledge in actual situation (Canale 1983: 5).

The theoretical framework of communicative competence according to Canale (1983:6) includes four areas of knowledge and skill.

> (i)   grammatical competence
>
> (ii)   sociolinguistic competence
>
> (iii)   discourse competence
>
> (iv)   strategic competence

(i)   Grammatical Competence

This type of competence is concerned with the mastery of the language code (verbal/non-verbal) itself. The features and rules of the language such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence-formation, pronunciation, spelling, linguistics, semantics etc. comprise grammatical competence. Such competence focuses directly on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances.

(ii)   Sociolinguistic Competence

This component includes socio-cultural rules of use. Sociolinguistic competence addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of interaction, norms and conventions of interaction. Appropriateness of utterances refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form.

(iii)   Discourse Competence

This type of competence concerns the mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text, for example, oral or written narrative, argumentative essay, a scientific report, a business letter etc. Units of text are achieved through 'cohesion' in form and 'coherence' in meaning. 'Cohesion' deals with how utterances are linked structurally and facilitates interpretation of a text. 'Coherence' refers to the relationships among the different meanings in a text, where these meanings may be literal meanings, communicative functions and attitudes.

(iv)   Strategic Competence

This component is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communications strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons:

"(a) to compensate for breakdown in communication due to limiting conditions in 'actual performance' (momentary inability to recall an idea or grammatical form) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence. (b) To enhance the effectiveness of communication (deliberately slow and soft speech for rhetorical affect). For example, when one does not remember a given grammatical form, one compensatory strategy that can be used is paraphrase." (Canale 1983:8)

Knowledge of how to use such strategies may be particularly helpful at the beginning stages of second language learning and it is to be expected that the need for certain strategies may change as a function of age and second language proficiency. As Stern (1978) pointed out, such coping strategies are most likely to be acquired through experience in real life communication situations but not through classroom practice that involves no meaningful communication.

Within each of the components of communicative competence that has been discussed, it is assumed that there will be a sub-component of probability rules of occurrence. These rules will attempt to characterize the redundancy aspect of language' (Spolsky 1968), i.e. the knowledge of relative frequencies of occurrence that a native speaker has with respect to grammatical competence (e.g. sequence of words in an utterance), sociolinguistic competence (e.g. sequences of utterances in a discourse), and strategic competence (e.g. commonly used floor- holding strategies).

Although much work remains to be done on the form of such probability rules and the manner in which they are to be acquired. According to Canale and Swain (1980:31):

"the second language learners cannot be expected to have achieved a sufficient level of communicative competence in the second language… if no knowledge of probability of occurrence is developed in the four components of communicative competence."

2.3.4. Summary

Through the discussion above regarding the theories and communication skills, we can summarize it as follows:

1. Communication is defined as a form of social interaction which takes place in discourse and sociocultural context.

2. Communication skills are defined as skills that are needed to get one's meaning across, to do things in the foreign language, to say what one really wants to say.

3. All the basic communication skills can be listed under the following headings: 'general language functions', 'specific language function', 'general notions', 'specific notions', 'topic areas', 'settings' and 'roles'. This will serve as a sort of inventory of language 'functions' and 'notions' and a syllabus designer can choose the 'functions' and 'notions' according to his requirement and situation.

4. The aim of communicative teaching is to develop 'communicative competence' which comprises: a) grammatical competence, b) sociolinguistic competence, c) discourse competence and d) strategic competence.

2.4. Communicative Syllabus Design

The elaboration of new theories of language and the language learning process, along with demands of learners and program sponsors for curricula that address real-life communicative needs has led to many initiatives in teaching materials. Best known among these initiatives are functional approaches to syllabus design. Following the example of the council of Europe (Van Ek 1975), syllabus designers have looked increasingly to language functions to provide content and sequence in teaching materials.   However, the problem they face are at least twofold: (a) adequate descriptions of language functions and how they are realized are none existent; (b) no workable guidelines have been developed as yet for the selection and sequence of functions from among virtually unlimited possibilities.

Most important for classroom teachers to understand, is that, whether it is structurally or functionally based, a syllabus is no more than a list of features to be

presented. It describes the desired outcome of a curriculum but says little about how that outcome is best attained. Simply put, communicative language teaching is not synonymous with a functional syllabus design (Savignon 1987). This is not to say that functional analysis is unimportant for materials development. To the contrary, it is a most welcome antidote to what has been a preoccupation with structure at the expense of meaning and purpose.

Communicative language teaching requires more, however, than attention to strategies for presenting the structures and functions of language. Above all, it requires the involvement of learners in the dynamic and interactive process of communication. A communicative classroom allows learners to experience language as well as to analyse it. Most effective are a combination of experiences that involve the learner in both a physical and psychological sense as well as in an intellectual sense. That is to say second language experience should involve the whole learner. They should be affective and physical as well as cognitive.

Here we propose to discuss the various types of communicative syllabus, ranging from the situational to the notional (functional). An attempt will also be made to present as explicitly as possible the issues and problems emerging from the idea of organizing functional/notional categories in the form of a finished communicative syllabus.

2.4.1. Definitions of a Syllabus

Since the advent of the communicative movement in language teaching, the proponents of communicative approach have tend to put greater emphasis on how to design a communicative syllabus in accordance with the needs of the learners in terms of communicative goals. It is only recently that language teaching syllabus and its various possible formulations have been widely and critically discussed. In the

development of the communicative syllabus design, theoretical disciplines like speech –act; theory, pragmatics and inter-language studies have all played their contributory roles. These studies have brought to light, perhaps for the first time in the history of language teaching, the complexity and subtlety of language 'use' as opposed to 'usage'. It remains to be seen in the words of Brumfit (1980)

> "whether this awareness will enlighten more than it confuses".

Before entering into a discussion of the rather uncertain and unstable field of communicative syllabus design, it appears sensible to discuss basic concept like what a syllabus is and what it means and should it mean to a language teacher, and what its role in school/college curricula. Corder (1973: 296) says:

> "A finished syllabus is the overall plan for the learning process. It must specify what components, or learning items, must be available, or learned by a certain time; what is the most efficient sequence in which they are learned; what items can be learned 'simultaneously'; what items available from stock, i.e., already known; and the whole process is determined by considerations of how long it takes to produce or learn, a component, or item. The process is under continual scrutiny by means of stock checks, or tests and examinations."

The term "curriculum" is used as a general term for the entire organized teaching plan of a subject. 'Syllabus', on the other hand, refers to a sub-area of the curriculum. A curriculum therefore, can consist of a number of syllabuses.

Strevens (1977: 25) defines the syllabus in the following words:

> "The syllabus (US: Curriculum) is partly an administrative instrument, partly a day-to-day guide to the teacher, partly a statement of what is to be taught and how, sometimes, partly a statement of an 'approach'… the syllabus embodies that part of the language which is to be taught, broken down into items or otherwise processed for teaching purposes.'

Westney (1981:186) lists the following elements that form part of a syllabus:

> "(a) The syllabus is a statement of <u>linguistic content.</u> This is central, providing the 'what' of any textbook, course of examination; the organized listing of linguistic items…
> (b) It has <u>methodological implications.</u> This relates to 'what' to the 'how' and claims that a syllabus cannot simply be taxonomy of language items in a methodological void…
> (c) It analyses or processes the material <u>pedagogically.</u> This is a crucial element, and by implication necessarily makes, for example, psychological assumptions.
> (d) It reflects a general approach…
> (e) It is a practical guide for the teacher."

In addition, a syllabus also provides us with an efficient sequence in which the language items are learned. It specifies learning items – linguistic or communicative categories – to be learned by a certain time.

A 'Communicative Syllabus', particularly by contrast with a 'grammatical syllabus', aims to make learners communicatively competent and is based on an analysis of the learners' needs.

2.4.1.1. Syllabus and Curricula

There is often confusion between the term syllabus and curriculum and the following definitions are intended to verify the distinction. The most satisfactory definition of curriculum according to Shaw (1977) is the following:

> … "the curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instructions and related programs."

Kerr (1986:16) defines a curriculum as

> "all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried in groups or individually inside or outside the school."

A curriculum should include the following key components: objectives, content which is selected and organized according to clearly defined principles; teaching strategies; and evaluation. A syllabus is 'a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself" (Shaw 1975: 74). He says that the syllabus should be viewed in the context of an on-going curriculum development process.

2.4.2. Approaches to the Syllabus

A 'linguistic' approach to the syllabus is concerned with formal structuring of language, as reflected in the typical 'structural' or 'grammatical' syllabus.

By contrast, a 'sociolinguistic' orientation implies attention to the function of language in society, and the individual's roles. Westney (1981: 189) discusses three approaches – linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic to framing the syllabus.

A psycholinguistic approach does not introduce another level, but is concerned with the appropriate ordering and presentation of material. Such an approach is concerned to establish criteria, not of pure linguistic complexity but of experimentally determined information regarding the relevant acquisition process of the mind. This is expressed in the following:

> "… the relevance of performance analysis to the designing of syllabuses is based on the notion that there is some 'natural' sequence of elaboration of the approximate system of the second language learner and that when / if this can be well established it would provide a psychological logic to the ordering of material in a syllabus". (Corder 1975: 213)

2.4.3. Types of Communicative Syllabus

The idea that the objectives of language teaching should be framed primarily in communicative terms has had considerable influence on ideas about syllabus development. Various attempts have been made to develop categories for framing communicative objectives in meaningful and relevant terms. Wilkins (1976:2) has distinguished between 'synthetic approaches' in which

> "the different parts of language are taught separately and 'step-by-step' and ordered according to certain criteria so that the learner is 'exposed' to a deliberately limited sample of language and it is 'only in the final stages… that the global language is re-established in all its structural diversity", and 'analytical approaches' where the learners' task is "to approximate his own linguistic behaviour more and more closely to the global language"; in analytic approaches there is "no attempt at… careful linguistic control", though "significant linguistic forms can be isolated from the structurally heterogeneous context in which they occur."

The approaches to syllabus design that Shaw classified as 'communicative' is classified by Wilkins as 'analytic'. Shaw (1982:81) groups communicative syllabuses

into three categories: 'Situational', 'topical', and 'notional' which are separately discussed in the following sections.

2.4.3.1. A 'Situational' or 'Contextual' Syllabus

This approach should not be confused with what Widdowson (1968:139) called a "contextually aided structural approach" but relates rather to what Corder (1960: 61) called a "Contextual Method". This is described as follows:

> "The starting point is the context and its presentations; the next step is the grading of the contexts, and the final step is the selection of items of verbal behaviour which shall fill them… The unit of verbal behaviour is the utterance, which is not a 'linguistic unit but a behavioural one." (Corder 1960: 61)

Newmark and Reibel (1968) also put forward some proposals for the use of 'Chunks' of real language (i.e. 'authentic' materials) situational ordered, but how the ordering would be done is not spelled out.

Wilkins (1972, cited from Brumfit and Johnson 1979:82-90) criticizes a situational approach on the ground that for most purposes it would be uneconomical, since the learner has no basis for transferring what he has learnt in one situation to other situations.

2.4.3.2. A Topical or 'Thematic' Syllabus

A number of writers have put forward the idea of using topic or themes as on organizing principle of course design and therefore of syllabus development. Cook (1971:72) and Van Ek (1975: 22-28) speak of topics.

We may conclude that, while topics are an important element in the syllabus, it is unlikely that it will be advisable in most cases to take themes as the sole organizing device.

2.4.3.3. A Notional (Functional) Syllabus

The idea of notions has been developed mainly within the council of Europe project. It was mentioned by Trim (1971: 55-56) as early as 1971, and developed by

Wilkins who has provided readers with a full and clear exposition and exemplification of his current thinking. Wilkins (1976: 81-82) claims that structural syllabuses give too little prominence to what the learner wishes to do and convey through language; situational syllabuses fail to exploit the fact that most of the thing people say are common to a wide range of situations, and also that a purely situational approach gives rise to wide a range of linguistic items to be suitable in the earlier stages of language learning.

Against this background, Wilkins (1976:21-23) has suggested the use of 'notions' as the main unit on which the syllabus would be based. Notional categories are suggested would be based. Notional categories are suggested for three types of meaning: "Semantico-grammatical categories" cover "ideational', 'cognitive' or 'propositional' meaning, that is "our perceptions of event, process, states and abstractions" as we express them through language; 'model categories' deal with the ways in which we express our attitude to what we are saying (or writing); and categories of communicative function' are used to classify what to do through language, as distinct from what we report through language. It is the development of the categories of communicative function which Wilkins considers to be the most original contribution.

Wilkins (1976:19) argues that notional syllabus

> "takes the communicative facts of language into account from the beginning without losing sight of grammatical and situational factors. It is potentially superior to the grammatical syllabus because it will produce a communicative competence and because it's evident concerns with the use of language will sustain the motivation of the learners. It is superior to the situational syllabus because it can ensure that the most important grammatical forms are included and because it can cover all kinds of language functions, not only those that typically occur in certain situations."

2.4.3.3.1. Criticism of Notional/Functional Syllabus

In terms strictly of context, the criticism sometimes made that notional syllabuses are restricted to intra-sentential concerns and therefore take no account of real questions of language use and interaction, that is, of discourse (Widdowson 1979).

If one considers the learners' total task, it may be that the productive potential of such a syllabus is not optimal. Perhaps the strongest argument in favour of retaining a grammatical orientation to the syllabus is simply that

> "a limited and describable number of rules enable the learner to generate an enormous range of utterances which are usable, in combination with paralinguistic and semantic systems, to express and function." (Brumfit 1978: 81)

By contrast, a strictly function based structuring cannot facilitate any comparable generative capacity.

A syllabus must be based upon an approach and provide input at the level of method. If one can talk meaningfully of the 'communicative approach' which is becoming the "new orthodoxy in language teaching" (Widdowson 1979: 252) then, in principle, there is room for variety in derivative methodology; and this could be illustrated perhaps by varying practice regarding teacher role, and the weighting to be given, respectively, to the goals of fluency and accuracy. This would imply that while a notional syllabus would necessarily reflect or embody a communicative approach, such an approach could not necessarily be expressed by such a syllabus. Indeed, it may be questioned says Westney (1981: 204)

> "Whether any current type of syllabus is adequate for the task involved in communicative course design."

Alexander (1979: 109-110) describes that communicative course design should take account of at least these elements: functions, notions, settings, roles, style,

grammar, vocabulary, and prosodic and paralinguistic features. In any case, says Westney (1981: 204)

> "methodology per se cannot be seen as in any way dependent on syllabus specification, but rather as 'consuming' it selectively."

2.4.3.4. Communicative Curricula

Allwright (1982), states that whether a curriculum is communicative or not is not the most important facing us. To him curriculum includes both 'content' and 'process'. Then he discusses four logical possibilities, the features of which the curricula can be hoped to embody.

(1)   A curriculum may be wholly non-communicative in the sense that the language to be taught is seen simply as a complex linguistic system to be learned rather than as a means of communication to be developed and that the method (process) involved may make no use of communicative activities. Perhaps here Allwright refers to grammatical or structural syllabus and the methodology employed to teach it.

(2)   A curriculum could be based on a communicative analysis of the target language and yet still employ a relatively non-communicative method whereby the various functions of language are treated simply as academic facts to be learned from lectures and therefore not paid quite enough attention to problems of process (methodology). Here he clearly refers to communicative syllabuses that ignore the major aspect of curriculum namely methodology which is as much important and needs to be clearly specified as communicative needs/functions/ notions are specified in terms of content.

(3) A curriculum may be non-communicative in terms of its content, and yet teaching method could be thoroughly communicative perhaps his referent here is situational structural syllabus.

(4) Finally to complete the topical possibilities a curriculum could be communicative in both content and process terms, adopting a communicative analysis of what is to be learned as well as employing communicative activities throughout the teaching process. Such a curriculum is exclusively communicative.

Strictly speaking, a truly communicative curriculum could have to be communicative both in its content and in its process aspects.

2.4.3.4.1. Communicative Content (Syllabus)

The first problem is that to specify curriculum content in communicative terms, we need a communicative description of a language as a system for communication. For language as a linguistic system we can have powerful generative rules, but for the uses of a language we little more than rather arbitrary taxonomies. Our communicative description lacks the sort of organizing principles we would want in order to take well-informed decisions about for example, the sequencing of curriculum content. This has serious consequences, especially for public school systems. The solution here refers to this problem is that school system syllabi should be based on the best linguistic description available with any communicative description being used only as a complement to the linguistic core (Allwright 1982).

2.4.4. Issues in Communicative Syllabus Design

While recognizing the usefulness of the specification of functions and notions to syllabus construction as "a very useful piece of information" (Brumfit 1980: 119), states that such statement can be worked out with considerable sophistication, but

they are only the beginning of the process of syllabus organization. Until the needs specified can be translated from a chick-list of objectives into a 'system', decisions will still have to be made about sequencing and grading with reference to what we know about language learners' processes of thought. We should also recognize that no inventory of language items can itself capture the essence of communication, organize and systematize life activities. However, well it may describe the system being used as a means of communication.

Grammatical features are part of a system, and it is the system which is being learnt, though not explicitly. "We have no comparable understanding of the system of communicative functions" complains Brumfit (abid). We are asking either that the whole of normal human relationship should be systemized and related to language, or that we should base our syllabus on a mere list of subjectively chosen, unrelated items. Neither of these seems to be a very sensible proposal.

According to Brumfit (1980), to base a syllabus on a genuine system like the grammatical system, and to use a list of basic functions simply as a chick list, to be integrated methodologically into the practical working out of the syllabus in teaching, would seem to be a very sensible approach to take.

Allwright endorses Brumfit's views when he says that the curriculum content should be organized linguistically and it should also include content specified in communicative terms. The most likely relationship between the two would be for the items of the language to be taught as language items, and then related, in communicative terms to their appropriate uses. It would be safer, Allwright argues to try to integrate standard (perhaps linguistic) and communicative descriptions as far as possible.

Widdowson and Brumfit (1981:202) argue that sentences are units of linguistic analysis and not of natural language use. They may be made manifest through structures, and performed in the sense that they are given a physical embodiment in the classroom. They are projections of abstract categories. They are not utterances. In natural language, language is needed to extend situational information; the meaning of the utterance has to be inferred by reference to situational factors which complement the information it expresses.

> "Sentences signal their own meaning because they are units of analysis; utterances do not because they are units of behaviour and to depend on human agency to derive meaning from them. And it is precisely this ability to derive meaning by extension that constitutes the communicative use of language."
> (Widdowson and Brumfit 1981: 202)

We have shifted from the sentence to the utterance as the basic element in the syllabus. Learners need to use the foreign language to express meanings and perform social activities, and therefore the syllabus should reflect not a classification of the system of the language, but a classification of language meaning or notions, and language uses, or functions. Hence there has been a search for generalizations about such 'notions' and 'functions'. But a functional syllabus is a non-generative one. One of the problems with a non–generative basis for syllabus design is that it is difficult to determine criteria for content.

Widdowson and Brumfit (1981) suggest one possibility that is to reject the syllabus mode (communicative syllabus) altogether but to retain the communicative objective.

> "It could be argued that most of the problems that communicative syllabuses address themselves can be solved methodologically by a greater emphasis on fluency rather than accuracy activities… It is probably preferable to evolve from methodology and to then affect syllabus design rather than to have it imposed as a revolutionary edict from above." (Widdowson and Brumfit 1981: 207-208)

2.4.5. Summary

Through what is discussed above, there are important points which are relevant to the purpose of this study regarding the designing of a syllabus. These points are as follows:

1. A syllabus is partly an administrative instrument, partly a guide to the teacher and partly a statement of an approach. It is an overall plan for the learning process. It should give us information about what to teach and how to teach.

2. A curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for learners both in and out of the class.

3. Communicative syllabuses are classified as:

   (i)   A 'situational' or 'contextual' syllabus

   (ii)   A 'topical' or 'thematic' syllabus

   (iii)   A 'notional'/functional syllabus.

4. A course designer requires to undertake the following:

   (i)   A specification of the learner's needs

   (ii)   A check-list of objectives for the course

   (iii)   A linguistic description of learning/teaching items

   (iv)   The use of linguistic forms to express communicative functions

   (v)   Framing objectives of language teaching terms.

The dissatisfaction with the structural approach and its rigorous puritanical discipline, we take refuge in the communicative approach and communicative syllabuses. Communicative functions and notions are as large as life and although they are almost impossible to systematize them in our Yemeni context, but this difficulty in designing a communicative syllabus should not distract us from the primary goal of a language.

Communication approach attempts to focus at the level of methodology, syllabus construction and materials production.

2.5. Communicative Teaching Materials

The ELT market is flooded with materials claiming to be either 'communicative' or 'authentic' or both. A brief survey of these 'communicative teaching materials', it is hoped, brings to light their distinctive character in comparison with courses that are labelled 'structural/grammatical'. Most generally, every syllabus/teaching materials/course book is based on an approach to teaching and learning; and communicative teaching and learning; and communicative teaching materials, by definition, out to be based on or associated with the widespread, current approach to ELT, viz. 'Communicative Approach'.

2.5.1. Communicative vs. Structural Materials

Communicative teaching materials present us with a convenient and often attractively packaged inventory of functions, notions and topics.

"Because the communicative approach is syllabus–centred, it is still accompanied by the idea of getting through a certain inventory of things to be learned (Roberts 1982: 125). These notions and functions are usually related to the needs of learner desiring to learn English with a purpose. Before the materials are prepared, materials producers make it a point to analyse learner requirements and specify their needs to focus on the purposive use of language. Widdowson (1979: 252) argues that "the specifications of learner needs should not, then (or so it seems to me) determine methodology". The communicative approach, dubbed a 'syllabus–centred approach', appears to be isolated, unlike structural approach, from methodology so far as

teaching material is concerned. "It does not provide us with a route but it points us in the right direction. It suggests an approach (Abid.)

The focus of communicative teaching materials is on communication–oral as well as written, and 'fluency' is central to the concerns of the materials writer as 'accuracy' is. It can be speculated that the traditional situational courses could be used to 'communicate effectively' depending on the way in which they were handled by the teacher. In other words, it is not "a new language which is being presented, but the same language in different packaging" (Roberts 1982: 127). The course materials are functionally and thematically organized, though grammar is typically introduced at the level of the linguistic exponents of functions. Supporters of structural approach argue that grammatical/structural syllabus presents a system, provides the learner with a capacity to learn, which is expected to be acquired or captured by the learners. On the contrary, there appears to be no evidence of a 'system' in communicative course books. Roberts offers perceptive comments on this.

> "Rich as the materials are in many respects, there is less evidence of a system to be learned than in the course book of a decade ago (meaning structural syllabuses), and the possibilities for self – access often seem very restricted." (Roberts 1982:129).

Communicative syllabuses and textbooks are far more motivating and attention – capturing than structural ones, for they take into account learners' needs, aspirations and concentrate more on the learner and his requirements than on structures and patterns divorced from practical utility and immediate relevance. Most of the communicative textbooks that will be mentioned below are exclusively meant for adult learners and immigrants.

Of all the communicative materials "Starting Points" (Scott, Roger & Arnold 1978) is "a classical example of communicatively organized EFL materials" (Roberts 1982: 126). Other materials include *Kernel One* (O'nell 1979), English for Life –

People and Places (Cook1980), Functional English (White 1979) and Communicate 2 (Morrow and Johnson (1980). (Based on Johnson, K. 1982).

2.5.2. Summary

1. The focus on communicative teaching material is both in 'accuracy' and 'fluency' but fluency receive greater attention which is cultivated by means of 'role-play. 'simulations', etc.

2. Grammar is not dealt with explicitly. Instead, it is introduced under functional headings like 'offering things', 'expressing dislike', etc. Grammar is often based on text and presented in situations and topics and never in isolation. Though, grammar teaching is essentially part of communicative teaching material. It is invariably situational and contextual so that the focus should be on 'communication', on the use of language in real-life situations rather than on grammatical principles presented out of context.

3. Language 'forms' and 'functions' are not introduced in grammatical or linguistic terms but in terms of communicative use, viz. 'describing people', asking about things etc. Thus, the course material is functionally and thematically organized.

4. Most communicative materials lay emphasis on language activation that to make optimal use of the language the learner has already learnt by providing exercises, situations and such topics that require language use.

5. There is a great emphasis on listening and speaking skills.

6. The courses are based on communicative needs of the students.

7. There is no evidence of systematic grading as is found in grammatical courses.

2.6. Communicative Methodology

After discussing the sections that concern the communicative approach to language teaching which include the principles of communicative approach, the concept of basic communicative skills, the communicative syllabus design and communicative teaching materials, we shall focus here on the communicative methodology and the principles that it offers and the guidelines, procedures and techniques that it recommends to the teachers to teach in a communicative way.

2.6.1. Defining Methodology

> "Methodology is concerned with it seems to us, how what has to be taught is best learnt, the process by which people learnt." (Prabhu 1980:27).

To achieve at methodology, we have to get the "process" of language learning. A possible framework for discussing methodological matters was proposed in Anthony's (1972) terminological distinction between "approach", "method" and "technique". An 'approach' is defined as 'a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language and the nature of language teaching and learning" (abid.) while a 'method' is defined as 'an overall plan for the older presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected 'approach' and is essentially procedural" (abid.). It looks reasonable that a syllabus should be based on an approach and should provide input at the level of method. A 'technique' is implementation that which usually takes place in a classroom.

> "It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method and therefore, a harmony with an approach as well." (abid.)

2.6.2. Changes in Methodology

According to Brumfit (1980: 12) changes in methodology of ELT usually come from two main sources. They are:

(1) Changes in our attitude to language teaching (via linguistics, socio-linguistics and psycholinguistics) and

(2) Changes in the social demands made on language teaching as a result of changes in the economic and political roles of English in the world.

In recent years, language teachers/applied linguists have drawn insights from the discipline like social psychology, philosophy, anthropology and traditional linguistics which brought about a change in their attitude to language teaching. The focus of teaching changed from 'grammatical competence' to 'communicative competence', from 'usage' to 'use', from 'structure' to 'meaningful communication'. Thus, communicative approach which is declared to eclectic in practice has drawn ideas from the allied disciplines and introduced major changes in methodology, syllabus design, teacher training, testing and evaluating, etc.

2.6.3. Communicative Methodology

The methodology of functional/notional/communicative curriculum evolves out of many of the language learning principles which have developed during the recent past.   It may not be out of place to discuss how the audio lingual method, the precursor of communicative methodology, differs from functional/notional methodology. Finnochiaro and Brumfit (1983: 91) list these differences as follows:

Audio–Lingual	Function–notional
1. Form and structure is paramount.	1. Meaning is paramount.
2. Structure-based dialogues memorized.	2. Dialogues centre around communicative functions and not memorized normally.
3. Language items are not necessarily contextualized.	3. Contextualization is a basic premise
4. Language learning is learning structures, sound, or words.	4. Language learning is learning to communicate.
5. Grammatical explanation is avoided.	5. Any device which helps the learner is accepted.
6. The use of student's native language is forbidden.	6. Judicious use of native language is accepted.
7. Linguistic system is the desire goal.	7. Communicative competence is the desired goal.
8. Accuracy in terms of formal correctness is a primarily goal.	8. Fluent and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context.
9. Translation is forbidden at early levels.	9. Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.
10. The teacher controls learners and learning	10. Teachers help learning in any way that motivates them to work with the language

Two major differences between the two methodologies emerge from the above list. The first is that the claims of functional/notional methodology are more modest theoretically than audio-lingual claims communicative methodology allows greater initiative not only to the teacher but also to the student.

So far as traditional classroom procedure (viz. presentation, drilling and practice) are concerned, they will make available to learners the items with which they must conduct linguistic negotiation, but these procedures are concerned primarily with 'availability', not with 'learning'. Finnochaiaro and Brumfit (1983:97) distinguish communicative methodology from traditional methodology and state:

> "We would not consider that a student has learned an item unless it can be used appropriately without conscious thought, and we all know that presentation, drilling and practice do not lead us to that happy position. What these procedures are intended to do is to enable students to store the items so that they are available for future use. Until what is stored has become activated by use we cannot say that it has been fully learned. 'Natural' language activity in the classroom provides the opportunity for such activation and it must by definition be unpredictable linguistically."

Communicative methodology believes that too much concern for accuracy will only impede fluency. The communicative classroom provides plenty of fluency activities to the learner. While they are engaged in fluency activities they would negotiate with language and adjust and improvise with the limited language that they know, and in so doing, they will both internalize and extend their understanding of the linguistic systems.

Improvisational role-play, simulation activities and language games will involve elements of oral fluency. In these activities, the criterion of fluency will be learners' relationship with the language. If they are operating in the same ways as they would with their own language, without obviously thinking about formal features, then it is a fluency activity. Thus, exercises in listening, speaking reading or writing can be either

accuracy exercises, in which formal features are being concentrated on, or fluency

exercises when the activity is natural.

> "All that is needed in communicative methodology is a teacher willing to commit a substantial proportion of time (anything up to two thirds of class time) to such activities." (Finnochiaro & Brumfit 1983: 98)

2.6.3.1. Principles of Communicative Methodology

Morrow (1981) presents a comprehensive picture of communicative

methodology. His emphasis is on the appropriate use of language 'forms' that help in

practising communication. He (1981: 60-65) offers five major principles that guide

and govern communicative methodology which are summarized as follows:

> (1) *"Know what you are doing"*
> The starting point of every lesson should be an operation of some kind which the student might actually want to perform in the foreign language. "Every lesson should end with the learner being able to see clearly that he can do something which he could not do at the beginning – and that the 'something' should be communicatively useful (abid).
> (2) *"The whole is more than the sum of the parts"*
> One of the most significant features of communicative is that it is a dynamic and developing phenomenon. It is possible to identify various formal features of the way language is used communicatively and these can be studied individually. "But the ability to handle these elements in isolation is no indication of the ability to communicate. What is needed is the ability to deal with strings of sentences and ideas and in the oral modes (speaking and listening) these strings must be processed in 'real' time" (abid.). The whole process must be instantaneous. It is the ability to work in the context of the whole that is of primary significance of produce learning. A communicative method operates with stretches of language above the sentence level. It operates with real language in real situation.
> (3) *"The processes are as important as the forms"*
> "A method which aims to develop the ability of students to communicate in a foreign language will aim to replicate as far as possible the processes of communication so that the practice of the forms of the target language can take place with a communicative framework" (abid.).
> (4) *"To learn it, do it"*
> What happens in the classroom must involve the learner and must be judged in terms of its effects on him. The teacher can help, advise and teach but it is the learner who has to learn.
> (5) *"Mistakes are not always a mistake"*
> Trivial mistakes of grammar or pronunciation do not matter as long as the student gets his message across. A teacher adopting a totally communicative stance must accept that grammatical and phonological mistakes will hammer communication; but the learners should not be criticized for their mistakes, for, it will destroy their confidence in their ability to use the language. Learners are bound to commit mistakes and it is through trial and error that they would master the linguistic system of the target language.

2.6.4. Communicative Procedures and Techniques

A fundamental– notional curriculum or a communicative approach recommends the following techniques discussed by Finnochiaro and Brumfit (1983):

1. Visual materials which will lend interest to teaching such as 'flannel boards', 'pocket charts', 'vocabulary wheels' and 'flannel – backed pictures' which can be moved from place to place are very effective.

2. Good questioning techniques to ensure the participation of every student.

3. Sustaining motivation by giving the students a feeling of achievement and success.

4. Information Gap Techniques (1983:93) a crucial characteristic of communicative language teaching is that it focuses attention on the ability to understand and convey information content. One reason why the information gap is useful for the teaching of speaking is that it creates a condition of 'unexpectedness'. If student 2 does not knows in advance what student 1 will say to him, the former cannot work out his reply in advance; he is forced to formulate his responses quickly, and thereby develops 'fluency'. Information gap principle permits genuine information flow in the classroom, and focuses on whether the students succeed in 'getting their message across'.

5. The jigsaw principle (Johnson 1981: 98):

   This principle streamlines the operation of receiving and producing the message by allowing all the students to be both 'producers' and 'receivers'. Thus, we give student 1 to write for student 2 while student 2 writes for student 1.   Thus they exchange the information to complete the jigsaw.

6. The Task dependency principle (Johnson 1981: 99): To exemplify this principle, we can imagine that we wish to practice 'asking for' and 'giving information about train times'. In order to do this we create an 'information gap' drill in which student 1 has some train times which student 2 must ask for. Part of student 2's task is a listening comprehension one, and we can only be sure he will undertake it if we ask him to utilize the information he is given in some way. Without this requirement the danger is that he will not listen. He will have no motivation for doing so.

Requiring the student to utilize the information obtained in the course of an exercise is the task 'dependency principle'. According to it, whenever possible a task 2 which can only be done if a task 1 has been successfully completed.

Activity sequences are attractive because they breed task dependencies. Through them we are able to develop task III to depend on task II, Task IV dependent on task III and so on.

2.6.5. Teacher Preparation

It may be desirable to review briefly some of the basic responsibilities of the language teacher in relation to functional/ notional teaching. Finnochiaro and Brumfit (1983:98-101) list a few responsibilities of the teacher which will prepare him to handle the student successfully.

1. To know the interests of the students; their linguistic cultural needs; their learning styles, their social and vocational aspirations.

2. To present the communicative functions, the structures and cultural insights in appropriate realistic situation which would not only clarify their meaning but would also exemplify the dimensions of human experience in which they are generally used.

3. To ascertain at what points on the continuum of each of the communication skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and communication interaction) in the target language the students are if they are not beginners.

4. To offer either controlled or guided activities leading to fluency, accuracy, and habit formation and those more creative tasks in which students can make and are encouraged to make free choices.

5. To prepare realistic activities which have some relevance to the students' everyday life and communication need and which use the learners' school and probable home and community experiences as a starting or 'jumping – off' point for motivating the study of a conversation, a reading passage or whatever.

6. Teacher should be aware of cognates that may exist between words or expressions in the students' native tongue and in the target language. The knowledge of contrastive analysis of the two languages – the target language and the mother tongue – will enable the teacher to teach better.

7. It is important that students be helped to feel that culture is generally the result of geographical factors and of historical events, that all people have culture and that it is 'different from' does not mean 'better than'. To develop in learners an appreciation of cultural pluralism is one of the many, worthy goals of the communicative curriculum.

8. Workshops, lectures and discussions can help trainee teachers to acquire the intellectual support necessary for a successful start in language teaching.

9. Being a teacher is not simply using a new set of skills, but an expression of our most characteristic human capacities intellectual, imaginative, moral and emotional.

10. Good teaching requires understanding of much outside teaching, but on an initial training program, it is essential that the relationship between external knowledge and skilled teaching is made as explicit as possible.

11. The training course should not be about practical advice, for it is difficult to generalize from specific hints; nor should it be entirely a description of principles, for, inexperienced teachers cannot be expected to see the significance of a principle until they have felt it through experience in a classroom. It should be about and exemplify in its structure and teaching mode, the relationship between principles and practice. Only out of such a training will teachers emerge who are principled in this practice and practical in their principles.

12. In service training is a way of introducing teachers to the latest fashion and implicitly of condemning their earlier practice. The teaching profession needs people who are constantly examining their work and experimenting with small scale improvements, people who are thinking about their own and their colleagues, practice and publicly discussing the results of their thinking. (Brumfit 1983).

2.6.6. Summary

1. Communicative methodology is eclectic in practice. The teacher can borrow/exploit any technique including 'drill pronunciation', 'explaining grammar rules', 'explaining idioms' etc. that serve his purpose. The real purpose of teaching is to develop communicative competence.

2. There are five basic principles of communicative methodology. They are:

   (i) 'Know what you are doing' – precision and clarity at the level of teaching and learning.

(ii) 'The whole is more than the sum of the parts' – a communicative method operates with the stretches of language above the sentence level in real situations. The elements of language viz., vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar etc. are not dealt in isolation.

(iii) 'The processes are as important as the forms' – 'forms' of language are taught and learnt through real-life processes of communication.

(iv) 'To learn it, do it' – it is the learner who will have to ultimately learn. Therefore, the learner should be involved in learning.

(v) 'Mistakes are not always a mistake'. Trivial mistakes of grammar do not matter so long as they do not hamper communication.

4. Procedures/techniques

   (a) Visual materials

   (b) Good questioning techniques to ensure participation

   (c) Information gap technique

   (d) The jigsaw principle

   (e) The task dependency principle

   (f) Workshops, lectures and discussion

   (g) Tutorials

   (h) Sustaining motivating by giving students a feeling of achievement

   (i) Elicitation of response from the students

   (j) Role-playing

   (k) Practice in pairs

   (l) Play-games etc.

5. Teachers' responsibilities:

   (a) To know the interest, needs, learning styles of students

(b) To present communicative functions in realistic situations

(c) To know the 'cognates' that exist between words and expressions in the students' native tongue and in the target language

(d) To develop in learners and appreciation of cultural pluralism

(e) Good teaching requires understanding of much outside teaching.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not Yemeni students would improve English language skills better using the communicative approach to language teaching than the traditional approaches such as, grammar-translation method, audio-lingual approach etc. This topic was chosen for research because there is a gap in research scholarship concerning how cultural norms in the Yemeni classroom might affect language acquisition, especially when the instructor attempts to use a communicative approach to language teaching.

According to this approach, when students are placed in language environment in which they are encouraged to apply the target language to satisfy personal needs or desires, their language skills will be developed. To encourage this development, the instructor should strive to make the classroom a comfortable environment, as free as possible from anxiety, as anxiety impedes the acquisition process.

The researcher predicts that the students would feel comfortable in classes taught by communicative approach. They would have less difficulty developing their English skills, as the teaching method would be congruent with their cultural norms.

This chapter is considered as a fundamental part of this thesis. It has presented a methodology for the research. This descriptive research design examines the syllabus design for teaching the English language skills. In this chapter, I present the participants, the data collection and data analysis procedures.

This study explored the syllabuses, approaches, materials, the practices, reflections, and recommendations of the participants both teachers and students

regarding their experience with the teaching and learning of English language skills in Yemeni universities. In order to accomplish these goals, a descriptive study method was utilized to explore the phenomena in question.

The qualitative research tradition offers many strategies of data collection: conducting questionnaires, interview and class-observations, and many kinds of data analysis most suitable for my purpose and for my preference as a researcher.

3.2. Research site and participants

The site for this study was Faculties of Education, Arts and Languages in Sana'a University, and Faculties of Education and Arts in Thamar University.

The number of the respondents for both teachers and students who actually responded the questionnaires in both Universities Sana'a and Thamar is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Research site and participants

Name of the University		Number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire	Number of students who responded to the questionnaire
i)		Sana'a University	
	Faculty of Education	12	49
	Faculty of Languages	7	24
	Faculty of Arts	6	4
ii)		Thamar University	
	Faculty of Education	2	29
	Faculty of Arts	3	61
	Total Number	30	167

3.3. Collecting Data

The primary data for this study was administering questionnaires and interviews for both English students and teachers at both Sana'a and Thamar Universities. The secondary data includes classroom observation. Questionnaires and interviews played a big role in providing this study with quantitative and qualitative information.

3.3.1. Questionnaires:

In order to explore the reality of teaching English language skills in Yemeni Universities, I decided to administer two questionnaires, one for the instructors and another one for the fourth level students. The questionnaires were prepared to be distributed in two Yemeni Universities: Sana'a University, particularly at Faculties of Education, Arts and Languages and Thamar University, at Faculties of Arts and Education.

By the help of the English departments at each college, I met the students in their classes, distributed the questionnaires, explained its purposes and responded to the students inquiries.

Heads of the departments were very cooperative in distributing the teachers' questionnaire to the lecturers and instructors at the Faculties mentioned above. At Faculties of Education and Languages in Sana'a University, I was discussing from time to time, students' questionnaire with the students individually and in groups according to their request, that is for making the questions of the questionnaire very clear and clarifying its importance for this study.

3.3.2. Interviews

In conducting the interviews, I followed the important point made by Patton (1990) below that the purpose of interviewing is to understand and "enter into" the perspective of the person being interviewed.

> "The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. The purpose of interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of the observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what gives on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective".
> (Patton 1990: 278)

I had one to two interviews with some participants individually and in groups for both instructors and students. The individual and group dialogues for the teachers were held at their offices at Faculties of Education and Languages in Sana'a University and Faculty of arts in Thamar University. The group dialogue/ interview for the students were held in their classrooms, and individual dialogue interview according to my request within the faculties' areas.

The lecturers' group at Faculty of Education, Sana'a University was considered of eleven (11) participants, most of them were lecturers of the English language skills in different levels. The other lecturers and instructors were interviewed individually.

Each interview lasted one to three hours. The length of each interview depended on the participants' expression, the rapport built between the participants and me, the shared knowledge between the participants and me and the participants' schedule. Interviews took place at various times in order to fit in best with the participants' schedules. All interviews were transcribed.

Knowing that some of the participants tended to be busy, I gave them a copy of the interview questions and they provided me with their perspectives as a written interview.

3.3.3. Classroom observation

> "Because he (a researcher) sees and hears the people he studied in many institutions of the kind that normally occur for them, rather than just in an isolated and formal interview, he builds an ever-growing fund of impressions, many of them at the subliminal level, which give him an extensive base for the interpretation and analytic use of any particular datum. This wealth of information and impression sensitizes him to subtleties which might pass unnoticed in an interview and forces him to raise continually new and different questions". (Patton 1990: 205)

I joined Faculties of Education and Languages in Sana'a University, as a listener-observer in the academic year 2008-2009. The purpose of the observation was

to see the reality of classroom instruction from the participants' perspective and to generate many questions as possible about the students' participation behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, in order to help in this discussion in the contexts of how they listen, speak, read, and write.

During the class, I wrote field notes about the students' participation in classrooms, kinds of activities assigned and the teachers' method and styles of teaching.

Along with taking notes, I used to sit down with the instructors after classes and discuss with them some issues related to the class and the research subjects. On the other hand, I allotted time to chat with the students after their classes related to their class participation and other issues related to the English language skills' syllabuses, approaches used by their instructors and the materials used in each skill. In addition, I observed the relation between the students themselves and their instructors.

3.4. Data Analysis

This section presents the results from the data analysis designed to explore the real situation of teaching English language skills in Yemeni Universities. The data designed particularly to look for the syllabuses designed for the four English skills: listening, speaking reading and writing; the approaches and materials used; the cadres who implement the teaching of the English language skills; and the focus on the Yemeni EFL students: their needs, interests, abilities, and their motivating factors to learn English.

After the data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation, I came to the next step which is analysing the data collected. Because this study examines the syllabus design for teaching the English language skills in Yemeni Universities, the researcher focused the questions of both questionnaires and

interviews on the important issues related to teaching each skill in English language. These issues for example, the syllabus, the approach used, the material used, the classroom instruction, and the ways and methods of assessing and evaluating students work and progress in each skill.

Depending on that, the researcher began with analysing the teachers' views on each question/subject; looking at the reasons beyond that; then concluding the data through the teachers' views and the discussion followed each question. After making the conclusions, the researcher was very desirous to provide suggestions to resolve the recent problems associated with the teaching and learning English.

The same is used to analyse the teachers' and the students' questionnaires. Because there were questions on all the English language skills, the same questions were given to both teachers and students. The researcher, in this case, analyses the teachers' views first, and then the students' views on the same question. After that, the researcher made a comparison between the teachers' and the students' views and then conclude the discussion and look for the reasons beyond the contradiction between the views. Finally, the researcher concluded the discussion and proposed suitable suggestions that are convenient to the Yemeni English context.

All the details and the results of the research are examined in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. The chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 present an analysis of the data obtained mainly through responses to questionnaires, interviews class observation, and the conclusions drawn from it about students' entry level, their needs, syllabuses, teaching approaches, materials, and the English language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING

4.1. Introduction

Researchers frequently note the importance of listening comprehension by observing that infants are capable of responding to a significant amount of language long before they produce speech. Once the child is "ready" to speak, progress is nothing short of astounding, given the complexity of language. Lately, moreover, scholars have begun to apprehend the critical role listening plays in second language acquisition and learning. As a result, today's second language acquisition researchers and second language classroom teachers are endeavouring to (a) understand the causative role that participatory and non-participatory listening plays: in second language acquisition; (b) determine the role listening comprehension skill development plays or should play in the second language curriculum, especially in the beginning stages of learning; (c) pinpoint the factors inside and outside the head that enhance or suppress comprehension of second language input; (d) identify the components of listening and how they are dynamically interrelated in listening comprehension; and (e) deduce specific instructional tasks and classroom activities that enhance listening skill development for second language learners (Dunkel 1991:64).

Though the assessment of the role of listening comprehension in second language learning begins on a general level, the emphasis in this project is on learning in a classroom setting. Obviously, any language that one has already learned to some extent, or perhaps even mastered, can be presumed to influence the degree of listening comprehension in a new language being studied. In learning a second language, just as in learning the first language; the learner must gain entry into a new form and/or

meaning system. The emphasis, then, is on form and meaning which are customarily attended to as inseparable units in real language use. Although the learner actually has a first language available for expression of meaning and thus can obtain help in breaking the code through translation, the proper interpretation of any language form is subject to complex contextual constraints. These constraints are not merely extra linguistic and referential but also linguistic and systemic. Ideally, second language learning should echo the original language learning experience, in which meaning is so uniquely grounded in extra linguistic contexts that it is possible to construct the "correct" meaning from phonic sequences and thus avoid the need for translation (Byrnes 1984:317).

Even though Krashen's views are now considered controversial (Gregg, 1984; Faerch & Kasper 1986; Sharwood Smith 1986; White 1987; Gass 1988; Ellis 1990), there are many aspects of Krashen's model of second language acquisition that can be used to explain what factors influence listening comprehension. According to Krashen et al. (1984), students learn language from comprehensible input and clearly a massive amount of such input is necessary to reach the ultimately desired level of comprehension. The word "massive" stresses that learners must have much more experience with the second language than has been customarily thought Krashen's suggestion that the learning situation should provide input that is just one step beyond the listener's processing capabilities seems plausible. More generally, for input to become comprehended intake, the meanings invited by the input must be firmly supported by a comprehensible context. Such comprehensibility arises from the here and now of the physical environment or from an abstract and temporally experienced context that the listener can recreate on the basis of broad cognitive skills or a well-developed knowledge of the world.

4.1.1. Definition of Listening Comprehension

Listening is the ability to identify and understand what the others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning (Howatt and Dakin 1974, cited in Corder and Allen 1974). An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously. Listening places a far greater load on the memory because the listeners cannot go back to the previous texts in order to check or revise comprehension. In listening, we do not have the option of focusing our attention on something aside from the main argument of the text, and then returning to it later, as one does it in reading. With our attention focused on the spoken text, there is no time or mental capacity for other conscious operations. What happens, of course, is that in real situations, our attention wanders on and off the text, or we listen with less concentration.

According to Rivers (1968), there are two basic levels while learning to listen, they are the level of recognition and the level of selection. When the learners begin to hear a second language, they hear only meaningless sounds; but when a person is continuously exposed to a language, he/she may begin to recognize elements and patterns of the phonological, syntactic ad semantic codes of the language automatically. Rivers (1968:51) further suggests four stages for teaching the listening skill in the elementary, intermediate and advanced levels of language learning. They are: (a) identification (b) identification and selection without retention; (c) identification and guided selection with short–term retention; and finally, (d) identification, selection and long term retention. Identification is also important in reading skills and so, through listening activities, the learners can improve their ability in word recognition.

Since the learners may find it difficult to absorb the input given to them, it would be more appropriate if the input were given in stages. The learners would improve their reading skill if they were given exposure in identification of words. As a result of training in identification of words with short-term retention, the learners would be able to improve reading comprehension. Identification, selection and long-term retention would help the learners to remember the words that they have learnt.

Listening comprehension precedes production in language learning and there can be no production unless linguistic input was provided and become comprehensible intake for a listener (Byrnes 1984). Steil, Barker, and Watson (1983) defined listening in terms of four related activities: 1) sensing, 2) interpreting, 3) evaluating, and 4) responding. Sensing refers to taking in messages verbally and nonverbally. Interpreting refers to the process of understanding. Evaluating involves sorting fact from opinion and agreeing or disagreeing with the speaker. Responding refers to the use of verbal and nonverbal cues in reaction to a message. Steill, Barker, and Watson (1983:36) found this last activity, responding, to be particularly important in determining "whether the person in the role of speaker, has been successful in getting his or her point across" since the other three processes/activities cannot be directly observed. According to Richards (1983), studies indicate that listeners take in raw speech and hold an image of it in short-term memory. They then try to organize that image into its constituents, that is, their content and their functions or purposes. These constituents are then grouped together to form a coherent message, which is held in long-term memory as a reconstructed meaning rather than in its original verbatim form. In addition to storing the meaning of the message (its content), listeners also try to determine the speaker's intentions when delivering the message. This determination requires that the listeners call upon their knowledge of the

situation, the participants involved, and their likely goals and purposes. This interaction view of meaning stresses the role of inference in comprehension. The listener's interpretation of the message constitutes the creative dimension of the listening process (Clark & Clark 1977).

Richards (1983:223) proposed a tentative model of the listening process involving the following steps:

1. The type of interaction act or speech event is determined (e. g. a lecture, a speech, a conversation, a debate).
2. Scripts (schemata) relevant to the particular situation are constructed from long-term memory.
3. The goals of the speaker are inferred through references to the actual situational context as well as to the script(s).
4. A literal meaning is determined for the utterance.
5. An intended meaning is assigned to the message.
6. This information is sustained and acted upon, and the actual form of the original message is deleted.

Listeners must deal with the stream of speech exactly as it reaches them. The fleeting nature of oral input often makes comprehension and verbal learning difficult. The ability to segment and analyse speech accurately and automatically into appropriate morphemic and syntactic units is essential when listening to spoken language. To illustrate the importance of accurate and automatic segmentation of what we hear into appropriate units, one need only recall how difficult it is to understand a spoken foreign language. So much attention is taken up in trying to identify the words and phrases that the message and meaning get lost. The reason for the loss of the message when we cannot segment automatically is that the amount of attention an individual can give to information processing at any moment is limited. For listening comprehension to occur, numerous cognitive tasks must take place in a brief period of time, and they all require attention. During the listening process, the activities that require attention include segmenting the speech stream into morphemic and syntactic

units, holding idea units in memory; identifying anaphoric terms, and integrating information from the speaker with knowledge stored in the memory of the listener (Samuels 1987:183).

Unfortunately for second/foreign language learners, the process of comprehension can be interrupted just as it begins. Insufficient language ability may make the identification of meaningful units and transfer to short-term memory as an impossibility. The most frequent complaint among students when they tackle a challenging second/foreign language listening task is that, the stream of speech begins and ends before they can capture a single recognizable unit. If the students cannot perceive and identify the acoustic signal, they are left with the reeling that the meaning of whatever utterance whizzed by was too rapid or unintelligible. Second language learners frequently find themselves immersed in an environment in which they are certain about very little they hear and in which they must often rely on partial information guesswork, and luck in their attempts at interaction (Long 1990:75).

Even when students comprehend the material by capturing specific words and phrases, they may not be aware of their commonness or contiguity requirements. We can assume, then, that they will not be able to process known items quickly or anticipate common combinations, patterns, and routines. Because they will be unable to process these expressions efficiently, they may experience a processing overload and thus fail in their attempt at comprehension. One way in which overload can be avoided is to reduce artificially the level of comprehension difficulty by narrowing the scope of the L2 listening task. In other words, instead of having students listen with the goal of global understanding, teachers can direct students' attention to one or two manageable bits of new information within the piece (Weissenrieder 1987:18-27).

Perceiving individual words and phrases is not tantamount to total comprehension, but such perception does help the student break into the stream of nonsense and to assemble an intelligible meaningful chunk. Studies in LI speech perception (Garnes & Bond 1977:231) have suggested that listeners should "find a word" or "find a phrase" from which they can begin to anticipate what is in store or reconstruct what has passed. Unfortunately for learners of a second/foreign language, faulty linguistic ability requires that anticipation and reconstruction strategies rely on knowledge other than the language alone. This reliance on prior world knowledge provides an ancillary tool to learners' comprehension. Once isolated words and phrases are perceived, they can be used as a springboard to meaning. Teachers, therefore, can take advantage of the learners' knowledge of the world and encourage the learners to guess at possible associations and to anticipate related themes.

As noted, listening comprehension is viewed theoretically as an active process in which individuals focus on selected aspects of aural input, construct meaning from passages, and relate what they hear to existing knowledge (O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper 1989:418). When this process is applied to the comprehension of a foreign language, foreign language learners find it difficult to filter out less important input items and have problems identifying key input. The reason for this difficulty is that they have imperfect control of the linguistic code, and often they just give up when the flow of incoming speech is too rapid. Second language learners, therefore, use strategies in different phases of comprehension as a response to specific processing problems. One of the most important strategies appears to be that of relating the new information grasped in the L2 listening task to the listeners prior' or background knowledge. This prior knowledge has been stored in memory and forms the basis for expectations or predictions about the interpretation of the discourse. Appropriate prior

knowledge might provide the listeners with the frames of reference into which they can fit the bits and pieces of what they are trying to comprehend (Long 1989:32).

Before we begin discussing the chapter of the skill of listening and the other chapters of the skills of speaking, reading and writing in Yemeni Universities, let us have an overview on the determination of the entry level competence of students of English at Faculties of Education, Languages, and Arts in Yemeni Universities.

4.2. The Determination of the Entry Level Competence of the Students of English in Yemeni Universities

This section seeks to establish the entry level competence of the learners. However, to confirm the estimated entry level, the following means were used:

1. A questionnaire for teachers.

2. A questionnaire for students.

3. Interviews with both instructors and students

4.2.1. The teachers' views on the students' entry level competence

We shall first discuss the findings on students' entry level competence from the teachers' questionnaire. This questionnaire was given to thirty teachers of English from Faculties of Education, Arts and Languages in both Sana'a and Thamar Universities. Question-1 of the teachers' questionnaire (see Appendix A) was given for determining the entry level competence of students of the above mentioned Faculties in terms of the marks obtained in English by an average student in university entrance exam.

The teachers' responses show that the majority of the students obtain between 70-90 marks in English (i.e. just the percentage required for passing in English in the University entrance exam. Some teachers pointed out that, admitting students is randomly taken because some students are illegally admitted. Teachers indicated that

these students have got less than 70% when the actual average entry level requirement is 70%.

4.2.2. Information gathered from students

A questionnaire was given to the fourth level students at Colleges of Education, Languages and Arts in Sana'a University and Colleges of Arts and Education in Thamar University. Question 1 of the students' questionnaire (See Appendix B) required each respondent to state the number of marks he/she obtained in English in the university entrance exam. Among 167 students, there were 112 who answered the question and the responses are shown in table (3) below.

Table 3: Students' marks in the university entrance exam

Marks out of 100	Number of students (out of 112)	%
64	7	6.25
65	4	3.57
70	6	5.36
72	8	7.14
74	7	6.25
75	9	8.04
76	3	2.68
77	4	3.57
78	10	8.93
80	13	11.61
81	3	2.68
87	8	7.14
90	11	9.82
92	7	6.25
93	4	3.57
94	6	5.36
96	2	1.79

It is evident from the above data that the students' entry level is low and their performance in different language skills is unsatisfactory.

This study reveals that the general reasons for the Yemeni students' unsatisfactory level in English language skills are as follows:

1. The basic and primary cause of unsatisfactory level in English language skills abilities is that the entry level competence of some students admitted to bachelor degree in Arts, Education and Languages is much below the required achievement level.

2. As the medium of instruction is Arabic in schools, students have hardly any exposure to English outside the English class. Responses of all the thirty teachers to question 2 (see Appendix A) confirm this view. Their lack of exposure to English is due to the fact that English is hardly ever spoken in the families or in the students' social environment.

Regarding the students' responses to question 2 (See Appendix B) that relates to the same question for their teachers indicates that 50% of the students respond that their exposure outside the classroom is insufficient to develop English proficiency. 31.25% of the students recommend that they are hardly exposed to English at all. 3.57% out of 112 students recommended that they are exposed to English sufficiently out of their classrooms. About 27.18% of the students did not answer the question.

3. The third cause is students' weak motivation to learn English. This became very clear through the teachers' view on question 3 (see Appendix A). The responses selected are shown in Table (4) below:

Table 4: Students' motivation to learn English

Students are	Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the responses (out of 112)	
	No.	%	No.	%
- motivated a great deal	14	46.67	78	69.64
- not sufficiently motivated	13	43.33	20	17.86
- hardly at all motivated	1	3.33	5	4.46

As it is shown in Table (4), two of the teachers didn't answer the question. It is evident from the numbers shown in the table that students' motivation to learn

English is not strong. But when we look at the students' responses to question 3 (See Appendix B), which are clear in Table (4) above, the results are different. That means, the majority of the students state that they are really motivated to learn English.

In response to question 4 (see Appendix A) which required ranking of the more important motivating factors, the teachers' responses are shown in Table (5) below:

Table 5: Motivating factors

Motivating factors for learning English	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the response (out of 112)	
	No.	%	No.	%
a) for passing exam	18	60	57	50.89
b) getting a job	23	76.67	63	56.25
c) Communication with others	15	50	30	26.79
d) pursuing higher education	13	43.33	42	37.50
e) social prestige	11	36.67	55	49.11

According to the teachers' responses in Table (5) it seems clear that the teachers ranked "getting a job" as the most important factor motivating students to learn English. "For passing exams" was ranked second, the third place was "communication with others", and "pursuing academic activities" was ranked fourth. The last motivating factor was assigned to "social prestige."

On the other hand, in their responses to Q.4 (See Appendix B), and according to their selection for the motivating factors, students ranked "getting a job" as the first motivating factor to learn English. The second one is "for passing exam," and the third factor is "social prestige." The students selected "pursuing higher education" as the fourth factor and "communication with others" as the last factor for motivating them to learn English.

Through the teachers' and students' responses shown in Table (5), we can conclude that both teachers and students ranked "getting a job" and "for passing exam" as first and second important motivating factors that pushed students to learn

English. The difference was that, the teachers selected "communication with others" as the third factor, while students selected it as the last factor. Instead students selected "social prestige" as the third one and the fourth factor was "pursuing for higher education."

It is clear from the teachers' and students' responses that "communication with others", "social prestige", and "pursuing higher education" do not provide sufficient incentive to students for learning English. This is because students are not necessarily required to communicate in English in college except in official circumstances which call for oral and written communication. To express their needs and interests in speech, students generally use their mother tongue. It cannot be denied that students consider the ability to speak English fluently an asset which will enable them to acquire social prestige. Most Yemeni students feel that the ability to speak English will enable them to participate in conversations in formal social gatherings and to command dignity inside and outside the classroom. This is one of the reasons why the speech course introduced in the English departments at Faculties of Education, Languages and Arts in Yemeni Universities are not received well by students. Thus it is easy to understand why "social prestige" the last important factor motivating Yemeni learners to learn English. "Pursuing academic activities" on the other hand does not provide sufficient motivation for the learning of English because most of Yemeni students are not interested in doing their higher education.

Generally, we can understand why "getting a job" motivating factor among the five factors listed above is assigned the first place that is because a sizable number of students need jobs and wish to be employed.

Therefore, the students' lack of interest in the learning of English and not paying sufficient importance to it, and through the teachers' and students' responses,

in addition to the discussion expressed in this section, we can infer that these problems are because of some possible reasons such as:

i)   Students have not found the English course suitable to their needs in college.

ii) Students do not consider the English teaching program suitable to meet their communicative needs during and after college.

iii) Students have found the courses above their ability level.

iv) Not having made any tangible progress, students consider it futile to put in any further effort.

4.2.3. Summary

From the above analysis and discussion of teachers' and students' responses, it may be concluded that the four basic causes of unsatisfactory performance are poor entry level competence of students, use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools, lack of exposure to English outside the English classroom, poor academic ability and lack of motivation to learn English. The discussion also indicates that if students' need-based courses are introduced, students' motivation is likely to be enhanced.

The four factors listed above make it imperative that syllabus planning, course designing and teaching must be consciously and carefully geared to meet the level and the needs of the learners.

Yemeni Universities often use the scores obtained from redundant tests of language proficiency. By this, students are admitted to the undergraduate level without certain qualitative measures and continue their degree with the same weaknesses they were admitted during the university entrance exam.

Although the English language is a compulsory subject in Yemen and students study English courses for six years, the English proficiency of most Yemeni college students is quite low. Furthermore, in terms of the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – listening and speaking especially appear to be Yemeni EFL student's major weaknesses.

For this reason, the researcher suggests that, the Yemeni students should pass under the standardized tests of language proficiency such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as important criteria in the selection of Yemeni students for admission to undergraduate programs. However, undergraduate students generally do not take standardized tests that purport to test general reasoning skills. Some educators have suggested that Yemeni students may have difficulty because they may not possess the critical thinking skills, due to a lack of training.

Yemeni students may be at a disadvantage in reading and reading critically in English for a number of reasons. First, despite their relatively ability in English, the fact that English is a foreign language for them may limit their ability to speak in English to some degree. Second, the Yemeni educational system is a traditional one. It emphasizes the reproduction of knowledge as opposed to speculation, the conservation of knowledge rather than its extension, and memorization and imitation rather than critical thinking or at least exposure to the native speakers which promotes it, Yemeni students may be able to learn to speak/reason in a manner appropriate for undergraduate programs.

Because the Yemeni educational system is traditional which stresses memorization, not higher order thinking, it is observed that students in Yemeni Universities may not be fully literate in the sense that they have not yet acquired a cognitive dimension of literacy. This dimension involves the ability to organize and

present written communication in a culturally appropriate manner. This may result in 1) an inability to organize written assignment in a linear pattern; 2) an inability to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant information; 3) an inability to adopt a critical way in asking questions; 4) Yemeni students have as much if not more difficulty in analysing the information.

Through his field work, the researcher concludes the following: 1) students found English language proficiency as one of the most serious problem areas; 2) EFL undergraduate students had more problems related to the syllabuses, materials and teachers. What this suggests is that English language proficiency may be a major factor in achieving success for students of English in Yemeni Universities.

4.3. The Nature of Listening Courses in Yemeni Universities

Under normal listening conditions, a word is recognized at that point, starting from the beginning of the word, at which the word in question becomes uniquely distinguishable from all of the other words in the language beginning with the same sound sequence. In that, Marslen-Wilson (1980) points out that, the student then, has not only to learn to understand the forms of the foreign language, the sound segments, the word forms, the sentence structures, but crucially, how they interact with different contexts to constrain the possible meaning. To understand the sound segments, the word forms and sentence structures, the learner should be given language exposure through various sources. The next sub-section discusses the teachers' and students' views on the courses of listening taught in Yemeni Universities.

4.3.1. Teachers' and Students' Views on the Listening Skills Taught in Yemeni Universities

. Before examining the teachers' and students' view on the micro-skills taught and learnt in the Yemeni Universities, let us have an idea about the difference

between macro and micro-skills. To know what course of listening used for teaching listening skill in Yemeni Universities, the teachers' and students' views are important. In the teachers' questionnaire, question 5 (See Appendix A) indicated that listening skills in Yemeni Universities are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers, and is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any deliberate practice. According to the teachers' responses, 60% out of thirty teachers disagree on the question and 40% agree with the question.

By looking at the percentage of the teachers' responses, for both who agree and disagree, we can see the difference in number is not that much. So, those who disagree indicated through their responses to the interview questions 1 and 2 (See Appendix C) that they consider listening as an isolated skill and is considered one of the important skills in the syllabus. Those who agreed with the question, they expressed that, listening skill is really neglected by syllabus makers, course designers and the teachers as well. These 12 teachers who agreed with the question confirmed that the actual teaching for listening skills is as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and by teaching students "pronunciation" that related to speaking skill.

In their responses to the same question (See Q.5, Appendix B), the students' views were almost different of what the teachers responded. 71.42% out of 112 students agreed that listening skills in Yemeni universities are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers and are taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any deliberate practice. Among 112 students, 17.85% of

them disagree with the question and 10.71% of the students didn't answer the question.

By examining the teachers' and students' views, we find that there is a contradiction among the teachers themselves and between the teacher and the students' views as well.

It is evident from this contradiction that, the skill of listening is not taught as an isolated skill, and instead, teachers teach students some aspects of pronunciation, as well as listening to teachers during their lectures.

The teachers and students' responses to question 6 (see Appendix A) and question 6 (see Appendix B) support this idea. In this question, the majority of teachers recommended that the micro-skill which is "understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc., which gives clues to meaning and social setting" is the most important skill used for teaching listening skill at Yemeni universities. Table (6) shows some micro-skills that should be used in teaching listening skill. Through this Table, we will see what kind of listening micro-skills are taught by teachers in Yemeni Universities as well as the students' views on that.

Table 6: Types of listening skills

Kinds of listening micro-skills	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the response (out of 112)	
	No.	%	No.	%
(i) prediction what people going to talk about	14	46.67	65	58.04
(ii) guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases without fearing	21	70	75	66.96
(iii) using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand	19	63.33	65	58.04
(iv) identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information	10	33.33	40	35.71

(v)	retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)	6	20	70	62.50
(iv)	understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stresses, etc. which gives clues to meaning and social setting	28	93.33	92	82.14

According to teachers' reporting to interview question 5 (See Appendix C), all the teachers who were being interviewed reported the answer "No" for this question. In question 6 in the same interview, (See Appendix C), some teachers reported their answers as follows:

❖ I took the initiative to urge my students to start listening and consider listening skill the first step to break the ice and talk.

❖ In speaking, the goal of spoken English is the characteristics and conditions of speech. Essential speaking skills are pronunciation, stress ad questions and answers.

By looking at the teachers' responses to question 6 (See Appendix A) that tabulated in table (6), it was clear that, the majority of teachers' responses were focused on three micro-skills as the main ones in teaching listening. These micro-skills are: "understanding the different intonation patterns and uses of stress, which give clues to meaning and social setting". This micro-skill itself in their views is considered the first and most important one taught in Yemeni listening classes. "guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases without fear", and "using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understanding", come as the secondary micro-skills in teaching listening. Few teachers who selected another micro-skill which is "prediction what people are going to talk about". On the other hand, and in their responses to Q.6 (See Appendix B), 80.35% of the students selected the micro-skill "understand different intonation patterns and uses of stress, which gives clues to meaning and social setting" as the most important micro-skill. "Guessing the meaning

of unknown words or phrases without fear" and "retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing") are considered as secondary micro-skills. The other micro-skills that the students consider them as less important skills are "predicting what people are going to talk about," "using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand," and the last one is "identifying relevant points, rejecting irrelevant information."

4.3.1.1. Summary

According to the teachers' and students' responses to the same question, it has been noticed that they selected the same micro-skills and the difference only is that the teachers selected the micro-skill number 3 in table (6) as the 3rd important one, while students selected another one which is number 5 in the same table. Therefore, according to the teachers and students responses, the researcher can conclude that the micro-skills they selected are really basic and important in teaching listening skills, and it is evident from their responses that, these are the only three micro-skills they really used for teaching and learning listening skills.

Although, the whole micro-skills tabulated in Table (6) are relevant but they are not enough to understand attentively what the speaker says. In order to achieve this aim, students should learn the whole micro-skills of listening that provide them with the useful concepts of learning listening skills. The researcher here provides several micro-skills of listening that prepare students to listen and understand attentively what the speaker says. For example, Richards (1983:228-230) suggested the following micro-skills:

- Ability to discriminate among the distinctive sounds of the target language
- Ability to recognize the stress patterns of words
- Ability to recognize the rhythmic structure of English
- Ability to recognize the functions of stress and intonation to signal the information structure of utterances
- Ability to identify words in stressed and unstressed positions

- Ability to recognize reduced forms of words
- Ability to distinguish words boundaries
- Ability to recognize typical word order patterns in the target language
- Ability to recognize vocabulary used in core conversational topics
- Ability to guess the meanings of words from the contexts in which they occur
- Ability to recognize grammatical word classes (parts of speech)
- Ability to recognize major syntactic patterns and devices
- Ability to recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse
- Ability to recognize elliptical forms of grammatical units and sentences
- Ability to detect sentence constituents
- Ability to distinguish between major and minor constituents
- Ability to detect meanings expressed in differing grammatical forms/sentence types (i.e., that a particular meaning may be expressed in different ways)
- Ability to recognize the communicative functions of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals
- Ability to reconstruct or infer situations; goals, participants, procedures;
- Ability to use real world knowledge and experience to work out purposes, goals, settings, procedures
- Ability to predict outcomes from events described
- Ability to infer links and connections between events
- Ability to deduce causes and effects from events
- Ability to distinguish between literal and implied meanings
- Ability to identity and reconstruct topics and coherent structure from on-going discourse involving two or more speakers
- Ability to recognize markers of coherence in discourse, and to detect such relations as main idea, supporting ideas, given information, new information, generalization, exemplification
- Ability to process speech at different rates
- Ability to process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections
- Ability to make use of facial, paralinguistic, and other clues to work out meanings
- Ability to signal comprehension or lack of comprehension, verbally and non-verbally diagnostic testing or detailed analysis of results of proficiency tests allows particular micro-skills to be further operational. Micro-skills which are relevant to academic listening and more suitable for teaching listening comprehensive at the Yemeni Universities include the following:
- Ability of identifying purpose and scope of lecture
- Ability to identify topic of lecture and follow topic development
- Ability to identify relationships among units within discourse (e.g. major ideas, generalization, hypotheses, supporting ideas, examples)
- Ability to detect attitude of speaker toward subject matter
- Ability to follow different modes of lecturing: spoken, audio, audio-visual
- Ability to follow lecture despite differences in accent and speed familiarity with different styles of lecturing: formal, conversational, read, unplanned familiarity with different registers: written versus colloquial knowledge of classroom conventions (e.g. turn taking, clarification requests)
- Ability to recognize instructional/learner tasks (e.g. warnings, suggestions, recommendations, advice and instructions).

By following the above suggested micro-skills in teaching and learning listening skill, students will listen and understand attentively what the speaker says. Through this understanding, students will begin feeling interested in listening and feel more motivated to learn it.

4.4. Teaching Listening Comprehension Skill

In teaching listening comprehension the aim is to provide opportunities to other learner to acquire particular micro-skills, those individual listening abilities which we have identified on the previous sub-section of this chapter should specify particular teaching objectives.

Richards (1983:232) manipulated two variables in teaching listening, both of which serve to develop ability in particular skills areas. He clarified that, we can either manipulate the input, that is, the language which the learner hears controlling for selected features such as grammatical complexity, topic and rate of delivery, or we can manipulate the tasks we set for the learner. Manipulation of either or (both) is directed toward developing particular micro-skills.

| INPUT | ⟶ | MICRO – SKILLS | ⟵ | TASKS |
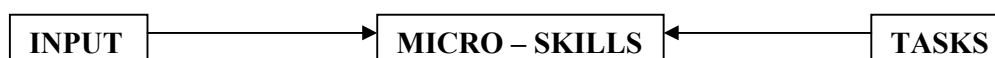
In examining procedures for teaching listening comprehension, Richards (1983:233-234) focuses first on some general criteria that can be applied to the evaluation of exercises and classroom procedures and then look at techniques and procedures themselves. In that, Richards concentrates on three criteria which serve as a checklist in developing listening tasks.

Content Validity: in content validity, Richards raised questions that related to it, such as: Does the activity practice listening comprehension or something else? How closely does the input of task relate to the micro-skills which listening comprehension

involves? Richards in this connection indicates that there are many listening materials contain activities that depend more on reading or general intelligence than on listening skills and confirms that the question of content validity raises the issue of whether the activity adequately or actually makes use of skills and behaviour that are part of listening in the real world. Thereby, he pointed out two related factors that have to do with memory and purposefulness.

1. *Listening comprehension or memory*: We saw above, that a variety of processing activities in listening precede storage of information in long term memory rather than on the processing activities themselves. An exercise involving listening to a passage and responding to a true /false questions about the content of in typically concusses on memory rather than on comprehension.

2. *Purposefulness and transferability*: Does the activity reflect a purpose for listening that approximates authentic real life listening? Do the abilities which the exercise develops transfer to real life listening purposes, or is the learner simply developing the ability to perform classroom exercises? An activity which makes use of news broadcasts as input, for example, should reflect the reasons why people typically listen to news broadcasts, such as listening for information about events. Cloze exercises requiring the learner to supply grammatical words on listening to the news item do not reflect the purposes for which people listen to news broadcasts. It is not a situation which corresponds to any real life listening purpose, and hence involves a low degree of transfer.

Testing or teaching: Does the activity or set of procedures assume that a set of skills is already acquired and simply provide opportunities for the learner to practice them, or does it assume that the skills are not known and try to help the learner acquire them? A great many listening activities test, rather than teach. For example,

a set of true/false questions following a passage on a tape might indicate how much of the material the learner can remember, but this kind of activity in no way helps the learner develop the ability to grasp main ideas or extract relevant details. The amount of preparation the learner is given prior to a listening task is often important in giving a teaching rather than a testing focus to an activity. Pre-listening activities generally have this purpose. They activate the learner's script and set a purpose for listening. They may take the form of discussion, questions, of short paragraphs to read which creates the script, providing information about the situation, the characters, and the events. Activities which teach rather than test may require much more use of pre-listening tasks and tasks completed as the student listens, than post-listening tasks.

Authenticity: To what degree does the input resemble natural discourse? While much authentic discourse may be too difficult to understand without contextual support, materials should aim for relative authenticity if they are to prepare listeners for real listening. Many current commercial listening materials are spoken at an artificially slow pace, in prestige dialects that are not typical of ordinary speech. They are often oral readings of written material articulated in a precise acting style, lacking the pauses and self-corrections of natural speech. Furthermore, the value of such materials must be examined in the light of Krashen's (1982, cited in Richards 1983: 234) proposal that authentic learning experiences should provide an opportunity for acquisition; that is, they should provide comprehensible input which requires negation of meaning and which contains linguistic features a little beyond the learner's current level of competence.

Depending on what Richards indicated in his three criteria that serve as a checklist in developing listening skills, we can say, in teaching listening

comprehension, the learners listen for meaning and answer factual, inferential and multiple-choice questions.

To make the learners understand and recognize words in second/foreign language, adequate training is required. Underwood (1979, cited in Richards 1983:237-238) recognizes three stages of teaching-pre-listening where the student activate their vocabulary and their background knowledge; during listening where they develop skill of eliciting messages and post listening which consists of extensions and developments of the listening task.

4.4.1. Summary

The teaching of listening comprehension or of any language skills involves considering the objectives we are teaching toward and the micro-skills our procedures cover. On how much of an attempt we have made to appreciate the nature of the listening comprehension itself. Any specific methodology or teaching program looks both at techniques and classroom routine and beyond them, to the broader principles which serve as justification.

Depending on what Richards indicated in his three criteria that serve as a checklist in developing listening skills, we can say, in teaching listening comprehension, the learners listen for meaning and answer factual, inferential and multiple-choice questions. In addition, listening skill cannot be taught in isolation but should be related to other skills such as reading, speaking and writing.

This section discusses two important points that related to teaching listening: 1) principles for teaching listening and 2) strategies for teaching listening.

4.4.2. Principles for teaching listening

Principles outline some key influence on the teaching of listening that achieved directly from second/foreign language acquisition research. To get familiar with the

principles used in teaching listening skills in Yemeni universities, the Yemeni teachers provided us with their own views as follows:

4.4.2.1. Teachers' Views on the principles for teaching Listening Comprehension Skill

Questions 7 of the teachers' questionnaire (See Appendix A) was given in order to specify the teachers' view on the principles that they consider while teaching listening skills. The teachers' responses to this question are shown in Table (7) below:

Table 7: Principles for teaching listening skills

	Principles that influence the teaching of listening	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)	
		No.	%
a	Listening experiences that help students lessen their anxiety about listening are generally beneficial.	14	46.67
b	Teachers do not need to force students to speak, as speaking will emerge naturally as a result of their response to listening.	16	53.33
c	Listening instruction should allow learners to figure out meanings for themselves and not depend on presentation by the instructor.	13	43.33
d	Consisting use of learning strategies helps students more efficiently.	20	66.67
e	Instruction should aim only to provide comprehensible input and not consider the learners' current level of competence in terms of vocabulary, syntax, discourse features, etc.	6	20
f	Attending to grammatical forms while listening requires a gradual increase in processing capacity	18	60
g	Learning material (topics, tasks) are relevant if they are related to learner's goals and interests and involve self-selection and evaluation.	16	53.33
h	Teachers should simplify their language, but attempt to keep the genuine features of the real spoken language.	14	46.67

4.4.2.1.1. Summary

The above eight principles are important and Yemeni English teachers should use them while teaching listening skills. According to the teachers' responses shown in Table (7), the majority of teachers gave priority to the principles number (d) and then (f), (b), (g), (a), (h), (c) and (e) respectively. It is evident from this that teachers were showing how and what they really approach with the teaching of listening skill. As it is clear from the course description of Faculties of Education and Languages, Sana'a University, (See Appendix D and E), the listening skill is not included in the course details. This itself confirms question 1 (See Appendix A) that refers to the fact that listening skills are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers. We can conclude from the above data and what the teachers reported through their interviews that listening is related to spoken English. It is evident that listening skill is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any deliberate practice.

4.4.2.1.2. Suggestions

For teaching listening skill, Yemeni English teachers are required to prepare the students to listen and understand attentively what the speaker says. For achieving this aim, teachers have to think and use the principles that are outlined in Table (7) and in addition, the researcher provides a number of principles for teaching listening suggested by a number of researchers for example, Rost (2002:108-9) suggests a number of principles for teaching listening, they are as follows:

1. By taking into account learners motives and attitudes about listening, the instructor can better select input of point learners to the best resources and opportunities for appropriate input.

2. Listening instruction should build in the need and opportunity for negotiation of meaning (e.g. information and opinion gap tasks). A substantial portion of instructional time should focus on such negotiation.

3. Listening tasks and instruction should aim to help learners atomize 'lower-level' processing of language so that they can devote more attention to higher-level' goals.

4. Regular targeted practice with 'fine-tuning' of lower-level processing skills (sound discrimination, etc.) will help learners atomize these skills for use in extended discourse settings.

5. Language use strategies can enable students to handle tasks that may be more difficult than their current processing might allow. This 'stretch' of capacity can be instructive to learners, and may motivate them to learn more.

6. Learning strategies that are associated with successful learners can be demonstrated and modelled for less successful learners.

According to Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis that humans acquires the first language-first and second languages in one and only one way: by understanding messages. This hypothesis has two main corollaries:

a) Speaking is the result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly, but rather 'emerges' on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.

b) If input is understood, and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar the learner needs to learn is automatically provided. The language teacher does not need to teach the 'next structure' along a continuum of learning ability or difficulty-it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically

reviewed if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input. (based on Krashen 1985:2)

Comprehensible input may be aural/oral or written, or both. Contextualized input, input with visual and environmental support, will tend to be more comprehensible.

Rost (2002:113) also refers to two more principles focusing on the features and forms of the grammatical system as follows:

- Different features of the grammatical system of the language are available to learners at different times, depending on their readiness to learn the 'next' stage of the grammatical system.

- Learners must use operating principles to notice formal fractures of the spoken language in order to make progress in listening

Concerning the need to supplement comprehensible accessible listening input with comprehensible output, types of listening, learning materials and how to develop students listening ability, Rost (2002) have also been suggested the following teaching principles:

1. Learning materials (topics, inputs, tasks) are relevant if they relate to learner goals and interests, and involve self-selection and evaluation. (p.122).

2. Learning materials should include a range of genres and discourse types that learners are likely to encounter in their contact with the target language. (p.125).

3. Simplification of input is effective for language learning only if it helps the listener become more active, that is, more able to activate background know-ledge, make inferences and more willing to respond to what he/she hears. (p.131).

4. To develop student's listening ability, teachers should aim to give all teacher talk (classroom instructions, social chat, praise, as well as content instruction and explanations) in the target language. When necessary to maintain student attention, interest and comprehension, the teacher should simplify language, but attempt to keep 'genuine' features of real spoken language. (p.135).

The organization of a text (often called a 'formal schema') contributes to the ease or difficulty of understanding it. In that, Brown et al. (1984, cited in Rost 2002:129) proposed six principles of cognitive load that affect listeners:

- It is easier to understand texts where the order of telling matches the order of events.

- It is easier to understand a text if relatively few familiar inferences are necessary to relate each sentence to the preceding text.

- It is easier to understand a text if the information in the text is clear (not ambiguous), self-consistent and fits in readily with information you already have.

Tomlinson (1998, cited in Rost 2002:150) on the other hand, concentrates on an important principle of teaching listening. This principle focuses on the multi-dimensional representations of the text.

- When reading or listening in our L1 we do not understand the meaning of an utterance or a text just by understanding the meaning of its words. In fact we do not understand the text at all but rather our mental representation of it. For this representation to become meaningful and memorable we need to make use of all the resources of our mind. We need at least to,

- achieve sensory and affective experience of the text;
- connect the text to our previous experiences of language and of life;

- fill in the gaps in the text to achieve our own continuity and completion;

- relate the text to our own interests, views and needs.

He clarifies that we need to achieve multi-dimensional ideas of the text in order for us to give it a meaning and for it to achieve a durable impression on our minds.

All the principles mentioned above are considered as a rich source to be used for teaching listening. We ask the instructors in the Yemeni Universities to benefit from and understand the above mentioned principles and reflect them in their teaching.

4.4.3. Strategies for Teaching Listening Skill

It is reasonable to be familiar with the general language learning strategies before discussing the strategies for teaching the listening skill in Yemeni Universities. In this regard, this section discusses first the definition of language learning strategies and second what is the most effective strategy instruction that should be involved in the teaching and learning the language.

Language learning strategies are among the main factors that help determine how and how well students learn a foreign language. A foreign language is a language studies in an environment where it is not the primary vehicle for daily communication and where input in that language is restricted. Oxford (1990:2) defines learning strategies as

> "specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques- such as seeking out conversation partners or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task- used by students to enhance their own learning."

Oxford, points out that it is important to emphasize that learning styles and strategies of individual students can work together with or conflict with a given instructional methodology. If there is harmony between (a) the student (in terms of

style and strategy) and (b) the combination of instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident and experience low anxiety. If clashes occur between (a) and (b), the student often performs poorly, feels unconfident and experience significant anxiety. Sometimes such clashes lead to the dispirited student's outright rejection of the teaching methodology, the teacher and the subject matter (pp. 2-3).

The most effective strategy instruction appears to include demonstrating when a given strategy might be useful, as well as how to use and evaluate it, and how to transfer it to other related tasks and situations. In that, Oxford provides some main categories of L2 learning strategies. They are as follows:

1. *Cognitive strategies* enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally.

2. *Metacognitive strategies* (e.g. identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task, gathering and organizing materials, arranging a study space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are employed for managing the learning process overall.

3. *Memory-related strategies* help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Various memory-related strategies enable learners to learn and retrieve information in an orderly string (e.g. acronyms), while other techniques create learning and retrieval via sounds (e.g., rhyming), images (e.g. a mental picture of the word itself or the

meaning of the word), a combination of sounds and images (e.g. the keyword method), body movement (e.g. total physical response), mechanical means (e.g. flashcards), or location (e.g., on a page or blackboard).

4. *Compensatory strategies* (e.g. guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words) help the learner make up for missing knowledge. Cohen (1998) asserted that compensatory strategies that are used for speaking and writing (often known as a form of communication strategies) are intended only for language use and must not be considered to be language learning strategies.

5. *Affective strategies,* such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk, have been shown to be significantly related to L2 proficiency. One reason might be that as some students progress toward proficiency, they no longer need affective strategies as much as before. Perhaps because learners' use of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies is related to greater L2 proficiency and self-efficacy, over time there might be less need for affective strategies as learners' progress to higher proficiency.

6. *Social strategies* (e.g. asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. Social strategies were significantly associated with L2 proficiency.

In addition to the language strategies mentioned above, Oxford sheds light on assessing learners' use of strategies by saying "many assessment tools exist for uncovering the strategies used by L2 learners. Self-report surveys, observations, interviews, learner journals, dialogue journals, think-aloud techniques, and other measures have been used. Various learning strategy instruments have disclosed research results beyond those that have been mentioned above. These additional findings include the following: L2 learning strategy use is significantly related to L2 learning motivation, gender, age, culture, brain hemisphere dominance, career orientation, academic major, beliefs, and the nature of the L2 task (Oxford 1990: 12-15).

According to the strategies discussed above, we can say, while the teacher teaches listening skill, he should concentrate on and use some useful strategies that make the teaching and learning listening skill successful.

To enhance the teachers' responses on question 7 that refer to the strategies of teaching the listening skill, question 8 (See Appendix A) was given to find out the kinds of strategies that the English teachers follow during their teaching the listening skill. Through the teachers' responses to this question, the majority of them specified some strategies such as "instruct the class what they have to do while listening", "introduce the topic and say something about it", "prepare the class to listen and given them necessary instructions," and "ask students comprehension questions".

Actually, the strategies used by the teachers as they mentioned above are useful for teaching listening. By talking about strategies, we mean talking about the teaching and learning process itself. The consistent use of learning strategies can help students learn more efficiently; enable them to handle tasks that may be more difficult than their current processing might allow and may motivate them to learn more.

It is evident from the interview questions that the strategies mentioned above by teachers were not actually used in the Yemeni listening classrooms teaching. This seemed clear through teachers' answers to question 10 (See Appendix C). One of the teachers reported:

> "We introduce the topic before listening. The second step is listening to the topic and then asking comprehension questions."

If teachers approach the teaching of the listening skill according to their views and/or the strategies they mentioned the learning and teaching process as of the listening will not be satisfactory for the students.

4.4.3.1. Summary

Through the teachers' responses to questions 7 and 8 (See Appendix A) and through the course description (See Appendix D and E), the researcher found that these responses means to hide their shortcomings that really exist in many English departments of Yemeni Universities. Teachers are satisfied that listening is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any practice.

4.5. Problems Associated with the Teaching of Listening Skill in Yemeni Universities

Although listening to English is the main channel of learning in a classroom, cultivation of the listening skill is not given due importance in the present system of education in Yemen. Practice in listening comprehension does not normally receive the attention in the classroom which it deserves. Classroom observation of teaching methods has proved that no systematic practice is given to develop the listening skill by the English language teachers in Yemeni Universities.

Listening skills are taken to be incidental to the goal of speaking. While teaching the productive aspects of language much importance is given to speaking

skills. The most important reason for changes in the English teaching programs is the changes of the needs of the students learning English.

In Yemeni schools, language teaching materials are structurally graded, and practice in receptive and productive skills is usually a means of practising the structures. At the college level, language teaching materials are usually uncontrolled and ungraded and the teaching is usually confined to the paraphrasing of a literary text or grammatical explanation. There is no attempt to systematically build the student's capacity to receive a "lecture". Examinations are mainly text – bound and assess the learner's writing skills only. Thus listening skills are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers.

To make it clear, we have to ask Yemeni English teachers in both schools and universities these questions. Do you consider listening as a skill or something related to other skills? If it is a skill, is it actually taught as the other skills? What is its place in the syllabus, if any? As teachers, how you dealt with it in the real classroom teaching? Do teachers depend on knowledge in teaching or follow the objectives related in the syllabus in terms of listening? Do the teachers think to design a syllabus for listening as a skill, taking into consideration the learners' needs, interests, and abilities, and the current trends of literature in terms of communicative approach to language teaching? What are the improvements you make in designing and teaching listening skills? What are the techniques and methods of teaching listening skills? Let us first see what the teachers and students said in their responses to the questionnaire and in the interview.

4.5.1. Teachers' and students' views on the problems associated with the teaching of listening comprehension

Question 9 (See Appendix A) was given to ask about the problems of teaching listening skills in Yemeni universities. Table (8) below shows a number of problems that probably associated with the teaching of listening skills and what are the teachers and students' views on that:

Table 8: Listening teaching problems in Yemeni universities

Problems of teaching listening skills		Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the response(out of 112)	
		No.	%	No.	%
i)	Teacher doesn't give the students the opportunity to get trained.	9	30	80	71.43
ii)	Can't practise listening appropriately.	24	80	45	40.18
iii)	Students feel discriminated in class.	16	53.33	56	50
iv)	Students feel undesirable to study listening skill and hate it at all.	13	43.33	40	35.71
v)	The selection of teachers for teaching listening skills is redundant.	11	36.67	50	44.64
vi)	Students don't ask for repetition or correction. They feel shy and scared.	26	86.67	70	62.50

By looking at Table (8), it seems obvious that the overwhelming majority of the teachers selected the item (vi) and considered it the students' main problem of learning the listening skill. The second problem in their view was number (ii) and (iii) in the table. The less important problems in their views are number (iv), (v), and (i).

On the other hand, when we look at the students' responses to the same question (See Q.7, Appendix B) in Table (8) above, we find that 72.32% students selected the item number (i) in the table. Considering this, it seems that the students considered this as their main problem in learning listening. Another problem that was considered

important by students is number (vi). Problem numbers (iii), (v), (ii), and (iv) in the table above are considered as problems of less importance by the students.

If we look at the teachers' and students' responses in Table (8), we will find that each one blames the other. Teachers claim that the students are not motivated and their performance is unsatisfactory. While students claim that the teachers didn't give them the opportunities to get trained. At the same time, students confessed that they have a habit of couldn't ask their teachers for repetition if they did not understand the teachers' talk or couldn't participate in the classroom discussion.

The teachers consider the first three as the major problems while the last three problems are secondary problems.

In fact, all the problems associated with the teaching of listening which included in Table (8) really exist, even if their degree of importance is different

In addition to these problems, some teachers reported other problems regarding teaching listening. For example, they reported that "they don't have sufficient material for teaching listening;" "some students cannot understand the female teachers' accent;" "the number of students in class exceeds 100;" and finally and one of the major problems of teaching listening they reported is inadequate lab facilities. Teachers confirmed that labs are small or not existent.

As a part of their answers to this question, students reported that they encounter the above problems while studying listening skill. Their problems are "teachers' explanation of the lessons with no discussion;" "students are treated badly;" "teachers do not encourage students;" and "students feeling shy to speak inside or outside the classroom".

We can conclude from the students' comments that the English lectures in the Yemeni classrooms are teacher-centred and teachers do not encourage students to be motivated to learn English.

4.5.1.1. Summary

It is evident from the above discussion that the Yemeni students' level in listening is unsatisfactory and their experience in conversation and discussion in the classroom and their beliefs about the efficacy of discussion are not good. This situation is because of several reasons:

1. Listening comprehension skill is not considered as an isolated skill but it is a related skill to speaking. This made the teachers and syllabus makers ignore listening.

2. The materials for teaching listening are not sufficient.

3. The selection of unqualified teachers to teach listening comprehension is a major problem.

4. The number of students in one class exceeds 100.

5. The labs for teaching and practising listening either they are small or not facilitated at all.

6. The opportunities provided in the listening classroom are too limited. These opportunities may help the students improve their communication abilities.

7. Students rarely participate in conversations in English, either in class or with their friends or out of the classroom.

8. Few students only like to participate in classroom discussions.

9. Students usually don't understand what they hear in the classroom carefully.

10. In the classroom discussion as I observed, students encounter difficulties to

understand their teachers. Especially, those students who sit in the middle and back of the class did not know what happened during the class discussion.

4.5.1.2. Solutions

To help rectifying the listening comprehension problems, the researcher proposes the following suggestions:

1. Students' attitude should be modified through their seriousness and concern in their study.

2. In the listening class, students need to give full attention to what they hear.

3. For Yemeni students, it is preferable that the tapes may be replayed two or three times, since repetition often leads to comprehension.

4. Alternatively, students may be asked to repeat or summarize what they have heard.

5. Exposing students to naturally native speech.

6. Students should be provided with the native speech and facility in deciphering grammatical aspects and lexical usages.

7. Students should be exposed to listening activities in real life that encourage them to refine their own language.

8. Students should understand the language heard in day-to-day situations.

4.6. Methods of Assessing Listening Skill and Evaluating Students' Progress

Assessment is an integral part of instruction, in that it suggests appropriate starting points for instructional design and allows for feedback on learner performance. This section provides an overview of issues related to the assessment of

listening in Yemeni Universities. It discusses two main issues: 1) methods for assessing listening, 2) evaluating students' progress.

4.6.1. Methods for Assessing Listening

Assessment is an important part of teaching, both as feedback to learners on their progress and as administration record-keeping. The contentious issues concern not whether to assess learners, but rather what to assess and how to assess and what to do with the results of assessments. This sub-section discusses the teachers' and students' views on assessing listening, evaluating students' progress and the researcher's view on what is to be suitable to be considered for assessing listening and evaluating students' progress in Yemeni classrooms.

4.6.1.1. Teachers' and students' views on assessing listening and evaluating students' progress

To begin the discussion, I shall try to investigate the teachers' responses on question 10 (See Appendix A). This question was given to ask about the methods for assessing listening skill and the ways of evaluating students' progress followed by English teachers in Yemeni universities. We notice that each teacher has his own way for answering the question. The researcher summarizes the teachers' views on assessing listening and evaluating students' progress as follows:

1. The teacher can have the students listen to native speakers through audio-visual aids and check their comprehension by asking questions.

2. Ask students to listen to cassettes, summarise, asking them questions and doing more practice.

3. Allow students to listen to native speakers using audio-visual aids and ask them comprehension questions.

4. Ask students to summarize what they have learned from a listening exercise, orally or in written and give some guiding questions before they listen and see if they can answer them.

4.6.1.1.1. Summary

About the teachers' views on this question, it seems that some of them explain what they teach and how to test what they teach by asking students only comprehension questions. Some of them really understood the question and talked about the methods, techniques of assessing and evaluating students' progress by following different ways such as allowing students to listen, predict, summarize, expose students to native speakers either in real life situation or by listening to native speakers by using audio-visual aids, giving students question pre- and after listening, and asking students comprehension questions. If actually each teacher follows the latter kind of assessment and evaluation of listening skill, teachers will discover whether their students have mastered what is taught to an acceptable degree.

The students, on the other hand, responded to this question expressing their opinions about the nature of assessing listening skill and how the teachers evaluate their progress. Their views are summarized as follows:

1. Teachers ask students to repeat what they listen, ask them questions and asks them to write what they listen.

2. Some students reported that teachers do not teach them listening as an isolated skill.

3. In level (I) the teachers give us cassettes to improve our listening skill.

4. We practice listening in the classroom by using the teachers' hand-outs. After that teachers give us exercises in the classroom and at home.

5. Students confirm that the listening task is taught only once during the bachelor degree and it was based mainly on using audio-visual aids at home and coming back to the   college to answer the questions related to it.

6. Teachers follow different methods in teaching listening and commonly it is teacher-centred. Their teaching is restricted on using the audio-visual aids in level (I) and (II).

7. The suitable materials are not available for real speaking. It is only just as reading, writing and grammar.

8. Teacher gives us a recorder and we listen to the tape; we write notes; and the teacher asks us from the book.

We can conclude that teaching and assessing listening skills in Yemeni Universities is restricted on few activities such as listening to cassettes for once in level I, and II, and asking questions. Through their answers to this question, students have shown that the teachers' responses to the same question were falsified or just as suggestions for future work. But what they teach and assess is only restricted to what mentioned in the students' responses.

4.6.1.1.2. Suggestions

To improve teaching the listening skill in Yemeni Universities, the researcher propose some issues suggested by Rost (2002:169-178) regarding the types of tests, specifications (what is to be assessed), forms of tests, deconstructing tests, oral interview tests and about how to help students to prepare them for tests. These issues are discussed below.

Types of tests

As usual, most tests that teachers themselves produce and use are the following:

Achievement tests: This test is designed to measure simply whether students have mastered what is taught to an acceptable degree. Achievement tests are and always should be relatively easy to make, to administer, to score and to use as direct feedback to the students. The reason that they should be easy to make is that the content and form should be derived directly from classroom material and tasks, or made from texts and tasks that are clearly parallel to classroom materials.

Achievement tests: are always based on 'criteria', that is, the objectives that have been targeted for the class. To the extent that the criteria are clear and realistic, it is perfectly feasible that everyone passes every achievement test. The testing concept of achievement test is that, one way to ensure content validity in achievement testing is to have parallel forms of classroom tasks and activities. One form is used for teaching and another form is used for testing.

Placement tests: designed to place student in an appropriate program of study, and *proficiency tests* is designed to determine how someone measures up against all other learners, are quite different. In order to be considered valid, these tests have to show a fair sampling of the types of behaviour that constitute the 'trait' being tested. In addition, placement and proficiency tests in order to be fair to the test- takers, have to exhibit strong indicators of reliability, which can be established only through 'pre-testing the test' on suitable numbers of test-takers.

Specifications

Under this heading, the discussion will be on 'What' is to be assessed. What is to be assessed is the key issue in the testing of listening. Buck (1992, cited in Rost 2002:170), one of the leading figures in the testing of listening has shown through factor of analyses of proficiency tests that what is measured on most 'listening tests' is largely general language proficiency or general comprehension ability rather than a

specific measure of listening ability. As Buck argues quite sensibly, if we are trying to measure only general language proficiency and comprehension ability, we might as well not do it with listening since listening tests are much harder to construct and administer.

However, if we are trying to assess learners' listening ability, we need to focus on those aspects of proficiency and comprehension that are unique to listening. So Rost (2002:171) outlined some textual aspects that are unique to listening, or certainly are more common in a listening mode, including the following:

(i)   All *physical* features of spoken language that are not reflected in written language: *pause units* (short 2-3 second bursts of speech); *hesitations; intonation; stress;* variable *accents;* and *background sounds*

(ii)   *Linguistic Features* which are more common in spoken language such as

- colloquial vocabulary and expressions

- shorter, particularly organized speech units

- false starts

- frequent use of ellipsis

- more *indexical expressions* (key to visible environmental features)

- more two- party *negotiation of meaning* (less original clarity)

(iii)   Psychological features unique to listening such as:

- Negotiation mode: the possibility for and sometimes the necessity of interacting with speaker to clarify and expand meaning.

- Constructive mode: the possibility of working out a meaning that fits the context, and is relevant to the listener and to the situations, incorporating visible contextual features

- Transformative mode: the possibility of interacting with, 'connecting' with and influencing the speaker's ideas.

Therefore, if we wish to test listening ability and listening ability only, we need to be sure that the input to the test-takers and the activities of the test-takers include these features as many as are feasible in the testing situation.

If an assessment procedure aims to test listening as part of an integrated set of language skills (and there is certainly nothing wrong with doing that), the task is markedly easier. The issue is simply one of understanding what is and not- being assessed.

Forms of Tests

This point discusses a survey of current teaching and testing practices reveals several ways in which listening ability is assessed. For example,

Discrete item tests:

Includes multiple -choice questions, open questions following presentation of a listening text, and standardized test scores (e.g. on TOEFL or TOEIC).

Integrative tests:

Open summarizing of a listening text, and cloze summarizing of a text, dictation, complete or partial.

Communicative tests:

Written communicative tasks involve listening (scoring on the basis of successful completion of a task such as, writing a complaint letter after hearing a description of a problem.). Oral or not verbal tasks involving listening (scoring on the basis of successful completion of the task, such as following directions on a map)

Interview tests:

It focuses on face-to-face performances with the teacher or another student, extended oral interviews.

Self- assessment:

Learner rates self on given criteria, via questionnaire, learner provides holistic assessment of own abilities via oral or written journal entries.

Portfolio' assessment:

Learner is observed and evaluated periodically throughout course on behaviour in tasks and other class activities; observations may be audio or videotapes. Portfolio may include any or all of the above types of objective and subjective measures. (based on Rost 2002)

Any of these methods of assessment can provide valid feedback to learners about their progress in listening. In order to serve as valid feedback or as a valid measure of learners progress or ability, the test its input and its tasks has to be consistent with what is being taught as listening. In other words, the focus of instructions tends to mirror the focus of tests: Students come to expect that instruction should be similar to what they will be tested.

Deconstructing tests

Because objectively scored discrete point tests are use so commonly in language education, it is important for teachers to 'deconstruct' these test- analyse the structure and content of each item-in order to understand what is being tested and in what proportions on the test. The goal of this type of analysis is to discover what kinds of items actually distinguish good learners from poor learners, that is, what kind of mental processes good listeners are exhibiting that poorer listeners are not (cf. Vogely 1995; Yepes 2001).

In order to understand what is being tested, the researchers found that five features were significant in discriminating among test takers.

1. The present of infrequent oral vocabulary.

2. The sentence pattern of the utterances in the stimulus (i.e. the extract preceding the questions).

3. The presence of negatives in the stimulus.

4. The necessity of making an inference to answer the item.

5. The roles of speakers in the stimulus. (Nissan de Vincenzi & Tang 1996 cited in Rost 2002:175).

Oral interview tests

An essential element in assessing second/foreign language performance is evaluating a learner's ability in various settings in which goal-oriented oral communication is required (McNamara 1998 cited in Rost 2002:178). In an oral interview test (often called OPI, for Oral Proficiency Interview), the test candidate is placed in the role of the listener and is expected to respond (as quickly and completely as possible) to the interviewer's prompts, which are usually questions.

Berwick & Ross (1996, cited in Rost 2002:180) describe oral interview tests more as a process of elicitation of specific output and compliance with routines than a 'normal' interactive conversation. Increasingly, interview tests are being conceptualized in terms of 'testing tasks' in which the tasks are closely associated with specific situations, goal-oriented, and involve active participation of the language user.

Helping students for preparing them for tests

Students often experience anxiety in taking tests and as a result do not give their best performance. In order to help students do their best on standardized tests, Rost (2002:189) suggested four useful issues:

1.   familiarize the students with the format of the test they will take, including all subsections of the test;

2.   Simulate test conditions with a full current-version test administered as the actual test will be (e.g. via computer if computer-based) with actual time constraints;

3.   Go over the test results with the students, pointing out strategies for examining their performance; and

4.   Respond to any questions or concerns that students have about the test, scoring, and how the result used.

These steps tend to alleviate uncertainties that students have about standardized tests. In addition, an important purpose of testing is helping students reviewing materials. Students can prepare for the test by reviewing the units that will be on the tests. It is best to give the students ample time, to prepare for a forthcoming review tests.

In order to prepare at home, have students review the *Vocabulary Task* section of each unit by quizzing themselves on the blanks in each unit. Have them listen to particular listening extracts on their self-study CD, once without referring to the script, and then a second time while looking at their completing self-study pages.

In order to prepare in class, teacher can review the listening task sections of all units, replaying the segments and asking the students to review their answers in their textbooks.

The next sub-section discusses the evaluation of students' progress.

4.6.2. Evaluating student's progress

Evaluating students' progress is an essential part of instruction. It helps the teacher understands what his students have learned as well as identify areas in which

they need more work. Assessment also helps motivate most students to do their best in a class. Both formal and informal assessment should be done throughout the course.

There are a number of ways the instructor can informally evaluate his students' progress. In order to provide more complete feedback to our students and to obtain more valid evaluations, it is recommended that, the instructor is advised to use more than one type of informal assessment. In evaluating students' progress, Rost (2002:190) suggests the following types of assessment that along with the test pack will give the teacher a fuller picture of his students' abilities and needs, and probably these types will be suitable to our students in Yemen.

- *Classrooms tasks:* Participation and active learning are an important part of progress in oral communication (speaking and listening) classes. The instructor gives credit for all classroom tasks completed. If students complete the tasks in their books, they can get credit for doing that. If students interact with each other during task follow-ups and during the interaction links they can get credit for that interaction. This is a kind of 'participation grade' that allows all students to receive credit for active learning during class.

- *Homework:* the instructor assigns homework with self-study CD and self-study pages in the back of the book. Students can do the tasks at home, in preparation for the next class. He/she can give the students credit for completing the homework, and then allow them to compare and correct their answers with their classmates in a small group. He/she can give credit for completion of the task or for the number of correct answers

- *Expansion activities*: Students can also do expansion activities as written tasks at home. It is not necessary to correct students' writing, which can be very

110

time–consuming and impossible with large classes. However, the instructor

can give students credit for speaking activities that will follow in the class.

- *Dictation*: Practice dictation tests can be done periodically using the impact listening extracts, to check students' progress and to give them practice in intensive listening. This will help the instructor identify his/her students' listening problems and give him/her a means of evaluating them.

- *Classroom observation*: As students engage in speaking activities, the instructor circulates and makes observations, and takes notes as he/she listens. After students have finished speaking, he/she shares his/her observations with the whole class. The instructor uses his/her observations to help him/her decide which areas of instructions to devote more time to teach.

CHAPTER 5

SPEAKING

5.1. Introduction

A large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking. The ability to speak a second or foreign language well is a very complex task if we try to understand the nature of what appears to be involved. To begin with, speaking is used for many different purposes, and each purpose involves different skills. When we use casual conversation, for example, our purposes may be to make social contact with people, to establish rapport, or to engage in the harmless chit-chat that occupies much of the time we spend with friends. When we engage in discussion with someone, on the other hand, the purpose may be to seek or express opinions, to persuade someone about something, or to clarify information. In some situations we use speaking to give instructions or to get things done. We may use speaking to describe things, complain about people's behaviour, make a request, or entertain people with jokes and anecdotes. Each of these different purposes for speaking implies knowledge of the rules that account for how spoken language reflects the context or situation in which speech occurs, the participants involved and their specific roles and relationships, and the kind of activity the speakers are involved in (Richards & Renandya 2002:201).

Speaking in a second/foreign language involves the development of a particular type of communication skills. Oral language, because of its circumstances of production, tends to differ from written language in its typical grammatical, lexical and discourse patterns. In addition, some of the processing skills needed in speaking differ from those involved in reading and writing. This section outlines the

importance of speaking, essential speaking skills, and the characteristics of successful speaking activities.

5.1.1. The Importance of Speaking English for Yemeni Students

For why is speaking important, we shall look here into some important issues which surround learning to speak English.

Many teachers worldwide teach mainly grammar and vocabulary because these areas are tested in examinations. This means that speaking is a neglected language skill in many classrooms, particularly in Yemen. Students may have a good knowledge of grammar and a wide vocabulary; they can use their knowledge to pass examinations, but they find it more difficult to speak English outside the classroom.

So, why is it important for Yemeni students to learn to speak English, and for teachers to learn to teach speaking?

More and more educators, government, ministry of education, higher education, other ministries and employers nowadays in Yemen need people who can speak English well. Companies and different associations want staff who can speak English in order to communicate within the international marketplace. Students who can speak English well may have a greater chance of further education, of finding employment and gaining promotions.

Speaking English well also helps students to access up-to-date information in fields including science, technology and health. Good English speakers will be in a strong position to help their country's economic, social and political development. So, by learning to speak English well, students gain a valuable skill which can be useful in their lives and contribute to their community and country.

Educational reasons to practice speaking during a lesson are a successful process. Some of these educational reasons are for instance:

- Speaking activities can reinforce the learning of new vocabulary, grammar or functional language;

- Speaking activities give students the chance to use the new language they are learning;

- Speaking activities give more advanced students the chance to experiment with the language they already know in different topics.

The above mentioned reasons help students to learn English better and succeed in their examinations.

5.1.2. Essential Speaking Skills

Throughout the world today and especially in developing countries, particularly Yemen, there is a great need for people to speak English well. Many employers, several educational institutions etc. look for good English speakers. So it is important for students to learn to speak English well and for teachers to know how to teach speaking well in our country.

In Yemeni Schools and Universities, many teachers are very good at teaching vocabulary and grammar in order to translate a text and to prepare students for examinations. However, organizing lessons to practise speaking English can be a big challenge for both teachers and students. Many teachers teach large classes with few resources. Those are effective and interesting ways to improve their students speaking skills. Whether teachers have been teaching for many years or are new teachers and whether they have classes of 25 or 50 students, they can use the suitable ideas which we are going to provide them here in this chapter to help their students speak English better both inside and outside the classroom.

Practical activities for speaking lessons and how to plan and organize speaking lessons well are of important in teaching speaking skills in Yemen. When we talk

about speaking here, we mean using language for a purpose. For example, instead of asking students to repeat sentences, sometimes we have to give students a topic and ask them to construct and say their own responses. In real life, we do not repeat what others say, we make our own sentences and dialogues. So, teachers need to make time for different kinds of practice, and to think of topics for students to speak about, taking in their consideration our Yemeni cultural differences. They also need to create an encouraging environment where students can practice expressing themselves and making themselves understood even if they make mistakes. This type of speaking practice prepares them for using English outside the classroom. Therefore, we should plan lessons, which include plenty of speaking practice.

Classroom activities that develop learners' ability to express themselves through speech would therefore seem an important component of a language course. Yet, it is difficult to design and administer such activities; more so, in many ways, than to do so for listening, reading or writing. We shall come on to what the problems are presently, and how to help English teachers in Yemen to overcome the problems of teaching speaking skills, specially effect speaking activity.

An effective speaking activity means, understanding what the characteristics of a successful speaking activity are. Below, we can see such these characteristics.

5.1.3. Characteristics of a Successful Speaking Activity

a) *Learners talk a lot:* As much as possible, the period of time allotted to the activity should in fact be occupied by learner talk. This may seem obvious, but often most time is spent in teacher talk or pauses.

b) *Participation should be equally:* classroom discussion is not dominated by a minority of talkative participants: all get a chance to speak, and contributions are fairly evenly distributed.

c) *Motivation is high:* learners are eager to speak: because they are interested in the topic and have something to say about it, or because they want to contribute to achieving a task objective.

d) *Language should be of an acceptable level:* learners express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy.

The early introduction of the speaking of the language is also important for reasons of motivation. Without any doubt our students come to study English as a foreign language in high school with the strong conviction that language means "something spoken". They are of discouraged and lose interest when they find that English as a foreign language study is just like other school subjects.

Students in Yemeni secondary schools consider it as 'fun' and feel it to be important. They study English as a subject and unfortunately their intention is only to pass the exam. They came to college with nothing as basics of English. So, many questions should be raised to be answered and get the suitable solution for this big problem that the student suffered. Why the student's condition looks like that? Is it the students' desires/mistakes or the English teachers were and still the reason for that? What are the teachers' roles for motivating the students that make them to interact and communicate inside and outside the class confidently?

To teach the speaking skill it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the process involved in speech. Through speech, students express their emotions, communicate their intentions, reacts to other persons and situations influences other human beings. At a sub-vocal level speech enables them to examine and rearrange impressions and associations so that they see new relationship and evolves new purposes. Spoken language is then, tool for learners.

5.1.4. Summary

1. Educational reasons to practice speaking during a lesson are a successful process. Some of these educational reasons are for instance:

(a) Speaking activities can reinforce the learning of new vocabulary, grammar or functional language

(b) Speaking activities give students the chance to use the new language they are learning

(c) Speaking activities give more advanced students the chance to experiment with the language they already know in different topics.

2. Practical activities for speaking lessons and how to plan and organize speaking lessons well are of important in teaching speaking skills. These activities require the following:

(a) Using language for a purpose. Instead of asking students to repeat sentences, they should be given a topic and ask them to construct and say their own responses.

(b) Teachers need to make time for different kinds of practice and think of topics for students to speak about, create an encouraging environment where students can practice expressing themselves and making themselves understood even if they make mistakes. This type of speaking practice prepares them for using English outside the classroom.

3. Characteristics of a successful speaking activity are as follows:

(a)   Learners talk a lot

(b)   Participation should be equally

(c)   Motivation is high

(d)   Language should be of an acceptable level

5.2. The basis for planning Spoken English Courses in Yemeni Universities

This section discusses the real basis for planning spoken English courses in Yemeni Universities. Question 11 (See Appendix A) was given to ask about the basis for planning spoken English courses to be taught to Yemeni EFL students in Yemeni Universities. In the teachers' responses, 53.33% out of 30 teachers answered the question, while 46.66% teachers did not answer the question. 68.75% of the teachers who answered the question expressed their ideas about the basis for planning spoken English courses as follows:

> "Considering the needs of our undergraduate students, we must try to improve their proficiency in spoken English by developing their skills in listening and speaking, along with their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and usage."

Five teachers out of 16 expressed their ideas by reporting that

> "while planning the spoken English courses, we concentrate on what we know about the socio-linguistic scene of the country."

By examining the views of the two groups of teachers, the researcher concludes that the teachers' intention beyond the above basis is that the student should be able to express himself in the target language, to cope with the basic interactive skills like exchanging greetings and thanks and apologies, and to express their needs, request, information, services etc.

In question 12 (See Appendix A), the teachers are asked to express their views on whether the focus in teaching oral skills is limited to pronunciation in the Yemeni Universities or they have another form for that. 63.33% of the teachers consider the focus in teaching oral skills is restricted to pronunciation in Yemeni Universities while 30% disagreed and two teachers didn't answer the question.

It is evident from the teachers' responses that the majority of teachers recommend that speaking is not taught eventually as a skill by itself, even if it is

programmed in the syllabus. From their responses, it can be concluded that students are taught some activities which are not are related to speaking skill. That is, the syllabus makers and teachers ignore speaking to be taught as an isolated skill. It is clear from the course description (See Appendix D and E) that spoken English is included as one of the basic language skills, but what do teachers teach in spoken English courses is discussed by the teachers below.

> "Teaching spoken English is not even limited to pronunciation. Pronunciation itself is not taught as it is needed."

> "We agree that teaching pronunciation is not enough and it actually prevents students from practicing the language, but in Yemeni Universities it is taught right from the first semester."

Another teacher confirmed what is mentioned above by saying:

> "The problems with the teaching of spoken English in the Yemeni Universities show clearly what kind of course developers or designers we have."

Through the students' responses to the same question (See Q.9, Appendix B), 66.7% recommend that the focus in teaching the oral skills is limited to pronunciation. 28.57% disagree on this view and 5.35% didn't answer the question. The majority of the students' responses to this question are considered as evidence for what the teachers emphasized in their responses. Therefore, by examining both the teachers' and students' responses and their comments on this question, the researcher finds that some Yemeni teachers insisted that the teaching of the speaking skill is only possible at the end of the course.

The researcher agrees that the teaching of pronunciation is essential and the students' pronunciation should be correct before moving on to texts. It is also crucial at the beginning but that does not mean teachers concentrate on teaching pronunciation and neglect the spoken interaction and conversation.

It is evident from the discussion above that the teachers believed in their views and make their teaching for spoken English limited only to pronunciation and neglect the teaching of spoken interaction, conversations and oral skills or delay them to the advances courses. As a result, we can say delaying the course until second year or even second semester causes an unnecessary gap in the sequence of learning to speak and is discouraging students. What is suggested is that the students should be able to use the content of Lesson (1) for example, to express themselves before going to lesson (2). If the teachers insisting to complete the mastery of each section of the book, the teachers therefore build a more solid foundation for later more complex lessons and enables the students to experience the satisfaction of attaining short term goals.

It is also evident from the teaching of pronunciation and delaying speaking skill until the advances courses is the ever use of Audio-Lingual METHOD on the teaching of oral skills by Yemeni teachers and their teaching is only restricted to the engineering of the repetition of oral production of structures, the development of grammatical and phonological accuracy.

Since the Yemeni teachers use the Audio-Lingual method, the specialists realized that these approaches omitted to take account of two aspects of language in communication: first, it neglected the relationship between language and meaning; and, second, it failed to provide a social context within which the formal features of language could be associated with functional aspects, such as politeness. On the other hand, teachers should focus on using the communicative approach to teach spoken English because this approach is developed in two ways: first, a notional–functional approach attempted to extend the teaching of grammar to include the teaching of interaction notions (paying attention to factors of formality and functions, such as

making requests, apologies, invitations and introductions). Second, a learner-centred approach emerged which emphasized the importance for learning of starting from the measuring learner wanted to communicate, and working out how to express them.

5.2.1. Summary

After examining the teachers' and students' responses, their comments and the discussion followed, the researcher concludes that the negligence of the teaching of spoken English is because of the following reasons:

1. The spoken English syllabus probably is not designed by the university and the English departments in their turns assigned this responsibility to the teachers to prepare their own hand-outs and choose randomly whatever they like for the course text.

2. Guidance on what the teachers plan and what they do in the classroom are hardly available.

3. The Grammar-Translation method to language teaching still has a great influence and dominance in language teaching in Yemeni universities, until now. These traditional approaches are marginalizing the teaching of communication skills.

4. Only recently, some of the teachers began to use the tape-recorders in the language classrooms. Due to the difficulty of teaching speaking skill, it is easier for the teachers to focus on the teaching of the written language than the spoken language. That means, the Yemeni Universities' syllabi and the teachers emphasize the teaching of reading and writing but not the teaching of the listening and speaking skills.

5. Most approaches to language teaching other than the Grammar-Translation method (the Audio-Lingual method, etc.) are exploited for oral communication as part of their methodology not as a discourse skill.

6. Students, in their turn, cannot express their views on the kind of syllabuses, materials and the teaching approaches used by their teachers because they feel scared of the punishment that they might receive later.

5.2.2. Suggestions

If the syllabus is meant to cater to the students' needs, this will prepare them to express their emotions, communicate their intentions and react to other persons and situations. For achieving the aim described above, the researcher suggests some ideas that the teacher should consider.

- Construct a structured course where a student learns a simple skill before building on that to achieve a more complex skill.

- The teacher would be in the positions of controlling a set of strategies which would help the student improve his performance.

- If a student had difficulty in expressing himself in conversation classes, the teacher might be able to diagnose his problems and give him practice in helpful strategies, rather than simply attributing the student problems to his inability to learn what his peers have learnt.

- The teacher needs to be in a confident position of possessing analytic tools which enable him to determine where the difficulty lies and to help the student with it. Hence, we as teachers shall be concerned not so much with the process by which the student comes to learn the forms of the language, but with the process that the student may come to use those forms creatively and appropriately.

Through the six reasons mentioned above, it is supposed to raise these questions: What is the appropriate form of spoken English to be taught in Yemeni Universities? How is it possible to give Yemeni students any sort of meaningful practice in producing spoken English?

To answer the two questions raised above, the researcher provides some suggestions regarding the form of spoken English to be taught in Yemeni Universities below. The other question will be discussed in details in section (5.3).

5.2.3. The Proposed Form of Spoken English to be Taught in Yemeni Universities

Usually the first item to think of when designing a syllabus or a certain course is the objectives.

5.2.3.1. Objectives

An educational program has to be based on needs of the community for which it is planned. We have, therefore, to examine the need for the use of spoken English in Yemen.

We can plan our undergraduate EFL courses on the basis of what we know about the socio-linguistic scene in the country. Considering the needs of our undergraduate students, we must try to improve their proficiency in spoken English by developing their skills in listening and speaking, along with their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and usage.

5.2.3.2. Students and Teachers

While planning a course of study at the college level, we have to take into account the students' level of attainment at the beginning of the course. Here we come across the difficulty of diversity of background. The students come from different social and educational backgrounds. Some of them have studied through the medium

of English (those students who actually living in the cities and studied in the public schools) and others through the medium of Arabic (those students who studied in the governmental schools in the cities or who came from the rural areas). We shall, therefore, have to divide students into homogeneous groups on the basis of attainment and the medium chosen. Another factor that we need to consider is the teacher's own proficiency in the use of spoken English and their training in the methods of teaching and the preparation of materials.

5.2.3.3. Course Content

We have now to consider what should be included in the spoken course in Yemeni Universities – what language items and what language skills. We wish to suggest that the course in spoken English should have three main components:

1. Listening comprehension,

2. Conversation, and

3. Pronunciation

Listening Comprehension:

The course in listening will be aimed at helping the students to understand spoken English better. The materials for listening will, as far as possible, be similar to what our students will normally listen to during the course of their lives – news bulletins, talks, lectures, readings of texts prescribed for study, academic papers and reports. They will also need practice in taking down notes while they listen.

Conversation:

For training in conversation, we need specimen dialogues, both formal and informal, on common and everyday situations. After these have been studied and listened to, practice should be given in the composition of dialogues. Some of the typical situations suggested for conversations are:

1. Dialogues between a shopkeeper and a customer;

2. Dialogues between friends who meet after a long time;

3. Dialogues on hobbies and others interests;

4. Dialogues between two passengers and airplane or bus station;

5. One person telling another about a dream he had;

6. Dialogue between a teacher and a student who wants to join a college;

7. Discussion on one's future career;

8. Asking for permission;

9. Describing people;

10. Asking for directions; giving directions;

11. Invitations, accepting invitations, declining invitations etc.

Pronunciation:

A course in spoken English has to include specific training in pronunciation. The items suggested for inclusion in the course are:

1. Lack of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation in English.

2. Word stress.

3. English vowels as used in British Received and not Americans; symbols used for them in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, and Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary current editions.

4. English consonants, phonetic symbols and the practice of the production of

   /f/, /v/, /Ө, **/ð/,** /b/, /p/, /g/, /j/, and /s/, /Š/ and /d3/ - /3/ -/z/ are necessary for

contrasts. The Distribution of /s/, /z/, /Iz/ in inflectional suffixes and the distribution

of /t/, /d/, /id/ in the inflectional suffixes should be examined.

5. Reading words from a phonetic transcription. Phonetic transcription of words.

6. Stress and rhythm in connected speech; contracted forms.

7. Intonation such as:

  - Division into tone groups

  - Location of the nucleus

  - Falling and rising tones.

5.2.3.4. Methods and techniques

We have also to consider the methods and techniques to be adopted for teaching spoken English and the preparation of suitable teaching materials. These methods and techniques are such as:

(i) For practice in listening comprehension, we have to present the selected texts orally, the teacher speaking or reading to the class, or using an audio cassette, video cassette, or a radio or television program. Questions have to be set to promote and test comprehension. Practice in note-taking has also to be provided.

(ii) For practice in conversation, we can proceed by stages, and we can first give a model conversation and ask the students to study it so that they become familiar with the vocabulary, the phrases, and the syntactic patterns. They can then listen to the teacher reading the text of the conversation or to a recording of it. In his/her way they will be familiar with the sounds used and the patterns of stress, rhythm and intonation.

They should then try to read the text of the conversation aloud, different roles being assigned to different persons. The teacher will make corrections and offer comments only after the text has been read. Later the students can write their own dialogues related to some typical situations. They can do it in pairs or in large groups.

After the script has been improved by the teacher, the students practiced reading it aloud. Still later, we can give students practice in conversation without preparing the script beforehand.

It is only through properly graded exercises that we can give our students the necessary confidence and help them take part in conversations in common everyday situation and also in formal situations like interviews.

  (iii) The teaching of pronunciation has to be based on information about correct patterns of stress, and the vowel and consonant systems as described in the dictionaries used by the students. After this basic information has been given, practice has to be provided in phonemic contrasts and stress patterns. This should, as far as possible, be correlated with other aspects of our curriculum. For example, practice in patterns of stress, rhythm and intonation should be correlated with oral practice in sentence patterns and conversations. Practice in word stress should be correlated with the teaching of vocabulary, and students should be encouraged to look up all new words in a good dictionary, both for meaning and pronunciation. This means they should be familiar with the phonetic symbols used in the dictionary and the sounds they stand for. The items chosen for specific practice should be those that constitute problems for Arab speakers and are important for intelligibilities and acceptability. For teaching word stress we should use stress marks and encourage frequent reference to the dictionary. Rules can be given where they are helpful; for example, the rule that words ending in the suffixes – ic – ion, and –ity take the main stress on the syllable immediately preceding the suffix.

For teaching phonemic contrasts we have to provide ear training and speech training with the help of minimal pairs. For correct articulation of some consonants like /f/,

/v/, /θ/, **/ð/**, /p/, /b/, /g/ and /j/, the teacher can give a demonstration to show how the sounds are produced.

The teacher of spoken English needs some training in phonetics so that he can not only improve his own pronunciation but also provide correct information for the students, hear their mistakes, find out the precise faults, and devise suitable remedies exercises.

5.2.3.5. Summary

As teachers of English, they are required to acquire as high a standard of proficiency in spoken English as possible and to help their students to acquire the skills of listening and speaking in English. By improving their skills in oral communication, teachers should give them greater confidence, developing their personalities and improving their prospects in life. By raising the standard of oral communication through English teachers should also promote national integration and international understanding.

5.3. Teaching and Developing English Speaking Skill

The goal in learning to speak a modern language is to be able to communicate orally with a native speaker. Realistically, the teacher cannot, and should not, expect his students to deceive anyone into thinking they are natives. The rate of speech will be slower than that of a native. The pronunciation and intonation will not be perfect. The syntactical usage will be at a simple level and most likely will include carry-overs from the native language. There will be many needed words which they will not know. (The master of vocabulary is never complete in any language). But if they can make themselves understood in the language, they and their teacher can be quite proud of their achievement. The honest modern language teacher must admit that

most students do not attain his level of proficiency in speaking. Perhaps achievement would be higher if the goals of the profession were set at a more realistic level (Chastain, 1971:198).

This section discusses some relevant points that are related to the situation of teaching of spoken English in Yemeni universities. These points are: teaching of speaking skills; motivating factors that motivate students to speak English in the classrooms; classroom organization; problems associated with the teaching of spoken English in Yemeni Universities.

5.3.1. Teaching of Speaking Skills

Before teaching the speaking skills, the main and important thing is that the teacher should prepare himself/herself fully for the students. The ability to speak a language, unfortunately, is difficult to acquire. However, a teacher can motivate and train students to learn to express themselves in a new language. In order to do so, he must maintain this initial enthusiasm as the ability to speak the language. It is important, therefore, early in the course and periodically thereafter for the teacher to reassure the students with regard to their own progress and to point out to them the amount of time necessary to learn a language. One method of demonstrating how much has been achieved is to return once in a while to elementary lessons for oral work. Normally, the students are amazed at how simple that material then seems. The teacher should also encourage his students to continue into third and fourth year courses.

Active class participation is important in all the language skills, but especially so in speaking. Reversibly, in the Yemeni Universities speaking skills are ignored while teaching, and most of the teachers' concentration is restricted on reading and writing. So, how can the Yemeni student encounter his job requirements by using

English or how can he communicate in daily real- life situations after he/she finishes his/her graduation? For that, we assure speaking is impossible without oral language practice. However, oral recitation is the most difficult activity to elicit from most of the Yemeni students. They may not talk much even in classes in which their own language is used. For the shy, introverted student, any oral answer in class is difficult. Even those students who normally enter willingly into class discussions may hesitate to do so in a language class.

The researcher investigates the kind of skills that Yemeni English teachers teach in the course of spoken English. Bellow, we will see the teachers and students' views on this subject.

5.3.1.1 The teachers' and students' views on the teaching of the speaking skills

Question 13 (See Appendix A) asked about the speaking skills. The teachers' responses on this question are shown on Table (9) below.

Table 9: Types of speaking skills

Kinds of the skills of speaking		Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the responses (out of 112)	
		No.	%	No.	%
a	Strategies for developing the speaking skills	15	50	60	53.57
b	Pronunciation, stress, and intonation	18	60	70	62.50
c	Lexical items	12	40	55	49.11
d	Structural items	11	36.67	45	40.18
e	Mimicry-memorization	6	20	25	22.32
f	Drills	13	43.33	15	13.39
g	Question-answer practice	24	80	80	71.43
h	International talk	12	40	35	31.25
i	Long turns	8	26.67	20	17.86
j	Dialogues	16	53.33	55	49.11
k	Plays	14	46.67	30	26.79
l	Simulations	6	20	25	22.32
m	Role – play	14	46.67	50	44.64

Table (9) shows the kinds of skills that the spoken English course should be included. By examining the teachers' responses, we find that all the teachers who answer the question select the item (g) in the table which is "question and answer practice". The majority of the teachers select the items (b, j, a, k, m, and f) respectively. Through their responses we can conclude that the teachers put their concern on two skills which are item (g) and (b) among the other skills shown in Table (9). The other skills in the table are considered as less important. In this regard, I raised a question: Do teachers empirically teach these skills in their classrooms, and/or do their courses in spoken English are included these items? This is what we can conclude it through the students' responses to the same question and what the teachers responded to question 12 above.

In question 10 (See Appendix B) and by looking at Table (9 we can see 71.42% of the students selected the item (g) in the table, 62.5% selected the item (b), and 49.10% of them selected both the items (c and j) the other items in their views are less important, whereas 17.85% of the students didn't answer the question.

Through examining the teachers' and students' views on the speaking skills, we find that the same skills that have the same importance are selected by both the teachers and students. That means both of them select "question and answer practice;" and "pronunciation, stress, and intonation" as the main skills they actually used for the teaching and learning spoken English.

It is evident from the discussion above and the teachers' responses to Q.12 (See Appendix A) is that, teaching spoken English is only limited to teaching pronunciation.

5.3.1.1.1. Summary

According to the discussion above, we can conclude that this unsatisfactory situation of teaching and learning spoken English is because of some reasons:

1. The syllabus is limited to teaching pronunciation which is considered as one aspect of the speaking skill.

2. The materials and texts used in the teaching of speaking skill are probably irrelevant to the students' needs, levels and their lives.

3. The teachers, either they are not qualified or they are assigned to teach speaking course which is not their specialized field.

4. The students seem to some extent are not motivated, not serious in their study and lack of English proficiency.

5. The approaches used for teaching the speaking skill are restricted to the audio-lingual approaches. Communicative approach to the teaching of speaking skill is ignored.

6. Teachers do not consider the ways of improving their students' personalities, their students' prospects and the students' oral communication skills.

5.3.1.1.2. Suggestions

It became clear how Yemeni Universities dealt with the teaching of speaking as a skill and what kind of skills the teachers teach in their spoken courses. For improving the situation of teaching speaking courses in Yemeni Universities, the researcher tries to shed the light on some important points that related to the designing and teaching of spoken English courses that are suitable to the Yemeni context.

The development of a warm, friendly class atmosphere is a crucial prerequisite for a language class. The teacher must not relax his efforts to encourage his full participation. He should be receptive to and encouraging of the students' best efforts,

and he should attempt to dispel the notion that he is the constant evaluator of every response. Because most of the Yemeni high school students' background knowledge in English is almost nothing, they do not speak their mother tongue perfectly and they do not speak the target language perfectly either, the teacher should refrain from the ever present urge to correct every single mistake in class, as well as he should let his students feel free to participate and to speak the language.

Another key proposition in developing the speaking skill, as in all the other skills, is sequencing. The difficulty level of oral activities should be arranged in such a way that the students are usually asked to respond only to those stimuli for which they have been sufficiently prepared. Otherwise, they soon become discouraged and cease to be active participants in the class. Such students then wait patiently, or impatiently, until they are permitted to drop the class.

As it is known, speaking means communication. In real life situations we can't live without speaking. When we talk of the four basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, we don't want to say that we learn these skills one by one. In fact, it is not so. The truth is we listen and speak. We read and write. Listening and speaking go hand in hand and reading and writing go together. For instance, when a teacher is teaching something in the class, the class is listening. May be, one of the students gets up and asks a question to the teacher. When a student speaks, the teacher has to listen. Thus we see that listening and speaking are interdependent. Therefore, for making students interact inside and outside the classroom, students get lots of opportunities to speak for instance, they have to introduce themselves; tell the time; describe people, places, things and events; answer the telephone calls; express likes and dislikes; ask for and give direction; give compliments; ask for and give information; make and grant request; ask for and give

opinion; order meals; accept and decline invitations; initiate conversation; give instructions and advice; talk about plans, make predictions; talk about problems; make, accept and decline offers; and express obligation, sympathy and opinion.

5.3.2. Factors that Motivate Students to Speak English in the Classroom

Question 14 (See Appendix A) was given to ask about the factors that motivate students to speak English in the classrooms. The teachers' responses are shown in table (10) below:

Table 10: Speaking motivating factors in the classroom

	Kinds of the motivating factors	Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)	
		No.	%
i	Making the English lessons interesting and lively.	20	66.67
ii	Giving students a chance to participate in the classroom discussion.	22	73.33
iii	Encouraging and supporting the students	16	53.33
iv	Making the texts and materials used for teaching as relevant to the students' needs and to their daily lives.	16	53.33
v	Using lots of interesting ways to motivate students to learn and improve their English.	18	60

In question 14 above, five teachers did not answer the question. According to Table (10), the teachers' responses show that the teachers give more importance for three of the motivating factors which are "giving students a chance to participate in the classrooms discussion", "making the English lessons interesting and lively", and the third one is "using lots of interesting ways to motivate students to learn and improve their English". The other two motivating factors are given less importance by the teachers.

5.3.2.1. Summary

In fact, the motivating factors listed in Table (10) are very important to motivate students to speak-English in the classrooms. In addition to these motivating factors, some teachers add some other factors such as, "better class atmosphere'; "good methods of teaching with good brained teachers"; "drawing the students' attention to the fact that they are all learning a new language" and "accepting the students' mistakes and should be appreciated because they are considered as a sign for their improvement."

In some learning contexts, it is clear why students need to learn to speak English. In many countries, students learn all the other school subjects like mathematics and science through the medium of English but unfortunately we don't have this in Yemen. The medium of instruction is Arabic. Secondary level students in Yemen may not understand why they need to speak English. So, how do we motivate Yemeni learners to speak English?

5.3.2.2. Suggestions

By examining the motivating factors in Table (10) and the suggested factors by the teachers, we believe the answer lies in the following:

- Making the English lessons interesting and lively and give the students opportunities to participate in the lesson. If the students are interested, they will be more motivated to learn and study well.

- Students need to be involved in the lessons that use a variety of activities.

- Teachers should encourage and support their students, and if possible, the texts and materials used for teaching should be relevant to the students' needs and to their lives.

- For practicing speaking in class and how to motivate students to use English outside the class, the researcher suggests the following:

1. Practicing speaking in class is quite important. So, a classroom is not only a place where students learn about the rules of language. It is also a place where the students can practice using the language in a supportive environment.

2. Teachers try to speed up the process of learning to speak English outside the classroom. Students hear English in their daily lives, so, they have to learn how to use English to communicate. This will be achieved when the teachers introduce new language and ask the students to practice it often.

3. Teachers need to use lots of interesting ways to motivate students to learn and improve their English such as, teaching the students lots of new words (vocabulary) and telling them how the language is organized (grammar). In addition, the teachers should give the students the opportunity to use and practice the language they have learnt.

4. In some Yemeni classrooms, speaking means that the students repeat sentences or dialogues, or chant English words. This is common in teaching spoken English in the Yemeni Universities and it is not sufficient because the repetition process is only one of the useful ways of practicing new language.

5. It is important for the students to practise the language they are learning in situations which are similar to the life outside the classroom. In this regard, the Yemeni students need to practice the oral communication skills by for example, talking about their lives; talking about news; expressing their ideas; and discussing issues.

6. Instead of asking students to repeat sentences, sometimes the teachers should

give the students a topic and ask them to construct and say their own responses. In this way, we give the students the opportunity to use their own sentences and dialogues. So, teachers need to make time for different kinds of practice and think of topics for students to talk about. Teachers also need to create an encouraging environment where students can practice expressing themselves and making themselves understood even if they make mistakes. This type of speaking practice prepares them for using English inside and outside the classroom.

5.3.3. Classroom Organization

Question 15 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about their suggestions which can help the classroom organization and may work for both the teacher and his student in the teaching of the speaking skill.

5.3.3.1. The teachers' suggestions regarding the class organization

The teachers' responses to this question indicate some suggestion that in their views are important in effective classroom organization. We can summarize their responses as follows:

(i)   to attract every student's attention

(ii)   to encourage those students who have a range of abilities and learning styles and help the weaker students.

(iii)   to avoid problems that are related to spoken English course and

(iv)   to convey the ideas and the lessons.

By focusing on the teachers' suggestions, we can say their suggestions are useful and helpful for organizing the class tasks and activities and probably they are reflected to the methods, approaches and styles the teachers use to teach spoken

English in their classes. For that, the researcher proposes some suggestions that can help in the classroom organization. These suggestions may actually work for both teachers and their students. The suggestions are as follows:

1. The teacher's role in speaking lesson: Because it is a habit for teachers in our universities to be dominant in the classroom, the students find it difficult to be involved or become creative. That means, the more time the teacher speaks during the lesson, the less time there is for his students to speak. So, to help his students speak, he needs to have several different roles. A teacher is a giver of information and a corrector of mistakes. But in addition, at different times during the lesson, the teacher can also be a model, a prompt, an organizer, an encourager and a monitor. These roles can help the teacher to manage the lesson and help the students learn.

2. Planning and organization: are considered important elements in the class organization. For example, careful planning keeps all students involved in the lesson and allows them to work with each other. The teacher does not give up control during any part of the lesson, but during pair work and group work, he manages and monitors the students carefully. In case the teacher can manage the pairs or groups well, and organizes the speaking activities carefully, he and his students can enjoy and learn from their speaking lesson. Additionally, and an important point in planning is that, when the teacher plans lessons, the researcher refers to some areas that the teacher should think about in detail.

   - Exactly what kind of speaking practice will the student do?
   - How much will the teacher speak and how much will his students speak?
   - What different activities the teacher uses?

- When will the students work in pairs or groups and how will the teacher group them?

- How much time will each part of the lesson take?

- What will the teacher do if the lesson turns out to be too easy or too difficult?

- How much will the teacher assess the success of the lesson?

3. Whole-class work, pair work, and group work: In Yemeni Universities the whole-class work pattern is still dominant until now in teaching English. About pair and group work, some teachers probably are used them to some extent. Whole-class work, pair work, and group work are considered as three different teaching and learning interactive patterns. Whole class work is when the teacher teaches the whole class at the same time. It is useful for certain stages of a lesson; often done in the presentation phase; or when he begins a new topic. We remember that, even if all students are sitting quietly, they may not be paying attention, so the teacher has to make sure that he speaks distinctly, gives clear instruction and involves the students at every opportunity.

Pair work and group work involve all the students in the class working at the same time. The important difference between whole-class work and pair and group work is that the students work with each other, and their attention is not focused on the teacher. He has different guiding roles during this type of activity.

Pair work and group work are very important because they provide all students lots of speaking practice; allow the quieter or weaker students to speak to another student, instead of speaking in front of the whole class; and teach students to help each other with their learning.

Working in pairs and groups, students can talk about their own ideas, opinions, and real life facts and situations and develop real spoken communication skills.

For communicative practice, students are required to practice the language inside and outside the classroom. But what is required is a teaching methodology which provides real communication within the classroom itself.

Professional literature describes a number of techniques for facilitating this kind of speech. The teachers in Yemeni Universities should then take advantage of commonly occurring classroom situations to speak in the foreign language rather than the native tongue. There are three basic categories for the teacher's purpose:

- *Directions, requests, questions:* Situations occur daily in every classroom which requires this kind of talk. Sometimes they are planned, other times they are spontaneous. They represent, nevertheless, the type of speech used in expressing real needs which of course constitute the most meaningful talk one can engage in.

- *Dramatizations and visual aids:* Use of such techniques make communication in the foreign language possible when linguistic items are involved which students have not yet learned. A simple acting out of the expression "Exchange your papers", accompanied by the literal exchanging of papers of two students by the instructor, communicates the message to the entire class, even though the expression has never been learned. The situation then can be taken advantage of to teach the new expression through students' repetition and a quick spelling on the chalkboard for notebook entry.

- *Persistent use of the foreign language with learned linguistic units:* This requirement applies to the teacher as well as the students, although the former of course must set the example. It attaches the absurdity of speaking in the native

language when students have learned the elements of the utterance in question in the foreign tongue.

Teaching for communication, therefore, calls for a supportive relationship between communicative techniques and teacher competence in the language. We must be continually concerned with both elements, but without them, it will be difficult to make our foreign language teaching very exciting and meaningful to the majority of students.

5.3.4. Problems Associated with the Teaching of Spoken English in Yemeni Universities

English is considered as a foreign language to almost all Arab students particularly Yemeni students. Therefore, learning spoken English turns out to be problematic to almost all college students in Yemen.

In the case of Yemeni Arabic speaking students, particularly those who come to the college level from Arabic medium school, there is nothing that can help them to learn an acceptable variety of spoken English. Thus, the responsibility of the English teacher at the undergraduate level in Yemen becomes more complicated. Naturally, in the teaching of spoken English, the teacher faces certain problems. Likewise, the students are also confronted with several problems. In this regard, institutions for training and advanced research if available, individual teachers who have already undergone training in this area and seminars can offer some guidance to the teacher in particular. However, extending such guidance may not always be possible if the nature and scope of the problems are not identified.

According to that, this study investigates the problems involved in the teaching of spoken English to EFL students in Yemen.

5.3.3.1. Teachers' and students' views on the problems associated with the teaching of spoken English

Question 16 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about the actual problems in the teaching of speaking skill that the Yemeni students are encountered. The teachers indicate some problems regarding the speaking activities. These problems are summarized as follows:

- ❖ Students often feel inhibited to try to say things in English as a foreign language in the classroom because students feel worried about making mistakes; are fearful of criticism or losing face; and they are simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.

- ❖ Students complain that they cannot think of anything to say, their participation is very low and they lack their confidence.

- ❖ Students have poor background.

- ❖ Students don't listen a lot but rather depend only on what they learn in class.

- ❖ Some students depend only on the teacher and what the materials included.

All the problems which are listed above by the teachers are actually existed. The teachers indicate only the students' complicated situation and they highlight to some extent the students' problems. But the teachers do not mention the problems that associated with the teaching of English spoken course they teach and other necessary issues such as the syllabus, materials, unqualified teachers, equipment, and the time allotted to the teaching of speaking skill etc. The problems which listed above are reflected to the students' performance while learning their course.

Before examining the teachers' list of problems, let us see what the students' responses are to question 11 (See Appendix B). Responding to question 11, in their

turn, the students reported their own problems regarding the teaching and learning speaking skill. The problems they reported are summarized as follows:

- ❖ Students are not encouraged to use the English or even practice it. They have just to listen and memorize.

- ❖ Teachers lack of an interesting way in teaching spoken English.

- ❖ Pair work and group work in the speaking classes are not followed. That means students need such tasks and activities to use English in class.

- ❖ In class discussion, students don't have opportunity to practice English.

- ❖ Materials are likely not available, only the teacher's hand-out.

Through examining the teachers' list of problems, we find that inhibition in the teaching of speaking skill unlike reading, writing, and listening activities. Speaking requires some degree of real time exposure to an audience. Because teachers themselves believe that the learners are often inhibit about trying to say things in English as a foreign language in the classroom; worried about making mistakes; scared of criticism or losing face; or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts. All these problems are associated with the students' each academic year. Since the teachers understand and cognizant of these problems, why they don't try to rectify them?

Some teachers reported that even if the students are not inhibited, we often hear them complain that they cannot think of anything to say. When teachers reported this information they understand that their students have no motive to express themselves beyond the fearful feeling that they should speak.

Another problem indicated by the teachers is that low or uneven participation. This is an obvious and one of the main dilemmas in the teaching of English language skills that the researcher observed in the Yemeni Universities. The researcher

personally confirms that the reason is not the students, the syllabus or the materials but the teachers themselves. The teachers come to the class to teach only the proficient students who are less than ten students among 100. So, what can we expect from the rest of the class?

By examining the students' problems, we notice that the most of these problems are mentioned in the previous discussion in chapter 4 (listening skill) and the previous sections of this chapter. But the researcher here confirms that emphasizing listening and speaking skills are prerequisite in the teaching and learning of English as it is dealt with the reading and writing skills.

5.3.4.1.1. Summary

After examining the teachers' and students' list of problems mentioned above the researcher concludes that the main problems that associated with the teaching of speaking skill in the Yemeni Universities are as follows:

1. Problems which are inherent in the academic situation such as:

    a) Lack of emphasis on spoken English in the curriculum.

    b) Lack of training facilities to the teacher.

    c) Lack of equipment

2. Problems related to linguistics, such as:

    a) The dissimilarities between the sound systems of Arabic and that of English pose certain problems to the students.

    b) The structural and functional differences between English and Arabic as spoken media.

3. Socio-cultural problems, such as:

    a) Yemeni students who join colleges come from different kinds of social and family background.

b) They come from different areas and different accents.

4.   The use of Arabic in the classroom where all learners share the same mother tongue, they may tend to use it because it is easier, they feel unnatural to speak to one another in English as a foreign language and because students are less exposed to English. If they talk in small groups, it can be quite difficult to get some classes–particularly the less motivated ones to keep to the target language.

5.3.4.1.2. Solutions

To help solving the problems that both Yemeni teachers and students listed above regarding the teaching and learning the spoken English, the researcher proposes some suggestion below.

1.   The teacher can by any mean help to solve some of the problems for example, by using group work. This increases the sheer amount of the learner's talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of the learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class. It is true that group work means the teacher cannot supervise all the learners' speech, so that not all utterances will be correct, and the learners may occasionally slip into their native language, nevertheless, even taking into consideration occasional mistakes and mother tongue use, the amount of time remaining for positive, useful oral practice is still likely to be far more than in the full-class setup.

2.   When the teachers think of an activity, they should base it on easy language. That mean, the activity on easy language in general, the level of language used for a discussion should be lower than that used in intensive language learning activities in the same class. It should be easily recalled and produced by the participants so that they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation. It

is a good idea to teach or review essential vocabulary before the activity starts.

3.   The choice of topic and task should be made carefully to stimulate students' interest. The teacher here should make the purpose of the discussion clear, this resulted to the more motivated students.

4.   One of the important points in the teaching of spoken English is that the teacher gives some instructions or training in the discussion of learning skills. If the task is based on group discussion then the teacher includes the instruction about the participation when introducing it. For example, tell the learners to make sure that everyone in the group contributes to the discussion; appoint a chairperson to each group who will regulate the participation.

5.   It is a teacher's responsibility to keep the students speaking the English language in the classroom and in the college setting.

However, when all is said and done, the best way to keep students speak the target language is simply the teacher should be personally there as much as possible, reminding them and modelling the language he personally uses.

5.4. Testing Spoken English

To begin this section, we have to know first how oral test is defined. "An oral test defined as a test in which a person is encouraged to speak and is then assessed on the basis of that speech". (Underhill 1987: 1)

In other words, we can say, an oral test is a repeatable procedure in which a learner speaks and is assessed on the basis of what he says. It can be used alone or combined with tests of other skills.

To identify the different components involved in communication by speech, Underhill (1987:2) designed a model and pointed out that the arrows indicate the directions of speech. They point in both directions; at one moment, one person is

listening to the other person speaking, and the next moment, the roles may be reversed. The speaker becomes the listener and the listener becomes the speaker. These switches from one role to anther often happen very fast in conversation. Speech is normally a two–way system of communication: situations where only one person speaks and others only listen, such as an academic lecture of a political address are comparatively rare. This feature of interactive role–switching distinguishing good oral tests form other language tests; listening, reading, or writing tests which present a set of questions and elicit a set of answers are clearly not interactive in this way.

SPEAKER / LISTENER	MESSAGE	LISTENER / SPEAKER

With one addition, the same model can be used to represent the oral test situation. As well as a person who speaks and a person who listens in an oral test we need somebody to assess that approach. It is this process of assessment that turns it into a test.

SPEAKER / LISTENER	MESSAGE	LISTENER / SPEAKER
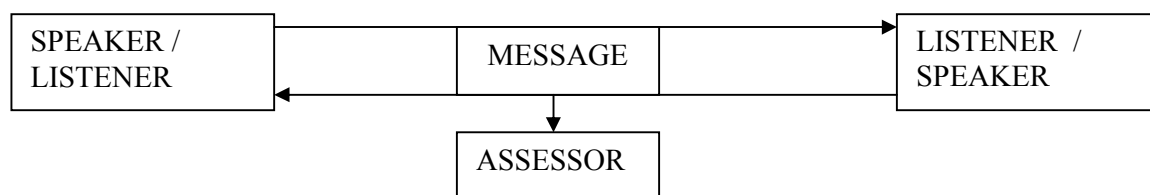
ASSESSOR

In oral test, we do not need to have three different people, one for each role. Some types of oral tests have more than three people, some have fewer: self-assessment, for example, needs only one person. The most common type of oral interviews involves two people, the learner and a person who is both listener and assessor. (See below)

SPEAKER / LISTENER	MESSAGE	LISTENER / SPEAKER

ASSESSOR

147

This test type for example is economical but it does require somebody to carry out two roles at the same time, and this can be difficult to do.

Comparison with other kinds of tests, oral tests are qualitatively different. There is a lot of interest now in oral testing partly because teaching is more than ever directed towards the speaking and listening skills particularly in the early stages. So, why have oral tests generally received little or no attention in the Yemeni schools and Universities? Many books have been written about language testing. They follow the changing fashions of language teaching but they usually make the same basic assumptions about the nature of language testing. And this is what still followed in Yemen. Generally, little space is devoted to oral testing compared to testing the other skills. This is partly because of the difficulty of treating oral tests in the same way as other more conventional tests.

Underhill (1987:3-4) pointed out that real people meet face to face and talk to each other. The test may not even exist in the same way that a written test does on paper. It is the people and what passes between them that is important, (and the test instrument is secondary). In fact, with a technique like an oral interview, it becomes impossible to talk about the 'test' independently of the people involved in it because it doesn't have a separate existence as a set of questions on paper.

It follows that oral tests must be designed around the people who are going to be involved. We want to encourage people to talk to each other as naturally as possible. The people, not the test instrument are our first concern.

Language testing has developed enormously in recent years and has absorbed many influences of a more pragmatic nature. Anyone with any experience of oral testing in particular will know that oral ability cannot be forced into such a mould. But the criteria used here for evaluating tests still favour the statistical assumptions of

the mental testing heritage and the result is strong bias towards mechanical tests and against the human face of oral test.

When we test a person's ability to perform in a foreign language, we want to know how well they can communicate with other people not with an artificially constructed object called a language test. Thus, evaluating the ways used in general in Yemen is that they restricted the language test only on two main language skills, which are reading and writing. Because of that the English graduates go to their jobs by knowing nothing to say. They go to teach in schools and colleges and it is difficult for them to contact properly with their students. Their students therefore encounter many problems of teaching and testing general English language and particularly couldn't use the basic communication skills.

After this introduction of how to test the spoken English, we investigate now the teachers' and students' views on the ways and methods that are used for testing spoken English in Yemeni Universities.

5.4.1. Teachers' and students' views on testing the spoken English

In question 17 (See Appendix A), the teachers were asked about the ways and methods that they use for testing and assessing spoken English. According to their views, the teachers provide some ways and methods. In their responses, some teachers have some similarities in their views and some other teachers follow their own views on testing and assessing the spoken English. Their views can be summarized as follows:

❖ Teachers can make the students speak about topics of their interests, ask and answer questions and act. Accordingly, the teacher can assess their speaking skills.

❖ Testing and assessing spoken English can be done through making interviews, debates, role-plays, conversations and elocution.

❖ Giving students an opportunity to speak is the means to assess their spoken skills.

❖ Assessing students through starting by reading some words and how to pronounce them. After that practising the words through their use in a context.

❖ Teachers use oral tests besides encouraging the students to express themselves freely.

❖ Ask students to choose a topic of their own and present it and then direct some questions to which they are supposed to give and answer.

❖ Giving the students more instructions, group discussions and expose them to the foreign language native speakers through recorded cassettes.

❖ Assign activities that lead students to speak and accordingly the teachers assess their students' speaking skills.

❖ Ask students to talk only in English among themselves as long as they are in the faculty.

According to the teachers' responses listed above, it seems that some of these views are really perfect, some of them restricted their views of testing and assessing spoken English by administering question and answer type, the other teachers generalized their views on asking students to present their own topics to do more instruction and to ask students to talk only in English among themselves.

On the other hand, students expressed their opinions on the ways of testing the spoken English they received in their universities. By responding to question 12 (See Appendix B), students showed their comments as follows:

❖ Testing students personally by choosing a topic to speak about.

❖ Teachers test and assess spoken English through the students' answers to their questions presented in the class.

❖ The teachers ask the students to listen to the cassette and then answer the questions about what they listened to.

❖ The teacher gives the students a passage with missing words and they listen and complete the blank of the missing words.

❖ The teacher asks the students to make conversations with each other, talk about any subject and asks students some general questions.

❖ Students claim that their teachers teach them the way as it is in "New Interchange Courses," not as students in the intermediate and advanced levels in the university.

❖ Teachers try to help the students to speak in English and don't allow them to speak in Arabic.

❖ Teachers most of the time ask their students random questions.

5.4.1.1. Summary

By looking at the teachers' and students responses, it seems there are no more differences in the content of their views regarding testing and assessing the spoken English. It is evident from the teachers' responses that the teachers do not think carefully about the aims of the speaking skill, whether these aims match the needs of the students or not. They don't consider that the aims of speaking skill should be reflected on the teaching/testing programs that provide just what the students need. This argument advocates the previous discussion that the spoken English as a skill is neglected in Yemeni Universities and is only limited to the teaching of pronunciation.

Students express what is really taught in their classrooms. But when looking at the teachers' responses, we find that each teacher has his own syllabus, and

methodology to assess and test the spoken English. The teachers' responses draw our attention to an idea that there is no specific syllabus and materials specified by the university regarding the teaching and testing spoken English. As usual, the teachers are assigned to design their thoughts in their own hand-outs and follow the approaches they prefer depending on the objectives that the think suitable throwing away the students' needs, interests and abilities while designing their hand-outs and when teaching them in their classrooms.

5.4.1.2. Suggestions

For testing and assessing spoken English, the researcher proposes some thoughts and suggestions below.

When we test a student's ability to perform in a foreign language, we want to know how well they can communicate with other people not with an artificially constructed object called a language test. As a result, the researcher proposes some ideas that the teachers should take them into account while teaching and testing spoken English. These suggestions are included the following:

Students' needs

What does the individual learner stand to gain or lose from taking the test? In ideal circumstances, the aims of the program match the needs of the learner so that the teaching/testing program provides just what the learner most needs and every day is happy. In the real world, however there is often a mismatch between institutional aims and personal needs resulting in a test which is of little or no benefit to the learner and may have a demotivating effect. Such a mismatch may stem from a large and inflexible training program particularly in an industrial setting or it may result from a

learner's greater awareness of his own special needs and hence a greater sensitivity to whether those needs are being met.

Different people have different needs at a personal level and at a professional level. If there are a few clearly distinct groups classified, for example, by present occupation or future training course- we can prepare and use certain techniques or stimuli accordingly.

If there is a wide verity of different individual needs, the overall aims of the program may be to teach and test general English because there are not sufficient resources to develop material for each special area. However, an experienced teacher will always adapt his/her lessons as far as possible to suit the individual needs of his/her students and an oral test can be flexible in the same way.

Making the test relevant to the learner's needs is not just an academic exercise. If the learner realizes that the interviewer is sufficiently interested in his personal needs to adapt the test accordingly, he will respond to that expression of interest. He will probably have more to say about topics that concern him personally. He will not necessarily perform better but he will feel that the test is more relevant for him and the assessment will be based on a more representative sample of his language. Needs usually becomes evident in the course of a short conversation with the learner.

For that, the teachers should take into their consideration the aims of testing spoken English program and the types of test they should administer to their students.

In this regard, the researcher provides some useful information on this subject that probably convenient to the Yemeni students' needs and expectations.

1. Aims of testing spoken language

Under this heading there are a number of questions asking about the general background in which the oral test is to be designed and used. It discusses the institutional aims and resources and asks about the individual needs and expectations.

To start any project, Underhill (1987:11) raised a question: "why exactly are we doing it?" He clearly commented on that by saying, "If you know precisely what the aims of the project are before you begin, it will be much easier to take the right decisions later on". The question is not always to answer as it sounds. Many language test are given because it is the accepted practice to give language tests as part of a teaching program without setting out clear aims, simply, we can say a written multiple choice test is usually held in scheduled lesson time in an ordinary classroom without the need for any special arrangements.

In Yemeni classes, it was and still a habit to follow the same multiple choice test. Oral tests in the view of the Yemeni teachers seem as more difficult to design, administer and mark. It is an important, therefore for the teachers to make sure that they know in detail the purpose of the test before they begin to design it and then produce a suitable test. This becomes clear through the aims of testing spoken English discussed below.

Giving a test is like asking a question -it is a request for information. If we ask the right sort of question, we get the right sort of answer. If we ask a silly question, we get a silly answer. In order to develop a test, we have to know what kind of information we want (Underhill 1987:12). Accordingly, tests can be used to ask four basic kinds of question. These questions are considered as the aims of testing.

a) *Proficiency*: What is the learner's general level of language ability? This kind of tests *aims to produce a single score result*. Usually it quickly covers a wide

range of language in order to find a broad target level. A live oral test can be an economical way of testing proficiency because the interviewer can very quickly decide what the broad target level is and then concentrate on the fine-tuning. Unlike a written or recorded test, where a lot of time can be spent answering and then marking questions which are either much too easy or much too difficult, most of the oral test period is spent on language tasks pitched at more or less the right level.

To get a complete picture of a learner's language proficiency, we would need to use a test battery that consists of several tests of different kinds-structure, extended writing and listening test, as well as an oral test. However, a well-designed oral test which incorporates a number of different test techniques will give a quick and quite accurate measure of general proficiency. If desired, written or comprehension tasks can easily be built into such a test.

b)   *Placement*: Where does this learner fit in our teaching program?

A placement test identifies the right class for a particular learner, there is no such as a good score or a bad score, only a recommendation for the most suitable class. Obviously, the interviewer must know which classes or levels are available, the teacher's task then is to decide in which of the pigeon-holes - the range of available classes or none of them to put the learner. 'Pigeon–holing' is a useful way to look at placement test; the fewer the options available, the more consistent the decision will be.

The interviewer should also know a lot about what happens in those classes. To assist him/her precisely we can concentrate on what we want the learner to do at the end of the course that he couldn't do at the beginning and to the basis of the course syllabus. If syllabuses are based around sequences of grammatical structures, for

example, then a placement test should place learners according to their knowledge for these structures.

c)   *Diagnostic*: What are the learners' specific strengths and weaknesses?

A diagnostic test offers the learner the opportunity to use a range of language elements they might be functions, structures, situations or vocabulary- to find out which he is familiar with and which he is not. It does not produce information in the form of a score but as a list of areas in which the learner is strong and those in which he needs further practice or remedial work. The interactive of an oral test allows the interviewer to probe for individual strengths and weaknesses, to ask for repetition or clarification, perhaps to elicit the learner's own opinion of his/her ability, and still leave the learner feeling good at the end of the test.

d)   *Achievement*: How much the learner learnt from a particular course?

An achievement test takes a sample of the language elements or skills that have been covered on the course and aims to test how well the learner has mastered those elements. The result s normally expressed in terms of an overall score, although there is also a diagnostic element; the course teacher will want to know which of the course contents were successfully learnt and which weren't. This knowledge will help him/her with future course planning. The best result is when every learner gets an excellent score.

In reality, most test programs will combine two or more of the above aims. For example, a placement test may also aim to diagnose any very weak areas and an achievement test will often aim to test general proficiency as well as how many students have learnt from a particular course. It is very important to design a test program that meets all of its aims and most oral test techniques can be adapted to a

variety of purposes. In an oral test the marking system is as important as the test itself in meeting the aims of the program.

An oral test may be intended only to test a specific feature of spoken language, either: (i) because the only purpose of the test may be to test that feature or (ii) because the test is designed as a series of techniques. Each one concentrates on one or two particular features (e.g. structural accuracy or the use of connecting words) and the results are put together to form a cumulative overall rating.

In practice, oral test frequently consists of several different testing techniques which are marked using different criteria. For example, marks might be awarded in the first part for structural accuracy and correctness of pronunciation; in the second part for breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary and in the third part for fluency and communicative effectiveness. In each case, the techniques and the marking systems obviously need to be carefully designed to match.

2. Expectations

This heading discusses how learners react to a test and therefore how well they do depending on how the test compares with what they expected it to be like. Objectives are associated rather than just oral proficiency.

To help compile a profile of the learner's expectations, Underhill (p.20) makes a list of points to check. These points are as follows:

1. What is the learner's educational background?

2. How strongly is it influenced by his cultural background?

3. What kinds of language tests has he previously taken?

4. Are his expectations of the teaching/testing program essentially academic or vocational?

5. How old is he/she?

6. What is his general level of proficiency?

In short, Underhill wants to investigate if there is a discrepancy between the learners' expectations and the aims of the program or not, how serious is it? And what can be done to remedy it?

Anticipating the likely level of learners may be difficult, but it can have an important influence on the design of the test. Certain question type and techniques are particularly suitable for certain levels and to produce the best test we therefore need to know the most likely range of levels.

3. Test Types

Under this heading there will be some general types of oral tests. These types of oral tests will be very helpful and convenient for both teachers and students in Yemeni Universities, if they are used in a reasonable way.

a) Self-Assessment

The learner is in the best position to say how good he is at speaking; he has been present at every effort he has even made to communicate in the foreign language, while oral test assessments are usually based on as sample of ten minutes speech. The test must therefore provide easily understood guidelines that will enable each learner to express in an explicit form his institutions about his own level. Thus, teachers should encourage their learners and enable them to take more responsibility for helping themselves progress and training learners to monitor and assess them.

Some techniques will be easier to self–correct than others. For example, sentence transformation, sentence repetition, self–rating and correction and the tapes can be corrected by the learner himself, and then kept for checking by conventional rating systems. Another possibility is to offer the learner several chances to record his

task on tape whether it is a laboratory drill, a short presentation, or a test read aloud - until he is happy with it, at which point he passes it over to the conventional rate.

Where several learners are involved in a test task at the same time, they can be asked to assess each other as well as themselves. As in real life, it is the people you are speaking to who decide if you have effectively communicated or not. Comparison between his self-assessment and other people's assessments of himself, using the same scale, will help the teacher to make his own self -judgment critical and accurate.

b)   Teacher assessment

After the learner himself, the teacher is the person who has had the most experience of the learner's speaking ability in the foreign language. Instead of being based on a ten-minute test, a teacher assessment will be based on fifty or a hundred hour exposure to the learner's language in a variety of activities and situations.

Teacher assessment can be carried out either on the spot or as a continuous assessment over a period of time. A third possibility is to base the assessment on a specific period of one week, as an example, during that period the teacher takes care to ensure that every learner has an equal opportunity to speak. For a continuous assessment, the teacher's judgment is formed as gradual process rather than as a sudden decision. Each time the learner attempts a task in class, the teacher has, in effect, administered a single item test. The total of all these tests administered throughout a course constitutes a complete test of proficiency. The disadvantages of teacher assessment are principally concerned with reliability.

The researcher would like to put some comments that the teacher may be considered while assessing learners. These comments are principally concerned with reliability.

a.   The more people involved in an assessment program, the more difficult, it is to

be confident that the results are comparable.

b. When rating their learners, teachers will tend to make assessments by comparing each learner with others in the same class.

c. Teachers build up relationships with learners over a period of time. These are generally constructive and have a positive effect on learning.

c) *The direct interview type*

The direct interview is the most common and most authentic type of oral test for normal purposes; there is no script and no preparation on the learner's part for any special activity. Obviously, the teacher will be well prepared as to control exactly what the learner says. This flexibility means that there will be a considerable divergence between what different learners say which makes such a test more difficult to assess with consistency and reliability.

d) *The pre-arranged information gap*

This type of test is effective at producing clear evidence of communicative success or failure; but it is restricted to a specific type of communication- the transfer of factual information.

At the design stage of information gap tests, there is a danger of creating a task that is too much like a problem-solving test. In other words, the ability to reason analytically may be as important to success as the ability to speak fluently.

e) *Tests where the learner prepares in advance*

The learner has sufficient time before the test to prepare for the task and therefore brings to the test a good idea of what he will say. The time needed for preparation will range from a few minutes for a blank dialogue to several hours or days for a presentation. A prepared oral test gives all the learners something to say

without putting words into their mouths; it tests the ability to compose and present statements with care and deliberation rather than the spontaneous self-expression of an interview type test.

f)   *Recording oral tests*

Any ordinary oral test can be recorded on tape but in most cases making a recording is not an essential part of the test. The recording is used subsequently for one or more of four purposes:

- As the basis for assessment

- As data for moderating the consistency of assessment

- As the basis for self- assessment

- As teaching material on which to base correction and feedback

This test is usually held in a language laboratory where several learners at once respond to pre-recorded stimuli heard through headphones. These spoken responses are recorded on the tapes in each booth and then collected for marking. These are referred to here as 'recorded tests'.

The learner is encouraged to speak and his recorded speech is listened to later by a listener/assessor, but there is no two way communication between them and no opportunity to switch roles from speaker to listener and back again, as in live conversation.

Concluding to the information discussed above and during each test, the teachers should involve their students and put in mind that, if their students desalt friendly and become more close to you, this will be reflected on their concern in their study. At the end of each test, teachers are advised to leave the learner with a sense of accomplishment, feeling that he has done something interesting in their study.

CHAPTER 6

READING

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will critically review five basic areas in reading comprehension. These areas are: an introduction to the nature and scope of reading; the reading courses (goals, models, approaches and materials) that are used in teaching the reading skill in the Yemeni Universities; teaching reading comprehension skill; reading instruction in the Yemeni classrooms; and understanding the students' difficulties in reading the text in English.

There has been a burgeoning of studies relating to the different aspects of reading dispelling the earlier view that reading is a unitary process. It has fascinated the psychologists, neurologists, psycholinguists as well as information processing theorists to observe the bewildering complexity of this wonderfully varied process. It has been realized that the whole range of operations subsumed under the single act of reading cannot be conceptualized under a single definition. This has led to an increasing awareness that reading indeed is a composite process making it simultaneously a visual act, a perceptual act, a thinking process, information processing process and a process related to the cultural background of the reader. As such, more questions are asked about the nature and the scope of reading and the answers proposed. As a matter of fact, so many diverse processes are subsumed under a single act of reading that it is naïve or simplistic to presume that reading is a linear process of getting meaning from the print.

During the last few years when the knowledge in psychology, more particularly cognitive psychology, was not highly advanced, people believed that as one reads a printed page, the meaning automatically pops into the mind. This was called the

individual's 'barking at print'. It was hypothesized that reading was mediation between the text and the writer, without any contribution on the part of the reader. But the present view of reading is diametrically opposite, that is, it is believed that reading is incidentally visual. In fact, a bewilderingly complex process and sub-processes are activated when the reader's eye meets the printed page.

6.1.1. The Nature and Scope of Reading

Nuttal (1982:192) defines reading as "It is like an infectious disease: it is caught not taught. (And you can't catch it from someone who hasn't got it…)."

Through the definition above, we can say reading means "reading and understanding". Because of that, a foreign language learner is merely decoding-translating written symbols into corresponding sounds.

For reading, Ur (1999:57) points out that "we need to clarify some aspects and illustrate the nature of reading". These aspects are:

(i)   We need to perceive and decode letters in order to read words.

(ii) We need to understand all the words in order to understand the meaning of a text.

(iii) The more symbols (letters or words) there are in a text, the longer it will take to read it.

(iv) We gather meaning from what we read.

(v)   Our understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed.

According to the five statements above, we can make possible reformulations or reservation to them. They might be as follow:

a.   When we begin reading a text or where there is little or no helpful context, we depend on decoding letters to understand words, but as soon as a meaningful

context we tend to bring our own interpretation to the word according to its general 'shape' and the sense of the text rather than according to its exact component letters. Thus, reading activities should probably stress reading for understanding the exact decoding of letters.

b. We need to understand some words in order to understand the meaning of a text, but not the meaning of all: we often "skip" or misread words in order to make sense of the whole more quickly or conveniently. The implication of this for teaching is probably that we should not insist too strongly on our learners understanding every word, but rather encourage them to go for the overall meaning of a text.

c. Very roughly, the more sense units there are in a text, the longer it will take to read it. If smaller sense units (words, sentences) are combined into bigger, coherent ones (sentences, paragraphs), the whole is much faster to read than if they are separate or incoherent. Learners therefore will probably read more successfully if given whole meaningful units of text to read rather than disconnected "bits".

d. Our understanding is based on far more than simple reception of the words themselves, and the process of reading would be better defined as constructing meaning from a written text. The construction of meaning that occurs in reading is a combination of "bottom-up" processes (decoding and understanding words, phrases and sentences in the text) and "top-down" ones (our expectations, previous knowledge constructs (schemata) of the text content and genre). It is very difficult, sometimes impossible, to read successfully a text where our own schemata cannot be brought to bear. Thus, learners should be encouraged to combine bottom-up and top-down strategies

in reading, which means in practice doing such things as discussing the topic of text before reading it, arousing expectations eliciting connections between references in the text and situations known to the learners.

e. Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. For example, we apply different reading strategies when looking at a notice board to see if there is an advertisement for a particular type of flat– and when carefully reading an article of special interest in a scientific journal. Yet, locating the relevant advertisement on the board and understanding the new information contained in the article demonstrates that the reading purpose in each case has been successfully fulfilled. In the first case, a competent reader will quickly reject the irrelevant information and find what he is looking for. In the second case, it is not enough to understand the gist of the text, more detailed comprehension is necessary.

To shed the light on how to do that, Nuttal (1982:195) raised three essential questions: What do we read? Why do we read? And how do we read? Below is a brief discussion on each question.

6.1.1.1. What do we read?

This question discusses the main text types one usually comes across. They are for example,

- Novels, short stories, tales, other literary texts and passages (e.g. essay, diaries, anecdotes, biographies),
- Plays,
- Poems, limericks, nursery rhymes,
- Letters, postcards, telegrams, notes,

- Newspapers and magazines (headlines, articles, editorials, letters to the editor, stop press, classified ads, weather forecast, radio/TV/Theatre programs),

- Specialized articles, reports, reviews, essays, business letters, summaries, précis, accounts, pamphlets (political and other),

- Handbooks, text books, guidebooks,

- Recipes,

- Advertisements, travel brochures, catalogues,

- Puzzles, problems, rules for games,

- Instructions (e.g. warnings), directions (e.g. how to use…) notices, rules, and regulations, posters, signs (e.g. road signs), forms (e.g. application forms, landing cards), graffiti, menus, price lists, tickets,

- Comic strips, cartoons and caricatures, legends (of maps, pictures),

- Statistics, diagrams, flow/pie charts, time-tables, maps,

- Telephone directories, dictionaries, phrasebooks.

6.1.1.2. Why do we read?

There are two main reasons for reading:

- Reading for pleasure

- Reading for information (in order to find out something or in order to do something with the information you get).

6.1.1.3. How do we read?

Usually, the relevant ways of reading should be specified, they are as follow:

- Skimming: quickly running one's eye over a text to get the gist of it.

- Scanning: quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information.

- Extensive reading: reading longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure, this is a fluency activity, mainly involving global understanding.

- Intensive reading: reading shorter texts, to extract specific information. This is more an accuracy activity involving reading for detail.

In real life, our reading purposes constantly vary and therefore, when devising exercises, we should vary the questions and the activities according to the types of text studied and the purpose of reading it.

6.1.2. Reading Components

It seems only logical that a text about the teaching of reading would begin with a definition of what reading is. However, the act of reading is not completely understood nor easily described. In the most general terms, we may say that reading involves the reader, the text and the interaction between the reader and the text (Aebersold and Field 1997:5).

6.1.2.1. The reader

The readers' engagement in the reading process is based on their past experiences, both in learning how to read and also in the ways reading fits into their lives. What memories does the reader have about his experience while learning to read? What attitudes does he have about reading? Is it a pleasure or a bore? Does it relax him or frustrate him? How did he feel about reading classes when he was in the early years of school? In what ways is reading a part of his life now?

Each reader will generate different answers to the questions from different knowledge bases rooted in previous life and educational experiences. These bases are important in how you as a reader approach, handle, think about and understand written texts. (p.5)

6.1.2.2. The text.

Although for many people reading texts means reading books, people read many different types of text every day, such as labels, instructions, advertisements and notes, etc. Text can be anything from a few words to one sentence to thousands of words comprising thousands of sentences.

The knowledge that readers have of text types allow them to adjust their reading expectations and skills to the text at hand. Readers' comprehension of a text may change as they re-read the text, but the text itself does not change.

Text exhibits various characteristics that can facilitate or hinder the readers' comprehension. Text has many features: organization of information, syntax and grammar, and vocabulary are just a few important types of text features. The presence or absence of various combinations of these features affects the comprehensibility of a text. (p.9)

6.1.2.3. The interaction between the reader and the text

Aebersold and Field (1997: 1) define reading by saying that "reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text" and point out that the text and the reader are the two physical entities necessary for the reading process to begin. It is, however, the interaction between the text and the reader that constitutes actual reading.

Readers use their varying resources to differing degrees when they read. Thus, reading comprehension differs from one reader to another. Aebersold and Field (p.14) specified three types of reading interaction.

(i) *Interaction between purpose and manner of reading*: When people read, they read for a purpose. They may read the instructions on a jar of instant coffee because they need to know how much coffee to put in the cup of hot water. They may

glance at the newspaper headlines before they leave home to see if there are major news items that they should know about. While driving to school or work they may look for signs about road construction in progress so they can avoid traffic delays. They may notice a sign announcing a new store; they may read it because they want to find out what it sells.

The purpose of reading determines how people read a text. As a result, there are some questions to clarify that. (1) Does the reader read the text slowly or quickly? Does he read to understand (reading for full comprehension) or simply to get the general idea (skimming) or to find the part that contains the information he need (scanning)? Does he reread any parts? If so, why? People vary reading behaviour according to their purpose for reading. To know in details

(ii) Interaction through reading strategies: Both teachers and researchers have attempted to identify the mental activities that readers use in order to construct meaning from a text. These activities are generally referred to as reading strategies, although they are sometimes called reading skills. Even though each reader has unique characteristics, successful readers also share much in common, and derive more or less the same meaning from the same text as the teacher or researcher does.

(iii)*Interaction through schema*: Schema refers to the knowledge readers bring to a text. Research on the theory of schema has a great impact on understanding reading and researchers have identified several specific types of schemata.

      a. *Content schema:* provides readers with a foundation, a basis for comparison (Carrel & Eisterhold 1983; Carrel, Pharis, and Libretto 1989).

b. *Formal schema*, which refers directly Linguistic schema: to the organizational forms and rhetorical structures of written texts (Carrel, 1984)

c. *Linguistic schema:* includes the decoding features we need to recognize words and see how they fit together in a sentence.

Some studies verify that students understand more of a text when they know the content schema (Steffensen & Joag–Dev 1984) and some studies illustrate how schema theory can and should shape our teaching practices (James 1982).

After having an idea about the nature of reading, the next section discusses the courses designed for the teaching of reading comprehension in Yemeni Universities.

6.1.3. Summary

1. To be a competent reader there are two cases:

    (a) The reader will quickly reject the irrelevant information and find what he is looking for.

    (b) It is not enough to understand the gist of the text, more detailed comprehension is necessary.

    (c) To shed the light on how to do reading attentively, Nuttal raised three essential questions:

    (i)   What do we read? This question discusses the main text types one usually comes across.

    (ii)   Why do we read? This refer to two main reasons for reading

    (iii) How do we read?

 2. The relevant ways of reading are as follows:

    ➢ Skimming: quickly running one's eye over a text to get the gist of it.

➤ Scanning: quickly going through a text to find a particular piece of information.

➤ Extensive reading: reading longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure, this is a fluency activity, mainly involving global understanding.

➤ Intensive reading: reading shorter texts, to extract specific information. This is more an accuracy activity involving reading for detail.

1. There are some aspects to clarify and illustrate the nature of reading. These aspects are:

   (a) We need to perceive and decode letters in order to read words.

   (b) We need to understand all the words in order to understand the meaning of a text.

   (d) The more symbols (letters or words) there are in a text, the longer it will take to read it.

   (e) We gather meaning from what we read.

   (f) Our understanding of a text comes from understanding the words of which it is composed.

4. Reading Components are as follows:

   (i) The reader

   (ii) The text

   (iii) The interaction between the reader and the text. This component consists of three types of reading interaction.

   (a) Interaction between purpose and manner of reading

   (b) Interaction through reading strategies

   (c) Interaction through schema

   (d) Content schema

(e) Formal schema

(f) Linguistic schema

6.2. Reading Courses: Goals, Models, Approaches and Materials

In language teaching, our methods and techniques have often failed to produce effective learning, however sound they may have appeared in theory. To discover why, we must study the learner. (Littlewoods 1984:1)

This section discusses some points such as, the course goals, models, approaches and what considerations to keep in mind when selecting texts.

6.2.1. Course goals

The most important information that teachers must have as they start to design a reading course is the goals for the course and the reading abilities that students should develop during the course. Teachers then use the goals to guide them as they decide about the structure of the course and about appropriate ways to evaluate the students' performances and, thus, the courses' effectiveness. Goals are usually stated in a broad and general manner, they need not be long or complicated.

In order to know what kind of goals/objectives that the teachers in Yemeni Universities think of when designing a course in reading, let us examine the teachers' views on that.

6.2.1.1. The teachers' views on the goals/objectives of the reading course

Question 18 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about the goals of the reading course they put at the beginning of the designing stage. There are 56.66% of the teachers who actually answer the question while 43.33%   didn't answer it. The teachers suggest some goals/ objectives which are summarized as follows:

- To master all the reading skills (scanning and skimming).

- To comprehend the meaning of the text.

- To reach the author's message.

- To create a bridge or link between the students' previous English course and the courses and materials they recently face.

- To train the learners by using the language they read.

- To focus on an authentic reading to stimulate readers.

- To enable students to develop the required reading skills.

- To comprehend the vocabulary in stages (i.e. words should be easy to read and understand at the beginning, then, these words should be used in a different shape and manner).

- To consider the students' needs and abilities when designing a reading course and topics of their interests must be selected.

- To improve guessing abilities.

As it is obvious from the list above, the teachers express their views on the goals that they should have as they start to design a reading course. The teachers' suggestions about the goals of the reading course that are mentioned above are those goals which they depend on when designing and teaching English reading skills at their universities. Some of the teachers actually specified some goals that are obviously related to the designing of a course of reading, some of them referred to ideas that related to the ways of teaching that should be followed in the classroom and the other teachers generalize their ideas without highlighting any goal regarding the design of a reading course.

6.2.1.1.1. Summary

By examining the teachers' views mentioned above, the researcher has concluded the following:

1) Making goals for designing a course in reading in Yemeni Universities is not deliberately done.

2) Teachers teach the reading skill without thinking reasonably of goals/objectives that specified by the syllabus, if there is one.

3) According to the list above, we can say, the teachers are suggesting goals for designing their reading course redundantly without taking into consideration the students' levels and what kinds of topics would be suitable for the students' interests that the teachers should select.

6.2.1.1.2. Suggestions

According to the discussion above, the researcher confirms that there are many decisions and preparations to be made before the teachers actually step into the classroom. Regarding that, the teachers look at how to decide what to teach in an EFL reading course, the course goals, the approach and what considerations to keep in mind in selecting the texts.

The goals of the course and the reading abilities that students should develop during the course are the most important information that the teachers should consider as they start to design a reading course. The teachers' responsibility then is to use the goals to guide them as they decide about the structure of the course and about appropriate ways to evaluate the students' performances and thus, the courses' effectiveness.

Littelwoods (1984:1) points out:

"In language teaching, our methods and techniques have often failed to produce effective learning, however sound they may have appeared in theory. To discover why, we must study the learner."

Accordingly, before goals can be determined, teachers in the Yemeni Universities should consider what students will do with their EFL reading abilities. For that, the teachers should think carefully on the following questions: 'Do the students need to be able to read textbooks on other subjects such as science or medicine? Do they need to be able to read newspapers or magazines? Do they need to be able to read literature? Do they need to be able to read schedules or forms? Do they need to be able to read letters or personal notes? As a result, the teachers then think of writing their goals. We have to understand that goals are usually stated in a broad, general manner and they need not be long or complicated. Therefore, the researcher proposes some objectives of the reading course that are suitable to the Yemeni English students' needs, interests and abilities. These objectives are:

1. To study and identify the Yemeni undergraduate English majors' levels of understanding and comprehension of English texts.

2. To identify and analyse the reading strategies which are used by the Yemeni undergraduate English majors.

3. To find out whether there is a difference between readers of high interest and those of low interest in applying the reading strategies.

4. To study and analyse the skill of guessing the meaning of unknown words.

5. To find out whether reading proficiency affects activation of appropriate schema.

6. To find out whether students in urban areas are better performers in reading than those in rural areas.

The course goals need to be established well in advance of the first class meeting so that materials can be selected and course designs can be made. Students' needs as defined by the teachers and administrators are usually given greater weight

than the needs defined by the students themselves. In addition, the teachers are often more knowledgeable about what lies ahead for students academically than the students themselves are. However, since students who are involved in their own learning are better learners, teachers should and can include them in the process. Teachers always have some degree of flexibility to adjust and shape a course as it progresses. If feedback from students is collected throughout a course, the teacher can adjust the goals and activities selected to provide students with a meaningful and relevant course.

By taking into account both teacher perceived and student contributed needs when planning reading goals, the teachers and the students work together to build a learning environment that is relevant to both. That means, the more invested and involved students are in their learning, the more responsibility they will take for their learning.

Responding to question 16 (See Appendix C), the majority of teachers confirmed that neither the teachers nor the English departments take into account the students' levels of attainment at the beginning of the course.

It is evident that the English department assign the task of designing the course to the teachers and in their role they collect what subjects they themselves prefer and make their own hand-outs.

6.2.2. Models and Approaches to Teaching Reading

This sub-section discusses the models of how reading occurs and approaches to teaching reading that are used by the reading teachers in Yemeni Universities.

***6.2.2.1. The teachers' views on the models and approaches to teaching the reading
skill***

Question 19 (See Appendix A), was given to ask about the models of how reading occurs and the approaches to the teaching of reading skill that the teachers actually follow in the Yemeni Universities. In responding to this question, the overwhelming majority of the teachers indicate to "the interactive school of theorists" as a model used by them to describe the interaction between the reader and the text. Actually, this model describes a process that moves both bottom-up and top-down model depending on the type of text as well as on the reader's background knowledge, language proficiency level, motivation, strategy use and culturally shaped beliefs about the reading.

6.2.2.1.1. *Summary*

Depending on their views on the models of how reading occurs, the teachers in the Yemeni Universities are successfully chosen the suitable one. The researcher here recommends their selection for this model and in his view, it is better for each reading teacher to be knowledgeable of all the reading models. In this regard, this study provides the Yemeni English teachers with a thorough summary of the three main models that Barnett (1988, cited in Aebersold and Field 1997:17-18) proposed. These models are: bottom-up theory, top-down theory and the interaction school of theorists.

1. Bottom-up model

Argues that the reader constructs the text from the smallest units (letters to words to phrases to sentences, etc.) and that the process of constructing the text from those small units becomes so automatic that readers are not aware of how it operates.

2. Top-down model

Argues that readers bring a great deal of knowledge, expectations, assumptions and questions to the text and give a basic understanding of the vocabulary, they continue to read as long as the text confirms their expectations (Goodman 1967). The top-down school of reading theory argues that readers fit the text into knowledge (cultural, linguistic, historical), they already posses then check back when new or unexpected information appears.

3. The interactive school of theorists

Most researchers currently endorse that both top-down and bottom-up processes are occurring either alternately or at the same time. These theorists describe a process that moves both bottom-up and top-down, depending on the type of text as well as on the reader's background knowledge, language proficiency level, motivation, strategy use and culturally shaped beliefs about the reading.

Reading teachers need to develop that ability to analyse top-down and bottom-up components of the reading processes. Understanding how you read and how your reading process may differ from others in your class is part of your preparation for teaching reading. By beginning with your own reading process and understanding how they operate you will eventually be able to anticipate the types of processes and potential problems that your students will experience.

Approaches to the teaching of reading

Once course goals have been written, the reading teachers need to decide what approach they will use to achieve their goals. An approach "refers to theories about the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers 1986:16).

Regarding the approaches to the teaching of reading, all the teachers who responded this question indicated that they use both "extensive" and "intensive" approaches as they are well-known kinds of approaches for teaching the reading skill.

The researcher recommends the teachers' selection for both the extensive and intensive approaches to the teaching of reading and asks the teachers to follow properly what these approaches include. Here, this study sheds light on these two approaches and proposes some suggestions on their use which will be associated with the levels of the Yemeni students.

1. An extensive approach

An extensive approach to teaching reading is based on the belief that when students read for general comprehension large quantities of texts of their own choosing, their ability to read will consequently improve. The emphasis in extensive reading courses is to use reading as a means to an end. In other words, reading is used to accomplish something else, such as a written summary, a written report, an oral report, a group discussion and a debate. In this type of course, students are usually given more freedom to choose reading materials that interest them and more responsibility in finding materials within their language proficiency range. The text that they read may be completely of their own selection or to some extent selected by the teacher.

In an extensive reading course almost all of the reading is done outside of class, without peer support or teacher aid. The text is always to be read for comprehension of main ideas, not of every detail and word. Students are frequently asked to read more than one text on the same topic. The more texts they read on the same topic, the more they will understand because they will bring more background knowledge to each new text they read. Extensive readings are not generally used to teach or

practice specific reading strategies or skills because the texts do not have accompanying reading exercises.

2. An intensive approach

In an intensive approach to reading which currently reigns in most EFL classrooms and books-reading, the text is treated as an end in itself. Each text is read carefully and thoroughly for maximum comprehension. Teachers provide direction and help before, sometimes during, and after reading. Students do many exercises that require them to work in depth with various selected aspects of the text. Exercises can cover a broad range of reading skills:

- Looking at different levels of comprehension (main ideas vs details)

- Understanding what is implied versus what is stated.

- Discussing what inferences a reader can reasonably make

- Determining the order in which information is presented and its effect on the message

- Identifying words that connect one idea to another

- Identifying words that signal movement from one section to another

- Noting which words indicate the authors certainty about the information presented

It is possible and common to use a combination of both approaches in a reading course. For example, teachers who use a mostly intensive approach to teaching reading may ask students to read text of their own selection and write a report on them, or to read something in the newspaper each week and report orally on it at the beginning of the class. Teachers who use a mostly extensive approach may have all the students read the same teacher-supplied texts from time to time so that they can

discuss the same topic together or can learn how to write a report or make an outline. (based on Aebersold and Field 1997:42-46)

6.2.3. Materials used for teaching reading comprehension

When the course goals have been written and the dominant approach decided, the next task facing the teacher is to select the appropriate materials. They may be expository, narrative, fiction-whatever type is necessary, as long as they fulfil course goals. Teachers using a mostly extensive approach in the reading course need to make sure that students have a readily available and sufficiently large supply of texts at their levels of language proficiency. Those using an intensive approach need to choose reading textbooks that provide the types of readings and reading skills they wish to cover in the course. Teachers using a mixed approach need to have both kinds of materials on hand.

6.2.3.1. The teachers' views on the materials used for the teaching of reading skill in Yemeni Universities

Question 20 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about the materials and strategies that the teachers use for teaching the reading skill. In this question, 53.33% of the teachers responded to the question while 46.66% did not. The teachers' responses are summarized as follows:

❖ Teachers use materials from different reading resources to diversify the reading material and expose their students to different materials from their interests.

❖ The materials they use include "the difficulties in recognizing sentence structure; the difficulties in recognizing relations within a sentence; the difficulties in recognizing and differentiating between a topic sentence and a concluding one in a paragraph.

- ❖ Using some magazines.

- ❖ Teaching students skimming and summarizing.

- ❖ Grasping new words from the context; trying to analyze the text by summarizing and paraphrasing.

- ❖ Telling the students what to do during silent reading, paraphrasing using different tones and using informal language.

By examining the teachers' responses, we find that the teachers in general talked about many subjects that include materials, reading skills, strategies and the ways the teachers use for teaching the reading skill. The question specifically concentrates on only what materials and strategies the teachers use when teaching the reading skill.

6.2.3.2. The Students' views on their feelings and motivations to read in English

By asking students about their feelings and motivations to read in English, it is clear from their responses to question 13 (See Appendix B) that less than 50% of the Yemeni students are not motivated and not interested that much in reading the English text. According to their responses, 49.10% respond that they feel interested in reading in English while 41.96% respond that they are not that much interested in reading in English and 8.92% did not answer the question.

About what types of texts do Yemeni students read regularly in English, the students through their responses to question 14 (See Appendix B), express their own views. Table (11) shows what the students regularly read..

Table 11: Types of reading texts

	Types of texts	Number of students who selected the response (out of 112)	
		No.	%
A	Newspapers	35	31.25
B	Magazines	50	44.64
C	Short Stories	70	62.50
D	Novels	36	32.14
E	Plays	41	36.61
F	Poetry	35	31.25

In this question, 70.53% answered the question while 29.46% did not. Regarding the students' responses in Table (11), it seems obvious that the overwhelming majority of the students select the item (c) in the table which indicates to "short stories." The second types of texts are "magazines" and "plays". The other types of texts "novels", "newspapers" and "poetry" are considered as the least interesting texts to read in English.

6.2.3.3. Summary

By examining the teachers' list of views on question 20, we can conclude that the teachers do not understand the question and cannot distinguish between the materials, skills, strategies and the teaching methods. Thus, some of the teachers' views regarding materials and strategies are useful for teaching the reading skill in Yemeni Universities. This encourages the English departments to think carefully of the programs they use and develop them by considering the current literature in reading.

Through the students' responses to question 13 and question 14 (See Appendix B), we conclude that the students are unsatisfactorily motivated to read in English and this situation is probably because of some reasons:

1.   Students probably are not accustomed to read regularly in their mother tongue.

2. The students' English language proficiency is poor.

3. The teachers in their turn do not encourage their students to read in English and perhaps they do not ask them to read as much as required as part of their class and home activities.

4. Probably, the materials for reading in English do not match the students' interests.

6.2.3.4. Suggestions

Through the teachers' views on question 20 and according to the students' responses to questions 13 and 14 and the discussion above, the researcher provides some suggestions to help the students to get motivated to read regularly in English and get to know the basics of reading in English that encourage them to read different types of texts.

1. Students should advocate time for reading program regularly. This will help them to enrich their language (vocabulary, grammar usage, organizing the texts, etc.).

2. The role of teachers should focus on encouraging students to read in English and provide them with the texts they are interested in. Additionally, instructors should follow the basic ways while teaching their students in the reading classes. In this regard, Aebersold and Field (1997:47) provide some points they are:

   - Mentally sound out parts of the words.

   - Pronounce each word completely.

   - Understand the meaning of each word.

   - Understand grammatical structures.

   - Get the overall meaning of the text.

- Relate text to what they already know about the topic.

- Understand the way information is presented in different parts of the texts.

While teaching reading, there are also some techniques should be considered by the instructors. These techniques are such as: telling the students to keep the purpose of their reading in mind; understand better, if they know the type/function of the text; understand better, if they read each word aloud and slowly; understand better, if they read silently and fast and students should feel that all words in the passage are important and they should know their meaning to continue reading.

If the students are given all what mentioned above and have a good atmosphere in the classroom, they absolutely will find it interesting and get motivated to read in English and will improve their reading, vocabulary and English in general.

In additional to the teachers' and students' views shown above, the researcher suggests some thoughts or ideas on materials, strategies, skills and styles of reading which probably are convenient for teaching the Yemeni students the English reading comprehension skill (see Aebersold and Field 1997:50) that include types of text books, extensive reading text books and reading skills text books.

Reading skills text books aim to improve reading abilities by focusing on the development of various reading strategies, such as, skimming, scanning, finding main ideas of the paragraph, inference and summarizing. The book chapters or sections are clearly marked as to which reading strategy they practice. There are several short texts in each chapter or section to practice a particular skill. Answers are frequently provided somewhere in the book.

6.3. Teaching Reading Comprehension

In many foreign language teaching situations, reading receives a special focus. For this, we specify a number of reasons. First, many foreign language students often have reading as one of their most important goals. They want to be able to read for information and pleasure, for their career and for study purposes. In fact, in most EFL situations, the ability to read in a foreign language is all that students ever want to acquire. Second, written texts serve various pedagogical purposes. Extensive exposure to linguistically comprehensible written texts can enhance the process of language acquisition. Good reading texts also provide good models for writing and provide opportunities to introduce new topics, to stimulate discussion, and to study language (e.g. vocabulary, grammar, idioms). Reading then, is a skill which is highly valued by students and teachers alike.

This section discusses some points which are considered the focus of reading comprehension. These points are: reading skills, reading strategies, differences between skills and strategies and reading styles.

Reading skills, strategies and styles constitute a spectrum of abilities on the part of the reader, which together contribute to his reading proficiency. So they need to be understood in their proper perspective.

6.3.1. Reading skills

A reading skill can be described as a cognitive ability which a person is able to use when interacting with the written texts. Thus, unlike comprehension which can be viewed as the product of reading a particular text, skills are seen as part of the generalized reading process.

To know what reading skills are taught in Yemeni Universities, teachers will explain below their own views on what kind of skills they teach.

6.3.1.1. The teachers' views on the reading skills

Question 21 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about the reading skills that they teach in Yemeni Universities. In this question, 80% of the teachers responded while 20% did not. The teachers' responses are shown in Table (12) below.

Table 12: Reading skills

	Reading skills	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)	
		No.	%
a)	Recognizing the script of the language.	8	26.67
b)	Deducing the meaning and the use of familiar lexical items.	8	26.67
c)	Understanding explicitly the stated information.	13	43.33
d)	Understanding conceptual meaning.	23	76.67
e)	Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances.	15	50
f)	Understanding relations within the sentence.	10	33.33
g)	Understanding relation between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.	15	50
h)	Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices	17	56.67
i)	Distinguishing the main idea from the supporting details.	17	56.67
j)	Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc.).	11	36.67
k)	Basic reference skills.	9	30
l)	Skimming.	13	43.33
m)	Scanning.	15	50
n)	Transcending information to diagrammatic display.	7	23.33

By examining the teachers' responses, we find that the overwhelming majority of the teachers select the item "d" which is "understanding conceptual meaning" as the first and the most important skill to be taught in reading in their views. Then, they concentrate on some other skills which in their views are important, such as "understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices"; "distinguishing the main idea from supporting details"; "understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances"; "scanning to locate

specifically required information". After that they consider the skills of "skimming" and "understanding explicitly stated information". The least of teachers select the other skills which they considered them as the least important. These skills are numbered in the list under the items (f, k, a, b, and n) in the table.

During the interviews made with the teachers (See Questions 29 and 30 Appendix C), the majority of the teachers report that the reading skills they teach are comprehension, reading fast, skimming and scanning. The techniques they use for developing the skills mentioned by them are group works, reading together in groups, answering the questions and discussing the issues after reading to test their comprehension.

6.3.1.2. Summary

After examining the teachers' responses regarding the skills in Table (12) and their comments during the interview program, we find a big difference. This difference is that the teachers select some of the skills that they feel they are convenient to be taught, but these skills are not actually taught in their classes. They only recommend these skills. The actual skills they teach are only those they reported during the interview which are: comprehension, reading fast, skimming and scanning.

6.3.1.3. Suggestions

By restricting the teaching of the reading skill on the four sub-skills that mentioned above by the teachers, the students do not comprehend the reading skill as it is required. For achieving this aim, we can say, all the skills listed in Table (12) are very important to be taught to students in Yemeni Universities because each skill is connected to the other. To clarify this idea, Wallace (1992:146) pointed out that

"Skills are supposed sets of specific abilities which are built-up sequentially, higher ones depending on lower ones, to produce a particular kind of behaviour."

According to that, the reading skills should not be restricted to those they reported in their interviews or those the teachers select from the table above. Thus, all the skills listed in Table (12) are necessary and should be organized as they are in the list. This comment is important to practice what Wallace pointed out.

Reading skills are several, so that, what are mentioned in the above table is also not enough in the views of the researchers. That means, many researchers have their own views of what varieties of skills of reading should include. Therefore, the researcher here provides some researchers' views on the reading skills that Yemeni teachers should consider when teaching English reading comprehension. Among those researchers, for example, Williams and Moran (1989:223), they argued that although a number of skills taxonomies exist, there is a little consensus concerning the content of the taxonomies or in the terminology used to describe them. The following taxonomies may be taken typical of them.

Munby (1978:126-131) points out that reading involves a variety of skills. The main ones he suggests are as follows:

- Recognizing the script of a language

- deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items

- Understanding explicitly stated information

- Understanding information when not explicitly stated

- Understanding conceptual meaning

- Understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances

- Understanding relations within the sentence

- Understanding relation between the parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices

- Understanding cohesion between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices

- Interrupting text by going outside it

- Recognizing indicators in discourse

- Identifying the main point or important information in a piece of discourse

- Distinguishing the main idea from supporting details

- Extracting salient points to summarize (the text, an idea etc.)

- Selective extraction of relevant points from a text

- Basic reference skills

- Skimming

- Scanning to locate specifically required information

- Transcending information to diagrammatic display

6.3.2. Reading strategies

As far as strategies of readers are observed, these refer to "mental operations involved when readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read" (Barnett 1988: 150). She suggests by dividing reading strategies into two categories:

1) text-level strategies

2) word-level strategies.

- *Text-level strategies*: are those which readers use in trying to understand the entire passage or a large part of it. These include using background knowledge, surveying the text and making predictions about what it will be about, skimming and looking for the organization of a passage or a paragraph.

- *Word-level strategies*: on the other hand, are strategies that involve individual words or phrases. For example, guessing the meaning of a word from a context or understand the meaning of a word through recognizing word families.

Kern (1989:145) indicates that comprehension strategies may be either conscious and controlled or unconscious and automatic, and they serve to direct the various components of the reading process toward efficient understanding of a given text.

Two fairly representative examples of strategy research are the investigations of Olshavsky (1977: 656) who claims that a strategy is a "purposeful means of comprehending the author's message". She used the protocol analysis in getting the data and categorizes the strategies as follows:

- Word related: Use of context to define a word, synonym, substitution, and stated failure to understand a word.

- Clause related: Re-reading, inferences, addition of information, personal identification, hypothesis and stated failure to understand a clause.

- Story related: Use of information in a story to solve a problem.

The current explosion of research in second language reading has begun to focus among other things on readers' strategies. These strategies are of interest for what they reveal about the way readers manage their interaction with written text and how these strategies are related to text comprehension. Using a variety of reading strategies are advocated to help students to read better. These strategies start from traditionally recognized reading skills of: skimming and scanning, contextual guessing, skipping unknown words, tolerating ambiguity, reading for meaning,

critical reading, making inferences, building, activating background knowledge and recognizing text structure (Block 1985) and meta-cognitive awareness (Carrel 1989).

According to what the reading theorists mentioned above, we can suggest that the reading strategies can be divided into three stages:

1. Pre-reading strategies

Pre-reading strategies can simply include the following: Accessing prior knowledge; writing your way into reading (writing about your experience related to the topic); asking questions based on the tide; semantic mapping; identifying the text structure; skimming for the general idea; reading the introduction and conclusion and writing a summary of the article based on previewing.

2. During- reading strategies

This stage includes the following strategies: Skipping unknown words: guessing from context; predicting the main idea of each paragraph; glossing; responding while reading; relating glosses back to the text structure; and drawing pictures to show what you see in your mind's eye.

3. After- reading strategies

This stage also includes important strategies that each reader should think of and use while reading. These strategies include: revisiting pre-reading expectations; reviewing notes, glosses and text markings; making an outline, chart, map or diagram of the organization of the text; retelling what you think the author is saying; relating the text to your own experience and responding to the text or criticizing it (Nuttal 1985:97).

6.3.3. Differences between Skills and Strategies

Under this heading, the researcher tries to provide some of the reading theorists' ideas on how to distinguish skill from strategy.

There are hardly any objective criteria to distinguish a skill from a strategy. Some writers refer to 'skill/strategy' (e.g. Nuttal 1985: 199) as if the two were interchangeable. Admittedly, some of this apparent lack of distinct boundary lines may be due to the fact that most of the skills proponents did not attempt to separate skills from strategies. However, Urquhart and Weir (1998: 96-97) provide the following differences between strategies and skills: (1) "strategies are reader-oriented, skills are text-oriented; (2) strategies represent conscious decisions taken by the reader, skills are deployed unconsciously; (3) strategies, unlike skills, represent a response to a problem."

Carrel (1989: 129) agrees with this difference or distinction. She states that, "the term 'strategies' emphasizes the reader's active participation, whereas the term 'skills' may suggest only passive abilities, which are not necessarily activated".

Williams and Moran (1989: 223) differentiate between reading skills and reading strategies as follows: "A *skill* is an ability which automates and operates subconsciously, whereas a *strategy* is a conscious procedure carried out in order to solve a problem"

6.3.4. Reading Styles

The term 'reading style' relates to the reader's attitude toward the text that he/she is about to read. The reading style is determined by two factors (a) the reader's purpose and (b) the accessibility of the text to the reader. Moreover, a text will not necessarily be read in one style, but readers will move along a continuum in response to shifting purposes and the degree of difficulty that different parts of the text present. For Urquhart and Weir (1998) styles are synonymous with strategies. As such, they use the terms 'global strategies' or 'local strategies', to refer to different reading

styles. For example, there are various styles outlined by the reading theorists, some of which are shown below.

Widdowson (1984: 222-3) presents two opposite reading styles: submissive and assertive (dominant). The reader may accept the writer's framework and follow the way the writer has arranged the content of the text; this is being submissive, or the reader may disagree with the writer's framework and simply take what he/ she needs from the text; this is being assertive (dominant).

6.4. Reading Instruction in Yemeni Classroom

Teaching reading in Yemeni Universities is almost teacher-centred. In this kind of teaching, students are only remaining passive. Therefore, we need courses in which the students have some degree of control over what goes on in the course and how it occurs. As a result, for teaching the reading course, we first think of the teachers' views below and then suggest what is suitable for Yemeni students in their reading classes.

6.4.1. The teachers' views on the reading instruction in the classroom

In question 22 (See Appendix A), the teachers are asked to talk about the reading instruction they follow in their classrooms. In this question 60% of the teachers express their views on the reading instruction in the classroom while 40% of the teachers did not answer the question. The teachers' responses to this question are summarized below.

❖   Teachers focus on the silent reading; giving students interesting texts; and they use both the extensive and intensive approaches to the teaching of reading skill.

❖ Giving students an opportunity to read in both extensively and intensively for improving their reading skills.

❖ Ask students to read silently and for many times with the rest in class.

❖ They teach reading by getting across the topic of a paragraph, differentiating between a topic sentence and a concluding one in a paragraph; recognizing sentence structure; scanning for information of the paragraph level and then for information of the text level; and deducing the meaning of unknown lexical items from the context.

❖ Focus on the title to guess what the passage will be about; infer the main ideas of each paragraph; think of the general meaning of the whole passage the writer wanted to convey.

❖ Teachers follow the group work to teach reading and later on discuss the students' answers together.

❖ Teaching student the reading skills and then giving them exercises and opportunities to practice each skill.

6.4.1.1. Summary

By examining the teachers' views about the reading instruction in their classes, one feels proud that the teaching of reading in the Yemeni classrooms has gotten more progressed.

When the researcher collected the data regarding this question, he finds out that each teacher describes his own ways/methods of teaching reading in the classroom. But each one's view seems restricted in comparison with the methods, strategies, and styles that should be followed in the teaching of reading.

To some extent, if we gather the all teachers' views listed above and put them together as a guided program for teaching reading, then teaching and learning reading

takes its place in the classroom and different skills of reading are to be covered. That means, each teacher at least should consider all the above views in mind.

To know more information about how the reading instruction is occurred in the Yemeni classrooms, the teachers are asked to provide this study with their views on two main points: 1) the planned activities taught in the classrooms and 2) constructing reading exercises taught in the classroom. Let us begin with first point.

6.4.2. Planned activities taught in the Yemeni classrooms

Even though exchanges among Yemeni students do not occur spontaneously in the ideal reading class, teachers can use planned activities to get students think about the text, reacting to it, and evaluate it. In order for Yemeni students to reach those goals in this way, teachers need to be aware of the objectives of post-reading activities.

6.4.2.1. Teachers' views on the planned activities used in their reading classrooms

In question 23 (See Appendix A) 56.66% of the teachers responded to this question while 43.33% did not. This ratio of those teachers who didn't answer the question affected the researcher's effort to collect the real and correct data regarding the teaching of reading comprehension.

6.4.2.2. Summary

To examine the teachers' views on the planned activities in their classrooms, we conclude that some of the teachers' views are valuable to some extent. Some of the teachers provide their views on the kind of activities they use in their classes as follows:

- Understanding the main ideas put forth in the text.

- Discern the relationships among the main ideas.

- Identify the language used to show the organization of idea.

Some other teachers refer to some of the above activities and added some other ones such as: "identify the topic of the reading"; "understand the details given in the text to support the main idea"; "recognize the structure of the information in the text"; and "assessing the value of the information presented in the text".

By examining the views of both groups of teachers, we can find that all the activities they mentioned are necessary for getting students think about the text, to react to it and to evaluate it.

It is evident from their responses that teachers are behaving differently when teaching the English language skills, particularly reading. As a result, the researcher concludes the following:

- Yemeni English teachers are assigned to teach the English language skills by the English departments. By doing so, teachers choose the materials they like, follow the approaches they are interested in without taking into their consideration the objectives that are formulated by their Universities.

- Teachers are redundantly teaching a particular English skill without taking into their account the students' needs, interests, and abilities. This kind of behaviour leads to the failure process in the teaching and learning of English language in general.

- Teachers are not supervised by the English departments and what happens in class is only the responsibility of the teachers whatever they do.

6.4.2.3. Suggestions

Through the activities given by the teachers and the concluding ideas, the researcher propose some activities suggested by Aebersold and Field (1997:116-132) that the teachers should consider. These activities are as follows:

Reviewing information from the text

Under this kind of activity there are many goals suggested by the teachers. For achieving these goals, the teachers should consider the following:

Comprehension questions:

One of the most frequent and timed honoured activities is the use of comprehension questions. Comprehension questions can be composed by teachers, book authors or students. They can be presented in writing or orally. Question can be asked before students read, while they read and after they read. They can be answered individually or in groups. Students can write the answers or state the answers. Regardless where questions come from or how they are used, comprehension questions in and of themselves can differ greatly in what they ask of the students.

A text comprehension question can cover various aspects of content; the thesis and main ideas of the text, various specific details, the difficult parts, and so on. It can also focus on language, particularly rhetorical structures, grammar patterns, vocabulary. A set of comprehension questions found at the end of reading text can focus on one type of question or it can combine types of questions. Questions that focus on language are usually found in vocabulary or grammar exercises.

Questions asked by teachers can be used to build comprehension of higher level texts as well. In addition to vocabulary, and perhaps because of it, one of the most challenging tasks facing FL readers at the advanced level of proficiency is to establish the main idea of an individual paragraph in order to later see how that paragraphs might fit into the reading as a whole.

In the beginning of the course, teachers should assume responsibility for seeing that all levels of comprehension questions are included and writing them as necessary.

As students learn about the different kinds of questions, they, too, should be involved in writing and categorizing questions.

Summaries:

Another post reading activity to review reading is to have students write a quick and closed book summary in class. Asking students to spend 10-15 minutes writing down what they just read in an informal and fairly unstructured way to get them to review mentally the information in a manner of understanding. In this way, the summary writing activity is primarily an informal assessment tool of a student's comprehension.

When the students make informal assessments, they are in the centre of the activity and are greatly engaged in the process. They are learning what makes one summary more effective than another and they evaluate their work by those criteria. Thus, depending on how this particular technique is used, it can be primarily an assessment tool or a comprehension tool.

Discussing information not in the text:

The ability to understand or posit information that is not overtly stated in the text is a higher level reading comprehension ability.

Inference and predicting are two skills that require readers to posit information not stated directly in the text. There are some useful activities for understanding and use of inference.

1. Presenting the skill of inference is only one part of teaching it. Helping students when they falter is the other. So, when students cannot make appropriate inferences, teachers need to be prepared to use text excerpts to guide students' thinking towards reasonable inferences.

2. To determine how probable an inference is given to the text's information and clues. Once inferences have been made, the teachers asks students to rate each inference as probable, not very probable, not possible or in between. This type of exercise forces students to relate their inferences to the text and support their answers.

3. Dealing with information beyond what is stated in the text asks students to analyse the structure of the text or parts of it.

Activities that encourage students to distinguish main ideas from details by giving lists of sentences taken from the text and asking students to decide if each is a main idea or a minor idea are a first step towards analysing text. Outlining activities are the ultimate step. They help students review the texts in a structured way, paying attention to the differing values of pieces of information and the relationships among them. Outlining, like summaries, requires students to address their comprehension of the whole text and can be challenging. Outlining places greater focus on the structure than does a summary, which is more meaning-oriented.

When students work with the content of a text and its meaning, it is easy for them to place the content in the foreground of their minds and the strategy in the recesses.

Finalizing activities are a small but important step in a lesson, because they review the main purpose for a reading activity and thus focus students' attention on it. Evaluating information in the text

As students read, their comprehension of the text is shaped by their previous learning and experience. They understand the ideas, they make inferences and they question information as they compare it with their own prior experience or knowledge

of the topic. These responses to the text are the first step toward evaluative reading. Other strategies that readers should use to read a text evaluative include:

- Identify the author's purpose in writing the text.

- Examine how the author establishes his or her perspective.

- Recognize persuasion in writing.

- Distinguish fact from opinion.

- Check the logic of the development of the author's perspective.

- Establish the assumptions underlying the text.

- Recognize the influence of the author's personal beliefs and attitudes.

- Note the author's use of language to set tone and register.

A good deal of evaluation goes on after the text has been read, as readers consciously think about the text and apply the evaluative reading strategies in a systematic manner.

Students should be encouraged to keep an open mind about what they have read and to take stock of the differences from and similarities to their own knowledge and bias. Some of the information they can use to evaluate a text can usually be found in the text itself. The following should be taking in consideration.

- Does the text present its information in an organized way?

- Are the arguments structured in a step-by-step manner?

- Are there any gaps that are not addressed?

- Does the text present opposing perspectives?

- Does the text confirm any opposing perspectives?

- Does the text use objective, non-emotional language?

- Does the text offer verifiable support for the argument, such as statistics or data collected by others not associated with the author?

- Does the author cite reputable, well known authorities as sources of information?

A second source of evaluative information is to consider what the reader knows about the author.

- Is the author well-known in this field?

- What bias, if any, is the author known to have?

- What background, experience, education, does the author have in this particular area?

- What are the author's views on this topic?

6.4.3. Constructing Exercises in the Reading Classroom

Using a variety of exercises in the Yemeni reading classroom is considered as an important factor in motivating students and it is necessary if different skills are to be covered.

An exercise should never be imposed on a text. It is better to allow the text to suggest what exercises are most appropriate to it. In other words, the text should always be the starting point for determining why one would normally read it, how it should be read, how it might relate to other information before thinking of a particular exercise.

Reading can be done as a class activity but reading activities can also be devised to individualize student's work at home. Instead of choosing one activity for the whole class, two or three sets of exercise of varying difficulty can be prepared based on the same text so that each student can work at home at his/her own level. If the text is then to be discussed in the class, each group of students who have worked on the same exercises will be able to talk about what they have done. This will certainly be stimulating for the weaker students, while the better ones will not feel held back.

The above introduction shed light on how we construct exercises in the reading classroom. To know how reading comprehension exercises are constructed in the Yemeni classrooms, teachers will highlight their views on what happen in their reading classes below.

6.4.3.1. The teachers' views on constructing the reading comprehension exercises in the classroom

Question 24 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers about the reading comprehension exercise types that they follow in teaching reading skill. In this question, 93.33% of the teachers answered the question and only 6.66% did not. The teachers' responses are shown in Table (13) below.

Table 13: Types of exercises in the reading classroom

	Types of exercises in reading comprehension.	Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)	
		No.	%
1	Reading techniques	11	36.67
2	How the aim is conveyed	22	73.33
3	Understanding meaning	26	86.67
4	Assessing the text	13	43.33

By looking at the table above, we find that the overwhelming majority of the teachers select item (3) "understanding meaning" as the first part of reading comprehension exercise types. The second part as "how the aim is conveyed", "assessing the text" and the last part they select is "reading techniques" which they consider as the least important one.

In addition to the above four parts, one of the teachers added one part that says

"while reading, students should try to get the meaning of the difficult words by going through several times instead of using the dictionary."

6.4.3.2. Summary

It is evident from the teachers' responses that few teachers are using the four parts when doing their reading comprehension exercise types. The majority of the teachers seem only to depend on the items (2 and 3) in Table (13) above.

Actually, the four parts are relevant because the first is developed to those reading skills and strategies that are essential to acquiring a basic reading competence. The three parts that follow aim to illustrate different ways of helping the students reach a better understanding of a text, starting from overall comprehension (function and organization of the passage), moving towards a more detailed one (understanding meaning and ending with some guidelines to help the students assess and evaluate what they have read).

6.4.3.3. Suggestions

It seems obvious from above that there is a certain amount of overlapping between the four parts. To make this overlapping clear and to provide the Yemeni students with useful ideas, the researcher provides initially an overview on the reading classroom procedures that reading teachers should consider. After that, I shall highlight briefly about each part that Table (13) is included.

The first point to be noted when practicing reading in the classroom is that it is a silent activity. Therefore silent reading should be encouraged in most cases, though the teacher may sometimes need to read part of the text aloud.

It is useful to give the class some help on how to approach a new text. In this regard some procedures are discussed below:

a) Consider the text as a whole, its title, accompanying picture(s) or diagram(s), the paragraph, the typeface used and make guesses about what the text is about, who wrote it, who it is for, where it appeared, etc.

b) Skim through the text a first time to see if your hypotheses were right. Then ask yourself a number of questions about the contents of the text.

c) Read the text again, more slowly and carefully this time, to understand as much as you can and try to answer the questions you can ask yourself.

Another classroom procedure can consist of helping the student to time himself and increase his reading speed little by little. It is necessary to reach a certain reading speed in order to read efficiently. This can be done by showing the students how to record their reading speed systematically on a chart and try to improve it each time they read a new text.

To say that reading is a silent and personal activity does not imply that it only lends itself to individual work. On the contrary, it is particularly interesting to encourage comparisons between several interpretations of a text which will lead to discussion and probably a need to refer back to text to check.

Reading techniques

Most of the techniques dealt with in this part are already familiar to our students in Arabic. But it is necessary to re-train them, as some students have difficulty in applying them to English as a foreign language. This part concerns three main points that reflect the techniques used in reading:

Sensitizing: The aim here is to provide exercises that develop the strategies students need to cope with unfamiliar words and complex or apparently obscure sentences. It should ensure that they do not stumble on every difficulty or get discouraged from the outset. This can be appropriately achieved through the students' activities such as, inference, understanding relations within the sentence, and linking sentences and ideas.

Improving reading speed: Students who read slowly will easily get discouraged. They will also tend to stumble on unfamiliar words and fail to grasp the general meaning of the passage.

Reading should also be followed by comprehension questions or activities since reading speed should not be developed at the expense of comprehension. When practicing fast reading systematically, the students can be encouraged to keep a record of their results. Students in this case are able to show their progress (e.g. in the form of a graph). This should encourage them to read more.

From skimming to scanning: One of the most important points to keep in mind when teaching reading comprehension is that there is not one type of reading but several according to one's reasons for reading. Students will never read efficiently unless they can adopt their reading speed and technique to their aim when reading.

In order to make the students more confident and efficient as readers, they are advised to do and follow some exercises such as: predicting, previewing, anticipation, skimming and scanning.

How the Aim is conveyed

In this second part, the emphasis on the function and organization of the passage includes useful information and techniques used for organizing the function of the text.

Organization of the text: Given a specific function (e.g. convincing the reader) there are certain information that have to be conveyed (e.g. some characteristics of a new car). There are many different ways in which this information may be presented and organized.

- Compare the new car to other lesser cars, for instance
- Use contrast to make the point

- Try to convince the readers by some kind of logical reasoning of the superiority of the car.

- Use a chronological sequence of events (for instance listing the major events in the history of the manufacturer) revealing the main characteristics of the car little by little.

This shows that the organization of a passage is not always determined by its context and by the nature of the information to be conveyed.

Another reason why it is essential for the students to grasp the method used to present the information is that once they have recognized the pattern that is being used, they can apply their reading strategies to the text and predict what is likely to follow. Regarding this, different types of exercises can be used to train the student to recognize these organizations:

- Rejecting irrelevant information
- Finding the topic sentences and what kind of relations they have to the rest of the text
- Discriminating between generalized and specific statements
- Completing skeleton outlines of the structure of the text.

There are other kinds of organization (chronological sequence, description, analogy and contrast, classification, argumentative and logical organization). The exercises suggested try to involve the students in an activity, leading them to study the way the ideas are organized through activities or problems (e.g. filling in tables, or recording passages) that should motivate and oblige them to think about the text. It should also encourage them to use devices when taking notes on what they read. According to that, readers have to concentrate on three points when organizing the text:

Function of the text: One of the very first things students should be led to do is to find out whether the text aims at convincing the reader, giving him information, asking him for something, etc. In many cases, the form of the passage, the way it is printed, laid out or the place where it was found, are sufficient to give us clues as to its function, and students should always be encouraged to make use of these non-linguistic elements.

Understanding meaning

This third part is overlapped with the second one. That means, besides understanding the way a text is organized it is of course essential to understand its contents. This part attempts to suggest different ways of doing this such as:

Non-linguistic response to the text: There is a whole range of comprehension activities that do not require any complex verbal response on the part of the learners. In the suggested exercises, something is added to the text (a document, a diagram, a picture) and the students are asked to relate the text to that document. This can mean:

➢ A comparison (e.g. comparing texts and pictures, matching passages of the text and diagrams)

➢ A transposition of the information (transcending the information into the form of a diagram, completing or labelling a document)

➢ Using the information in the passage to find a solution, make a decision or solve a problem.

Linguistic response to the text: Several exercises suggested enter the following categories. For instance:

1. Recognizing the information which the students are asked to present in a different way; to organize it according to a different pattern (e.g. completing a table, drawing up a chronological list of the events mentioned in the passage).

These exercises emphasize the fact that there are many different ways of presenting the same information.

2. Comparing several texts indicates that since we often mentally compare different versions of the same event or incident, for instance what someone wrote in a letter and what we read in a paper, what a friend tells us bout a country and what a guide- book or a travel brochure says. It is through the comparison between the different texts that the students' attention is drawn to what is specific to the passage they are studying. The passages offered for comparison may differ: (i) in their contents (e.g. one can study the development of an item of news over a period of time). (ii) in their point of view (e.g. several articles on the same subject taken from different newspapers).

3. Completing a document: In this exercise the students are required to do more than simply provide labels or figures, they must, for example, use the contents of the text to answer a letter, fill in an evaluation card, an application form, leave a note, etc. In addition to these different categories, there must be the added possibility of using the text for simulation or role-play. One can, for example, ask the student to study the information in the text and identify with one of the characters who will then have to react to different situations.

4. Question-types: this kind of exercise is inspired by two different aims:

   a) To make the students active in the reading process by presenting them with decision-making activities (e.g. drawing a diagram with the information given in the text, solving the problem, completing a table which reorganizes the information).

b) To devise activities which are as natural as possible, i.e. as close as possible to what one would naturally do with the text (e.g. answering a letter using the information given in that letter, completing a document, comparing several texts, etc.)

Study skills: Two major skills have been selected here: Note-taking and summarizing. Taking notes is essential in order to remember what one reads or listens to and it has a further use: when taking notes, it is necessary to establish the structure of the text and its key ideas and to learn to leave out unessential information.

Assessing the text

The activity to assess and evaluate the text is considered one vital aspect of reading comprehension. This means that one should be fully aware of the writer's intention, of his point of view and possible bias. Simply we can say this part discusses two main points.

Fact versus Opinion: These exercises aim at training the students to be able to discriminate facts from opinions. It is an important part of reading competence since any good reader should be aware of the way his judgment is influenced one way or another.

Writer's intention: The activities suggested here are focused on the attitude of the writer, the particular kind of bias that can be felt through his writing. This is of particular interest for this instance, in advertising passages.

In order to be comprehensive, this part should also deal with several other aspects which – to no lesser degree – contribute to conveying the message. Some relevant points are for instance:

- Tone is often one of the most difficult aspects of a text to grasp. Teachers therefore make sure that the students are familiar with the whole range of tone (e.g. irony, anger, persuasion, etc.).

- The language used by the writer, the kind of sentences he chooses and the way he arranges them also contribute to specialists of literature only, since it is of vital importance, whatever the kind of text studies. This covers aspects such as the kind of vocabulary and sentence structure used, the different forms of speech highlighted, the use of image, the possible imitation of a certain genre to give only a few examples.

- Finally, it is obvious that the idea expressed in the passage should be discussed and judged at some point. Whatever ways these opinions were expressed one cannot help reacting to them and questions leading the students to compare their own views to those of the writer are necessary components of any reading comprehension syllabus.

6.5. Understanding the Students' Difficulties in Reading the English Text

Under this section, this study examines the problems that the Yemeni students encounter while reading the text in English.

6.5.1. The teachers' and students' views on the reading difficulties

Question 25 (See Appendix A) asks about the problems that Yemeni students encounter while reading in English. In this question, the teachers summarized the students' problems that they always observed when teaching reading. 93.33% of the teachers responded to the question, while 6.66% did not. The researcher summarizes the teachers' responses as follows:

❖ The students suffer from some problems due to the ambiguity tolerance, so teachers should help the learners to be middle–ambiguity tolerance students.

❖ Students feel shy and have problems in pronunciation.

❖ They either don't understand the unfamiliar words or the structure of the sentence.

❖ They may be able to understand the meaning of the sentences, but they cannot connect these sentences to get the meaning of the whole passage.

❖ Lack of proper teaching materials and topic of interest is not included.

❖ They are not able to grasp the gist of the reading if it contains difficult vocabularies and they are not able to connect and join the paragraph to come up with a meaning at the end.

The teachers' comments mentioned above are absolutely existed. Their comments on this question helped the researcher in finding the real situation of the teaching of reading skill and support him for trying to get a way to participate in solving these problems.

The researcher personally recommends all the comments listed by the teachers and through the discussion below, this study will highlight some comments about other problems that many of the Yemeni students encounter while learning reading in Yemeni Universities and trying to find solutions to overcome these problems.

In addition to the teachers' list of problems, the researcher shows some other problems that he himself observed during his field work in both Sana'a and Thamar Universities. The problems which became more obvious in students' performances are as follows:

• When a great deal of the vocabulary students are reading is unknown to them, they become frustrated.

- If the grammar structures of several consecutive sentences are long and complex, they got tired or lost or both.

- If the topic written about is outside of their experience or base of knowledge they are adrift on an unknown level.

When the students have these feelings while reading, they may stop reading because they cannot understand the meaning of the text enough to satisfy their expectations, needs or interests.

On the other hand, and responding to question 15 (See Appendix B), the students expressed their opinions about the difficulties they encounter in learning reading comprehension. These difficulties are shown below.

1. Sometimes students do not understand the grammatical structures of the sentences.

2. It is difficult to understand the overall meaning of the text.

3. During reading, students fail sometimes to understand how different parts of the text are connected.

4. When reading the text, students find many unfamiliar words.

5. Students sometimes are assigned difficult passages. Thus, they stop reading it. When asking the teachers for more clarification, teachers claim that they don't have time for discussion.

Question 16 (See appendix B) was given to ask students if they have any comments on the situation of teaching reading comprehension skill in the Yemeni Universities. In their turn, students provide some comments which are summarized as follows:

❖ Teachers should provide short paragraphs during classes and create discussions about them.

- ❖ Reading different books and stories are important to improve the students' reading skills.

- ❖ Students should be given many opportunities for interacting in the reading class.

- ❖ If students have problem in understanding any passage, the teacher should allow students to read it again.

- ❖ Teachers should put questions after each text and the topics should be from our culture.

6.5.1.1. Summary

After reviewing the problems listed above by both the teachers, students, and the researcher, we find out that there are some reasons that made the students encounter the above listed problems. These reasons in the researcher's view are as follows:

1. The students are given texts above their level.

2. Students are not given opportunities to participate in reading in the classroom. This reason particularly cause many problems such as: a) the students face a difficulty to read which creates a dissatisfaction to him/her to stop thinking of reading at all, thereby he/she feels shy and cannot pronounce any word correctly because he/she do not used to practice in reading.

3. Students' are not taught properly the vocabulary issues in teaching reading, the concept of cohesion and coherence to understand the structure and meaning of a certain text.

4. Lack of proper teaching materials and topics of interest.

According to the list of problems mentioned above and the concluding reasons by the researcher, the researcher emphasizes first the summaries, discussions and

suggestions that are mentioned previously regarding writing the goals and designing the reading course (see section 6.2), teaching reading skills, strategies and styles as mentioned in section 6.3, etc. and reading instruction in the classroom (see section 6.4).

6.5.1.2 . Solutions

For achieving the aims mentioned above and to overcome the students' problems listed, the researcher suggests some points that the teachers should consider when teaching the reading comprehension skill. These points concentrate on the students' interests and the students' language proficiency. These points will be discussed in details for providing the students with the valuable information for learning reading comprehension effectively.

1. Students' interests

Students' interest is an issue that should be taken into account while teaching reading. It is possible that very few students have needs that motivate them to read English as a foreign language. However, they probably all have interests that could be used to propel them into reading in English.

Some students may have an established personal interest in certain topics and may like to read anything and everything that they can find on those topics. They probably already know a lot about the topic, but they want to know more. Thus, a person who is interested in space exploration will automatically seek out articles on this topic when scanning the newspaper or perusing the magazine.

Another reason students are interested in certain topics is that they touch their lives in personal ways. Teenagers, for example, take in popular music and performers. They may become interested in the topic because their social peers are interested. They want to know what others around them know.

Another type of interest stems from the relevance a topic has to the larger community within which an individual functions. People have become focused on the connection between health and environment recently as a result of being bombarded with information via magazines, newspapers, radio and television and community meetings. To some degree, the readers' interest in the topic has been created for them.

The three types of interest (individual, peer group, community group) described in the preceding example will occur at different degrees in different people. Degree of interest is an important factor in reading motivation. The more interested people are, the more they will persevere in reading. Intense interest motivates people to read materials that are beyond their range of language proficiency. It is important that students have some degree of interest in the materials they read.

Just as peer groups and communities can create interest on the part of readers, teachers, too, can create interest on the part of students. By using a number of activities and techniques, teachers can create and heighten student interest in a topic before they read. By exposing students to new topics or new ideas about old topics, teachers can expand the bases of students' knowledge. Sometimes students are not interested in a topic until they know something about it.

2. Students' Language Proficiency

When students can understand enough of the text they are reading to make general sense of the message, they are reading within their language proficiency range. This means they may not know all of the facts and details, but they do understand the general topic, most of the main ideas and several details.

When students try to read beyond their language proficiency level, they are overwhelmed; a great deal of the vocabulary they are reading is unknown to them, they become frustrated. If the grammar structures of several consecutive sentences are

long and complex, they get tired or lost, or both. If the topic written about is outside of their experience or base of knowledge they are adrift on an unknown level. When they have these feelings while reading, they may stop reading because they cannot understand the meaning of the text enough to satisfy their expectations, needs or interests.

The parameters of students' language proficiency ranges are likely to vary even within one class. If students are placed in classes by their proficiency levels as demonstrated by tests, there should be a fair amount of overlap among their ranges. If, however, students are placed in a class because they have already completed one year of EFL study or they are in a certain grade, it is possible, even likely, that there will be greater differences among their ranges. An EFL classroom of this type is known as a multiple level classroom. It is a great challenge for teachers because it requires multiple lesson plans and a range of materials to address all the students. Indeed, different levels may need to study skills at a given time. Planning for and teaching multilevel classes greatly increase the teacher's workload.

6.5.2. Preparing students to read

By thinking carefully of the students' interests and the students' English language proficiency described above, we are in a situation to reflect these ideas to what should be taught in the Yemeni classrooms. For doing that, we are required to think of some questions that are concerned with the principles and practice of teaching reading. These questions are: What is reading instruction like in the classroom? How do we teach reading? Do teachers teach according to principles derived from research findings? In order to answer the above questions and to know the reasons for preparing the Yemeni students to read in English, let us see the teachers' responses below.

6.5.2.1. The teachers' views on the values for preparing students to read

Question 26 (See Appendix A) asking about the reasons for preparing students to read is related to the pre-reading processes that the students use and the ways that the teachers can make the students aware of their use.

In this question, 66.66% of the teachers respond to the question while 33.33% of the teachers did not. About the teachers' responses, there was little consensus concerning the reasons for preparing students to read. The majority of teachers who answered the question mention only one reason which is "establishing realistic expectations about what is in the text and thus read more effectively".

6.5.2.2. Summary

The teachers' responses are useful but restricted to one reason which concerned preparing students to read. Preparing students to read focuses on the unconscious and conscious pre-reading processes that readers often use and the ways that the teachers can make students aware of their use. Thus, the only reason mentioned above by the teachers is not enough.

6.5.2.3. Suggestions

The researcher here tries to provide some ideas about these reasons in details that the Yemeni teachers should take them into their consideration when teaching reading comprehension.

The major reasons for preparing students to read are as follows: 1) "to establish a purpose for reading a given text", 2) "to activate existing knowledge about the topic and thus get more out of reading the text" and 3) "to establish realistic expectations about what is in the text and thus read more effectively." The third reason is the one which is provided by the teachers.

In addition, teachers should usually do vocabulary work before reading in order to make more conscious and familiar the relevant vocabulary students already have and to build new vocabulary that will prove valuable to them when they begin to read. The researcher provides some details of each reason.

Establishing a purpose for reading

Establishing a purpose means taking into account the student's language and proficiency levels and determining the appropriate tasks for them to complete. There are three considerations influencing the process of establishing a purpose for reading. They are:

1. The match between the content of the text and the readers' familiarity with that content. This will be carried out by asking student to read the text for thorough understanding.

2. The teacher's purpose for having students read a text. If the teacher wants students to look for specific pieces of information, then it makes sense to scan for particular items rather than read the whole text. However, when a thorough understanding is the purpose of reading, two or sometimes three readings of the whole text are essentials. Purposes in reading classrooms, like in real life, vary from text to text.

3. Getting the reader to establish reasons for reading is beneficial for readers to establish their own purposes, especially in a class using an extensive approach. Students can be asked to identify the purpose in a written report on each text so that the teacher knows how the text was read and can respond accordingly.

Activating and building background knowledge

Both L1 and FL reading comprehension research tell us that, readers benefit in three main ways from having an introduction to the topic of an informational text

before they begin to read. First, an introduction helps students to recall any information that they may already know about the topic (content schema), either from personal experience or other reading. If the students keep this knowledge in mind as they read, they increase their opportunities to make sense of the information they find in the text. An introduction may also bring to mind cultural factors that help them understand the new material, thus enhancing comprehension. Second, getting the students to start to think about the topic should increase their interest in the topic and thereby motivate them to read the text. Third, if the introduction activity is conducted in the EFL, it will also review or introduce the relevant vocabulary for that topic.

For activating and building students background knowledge, Aebersold and Field (1997:108) specify five pre-reading exercise types as most evident in classroom.

1. Recalling information

2. Generating new ideas

3. Sharing or solidifying information

4. Building key vocabulary

5. Establishing a purpose for reading

Other activities that can also be used to activate students' background knowledge include: Field trips; role play; word association activities (Students connect words that have a similar meaning); content mapping (students write down any information that comes to mind on the topic, then mark the sentences in the reading with content similar to what they wrote) and semantic mapping (students write down any words that come to mind on the topic and then circle and connect the words that are closely related).

In addition to building schema, intermediate and advanced level students also need to be aware of the structural, or formal writing pattern of the text they are

about to read. Knowledge of how information can be organized helps readers to understand and anticipate information in a text.

Previewing the text to build expectations

Previewing a text before beginning to read is another useful preparation activity. It enables students to establish their own expectations about what information they will find in the text and the way that information will be organized. The previewing process provides an orientation in order to overt the kind of problems that the students encounter.

Previewing introduces various aspects of the text, helps readers predict what they are going to read, and gives them a framework to help make sense of the information. Several features in the text, which are usually distinct from the running text, aid the reader's ability to predict. Bellow, we have useful features to be used when previewing long texts. They are: the title; the author, source; subtitles; subheadings; photographs, drawings; graphs, charts, tables; spacing (e.g., extra space between paragraphs); print that is different in size, darkness or style.

Working with the title of a text is one previewing activity for establishing expectation about the content of a text. All of the following pre-reading strategies involve some reading beyond the title of the text:

❖ Reading the introduction (all the paragraphs that comprise the introduction) and identify the key issue to be discussed.

❖ Read the concluding paragraph, if present, carefully.

❖ Skim the text.

❖ Read the first sentence of each of the body paragraph (the paragraphs after the introduction and before the conclusion) to see what ideas are mentioned in them.

❖   Scan parts of the text for specific information.

Thus, reading both the introduction and conclusion of academic texts, such as, essays, technical books, college text books, and specialized scholarly writing will often give the reader useful clues about the main ideas the writer is making. Skimming, sampling and scanning are also important and useful strategies for reading.

CHAPTER 7

WRITING

7.1. Introduction

Second language writing first became an issue in English language teaching in the mid1950s as a result of the post-World War II. However, even as late as the 1970s, ESL writing was not viewed as a language skill to be taught to learners. Instead, it was used as a supporting skill in language teaching (Reid 2001:28). The early practice of ESL writing in the classroom was meant to teach using grammar, to improve handwriting, and to serve as an aid to the audio-lingual teaching methods (Raimes 1991). EFL writing received scant attention in the past because many language teachers believed that writing was not necessary until the learners had mastered oral language. In addition, there was an idea that language developed sequentially from listening to speaking to reading then finally to writing. As writing was thought to be the hardest skill, it was the last language process to be taught (Hudelson 1989). In the latter half of the twentieth century, writing (as a first language), written discourse and the teaching of writing began to receive significant attention from scholars and teachers. Along with the growth of composition studies, there was also a parallel development in the field of second language writing (Silva and Matsuda 2002). Because of their parallel developments, second language writing has always been influenced by research and studies in first-language writing in several ways (Silva 1990).

7.1.1. Definitions and Purposes of Writing

This section addresses theoretical definitions of writing that underscore the present study. Several definitions are proposed. Each has merit in the context of

encouraging diversity. For example, Vygotsky (1962:100) defined written language as "deliberate structuring of a delicate web of meaning". Words are not just a jumble of ideas that leap from our minds or dash onto the page. Rather, words require connections and relationships and reveal an effective and cognitive dimension that outlines a trail from our thoughts to and from our behaviour and similarly from our internalized speech to and from our written speech. Our behaviour and written speech show our connection to the world; they become the outward signs of the way we value ourselves and others. Other theorists and scholars since then have found his definition to be incomplete; writing is also saturated in affective, cognitive and social constructs.

Some scholars find writing's value in its ability to become a permanent record of thoughts, to reveal the writer's self or to negotiate meaning. This view points to the affective aspects of writing.

Professional writers focus on the act of writing and its purpose and value. Some focus on writing's close connection to thinking and discovery, Murray's (1982) compilation of what professional writers think about writing is not worthy in that there is no separation between writing's form and content, so close is the connection between thinking and writing.

Many professional writers focus on writing as a way to analyse their beliefs and surroundings, exploring a connection with the outside world through writing. For example, Ellison (2000:75) contends that writing is

> "the medium through which he finds answers about personal reality, his past, his
> future, his sense of morality, the grasp of his society, and how he might "express
> (his) vision of the human predicament."

Meaningful writing, according to Orwell (2000:605), is the struggle to "efface one's own personality"; without this struggle, nothing a writer produces is worth reading.

Some professional writers find the purpose of writing is self-analysis, connection and influence on the lives of others. Didion (2000:545) argues that writing is "an act of saying "I", of imposing oneself on other people, of saying listen to me, see it my way, change your mind". Gould (2000:565) wants to reach his readers and communicate scientific ideas using accessible language: "I write essays primarily to aid my own quest to learn and understand as much as possible about nature".

The connections between composition and thinking have been questioned and explored throughout the last few decades. (Murray 1973:22) defines writing as "the most disciplined form of thinking", involving many skills common to thinking. For Langer & Applebee (1985: 36) writing is as students write "to define, refine, evaluate, integrate and communicate what they have learned at a variety of levels". Through writing, students can develop their ideas more fully, integrating and connecting old learning and new thinking as they write (ibid).

Moreover, writing and writing to learn activities are inadequate in secondary and post-secondary education (Bridgeman & Carlson 1984; North 1986; Applebee 1990; Tighe 1991; Johnson et al. 1993). This limits students of non-English educators; such instruction necessarily belongs under the guidance of the English department, and assigning and grading writing is time-intensive (Bader & Pearce 1983; Loux & Stoddart 1993; Resnick 1987). In addition, the term writing has different connotations and practical applications-often at odds with English teachers' perceptions. For example, some teachers believe that writing assignments means that teachers must double as grammar and that it is a science involving one draft and right/wrong answers. This is a contradiction from many English teachers' perception of writing as composition—as a blend of art, referring to such elements as organization and revision; and science, meaning the correctness of mechanics and standard format.

Kane (1988:3) on the other hand, pointed out that there are two broad assumptions that underlie writing: (1) writing is a rational activity and (2) it is a valuable activity.

To say that writing is rational means nothing more than that it is an exercise of mind requiring the mastery of techniques anyone can learn. In this case, Kane wants to illustrate that one need not to be a genius to write clear, effective English. One only needs to understand what writing involves and learn how to handle words and sentences and paragraphs while writing. By doing so, one can communicate what one wants to do.

The second assumption is that writing is a valuable activity. It is of practical benefit in almost any job. There are jobs in which one can get along without being able to write clearly. If you know how to write, however, you will get along faster and farther.

Concluding to the definitions of writing discussed above, one can argue that writing should be incorporated in all subjects to enhance thinking and learning specific contents. That means, writing is a form of thinking that students need to learn both the skills of thinking processes as well as the skills of composing processes. Most importantly, the type of writing encouraged must go beyond an analysis of grammar. Rather, it must encourage idea exploration, multiple drafts—in other words, the elements of the writing process.

7.1.2. Exploring the Differences between Talking and Writing

We have had many years of experience talking and writing. Perhaps talking is easier for us, or maybe we would rather write. No matter which seems more comfortable, though, we know that they are not the same thing. In talking, we put words together, for example, babies and young children internalize/pick up the words

and structure of whatever language they hear. This is why it is essential to talk and read to children. If a child hears no language spoken, that child will not speak. If for example, a child hears Arabic, the child will speak Arabic. And if the child grows up in a bilingual setting, hearing two languages, the child will easily acquire both (Dykstra 2000:1-2).

By the time, child has internalized the basic patterns of the languages spoken around him. S/he knows what the individual words mean, and how to put those words together.

As a basic pattern, in English, for example, words are usually arranged in a subject-verb-object pattern. The subject does the action; the verb is the action; the object receives the action.

subject   verb   object

We   exchange   gifts.

We simply listened to others and practiced the pattern we heard. Without consciously trying, we learned that verbs come first, subjects come second, and objects come last in Arabic. In English, it is different, subjects come first, verbs come second, and objects come last. That means, in English, the order of words gives us valuable information. For example,

The dog bit the man.

The man bit the dog.

Those are two entirely different situations. The same words, *dog* and *man,* are used, but changing the position changes the meaning; it changes who or what did the biting and who or what was bitten. In Arabic, it is as English. If we change the positions of the subject and object, the meaning will be changed. For example,

> *al   kalbu adha ar   rajula.*
>
> the dog   bit   the man
>
> *ar   rajulu adha al   kalba.*
>
> The man   bit   the dog

Although, if we change the positions of subjects and verbs in Arabic, the meaning will not be changed, and remain the same.

What mentioned above, guides us in taking the patterns we already know and using them in our writing. We accustomed to talk in these patterns. But if we write exactly the way we talk, readers will be confused because the structure of writing is different from the structure of talking.

Therefore, the structure is one of the most important differences between talking and writing. That means, we talk in chunks, but we write in sentences.

Talking in chunks is understood as, when we talk, we say things such as, *"I went to the mall and bought these chairs on sale two of them and they'll go in the living room I think."* We put our words together in groups, groups such as, *I went, these chairs, in the living room.* People who study language have a name for these groups: *chunks*. We talk in chunks of information, stringing them together until we get our idea across. When we listen to ourselves talk, or listen to anyone else talk, we hear chunks and chunks of information tied together by the words *and, so, or you know.*

Writing in sentences: Writing involves presenting the chunks of information in a different structure: a *sentence*. When we talk, people aren't likely to say "there is a verb missing from that sentence". Unlike talking, writing demands a subject and a verb in every sentence. Another important difference between talking and writing is

the situation. While talking, the listeners are right there with the speaker. While writing, the readers are separated from the writer both by space and time.

To illustrate that, *when we talk*, we can see the listeners, and they can see us; we use gestures, facial expressions, and body language to communicate our meaning; and we also watch the listener's expressions and body language to see if they understand what we are saying or whether they agree or disagree. In addition, when we talk others participate in the conversation. Conversation is a give and take process. Speakers and listeners create meaning together. But *when we write*, readers can neither listen nor see us; the clues given in face-to-face conversation is no longer work and readers are not there to create the conversation with us and help us clarify our thinking, there is no discussion, no way of asking questions or getting feedback.

Furthermore, readers cannot see our body language or hear our voices change pitch, pause, and stop. So, if we write the way we talk- stringing along ideas- there will be nothing to separate one thought from another and readers may become confused and conclude that we are disorganized and don't know what we think.

Dykstra (2000:4) points out:

"writing has developed over a long period of time, and a system has evolved to communicate with readers. We use punctuation marks to show how ideas are separated or connected. We choose and arrange words carefully to create the effect we want. We spell words correctly so there is a common understanding of what words we are using. Writing is not better than talking; it is just different."

7.1.3. Various Forms and Kinds of Writing

This sub-section discusses relevant views related to forms and kinds of writing. Writing occurs in different forms. When people discuss teaching writing or describing writing, they have to be very careful to specify what kind of writing they are talking about. According to Cooper & Odell (1977), writing can include many styles of written discourse, such as dramatic writing, personal writing, reporting research, academic writing, fiction, poetry, business writing and technical writing. Although,

these various styles of writing can be taught by using a process approach, there are various aspects that writing teachers have to consider. For example, they have to think about the skills of students, their needs to learn English, their language background (EFL, or first language students), and their motivation. In addition to these factors, forms and rules that govern certain kinds of written discourses can designate the ways teachers teach writing.

About the kinds of writing, it is clear that, the various effects a writer may wish to have on his or her readers is to inform, to persuade, to entertain, result in different kinds of prose such as expository, descriptive, or narrative etc.

Exposition: tells what a particular mind thinks or knows or believes. Exposition is constructed logically. It organizes around cause/effect, true/false, less/more, positive/negative, general/particular and assertion/denial. Its movement is signalled by connectives like *therefore, however, and so, besides, but, not only, more important, in fact, for example.*

Description: deals with perceptions, most commonly visual perceptions. Its central problem is to arrange what we see into a significant pattern. Unlike the logic of exposition, the pattern is spatial: above/below, before/behind, right/left and so on.

The *narration* is a series of related events- a story. Its problem is twofold: to arrange the events in a sequence of time and to reveal their significance.

Persuasion: seeks to alter how readers think or believe. It is usually about controversial topics and often appeals to reason in the form of *argument*, offering evidence or logical proof. Another form of persuasion is *satire*, which ridicules folly or evil, sometimes subtly, sometimes crudely and coarsely. Persuasion may be in the form of eloquence, appealing to ideals and noble sentiments.

7.1.4. Foreign language writing instruction and foreign language writing on the process approach

The researcher in this section intends to cover relevant ideas about the process approach and show what kinds of advantages that the students will get from this approach. The researcher therefore, insists through this study to expose Yemeni students to the process approach to writing.

The purpose of this sub-section is to provide an overview on the process-oriented approach and show how it influences students' writing and to illuminate the development of EFL writers.

The teaching of writing was primarily product-oriented approach in that teachers placed heavy emphasis on the accuracy of students' compositions and highlighted all grammatical errors students made in their final product. This drew our attention that writing was used as a means of fixing syntactic patterns in the memory. Using this meant copying sentences, dictation, or translation. Writing was not seen as a goal of language learning in itself but as an adjunct of grammar.

In 1960s, audio-lingual methods replaced grammar-translation methods. Most of the emphasis was on oral activities and the teaching of writing was seen as a way of reinforcing structural drills. Controlled composition was the dominant method for teaching writing at this time: Either changing tense-forms or completing unfinished sentences was confidently believed to produce competent writers. Practitioners of this method believed that oral competence would automatically lead to writing competency (Richards and Rodgers 1986).

With the thrust of the views that considered language as a means for communication, the structural and behaviourists' views of language teaching began to be abandoned in the 1970s. The recognition in the need to focus on writing as a communicative skill rather than writing as a language led educators to focus on

writing-based writing instruction (Reid 1993). Influenced by the research on the teaching of composition to native speakers, ESL/EFL writing instruction became focused on the rhetorical modes in academic writing, such as comparison/contrast and cause and effect. ESL/EFL writing teachers began to subscribe to the notion that good writing was that which conformed to a predetermined ideal model. The models were extracts from the writing of accomplished writers who were famous and successful writers. In this model, writing was seen as a form of initiating different rhetorical modes and the focus was on error-free sentences and the final written product. Students were required to manipulate rhetorical forms. This approach, however, was influenced by the dilemma that practitioners faced themselves. Teachers believed that, models provided powerful input but began to question how much of this input was absorbed and used by students in their own writing. As the model approach did not work, composition teachers of native speakers began to abandon it. Nevertheless, it still appears to live on in some ESL/EFL text books (Kelly 1984).

Recent ESL/EFL composition texts designed for advanced students take a functional-notional approach, i.e. they look at the typical language functions that college students will encounter in their writing tasks. The tasks include defining, classifying, comparing and contrasting, describing processes, expressing purpose and developing by cause and effect. The theoretical assumption behind this approach is that language functions occur in all disciplines. Although the approach seems compatible with the current emphasis on writing across the curriculum and the emphasis on academic writing, its emphasis is essentially on form. It focuses on the product of writing rather than the process of writing.

Since the 1980s, a move away from teaching based on the product towards the process of writing had been under way in the teaching of English to native speakers. This new view of teaching writing grew out of research on how people actually write. The shift was motivated by the dissatisfaction over the failure of the product-oriented approach to foster students' thinking and self-expression (Hairston, 1982; Raimes, 1983). From the perspective of the process-oriented approach, writing is a complex, recursive and creative process or set of behaviours, making it very similar in its broad outlines for first and second language writers. By the late 1980s process writing pedagogies reached the mainstream of ESL/EFL writing instruction.

As Zamel (1983:197) pointed out, the process-oriented approach contrast sharply with traditional approaches (e.g. product-oriented) which " require students just to formulate their ideas beforehand, to elaborate upon them by using some prescribed rhetorical framework and to submit these written products for grading purposes".

Another study providing support for the process-oriented teaching of second/foreign language writing at the college level was Hildenbrand's (1985) case study. The study focused on the writing behaviours of a young Hispanic Woman in two different classroom contexts, one using a product-oriented approach and the other a process-oriented approach. Hildenbrand claimed that the process-based classroom provide the student with an awareness of the writing act and helped her see herself as a writer. Her findings indicated that her subject's preferred writing mode-creative and personal writing-conflicted with the academic mode expected of her, thereby hindering her writing process. Hildenbrand's study implied that certain second language instructional approaches might not help to develop the composing competence that was intended, and that certain teaching practices hindered the

233

development of second language writers. Her study offered suggestions on how teachers might help their students improve their writing.

In the same way, some researchers (Adipattaranun 1992; Villalobos 1996) investigated the variable in the writing process of college ESL students in a process-oriented writing course. Adipattaranun (1992) observed nine college ESL students in a freshmen composition course for one semester. The results showed that all participants improved their writing skills after having experienced the process-oriented writing course and variables that affected the quality and experience of writing were found: 1) how the students were taught, 2) the quality of the peer partner, 3) commitment to success 4) language difficulties.

This trend of adopting the process approach to writing in the EFL field strongly influenced the teaching of writing in Saudi Arabia where English is taught as a foreign language. For example, Jouhari (1996) conducted a research to investigate the effects of the process approach on the writing development of Saudi college freshman students. Using multiple sources such as observation, interviews, questionnaires, students' multiple drafts for the data collection; he analysed six cases of college students from Saudi Arabia. The results showed that the students became more proficient in generating ideas, drafting, processing feedback and revising. They also changed their expectations as a result of the exposure to the process approach and their attitudes were positively affected by the course.

Through the discussion above regarding the process approach to writing, this study pays more concern to this approach because of it's highly demand to be used in teaching writing in Yemen. Through his research field work, the researcher confirms that the process-oriented approach does not take place in the teaching of writing in Yemeni Universities. Thus, and for the future research, the researcher highly

emphasizes the process approach due to its useful techniques that will reflect the students' writings. These techniques will help students to produce longer and better-developed compositions, as well as increase their confidence and motivation to write. Specific techniques that the students will find helpful are the teaching of pre-writing activities, writing in multiple drafts, teaching students how to peer and self-edit effectively, instructor's comments on early drafts that focus more on content and organization than on grammar, group activities that encourage interaction and sharing of ideas among students, teacher/student conferences and an emphasis on the publication of students' work.

In summary, the impact of the process-oriented approach to teaching EFL writing will show positive effect of the approach when it will be used in EFL writing than the traditional approaches that are used recently in Yemen.

7.1.5. Feedback in Foreign Language Writing

In the process-oriented approach to writing, feedback is emphasized in students' development of writing skills. The effect of feedback in foreign language writing classes has recently become a source of controversy among researchers. The research on feedback on foreign language writing consists of two types: (i) that focuses on teacher feedback and (ii) that focuses on peer feedback.

7.1.5.1. Teacher Feedback

Teacher feedback can be divided into two categories: teacher-student conferences and teacher's written feedback. The discussion here focuses on the teacher's written feedback. There have been several research studies conducted on the effect of teacher's feedback and the results are quite different depending on the nature of the studies.

7.1.5.1.1. The effectiveness of teachers' written feedback

Whereas earlier research (Cohen 1987; Semke 1984; Zamel 1985) provided primarily negative evidence regarding the effectiveness of teachers' feedback, more recent studies showed that teachers' feedback had advantage and resulted in improvement in students writing. Zhang (1995) compared different sources of feedback and found that teachers' feedback had an effective advantage over peer feedback, self-feedback and other sources of feedback. The results of her study showed that claims made about the effective advantage of peer feedback in first language writing did not apply to ESL/EFL writing.

Ferris (1995, 1997) examined in details the students' reactions to teachers' responses and the relation between teachers' comments and students' revisions in a multiple draft setting. Her earlier study revealed that, overall, the students found the teachers' responses helpful when revising their drafts; that the students tended to reveal their papers and teachers' comments on the earlier drafts, rather than on the final drafts; that the proportion of the students who reread their papers was greater than that reported in Cohen's study (1987). Ferris's second study (1997) categorized teachers' comments by using four criteria: length, type, use of hedges, and text-specificity, the results showed that many of the techniques used by the teachers in this research were effective. These techniques included limited grammar feedback (more general comments on grammar feedback (more general comments on grammar, paired with underlined examples of particular error patterns in the body), marginal comments functioning as requested for information or for revision, and focused text-specific comments that provided clear directions for the revision tasks.

The technique of paragraph analysis, originally suggested by Brannon and Knoblauch (1984), requires students to write down the topic of each paragraph so that

they become aware of the overall structure of their texts. This procedure is potentially effective for ESL/EFL writers, for it is non-evaluative strategy that enables students to see the organization of their own writing (Leki 1991).

Various other responding strategies were also claimed to be effective. Leki (1991) suggested a limited approach in which teacher never commented on all the problems but gave feedback only on some aspects of content and form in each paper. Reid (1993) proposed that teacher have students commit to make only a few changes after they understood the teachers' feedback; Jenkins (1987) had students involved in written dialogues in response to the teachers' comments.

The success of these responding strategies seems to imply that the good intensions of writing teachers who give comments are not sufficient. Specific techniques that involve students in analysing certain characteristics of their own text (Connor and Farmer 1990) can enhance students' knowledge and ability to revise their own writing.

7.1.5.2. Peer Feedback

The effect of peer feedback in foreign language writing has recently become a source of controversy among researchers. The possible effect of peer feedback might vary according to learners' level of proficiency and cultural backgrounds.

7.1.5.2.1. The effectiveness of peer feedback

First language researchers have claimed that peers' feedback motivates students to do revisions, for it provides them with genuine questions and responses from authentic readers (James 1981; Koch 1982). Peer feedback helps student writers to develop not only their audience awareness, but also their critical thinking ability, which is essential for good writing (James 1981). Other benefit such as stimulating

students through multiple and mutual reinforcing perspectives and equipping students with the power to express themselves be also illustrated (Lamberg 1980).

These researchers who favour peer feedback maintain that: foreign language students could benefit similarly from peer feedback if teachers implement the peer feedback procedure carefully and give students substantial training.

Mittan (1989) stated that the effectiveness of the peer feedback technique could be attributed to the training the students received and the careful integration of the peer feedback procedures.

Through the researchers' views regarding "peer review", we can deduce that peer review sessions help students clarify, generate and develop ideas; improve the organization and style of their writing and develop their sense of audience which is essential to good writing.

7.1.5.2.2. The ineffectiveness of peer feedback

As we understood from the researchers' views that peer feedback is beneficial to students, problems are emerged, especially in the heterogeneous collaborative groups. The common problems that the students feel uncomfortable when making negative comments; they are scared of making honest and critical comments because they fear such comments might hurt other people's feelings; students feel that their limitations in terms of language skills constrained them in making contributions in the peer response process.

7.1.5.3. Summary

The overall view of foreign language writing research suggests firstly, the paradigm shift in foreign language writing instructions lead to the process approach and this approach has proved to be effective in teaching writing to foreign language

learners. Second, empirical research on feedback could not provide conclusive evidence on which feedback techniques worked most effectively for EFL students.

However, most studies in the field of foreign language writing research seem to lack a description of how learners from different backgrounds in the writing classroom act and respond to this approach. What is relevant to be clear to all EFL learners is: how they experience process-oriented class activities such as peer feedback and group work, how they perceive the growth of their writing skills, how their writing is changed over a period of time, what plays positive or negative roles in a process-oriented writing class with learners from different language backgrounds.

This chapter pays more concern on the process-oriented approach, because it may help Yemeni students who are relatively unskilled in English composition. The researcher wants to show through this chapter, the various kinds of influence this approach has on EFL students and how they respond and become accustomed to it according to some researchers' work in this field.

In order to investigate how EFL students respond to the process-oriented approach to writing in Yemeni EFL setting, this chapter focuses on class observation of their interactions, the collection and analysis of the teachers' and students' views on writing through the questionnaires and interviews with the instructors and their students.

Some questions should be addressed before discussing the situation of teaching English writing skill in Yemeni Universities. For example: What do students and teachers think writing is? What is the purpose of writing? What is its value? Do students think writing has value in high school/college courses, for overall academic success, and in their careers? How is writing used in exchanges between and among peers? In what ways are these perceptions evidenced by students talk about writing,

writing approaches, writing attitudes and writing products? What are students and teachers' perceptions of students writing skills as determined by assessment tests? How do assessment tests influence students' writing attitude and motivation? What suggestions do teachers have as motivators to further encourage and strengthen students writing?

7.2. The unsatisfactory performance in the writing of English among Yemeni English students in Yemeni Universities

The unsatisfactory performance in written English is partially due to defects in the teaching system or other issues. We begin the investigation by referring to the teachers' and students' responses to question 27 (See Appendix A) and question 17 (See Appendix B) which seek to find out whether Yemeni students enjoy composition class like other English classes or not. The responses are shown in Table (14) below.

Table 14: Students' motivating factors to learn writing

Students like composition Period		Number of teachers who selected the Responses (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the Responses(out of 112)	
		No.	%	No.	%
(i)	as much as other English classes	6	20	48	42.86
(ii)	more than other English classes	1	3.33	23	20.54
(iii)	less than other English classes	21	70	21	18.75
(iv)	hardly at all	-	-	18	16.07

The responses in Table (14) show that 20% of the teachers recommend that students like composition "as much as other English classes" while 70% recommend that students like composition "less than other English classes and only one teacher who recommends that students like composition "more than other English classes".

240

About the students' responses shown in the same table, 42.85% of the students recommend that the students like composition "as much as other English classes" while 20.53% recommend that students like composition "more than other English classes". According to 18.75% students like composition "less than other English classes" and 16.7% show that students "hardly at all like composition classes." In question 17 (See Appendix B) there were 17.85% did not answer the question.

By examining both the teachers' and students' responses that in Table (14), it was clear that the students' responses are completely different of their teachers. 42.85% of the students who answered the question selected item No. 1 in the table, while the teachers' selection of the same item IS only 20%. The ratio of the teachers' selection for the 2nd item in the table is 3.33%, while the students' ratio who selected the 2nd item is 20.53%. In the 3rd item, the ratio of the teachers who selected the item is 70%, while the ratio of the students is 18.75%. Regarding the last item in the table, the ratio of students who selected this item is 16.7%, but the teachers did not select this item at all.

Through the ratio mentioned above, we can conclude that the majority of the students who answered the question express their interest for learning composition as much as other English classes, but the teachers' view is reversibly. The majority of teachers confirm through their selection for the third item is that students are not interested in and not motivated to learn composition at least as other English classes.

Choosing specifically these two items leads us to examine two different views for both the teachers and their students. It is evident from the above discussion that the teachers express their opinions on what they really feel and observe daily in their classrooms. On the other hand, the students express their real motivation and interest towards learning composition.

The teachers' and students' responses and the discussion lead to the question: "Is there anything wrong with the teaching of composition in Yemeni Universities?" Questions 34, 35, 36, 37, and 38 (See Appendix A) seek to find an answer to question 27 in the teachers' questionnaire and question 17 in the students' questionnaire.

(34)   How many classes a week are devoted to the teaching of writing?

(35)   Do you teach composition in full class, tutorial groups, or both?

(36)   How many composition classes do you take in each?

Through the responses to question (34) most of the teachers specify two classes per week (i.e. three hours per week). Questions (35) and (36) are about "teaching composition in the full class and tutorial groups and how many composition periods the teacher take in each. The teachers' responses on questions (35) and (36) are shown in table (15) below.

Table 15: Ways of teaching composition

Ways of teaching composition	Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the responses (out of 112)
	No.	%	
(i) in the full class	13	43.33	
(ii) in tutorial groups	-	-	
(iii) both (i) and (ii)	11	36.67	One class for each

20% of the teachers did not answer Q. (35). Regarding question (36), there are 6.66% who answered it and 93.33% did not.

Questions 37 and 38 ask about "if the teachers set exercises in free composition, guided composition or both? And "How many exercises of each do the teachers set in each per term? Table (16) below shows the total number of free and guided composition exercises set by each teacher per term.

242

Table 16: Types of writing composition

Do teachers set exercises in		Number of composition exercises taken per term (Unknown)		Number of teachers who set and practice composition exercises(out of 30)	
		No.	No.	No.	%
(i)	Free composition?	7	5	1	3.33
(ii)	Guided composition?	9	15	1	3.33
(iii)	both (i) and (ii)			25	83.33

Table (16) indicates that 83.33% of the teachers set out composition exercises in both free and guided composition. One teacher specifies that he set out his exercises only in free composition and one teacher set out his exercises only in guided composition. Regarding the number of exercises taken per term in both free and guided composition there are only two teachers who specify the number of exercises per term. One of them specifies that the exercises taken per term are 7 exercises in free composition and 9 exercises in guided composition and the other teacher specifies that the exercises taken per term are 5 exercises in free composition and 15 exercises in guided composition. 28.33% of the teachers did not answer Q. 38.

A possible explanation could be that the teachers do not distinguish between composition and other writing tasks such as isolated exercises in grammar, copying notes or taken down dictated notes. Perhaps they consider every writing task as contributing to the skills of writing in equal measures.

It is evident from Table 15 and Table 16 that sufficient time is not being spent on the teaching and learning of the skill of writing. A possible reason for this negligence could be that a suitably designed composition course has not been prescribed.

It is also evident from the responses to questions 37 and 38 that at Colleges of Education, Languages and Arts in Sana'a and Thamar Universities, composition is

taught in classes exceeding100. Where tutorial groups are formed for composition teaching, the strength of each tutorial group ranges between thirty and forty students. As a result, it is difficult to get learners interested in composition classes and also to supervise their work. Composition can be taught effectively in small tutorial groups.

Responses to questions 37 and 38 show that teachers set both free and guided composition exercises and the ratio of free to guided composition is ill-balanced according to the responses of the two teachers who specified the exercises taken per term. As students are not able to cope with free composition, they lose interest in the class.

According to the teachers' responses to questions 30, 31, 32, and 33 (See Appendix A), free composition proves discouraging as it makes demands far above the ability of the students. Moreover, what each teacher means by guided writing is difficult to specify. Guided writing can be of different kinds and can be specified at different levels.

7.2.1. Summary

Through examining the teachers' and students' responses in this section, it is evident that some of the principal causes of students' unsatisfactory writing in English are as follows:

(i) The meaning of writing is variously understood by Yemeni writing teachers. Grammar and vocabulary exercises on the sentence level and single-sentence answers are termed writing tasks in much the same way as a connected piece of writing which pays attention to fundamentals of organization. As a result, the periods available for composition are not spent on composition tasks.

(ii) The time devoted to the teaching of composition is insufficient.

(iii) The ratio between free and guided writing is ill-balanced and needs to be revised. More guided and less free composition tasks would encourage learners to take interest in classes and put in greater effort.

(iv) Composition is taught in large classes or in large tutorial groups. This makes individual guidance and supervision almost impossible. Writing, being a difficult skill needs individual supervision. Furthermore, students can participate better in class activities if the group is small.

7.3. Views on Approaches to Teaching Writing

The evolution of second/foreign language writing instruction has been very interesting. Teachers in the field of writing have always searched for new and effective approaches to teaching writing. Raimes (1991) and Silva (1990) found that writing instruction in a second language started with a controlled composition or a product-focused approach. Then, researchers and writing teachers realized that a product-focused approach did not take into account the act of writing itself, but merely followed existing forms and grammar practice. Therefore, writing researchers and teachers began to investigate the composition process (Zamel 1986).

Research on the composing process on both the L1 context and the L2 context yielded a new approach that called attention to *how* students write rather than *what* they write. This new approach rapidly diminished the product-centred paradigm because many teachers/practitioners jumped on the new approach which is process approach to writing without hesitation.

Regarding the process approach to writing, it was discussed in details in the sub-section (7.1.4), but the researcher wanted to recall both approaches for comparison and emphasizes the advantages of process approach as the suitable approach for teaching writing in Yemeni Universities.

7.3.1. A Product-Oriented Approach to Writing

A product-oriented approach was pre-dominant in the past. It puts emphasis on the final written texts. It is "prescriptive and product-centred," stressing correct usage and mechanics, while emphasizing the traditional modes of discourse (narration, description, exposition, persuasion, and sometimes poetry). In the 1960s and 1970s, this approach was still dominant. It emphasized grammatical form and stressed the imitation of models of paragraphs and essays. Students wrote from an outline, completed paragraphs, and reordered paragraphs. In addition, the product-oriented approach also includes the ways teachers use models (for students to copy) in a writing class. However, because a product-oriented approach, many have argued, cannot foster thought, but can discourage creative thinking and writing, many writing teachers and researchers sought to find a different way of teaching writing (Silva, 1990).

7.3.2. A Process-Oriented Approach to Writing

A process-oriented approach to writing is an idea that began to flourish 30 years ago as a result of extensive research on first language writing (Reyes cited in Montago 1995). The most important principle of process pedagogy is that writing is the result of a very complex, highly individualized process. *Process writing* refers to a broad range of strategies that include pre-writing activities, such as defining the audience, using a variety of resources and planning the writing, as well as drafting and revising (Goldstien and Carr (1996). As Raimes (1991) clarified that the process-oriented approach focuses on the writer because it allows writers times and opportunity to select topics, generate ideas, write drafts, revise, and provide feedback. However, Murray (1973), one of the major league proponents of a process approach, recommends that to employ a process-oriented approach effectively, writers should

spend 85% of their writing time in the pre-writing step, 1% on writing, and14% on rewriting.

Some recent researches suggested that many of the techniques and activities associated with the process approach including group-writing assignments, peer-editing and multiple revisions serve to demystify the task of writing in a foreign language, as well as to provide students with valuable opportunities to learn from each other. Concluding to what mentioned above, we found that, writing as a process is necessary for EFL students, particularly Yemeni students, because they may have placed a low priority on developing their writing skills. Many of them still measure their writing only from a product perspective. So that, teaching them writing as a manageable process can not only enrich these students' notion of writing, but can also give them a method of diagnosing where they have problem in the process of moving from the beginning to a complete/final text in English.

7.3.3. The teachers' views on the approaches used for teaching written English in Yemeni Universities

This sub-section discusses the teachers' view on the approaches used for teaching writing skill in the Yemeni Universities. These views are obtained through the teachers' responses to question 28 (See Appendix A). Question 28 aimed at finding out what teachers thought of students' performances in the different aspects of the skill of writing. The responses of an overwhelming majority indicate that the students' writing is poorest with regard to content. The teachers' responses show that after 'content', the next weak area is "grammatical correctness" and "organization". Some of the teachers, however, feel that "students have hardly any ideas".

Although, the teachers understand their students' unsatisfactory level in writing, 86.66% of the teachers agreed with the view that the emphasis on the aspects of

writing should concentrates on content, organization and communicative use of language rather than grammatical aspects. If the concentration paid to these aspects of writing, students will be better motivated, be more confident and will eventually be able to write better. 10% of the teachers disagree and only one teacher couldn't give any response.

7.3.4. Summary

Through the teachers' responses, the researcher concludes that the majority of the teachers begin to realize that emphasis on grammar never improves students' writing ability and that there are other important aspects which have to be considered in teaching composition. One of these aspects is to shift the emphasis from grammar to communication. That means how teachers focus on how to illustrate a method for teaching writing that focuses on both the grammatical and communicative aspects of writing. The researcher's emphasis that rather than practicing grammatical structures through controlled sentence exercises, students are presented with a situation which is designed to elicit practice in a particular structure. By providing students with a voice, audience and a task, the researcher confirms that the attention is given to both grammatical correctness and rhetorical effectiveness. Further ways of enabling students to write effectively and to write with some degree of confidence is to follow the process approach to writing and the collaborative writing paradigm as the suitable paradigms for teaching writing.

There are two advantages of providing students with writing tasks and voices. First, such an approach provides a context for determining whether or not a statement is appropriate and effective. Thus it is important for EFL writing texts to provide students with a context in which to determine the appropriateness of an item. This is even more critical in teaching situations where English is not spoken outside the

classroom. In this case, the classroom must provide instruction in language use since there is no opportunity for this kind of learning outside the classroom. The second advantage of providing students with writing voices is that it introduces them to the semi-technical vocabulary of various fields, along with preparing them for the kind of writing they may be asked to do in the future.

As mentioned in the previous section that composition has been defined in a variety of ways, which include recurring phrases such as thinking process, stylistic process, grammatical correctness, rhetorical arrangement, and creativity. In this regard, Raimes (1978:188) points out, what is now needed is a way to integrate these aspects so that "students invent and organize their own ideas while they practice the rhetorical and syntactic structures of English." The purpose of this section is to illustrate a communicative approach to writing that attempts to fulfil this goal.

Very few writing texts provide students with an opportunity to base their writing on direct perceptions and actions. In addition to not providing opportunities for direct experiences, many written texts minimize the fact that composition is a communicative process which involves a speaker and an audience. As Widdowson (1973:16) points out:

> "to compose sentences is not the only ability we need to communicate. Communication takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature."

Composition then, like all communication, involves the skill of knowing how to use the language within a particular situation.

The process approach and collaborative writing are two paradigms that teachers can follow to teach writing skill in the Yemeni Universities. Through using these two paradigms the teachers can achieve the above mentioned aims.

7.3.5. Suggestions

Communicative writing class in the Yemeni Universities should illustrate how communication is applied in teaching writing and the instructors on the other hand should encourage their students to follow and grasp the written communication strategy. As a result of what discussed above, the researcher proposes some suggestions that should be taken into consideration while teaching the course of writing:

1. The Yemeni Universities should present writing materials that provide students with direct experiences (visual images and field experiences) for their writing rather than secondary experiences (reading models). Thus, the more students are directly involved in the process of perceiving and categorizing, the more practice they will have in skills which are central to good writing, namely, arranging and substantiating.

2. Students' writing should be the primary object of study. In order to introduce students to the essentials of communicating effectively in the university, students must be writing and talking about their writing. The teacher's ability to share his/ her insights about writing for academic matters and the textbook's explication of rhetorical concepts are secondary instructional tools. Therefore the instructional focus is on students' own writing.

3. Encourage students to put their feelings and thoughts into words in a more vivid and lucid manner which produce a good writing.

4. Teachers should be dedicated to promoting writing or activity-centred learning environment in their classrooms. This maintains a focus on helping students negotiate rhetorical concepts for themselves rather than focusing class time on a teacher's presentation of rhetorical concepts while students remain passive.

5. Large-group or whole-class activities that facilitate students' dialogue are essential to this classroom environment. Such interaction is designed to help students practise negotiating concepts about writing through problem-solving activities.

6. Other common classroom practices are peer-response activities. Such activities place students in direct negotiation with each other over the meaning of their texts. One goal of this activity is to give each writer ideas about how readers might react to his/ her text. A second goal is to emphasize the importance of having students practice using key rhetorical concepts with each other.

7.4. Teaching Writing Skill

Beliefs about writing instruction emphasize on the relation between talking, reading and writing. It is believed that talking and reading could help with writing and suggested that the integration of talking and reading is important for EFL writing instruction.

It is believed that students learn to write by reading, but this phenomenon or strategy is not followed in Yemeni Universities. That means, teachers don't encourage their students to condense their reading for the purpose of writing, because the more exposure the student gets from reading, and writing about what he reads, the more fluent in writing he becomes. As a result, reading is important for students not just for practicing reading, it is also important for students to talk about writing, to talk about each other's writing, to talk about what they've read.

Teachers recently began to disagree with the structuralisms' views on teaching writing which supports teaching grammar or focusing on the surface level of sentences. Instead, they advocated teaching writing as a means of discovery of what the writer wants to say.

For Yemeni students to produce an effective piece of writing, they should go through several steps which are included in the process approach.

This section discusses points that are related to the teaching of writing in Yemeni Universities. These points concentrate on the teachers' and students' views on teaching the writing skills in the Yemeni Universities; collaborative writing; class interaction; journal writing; how students improve their writing.

7.4.1. Teachers' and students' views on the skills of writing

Question 29 (See Appendix A) was given to ask the teachers and students about the skills of writing that are taught and learnt in writing courses. The teachers' and students' responses are shown in Table (17).

Table 17: Skills of writing

	Skills of writing	Number of teachers who selected the responses (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the responses(out of 112)	
		No.	%	No.	%
A	Note-making from books	23	76.67	51	45.54
B	Summarizing	18	60	26	23.21
C	Note-taking from lectures	17	56.67	46	41.07
D	Conveying message in writing	13	43.33	56	50
E	Answering examination questions	26	86.67	45	40.18
F	Paragraph writing	26	86.67	52	46.43
G	Essay writing	26	86.67	55	49.11
H	Report writing	26	86.67	68	60.71
I	Writing formal letters	21	70	30	26.79
J	Writing informal letters	18	60	25	22.32
K	Giving written instructions	19	63.33	61	54.46
L	Making written inquiries	16	53.33	40	35.71

In Table (17), all the teachers who answered the question select the items E, F, G, and H. In their views, they consider these skills as the most important ones to be taught in the Yemeni classroom. About the secondary skills, the teachers select the items A, I, K, J, and B respectively. For the items C, L, and D are given the least consideration by the teachers. In this question, 4 teachers did not answer the question.

To examine the students' views on question 18 (See Appendix B) which indicates to the same question of their teachers, we noticed that, the students' responses seem a little bit different of their teachers. In this question, 15 students out of 112 did not answer the question.

In Table (17), students on the other hand, select the items H and K as the important skills of writing to be taught in their views. The secondary skills they select are the items D, G, F and A. The skills which seem less important in the students' views are the items C, E, L, I, B, and J.

7.4.1.1. Summary

By examining the teachers' responses, we can conclude that there was a consensus by the teachers on those common skills which they themselves teach in their classes. But examining the students' view on the same question seems strange. It is evident from their responses that there is a discrepancy between what the students select and what their teachers did. This leads us to deduce that:

- There is no specific syllabus designed for teaching the skills of writing.

- Probably the syllabus is there, but the teachers do not include the skills in their own hand-outs that they design for the writing course.

- Perhaps the students do not understand each particular skill while learning the course of writing.

- Probably the syllabus is there, but the teachers neglect the skills of writing and depend on other tasks such as teaching grammar, copying notes, dictation and focusing at the sentence structure level.

7.4.1.2. Suggestions

Through the teachers' and students' responses, the discussion followed, the researcher suggests some comments on how the teaching of writing should be happen

in the Yemeni classrooms. Probably these comments will show why the researcher emphasizing on following the process-oriented approach to teaching writing in Yemeni Universities. These comments basically concentrate on the teaching style that should be considered in the writing classes, collaborative writing, text used in the class and class interaction.

The researcher emphasizes the process oriented approach to writing, because it is helpful, it really pushed students to do much better in their writing. It is much more appropriate than focusing on grammar. At the same time, the researcher emphasizes the importance of clarity and correctness in the revision process. For example, after having students generate their ideas in their first draft, instructor should encourage them to move slowly to focus on the correctness and clarity in the subsequent drafts of their writings.

About the style of teaching, the researcher emphasizes it as an important point which attracts the students' attention. Thus, while teaching writing, the instructors should teach the students in a manner that is gentle and encouraging. This creates a very comfortable environment for the students. Teachers should use a clear, slow, and soft expression; flexible about negotiating with the students; giving options to the students in terms of choosing their topics and reading articles so that the students will become more engaged with their writing and reading.

7.4.2. Collaborative Writing is the Suitable Paradigm for Teaching Writing in Yemen

Collaboration and collaborative writing are worth studying because of their numerous advantages. They are considered to be an important social and interactive activities that increase students' intellectual and emotional participation in an integrated, a nonthreatening and a flexible atmosphere (Bruffee 1980). Collaborative

254

writing also helps students to overcome psychological barriers to lessen students' apprehension and to help them learn from each other through conversations (Rass 2001).

Teachers should encourage collaboration and acceptance of others' ideas. Their feedback to their students' work should be collaborative instead of critical and evaluative. Positive feedback particularly written comments on the first draft is so relevant in improving the students' writing. Because of its relevance, the collaborative writing is an insisted requirement to be taught in Yemeni Universities. As a result, the researcher provides relevant information about collaborative writing.

Collaborative writing is a process of how students work collaboratively. It appears to occur in two steps. *First*, it will take place during the beginning of the collaboration, when all members are gathered to do the group brainstorming. Each member has a chance to propose, discuss, and negotiate his/her ideas. Such activities allowed students to consult directly with each other over the meaning of their texts. Our students discuss and negotiate their ideas in their mother tongue (Arabic), yet they demonstrate that they are involved in social and interactive procedures that might increase their intellectual and emotional capabilities.

The collaborative writing in this stage will seem to foster emotional maturity because evidence from students will show that they will learn to confer effectively with others in their groups. They will learn to respect others' opinions and accept the group consensus. They will discuss the work that they want to do. They offer opportunity for each one who has knowledge in each field to explain the project and outline it. They help each other to revise it. They assign each other the work to do. When students have problems, they help each other correct them and they help each other to make it perfect.

These advantages as mentioned above show that the members of the groups could offer supporting and opposing information, ideas and opinions. These exchanges could create shared knowledge and perspectives that group members might absorb consciously and unconsciously. Moreover, when someone brainstormed and presented ideas in one group, other members are likely to notice weaknesses and mistakes and could help suggest alternative solutions to help correct those mistakes. This is beneficial because the members can act as mirrors that reflect the others' viewpoints, thereby helping each other to learn. In other words, when brainstorming and writing collaboratively, students have an audience that can give immediate feedback.

Second, collaborative writing appears to take place when the members who are competent in English write in English or translate the agreed ideas into English. The learning in this stage promotes students English skills because once members of the group agree on someone's ideas, the originator of those ideas would rephrase and voice his/her thoughts in Arabic. Then the person who is good in English will translate that Arabic speech into English, and this is the common way that is recently used by Yemeni students in the Yemeni Universities but in an individual way not as groups. In some groups, a member will first write those ideas on paper in Arabic. Then the members help each other translate it into English with the direction of the members who are good in English.

During this translations process, the less English proficient members in the groups can learn more about English writing. They learn while observing and assisting the more skilled writers. Most of the time, the proficient writers can also provide advice about English writing to other members.

7.4.2.1. Summary

We can conclude that collaborative writing assignments provide students with the benefits and experience of building writing knowledge through the dynamic interactions between group members, between the other groups and the subject matter. Especially, less-proficient students will receive tremendous benefits. Through collaborative writing, they will be exposed to the ways in which more-proficient writers write and they learn that they can adopt those strategies to use in writing their own individual work. Teaching collaboration makes learning much more interesting for teachers and much more realistic for students.

7.4.2.2. Suggestions

Future work on the cognitive aspects of writing is likely to focus on the interaction between a writing process and social, organizational and cultural context. As a result, the researcher proposes some suggestions that Yemeni teachers should consider. These suggestions are as follows:

1. Teachers should connect writing assignments to students' lives.

2. Teachers should listen carefully to their students and seek students' suggestions to build a writing curriculum that is grounded in students' experiences and cultures.

3. Relating writing to students' lives and cultures could bring students and teachers closer and the teachers may able to provide counselling, along with improving students' academic skills.

4. More attention should be directed to seeking approaches that unite lives, schools, homes, communities and curricula. This leads to the reconsideration and application of communicative approach to teaching writing.

7.4.3. Class-Interaction

This sub-section discusses how the interaction happens between the instructor and his students. In the class, the instructor and the students interact in two different ways 1) in an oral format and 2) in a written format.

To draw the attention of the students, the instructor should establish a comfortable and supportive environment for them. To make the class interact the instructor has to make the classroom full of activities and interaction between him/her and the students and among the students themselves occur frequently. The communication is mostly started by the instructor to stimulate students' responses. Giving students lots of different activities in class will motivate them to write effectively and will do away with boredom feeling as monotony of work.

As it is used, in Yemeni English classrooms, the language learning experiences are teacher-centred and the students do not feel free to talk to each other. Students only listen to the teacher and write down what the teacher says.

By following the process-oriented approach to writing, Yemeni students will get the chance to communicate with each other, making teacher-student conferences in the classrooms. This will be achieved through the use of collaborative learning among the students themselves. The instructor encourages his/her students to talk to each other, participate actively in whole-class as well as small group discussions and pair work. This kind of techniques will minimize teacher-centred lectures during the course.

7.4.3.1. Summary

For encouraging the Yemeni students to talk in the composition class, the instructor has to follow the oral interaction between him/her and his/her students through a question and answer format, but not the traditional style used recently in

Yemeni classes. Unfortunately, some instructors take a negative attitude of those students who always ask questions in the class. Therefore, the instructor has to use the open-ended questions. He/she stimulates students to engage in exploring answers by asking. The students' responses to their instructors' questions, and by answering them, they slowly began to understand what constituted a good composition and how to make the written piece better. This kind of practice in a whole-class discussion as well as in small group discussions enable students to see fundamental elements of good writing and eventually to acquire basic knowledge about writing techniques.

According to the techniques and styles discussed above for class-interaction, and since the instructor asks his/her students to work together on the assignment, the assignment then makes them collaborative. During the researcher's observation at College of Education, and College of Languages in Sana'a University, he noticed that the class-interaction is probably not planned by the most of the instructors. Some of the instructors are really used the group-work assignment but it is restricted to few students as the class exceeded 100. What I noticed is that the students became not engaged in talking to each other in English. They do not feel motivated to do their assignments together such as pair work or group work.

7.4.4. Journal Writing

By looking at the students' journal, the researcher really felt very pleased that the students are doing this kind of activity. But by reading it, he discovered that the journal had been written since a year.

Journal writing is considered one of the important types of interaction that the instructor should think of. Through journal writing, the instructor interacts with his students individually and comes to know them better. In addition, it develops the students'-confidence in their writings. When the students read their peers' journals,

they will see how others write and realize the impact of their own to write something challengeable. Through journal writing, the students slowly increase their fluency in writing. During the interview program that the researcher organized with some students, most of the students reported that they don't have enough time to do their class activities and homework assignment and it is too difficult to think of writing to students' journal. They additionally commented that the exercises planned to be given to the students are focused mainly on developing accuracy in writing. However, it is useful for the teachers and students to work on fluency as well. For this reason, the researcher recommends that the teachers should encourage their students keep in writing journal. In the journal, students will be concerned with expressing their thoughts, feelings and ideas and should not be focused on spelling or grammar. The writing journal can be compared to having a casual conversation, where fluent communication is the goal rather than a formal presentation where form and correct language use are more emphasized.

7.4.5. How can Students Improve their Writing?

We learn how to talk by listening to others talk, by listening to what words they used and how they put their words together. We then practise until we learn to communicate effectively. A similar process is involved in learning how to write well. We concentrate on the words writers use and how they put those words together and we practice until we communicate effectively. So, students' involvement both inside and outside the classroom is essential.

Learning how to write well involves more than class participation. Internalizing the patterns of writing takes time and practice. There are other ways that we can use to improve our writing such as, reading daily, notice what writers do, writing daily, and review what we have learned.

Students' writing processes are very important and should be studied. As more teachers are moving their instruction from product-oriented approach to a process-based approach, studies of learners' writing processes have proliferated (Brumberger 1999). Zamel (1986), added by saying that mostly, the research on this topic has aimed to develop a deeper understanding of students' writing processes so that researchers and teachers can design an instruction program that best suits the needs of their students.

7.4.5.1. Summary

. Because the researcher' plan to teach Yemeni students how to write in English effectively, he needs to notice how they are processing their writing in English. Thus, one of the findings of the researcher's field work in composing written text is that the students' lack of competence in English grammar and vocabulary. This forces them to compose through their mother tongue (Arabic) first and later to translate their texts into English. Through the interviews organized, students report that the revisions mostly done at a sentence level. For that, students should benefit more from having an opportunity to look at their peers' work than from their peers' comments because the students not confident and feeling shy in giving comments to each other. Although, this kind of written activity itself is not followed in the Yemeni classrooms, students cannot achieve a certain progress in writing. Student/teacher writing conferences are liked, but students want more time to discuss their general learning problems not just correcting the assignments. Students like the writing assignments because they could practice writing articles and other subjects that are related to their own field or general fields. However, the course content appears to have been inadequate. Through the students' questionnaire and interviews, students stated that they need a course that cover more content and that allow them to practice not only English writing, but also

listening, speaking, and reading skills. For the evaluation, students need a more tangible approach to measure their abilities not the traditional one that recently followed by the teachers. In this regard, students in the Yemeni Universities suggest that giving more marks for the writing assignments should not depend on the final exam results as a method for evaluation, but evaluating the students' work during the academic year.

The researcher emphasizes on some issues in teaching the writing skill. First is that the writing teachers should help students become more aware of their own writing processes by familiarizing them with the writing activities, such as pre-writing, drafting, giving peer feedback, revising and editing. Secondly, writing teachers specifically in the Yemeni Universities should think carefully with the students' self-awareness. It is essential in developing higher-mental functions, because it is the key issue in learning. It could enable learners to gain conscious control of their actions and learning. Thus, increasing students' awareness in writing is especially important in large classes because large classes are always a dilemma in Yemen. A teacher in this situation may not be able to pay close attention to all students. Large class sizes are common in most Yemeni Universities, so it might not be easy for teachers to give their students enough individual attention. One way that teachers may adopt to resolve this problem and improve students' performance is to raise the awareness of the students' writing process and help them to develop learner autonomy. Awareness of a writing process may enable learners to gain control of their writing and reduce their reliance on teachers.

Awareness of a writing process is useful for students and teachers, so in this chapter, the researcher find out that one of the main objectives for teaching writing in Yemeni Universities is to raise the students' awareness by presenting them the

"general features of a writing process, including the strategies of revision, and a collaborative writing paradigm. These features will encourage the learner to think about the nature of his/ her own writing process and then, through students' reflection about both writing process and collaborative writing paradigms.

7.5. Teaching the Yemeni Graduate Students to Teach Composition

During the previous period complaints about writing crisis still unsolved in the Yemeni Schools and Universities. Thus, there is obvious evidence that English teachers at all levels should receive little training in the teaching of English language skills, particularly writing. One reason is that Ministry of Education and English departments in several Yemeni Universities do not have a commitment to writing. This failure is manifested in the practice of assigning freshman composition to untrained teaching assistants or to non-tenure instructors in holding out courses in literature or writing as plums and in the refusal of many departments to create courses that prepare students for "real world" writing.

The researcher's purpose here is not to discuss the shortcomings of the Yemeni English departments but to bring into attention that departments should recognize these shortcomings and take steps to correct them.

It is ironic that most Yemeni Universities and the English departments in particular use graduate teaching assistants to staff their freshman composition courses without providing them with any training program to prepare them for the assignment. Thus, training programs should be organized. Besides, the department members can equip teaching assistants with the knowledge necessary to teach composition. Some ways are suggested to overcome this problem for example, 1) convince the department that if the teaching assistants are to receive any of the available jobs they must be virtually certified as competent by the department, 2) make the training

program a grade-bearing course recognized by the university, 3) encourage the heads of the English departments to promote research in composition within the composition courses as a way of getting teaching assistant and full-time faculty to work together, 4) establish a workshop offered to teaching assistant just before the opening of the fall term and taught by the director of freshman English.

The workshop progress from instruction in grammar and language structure, through sentence combining techniques to methods of writing instruction will take one to two weeks-long. The graduate students also participate in a counselling session to eliminate any apprehension and fears of failure they might have.

In addition to the workshop, the teacher assistants are each assigned to one or two department guides who are given released time to supervise their teaching assistants and to meet them during a specific period they decide. The guides explain upcoming writing assignments, offer additional grading sessions, demonstrate how to discuss students' writings in class and suggest ways of guiding the freshman through paragraph construction, first drafts and revision. The guides also observe their teaching assistants during a semester and review two or three sets of grades on freshman papers before they are returned to the students. The researcher recommends that the program will be enthusiastically endorsed by the students who annually ask that it be expanded.

7.5.1. Summary

In the face of such research results, English educators seem to be adapting their programs to give graduate students and other prospective writing teachers some of the necessary practice, skills and experience in composition instruction. For example, through the teachers' and students' responses regarding the lack of preparation of the English teachers in teaching the writing skill, the English departments in Sana'a,

Thamar, and other Yemeni Universities should design a syllabus that meet the demand for more writing instruction preparation. The syllabus that should be designed has to emphasize preparing teachers in the areas of writing instruction and teaching methods or designing a thorough syllabus which include the four language skills.

As it is noticed, in the English departments in different Yemeni Universities, the graduate major students as soon as they finish their bachelor degree in English, they are assigned as teaching assistants to teach the English language skills, linguistic subjects and literature as well without any previous teaching experiences or proper supervision. Thus, for preparing these teacher assistants to do their jobs properly, the English departments should plan programs which include several stages of instruction and practice. For example, the graduate students are required to assist composition instructors with teaching classes, grading papers, conferring with students and generally planning daily classes. The graduate students are also allowed in the course of a year to work closely with three different instructors, thereby learning as many as three different approaches to the teaching of composition. After evaluation by the instructors, the graduate students are made teaching assistants and continue the process of teacher preparation with a tutorial and an evaluator/advisor program. In the tutorial the teaching assistants and their instructor discuss the problems that arise during the assistants' teaching experiences. The last point is, by having an evaluator/advisor, the student benefits from the experiences of a tested instructor while also confronting independently and essentially without supervision the teaching of composition.

Although writing instruction remains a difficult work, the increased attention to teacher preparation in writing instruction can contribute significantly towards making such instruction less frustrating, more enjoyable, and possibly even exciting for both

English teachers and their students. Therefore, the teacher preparation as a program can be applicable not only to writing skill but the other language skills, listening, speaking and reading.

7.6. Understanding the Students' Difficulties

This section tries to find out the difficulties students encounter in the writing composition. This will be seen by obtaining the views of the teachers and students through the questionnaires and the interviews organized with them as well as class observation.

7.6.1. The teachers' and students' views on the students' difficulties

Questions 39, 40, and 41 (See Appendix A) sought to ascertain the difficulties that students face in writing. Question 39 indicates that 93.33% of the teachers recommend that the students are handicapped because they are weak in the skills of writing, while 6.66% are against that. So that, the teachers' responses to question 40 (See Appendix A) and the students' responses to question 19 (See Appendix B) that indicates to the same question of their teachers are an evident for question 39. Table (18) that is given below shows the responses selected.

Table 18: Students' writing difficulties

	Students are handicapped	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)		Number of students who selected the response (out of 112)	
		No.	%	No.	%
(i)	at college when doing work which demands the skills of writing	1	3.33	8	7.14
(ii)	in real-life situations which demand communications through writing	2	6.67	23	20.54
(iii)	both (i) and (ii)	25	83.33	44	39.29

In Table (18), it seems clear that 83.33% of the teachers recommend that the students are handicapped at college and in real life situations which demand written communication. About the teachers who select the item (ii) in the table are only two teachers, while only one teacher who select item (i) in the table above. In this question two teachers did not answer the question.

Regarding the students' views on question 19 (See appendix B), the students' responses as shown in Table (18) yielded that, 7.14% of the students select the item (i) in the table. 20.53% select the item (ii) while 39.28% select both of the items (i) and (ii). 33% of the students did not answer the question.

7.6.1.1. Summary

By examining the teachers' responses to question 39 and the result shown in Table (18) is that the more urgent need for Yemeni students is not to be taught the kind of written English needed in job situations but to find out whether students need written English in the college setting and to equip them to face these situations. In this way, various kinds of writing tasks could be given adequate coverage and the students may be equipped to face real-life situations requiring written communication before they have graduated. Through the discussion above, we conclude the following:

   a) Students are handicapped at College on the account of their inability to communicate in written English.

   b) Many students need jobs after graduation but they will fail to get them primarily because of poor oral and written expression in English. Therefore, by equipping them to speak and write appropriately in English, they can improve their job prospects. Hence, teachers need to find out in what situations (academic and others) students need to write

in English at College or whether students need written English in job situations.

   c) What kind of writing tasks will enable them to meet the requirements of their jobs in future?

For helping Yemeni students to communicate in written English; improve their oral and written expression and enabling them to meet the requirements of their jobs in future, instructors should teach their students some of the sorts of writing tasks such as: problem-solving tasks; tasks which require knowledge and information; tasks which require manipulation of grammatical structures; tasks which require creative thinking and tasks which require communication in a well-defined situation. By doing these tasks, all the aims discussed above will be solved easily.

In their responses to question 20 (See appendix B) which was given to ask students about the most important difficulties that they face in writing composition, the researcher summarizes their difficulties as follows:

❖ Students do not have good and effective writing and have not good supporting ideas.

❖ Probably all Yemeni students encounter problems regarding grammar, vocabulary, spelling and the order of sentences in a paragraph.

❖ Students face difficulties in writing letters of various kinds.

❖ Students claim that they don't' have time to allocate for practicing the writing skill daily.

❖ Students face difficulty in translating what they read into a piece of writing.

❖ Students encounter difficulty in finding ideas about the topic they want to write about and difficulty in getting the right way of organizing these ideas.

❖ Students claim that they write the style that satisfies their teachers not to satisfy their desires.

❖ Students need their teachers to teach them the writing skill by using the suitable approaches that guide them to write a piece of writing effectively and asking their teachers give them more classes in learning the writing course.

❖ Students claim that they do not have an opportunity to write English compositions as should be required because the curricula as they mentioned in Colleges are mainly focus on grammar exercises and translation but not writing composition.

❖ Students clarify that when writing in English they start writing in their mother tongue, then translate it into English by using an English/Arabic dictionary. As a result, students insist that they don't want to follow this method and want to think and write only in English.

By examining the students' views listed above, we can conclude that the major writing difficulties identified by the students are their lack of information, vocabulary, ideas and difficulties with the correct use of grammar. It seems that even though they have a great deal of grammar practices, they actually have considerable difficulties in using the grammar in the appropriate way while writing.

Probably, due to the students' limited experience with writing in English, their initial writing is underdeveloped, lacked details, organization and perhaps included many mechanical errors. Therefore, these tasks and skills should be taken into consideration. To improve the students' skills in writing, teachers should shift their teaching from the product-oriented approach to the process-oriented approach with the instructors' skilful intervention. The researcher find that the students' feelings associated with the difficulties in their writings are fear of failure about getting a good

marks, low self-esteem, resentment of and resistance towards tasks and writing assignment and lack of coping strategies. We conclude that these difficulties that students encounter seem to keep them from improving their writing.

Through the class observation the researcher find out that Yemeni students are very quiet in their classes, they rarely talk and to some extent follow the whole-class discussion. Unless they are called on by the instructor, they hardly answer the questions. Students when speaking in class they do not feel confident because their speaking skills are limited.

Through the students' views on their difficulties they face in writing composition and the discussion above, the researcher believes that all these difficulties discussed above are because of some reasons. These reasons are as follows:

1. The limited role and series of writing that takes place in most classrooms and when students are asked to write, the focus is only on expository writing that is highly structured and teacher-centred.

2. Writing in Colleges deal with retelling what a teacher says, summarizing subject material or the emphasis remaining on mechanical corrections and strategic repetition.

3. Teaching approaches are treating writing processes in a superficial manner and students do not learn to link process activities with the problem they face in their own writing. One reason for this lies in the reality of life in Colleges; oversized classes and little time for preparation yield skimpy process teaching. Another reason is that adopting a collaborative rather than an evaluative stance in the teaching of writing is difficult in this kind of Yemeni oversized classes.

4. Through the analysis of Yemeni students' interviews, their answers to the questionnaire and class observation, the researcher find that the majority of the students face similar problems. They report that they encounter three major problems in studying English writing skills. First is <u>the issue of time.</u> Almost all the students complain that they don't have enough time to study writing skills and carry out the assignments by the teachers. This finding shows that students do have the time, but that they do not allocate enough of their time to writing the assignment for the class. The real problem that brought about complains are the lack of effective time management and possibly a lack of enthusiasm towards written English. The second problem is <u>the misuse of peer review, peer evaluation, and collaborative writing in writing classes</u>. Although the communicative view that peer review and collaborative writing practiced in the teaching of writing, Yemeni teachers are still using the structural product-oriented approach for teaching writing. Whereas, using peer review and collaborative writing process will provide the students with many benefits (as mentioned above) and improve their written and spoken English as well. The writing teachers therefore, might need to use peer review, peer evaluation and collaborative writing to teach their students effectively the writing skill. The third problem was <u>the English language problem</u> which seems to be typical for an EFL writing class. This problem emerged from the questionnaire, interview, and class observation. This study find out that students face some problems in their writings. They are as follows:

- They have problems in looking for data and how to use English.
- It is hard for them to think about the topic they want to write about.

- They couldn't follow properly the strategies of the process approach to writing which is the guided approach for Yemeni students to study and improve their writing skills.

Through the class observation, this study find out that an inadequate background in English cause major problems with the teaching and learning writing. This inadequate background

- Greatly slow down their writing processes because Yemeni students used to draft their ideas in Arabic and write them later by translating those ideas into English.

- Many of the students feel frustrated because they have to rely on their friends to check the accuracy of their writing.

This finding proves the reality that a large number of students in one class are not ready to write advanced documents such as, essays, letters, reports etc., in English. It is essential that the teachers of writing should provide their students with some of the suitable strategies of written English course.

It is concluded that the quality of the Yemeni students' writing depends on their competence in English. Students would be able to produce a good piece of writing if they possessed English at a certain level of proficiency.

7.6.1.2. Suggestions

After examining the teachers' and students' views regarding the students' difficulties and the researcher's concluding ideas, the researcher proposes some suitable solutions, they are as follows:

❖ The writing course should consider the students' needs, interests and level.

❖ The instructors' teaching style should be greatly appreciated by their students.

❖ The variety of different activities in the writing class prepared by the instructors should make the students engage in many different type of writing strategies and techniques which they could apply to their own writing process.

❖ The instructors should be helpful with their students and the students should accept their peer comments as well.

❖ The students should take into account their instructor's comments on their drafts. This made them aware of their shortcomings and errors in their draft more suitably.

❖ Teachers should consider some factors which appear to affect the learners of the study of writing. These factors such as: classroom atmosphere, what the students wrote, drafting procedures, peer reading/feedback, teachers' feedback, teacher–student conferences and the evaluation procedures.

❖ Some of the factors that encourage the students' writing abilities, writing clearly, and writing effectively is that, they enjoy the pleasant atmosphere and the small group process and discussions and they like the friendly and caring instructor.

7.7. Evaluating and Grading Students' Writing

Evaluation usually has a wash back effect on teaching. Therefore, this section examines the practice follow by the teachers in evaluating students' writing in Yemeni Universities.

7.7.1. Teachers' Views on Evaluating and Grading Students' Writing

Responses to question 42 (See Appendix A) show that, in the evaluation of composition, the majority of the teachers laid greater emphasis on grammatical correctness than on organization. This is hardly surprising in view of the students'

inability to write even fairly correct English. When the teachers find too many grammatically incorrect sentences in composition scripts, the tendency is to give better marks to students who make relatively fewer mistakes. This, however, is not the only reason for greater emphasis on grammatical correctness in evaluation. Grammar mistakes are numerous as well as serious; the entire teaching effort concentrates on the teaching of grammar alone in most composition classes. The teacher tends to overlook requirements other than grammatical correctness in the skill of writing. And as grammatical correctness is emphasized while teaching, it naturally continues to be emphasized in evaluation too.

Question 41 (See Appendix A) discusses the kinds of common mistakes that students commit often, seeks also further information on evaluation practices and the nature of errors in students' writing. The teachers' responses to question 41 indicate that the teachers consider only the mistakes that interfere with comprehension more serious than mistakes which violate the rules of grammar. It cannot be denied that mistakes which affect intelligibility are certain to be considered more serious. As we know, writing is a means of communication. If communication breaks down, writing proves futile. Evidence to support the teachers' responses to question 41 is to be found in the teachers' views when they respond to question 42 (see Appendix A) which asked about the aspects that the teachers lay greater emphasis in the evaluation of writing composition. The teachers' responses are shown in Table (19) below.

Table 19: Aspects of evaluating writing composition

Aspects that lay greater emphasis in the evaluation of writing composition	Number of teachers who selected the response (out of 30)	
	No.	%
a) grammatical correctness	18	60
b) Content and organization	14	46.67

In Table (19) 60% of the teachers recommend that the greater emphasis they follow in the evaluation of the writing composition is "grammatical correctness", while 46.66% select the item (b) in the table which is "content and organization" that they recommend as the aspect which needs greater emphasis during the evaluation of the writing composition.

Through the teachers' responses, we conclude that the majority of the teachers basically concentrate on grammatical correctness on their evaluation of students' writing composition.

It is evident from their answer to question 46 and 47 (See Appendix C), the teachers confirm that their concern while correcting the students' writing is on two things: one is the grammatical errors and the second is the spelling errors. On the other hand, some teachers confirm that content and organization should be taken more consideration while evaluating. Other teachers select both items (a) and (b) in the table.

Through examining the teachers' responses, we find that there is a discrepancy between the teachers' views on how to evaluate the students' writings. This discrepancy drew our attention that there are not specific strategies to oblige the writing teachers of how they evaluate the students' writings.

7.7.1.1. Summary

Through the preceding discussion in this section, this study concludes that the stress on grammatical correctness in the teaching and in evaluation is a possible cause of students' unsatisfactory writing. This is probably because a specially designed course in writing has not been prescribed. As a result, the teachers find it easiest to resort to the grammar teaching even in the composition classes. Actually this is the favourite way that the English teachers used to follow in teaching composition.

Consequently, the teaching of even the fundamental principles of organization is neglected. Over emphasis on grammar constraints impose students to think and feel worry about grammatical correctness. While they try to compose sentences, they lose track of their thoughts on the subject. The effort is only paid to write correct sentences.

7.7.1.2. Suggestions

The researcher proposes some measures to solve the problem at least to some extent.

a. diagnosing students' writing problems,

b. guiding and focusing feedback for students' writing as they progress through a course,

c. measuring students' growth over a specific time period,

d. measuring changes in intellectual processes as a dimension of growth in writing,

e. assigning grades to particular piece of writing and to the entire body of student work in a course,

f. determining the effectiveness of writing instruction and/or the writing program,

g. involving students in evaluation: individualized goal setting, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation,

h. using various approaches to evaluation for a given piece of writing.

We have, so far, found the causes of unsatisfactory writing to lie partly in the teaching and evaluation practices. We also find out that some of the problems such as large classes for composition teaching, lack of tutorial periods etc., need to be tackled by the administration of all Yemeni Universities.

After teaching how to write a paragraph or essay, the teachers should take into their consideration some points when grading for example a paragraph:

- Does it have a clear topic sentence that has a controlling idea?

- Do the supporting sentences all relate to the topic sentence? (Is the paragraph unified?)

- Are the supporting sentences in a logical order? (Is the paragraph coherent?)

- Were transition words and phrases used to connect ideas together?

- Did the writer provide enough explanation of and support for the main idea in the topic sentence?

- Is there a clear concluding sentence that restates the topic sentence or summarizes the main points?

- How is the language use (vocabulary and grammar)? Is there a variety of vocabulary used and is it used correctly? Are words spelled correctly?

- Does the writer use complex grammatical structures and are the structures used well? Is punctuation and capitalization used correctly?

- Does the paragraph have the correct format (indented first line, double-spaced, etc.)?

For grading essays, the teachers should consider the above points for each paragraph, and additionally to consider the following:

- Does the introduction contain a clear thesis statement?

- Do all the body paragraphs support the thesis statement?

- Does the conclusion restate the thesis or flow logically from the ideas presented?

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study adds to the line of research that attempts to highlight the impact of the communicative approach to language teaching on designing and teaching syllabuses for the English language skills in Yemeni Universities. It explores how the communicative approach should be utilized to meet the learners' communication needs. These needs must be specified with respect to grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. This study demonstrates that the communicative approach to language teaching goes well with some techniques such as: tutorial sessions; group discussions; problem-solving; and simulations and role-playing. This approach gives learners more opportunity to express their own individualities in the classroom. This study emphasizes communicative interaction, because it provides scope for cooperative relationship to emerge both among learners and between the instructors and learners. Through communicative oriented foreign language program, the learners must be provided with the information, practice and much of the experience needed to meet their communicative needs in foreign language.

The findings of this study revealed that the communicative approach to teaching language will have positive effect on Yemeni Universities ELT students and it serves each student to reflect his needs, interests and capabilities.

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the findings and the issues raised with reference to the English language skills. Finally, I conclude by laying out recommendations for further research and pedagogical implementations of the study for teaching practices.

8.1. Conclusions

- This study found that the students' entry level in the university entrance exam to the English departments at the Faculties of Education, Languages and Arts is low and it is considered as the basic and primary cause of unsatisfactory level in English language proficiency. The entry level of some students who admitted to the English departments in the faculties mentioned above is much below the required achievement level.

- Yemeni Universities often use the scores obtained from redundant tests of language proficiency. By this, the students are admitted to the undergraduate level without certain qualitative measures and continue their degree with the same weaknesses they were admitted with at the university entrance exam.

- As the medium of instruction is Arabic students have hardly any exposure to English outside the English class. Their lack of exposure to English is due to the fact that English is hardly ever spoken or read in the families or in the students' social environment.

- The students' lack of interest in the learning of English and not paying sufficient importance to it may be due to the following reasons:

  (i) Students have not found the English course suitable to their needs.

  (ii) Students do not consider the English teaching program suitable to meet their communicative needs during and after college.

  (iii) Students have found the courses, above their level.

  (iv) By having not made any tangible progress, students consider it futile to put in any further effort.

- Although language is a compulsory subject in Yemen and students study English courses for six years, the English proficiency of most Yemeni college

279

students is quite low. Furthermore, in terms of the four skills of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing – listening and speaking especially appear to be Yemeni EFL student's major weaknesses.

- Among the major findings of this study are as follows: 1) students find English language proficiency as one of the most serious problem areas; 2) EFL undergraduate students have more problems related to the syllabuses, materials and teachers. What this suggests is that English language proficiency may be a major factor in achieving success for students of English in Yemeni Universities.

- Through examining the situation regarding the English language skills, the approaches used, the materials used, the class organization followed and the teacher training programs in Yemeni Universities, this study concludes that the recent syllabuses designed and used do not match the students' needs and interests. These recent syllabuses seem to have left the teacher himself to design the syllabus for the skill he/she is assigned to teach, chooses the approach/approaches he/she thinks himself interested in and prepares the materials that the lecturer/instructor likes. All these things are conducted without adequate guidance which lecturers and instructors continuously need by the English departments. Since most of the English teachers are graduated from the same Yemeni English departments and because teaching grammar from the articles to the complex sentence construction is the dominant model used, teachers think that they are not in need to new perspectives to be given to them to change the syllabuses or modifying them. Therefore, the Yemeni Universities, precisely the English departments should think of changing their

syllabi or modifying them. This change in syllabi should also include change for special materials for classroom use, as well as specially trained teachers.

8.1.1. Listening Skill

- This study concludes that listening skills in Yemeni Universities are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers and is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures, teaching students "pronunciation" that is related to speaking skill and therefore does not need any practice. Therefore, this study concludes that there are only three micro-skills which are basically taught in Yemeni listening classes. They are: "understanding the different intonation patterns and the use of stress, which give clues to meaning and social setting", "guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases without fear" and "using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one's understanding." Although, these micro-skills are relevant but they are not enough to understand attentively what the speaker says.

- Although listening to English is the main channel of learning in a classroom in the case of many college classes, the cultivation of listening skill is not given due importance in the present system. Practice in listening comprehension does not normally receive the attention which it deserves in the classroom. Classroom observation of teaching methods has proved that no systematic practice is given to develop listening skills by the English language teachers in the Yemeni Universities.

- Yemeni ELT students have unsatisfactory level in listening and their experience in conversation and discussion in the classroom setting and their beliefs about the efficacy of discussion is not satisfactory too. This study

examined the problems that are associated with the teaching of listening comprehension and found that there are several problems such as:

1. Listening comprehension skill is not considered as an isolated skill but it is related to the skill of speaking. This idea itself made the teachers and syllabus makers ignore listening.

2. The materials for the teaching of listening are not sufficient.

3. The selection of unqualified teachers to teach listening comprehension is one of the major problems.

4. The number of students in one class is exceeding 100.

5. The labs for teaching and practising listening are either small or not facilitated at all.

6. The opportunities provided in the listening classroom are too limited. These opportunities may help the students improve their communication abilities.

7. Students rarely participate in casual conversations in English, either in class or with their friends or out of classroom setting.

8. Teachers to some extent don't encourage and lead class discussion as a common method in learning and teaching English and students usually don't understand carefully what they hear in the class discussion.

9. In class discussion, as I observed, students encounter difficulties to understand their teachers. Especially students who sit in the middle and back of the class did not know what happened during the class discussion.

- Regarding assessing and evaluating listening skills, this study found that each teacher follows his own way of teaching, assessing and

evaluating listening skill and the students' progress in listening comprehension. That means, there is a systematic approach that all the teachers should follow in assessing and evaluating listening skill.

8.1.2. Speaking Skill

- This study found that the negligence of teaching spoken English is limited to teaching pronunciation is because of the following reasons:

   (i) The spoken English syllabus probably is not designed by the university and the English departments in turns, assigned this responsibility to the teachers to prepare their own hand-outs and choose randomly whatever they like for the course text.

   (ii) Guidance on what the teachers plan and what they do in the classroom is hardly available.

   (iii) Grammar-Translation approaches to language teaching still have a great influence and dominance in language teaching in Yemeni Universities until now. These traditional approaches are marginalizing the teaching of communication skills.

   (iv) The teachers recently began to use the tape-recorders in the language classrooms. Due to the difficulty of studying talk, it was easier for teachers to focus on written language than spoken language. That means, Yemeni Universities' syllabuses and teachers emphasize on the teaching of reading and writing, but not on listening and speaking.

   (v) Most approaches to language teaching other than Grammar-Translation method (the Audio-Lingual approach, etc.) exploited oral communication centrally as part of their methodology not as a discourse skill as its own right.

(vi) Students in turn, cannot express their views on the kind of syllabuses, materials and the teaching methodology used by their teachers because of their fear of the punishments that they will receive later.

- Regarding the teaching of speaking skill and its limitation to the teaching of pronunciation in Yemeni Universities, this study found that this unsatisfactory situation of the teaching and learning spoken English is because of some reasons:

  1. The syllabus is limited to the teaching of pronunciation which is considered as one part of the speaking course content.

  2. The materials and texts used in teaching speaking skills probably are irrelevant to the students' needs and to their lives.

  3. The teachers, either they are not qualified or they are assigned to teach speaking course which is not their specialized field.

  4. The students seem to some extent not motivated, not serious in their study and lack the proficiency in English.

  5. The approaches used in teaching the speaking skill are restricted to audio-lingual approaches. The communicative approach to the teaching of speaking skill is generally ignored.

  6. Teachers do not program in their courses and class teaching to develop the students' personalities and improve their prospects in life, in additional to their ignorance to improve the students' skills in oral communication.

  7. Teachers do not appropriately use the motivating factors to motivate their students to speak English inside and outside the classrooms.

- Through the problems mentioned by both the teachers and their students, this study found that the important problems that associated with the teaching of spoken English are classified as follows:

  1. Problems which are inherent in our academic situation such as:

     a) Lack of emphasis on spoken English in the curriculum.

     b) Lack of training facilities to the teacher

     c) Lack of equipment

  2. Problems related to linguistics, such as:

     a) The dissimilarities between the sound systems of Arabic and that of English pose certain problems to the students.

     b) The structural and functional differences between English and Arabic as spoken media.

  3. Socio-cultural problems, such as:

     a) Yemeni students who join colleges come from different kinds of social and family background.

     b) They come from different areas and possess different accents.

- By examining the ways of assessing and testing spoken English, this study found that each teacher has his own syllabus and methodology to assess and test spoken English. This drew our attention to an idea that there is not specific syllabus and materials specified by the university regarding teaching and testing spoken English. As usual, the teacher is assigned to design his thoughts in his own hand-outs and use the approaches he prefers depending on the objectives that he finds suitable, throwing away the students' needs, interests and abilities while designing his hand-outs and when teaching them in his classrooms.

8.1.3. Reading Skills

- By talking about the goals/objectives the teachers have at the beginning of designing the reading course, this study found the following:

   1) Making goals for designing a course in reading in the Yemeni Universities is not deliberately made.

   2) Teachers teach reading skills without thinking reasonably of the goals/objectives that are specified by the syllabus if there is one.

   3) Some teachers are suggesting goals for designing their reading course redundantly or perhaps they depend on some books/references in their teaching reading without taking into their consideration the students' levels and what kinds of topics that suitable to students' interests that the teachers should select.

- This study found that neither the teachers nor the English departments take into account the student's level of attainment at the beginning of the course.

- About the models used in teaching reading comprehension, this study found that the overwhelming majority of the teachers indicate to the "The interactive school of theorists" as a model used by them to describe the interaction between reader and text. Thus, depending on this model, teachers in Yemeni Universities are successfully chosen the suitable one.

- By investigating the materials and strategies that the teachers use for teaching the reading skills in Yemeni classes, this study summarizes the teachers' views as follows:

- ❖ Teachers use materials from different reading resources to diversify the reading material and expose their students to different materials from their interests.

❖ The materials they use include "the difficulties in recognizing sentence structure; the difficulties in recognizing relations within a sentence; the difficulties in recognizing and differentiating between a topic sentence and a concluding one in a paragraph.

❖ Teaching students skimming and summarizing.

❖ Grasping new words from the context; trying to analyse the text by summarizing and paraphrasing and telling the students what to do during silent reading.

• By examining the students' feelings and emotions to read in English, this study found that the students are not satisfactorily motivated to read in English. This situation is in the researcher's view because of some reasons:

1. Students probably are not accustomed to read regularly in their mother tongue.

2. The students' English language proficiency is poor.

3. The teachers in their turn do not encourage their students to read in English and perhaps they do not ask them to read as much as required as part of their class and home activities.

4. Probably, the materials for reading in English do not match the students' interests.

• This study explored that the actual reading instruction in the Yemeni classrooms is described as follows:

1. Teachers focus on the silent reading, giving students interesting texts and use both the extensive and intensive approaches for teaching the reading skill.

2. They teach reading by getting across the topic of a paragraph,

differentiating between a topic sentence and a concluding one in a paragraph; recognizing sentence structure; scanning for information of the paragraph level and then for information of the text level; and deducing the meaning of unknown lexical items from the context.

3. Teachers follow the group work to teach reading and later on discuss the students' answers together.

- By investigating the problems that are associated with the reading skill, this study found that there are some difficulties that make the students encounter some problems in reading. These difficulties are summarized as follows:

1. The students are given texts above their level.

2. Students are not given opportunities to participate in reading in the classroom. This reason particularly cause many problems such as: a) the students face a difficulty to read which creates a dissatisfaction to him/her to stop thinking of reading at all, thereby he/she feels shy and cannot pronounce any word correctly because he/she do not used to practice in reading.

3. Students' are not taught properly the vocabulary issues in teaching reading, the concept of cohesion and coherence to understand the structure and meaning of a certain text.

4. Lack of proper teaching materials and topics of interest.

8.1.4. Writing skills

- Through examining the students' unsatisfactory writing in English, it has been found that it is due to the following:

1. The meaning of writing is variously understood by Yemeni writing teachers. Grammar and vocabulary exercises on the sentence level and single-sentence answers are termed writing tasks in much the same

way as a connected piece of writing which pays attention to fundamentals of organization. As a result, even the periods available for composition are not spent on composition tasks.

2. The time devoted to the teaching of composition is insufficient.

3. Composition is taught in large classes or in large tutorial groups. This makes individual guidance and supervision almost impossible. Writing being a difficult skill needs individual supervision.

4. Through the approaches used in teaching writing skills in Yemeni Universities, this study found that teachers emphasize the "Product-oriented approach to teaching writing" which is concerned only about the grammatical correctness, and ignored the use of the process approach to teaching writing which is concentrated on content, organization, and the communicative use of language rather than grammatical aspects. This study concluded that, if the attention is paid on these aspects of writing, students will be better motivated, be more confident and will eventually be able to write better.

- Through the investigation of the teachers' and students' views on the teaching of the skills of writing, this study deduced the following:

    (i)   There is no specific syllabus designed for teaching the skills of writing.

    (ii) Probably the syllabus is there, but the teachers do not include the skills in their own hand-outs that they design for teaching the writing course.

    (iii) Perhaps the students do not understand each particular skill while learning the course of writing.

(iv)   Probably the syllabus is there, but the teachers neglect the skills of writing and depend on other tasks such as teaching grammar, copying notes, dictation and focusing at the sentence structure level.

- Through the students' views and the researcher's classroom observation, this study concluded that in the Yemeni English classrooms, the language learning experiences are teacher-centred and the students do not feel free to talk to each other. Students only listen to the teacher and write down what the teacher says.

- This study found that in composing the written text, the students lack a competence in English grammar and vocabulary. Their lack of competence forces them to compose in their mother tongue. This study explored that the revisions are mostly done at a sentence level but peer review, teacher/student conference and collaborative writing are not followed in the teaching of writing skill in the Yemeni Universities. In addition, the course content appears to have been inadequate.

- It is ironic that most Yemeni Universities, Colleges, and English departments in particular use graduate teaching assistants to staff their freshman composition courses, without providing them with any training program to prepare them for the assignments and they do not get any kind of proper supervision.

- This study found that the major writing difficulties that the Yemeni ELT students encounter are as follows:

a) Students are handicapped in college on the account of their inability to communicate in written English.

b) Teachers and English departments probably do not think carefully about what kind of writing tasks will enable students to meet the requirements of their jobs in future.

c) Their lack of vocabulary, ideas and difficulties with the correct use of grammar. In addition to the students' limited experience with writing in English, their initial writing was underdeveloped, lacked details and organization and perhaps included many mechanical errors.

d) The limited role and series of writing that takes place in most classrooms and when students are asked to write, the focus is only on the expository writing that is highly structured and teacher-centred.

e) Writing in colleges deal with retelling what a teacher says, summarizing subject materials, the emphasis remaining on mechanical corrections and strategic repetition.

f) Teaching approaches are treating writing processes in a superficial manner, while the students are not learning to link process activities with the problems they face in their own writing. One reason for this lies in the reality of life in colleges; oversized classes and little time for preparation yields skimpy teaching. Another reason is that adopting a collaborative rather than an evaluative stance in the teaching of writing is difficult in this kind of oversized classes as is the case with Yemen.

Through the above discussion regarding the students' problems associated with the teaching and learning writing skill, this study found that the Yemeni ELT students encounter three major problems. They are:

1. The issue of time.

2. The misuse of peer review, peer evaluation, and collaborative writing in

writing classes.

3. The English language problem which seems to be typical for an EFL writing class.

- Regarding the evaluation of composition, this study explored that the majority of teachers laid greater emphasis on the grammatical correctness than on organization and content.

- This study found that there are not specific strategies to oblige the writing teachers of how they evaluate the students' writing. As a result, it may be concluded that the stress on grammatical correctness in teaching and in evaluation is a possible cause of students' unsatisfactory writing. Perhaps, because a specially designed course in writing has not been prescribed, teachers find it easiest to resort to grammar teaching even in the composition classes.

8.2. Recommendations

This study recommends that syllabus planning, course designing and teaching must be consciously and carefully geared to meet the level and the needs of the learners. The study emphasizes that the Yemeni Universities should take decision regarding the ELT students' admission to undergraduate programs. That means, Yemeni students should pass under the standardized tests of language proficiency such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as important criteria in the selection of Yemeni students for admission to undergraduate programs. This study recommends the Yemeni Universities, English departments and the teachers to shift their focus from the grammatical correctness of language to the communicative one. This shift will definitely take the teacher away from old attitudes of teaching English, from content-based courses and a formal knowledge of grammar, to newer ones—to

skill-based teaching. The recommendations suggested by this study will be discussed for each skill as follows:

8.2.1. Listening Skill

- This study adjures Yemeni Universities to consider a listening skill as one of the basic English language skills and should be programmed in their syllabuses and empirically taught in the Yemeni classrooms.

- For teaching listening skill, Yemeni English teachers should prepare the students to listen and understand attentively what the speaker says. For achieving this aim, teachers should think of and use the principles, strategies, and micro-skills that are outlined in chapter 4, Tables (6, 7, and the sub-section, 4.4.2) In addition, this study provided a number of principles, strategies, and micro-skills for teaching the listening skill for a number of researchers that the teachers will actually benefit from them in designing and teaching listening (see sections, 4.3.1, 4.4.1, and 4.4.2).

- To help rectifying the problems and difficulties that are associated with the teaching of listening comprehension, this study recommends the teachers and the English departments to consider the suggestions that this study provided (see sub-section 4.5.1).

- Assessment is an integral part of instruction. In that, it suggests appropriate starting points for instructional design and allows for feedback on the learners' performance. It is an important part of both teaching as feedback to the learners on their progress and administration as a record-keeping. As a result, this study recommends the contentious issues concern not whether to assess learners, but rather what to assess and how to assess and what to do with the result of assessments.

- For assessing listening and evaluating students' progress, English teachers in Yemeni Universities should think of and follow some methods that lead them to assess listening appropriately. This study suggested appropriate methods. These methods are included in section 4.6).

8.2.2. Speaking Skills

❖ This study recommends the English departments to consider speaking skills as an integrated skill not limited to teaching some aspects of pronunciation.

❖ This study emphasizes and recommends that practical activities for speaking lessons and how to plan and organize speaking lessons well are of importance. Additionally, it emphasizes that the teachers need to make time for different kinds of practice and to think of topics for students to speak about taking in their consideration the Yemeni cultural differences.

❖ For teaching the speaking skill, this study recommends that it is must for teachers to have a clear understanding of the process involved in speech. Through speech, students express their emotions, communicate their intentions, reacts to other persons and situations influences other human beings. In order to achieve the aim described above, this study suggested some ideas that the teacher then might be able to do them. (See section 5.2.2.)

- This study adjures the Yemeni Universities, faculties, English departments, and ELT teachers to design an appropriate form of spoken English program to be taught in the Yemeni Universities and how is it possible to give Yemeni students any sort of meaningful practice in producing spoken English. Thus, this study provides some suggestions regarding the form of spoken English to be taught in Yemeni Universities (see sub-section, 5.2.1). About giving the

Yemeni students a meaningful practice in producing spoken English, the study also provides suitable thoughts and ideas that are suitable to the Yemeni students' abilities. This is discussed in details in section (5.3) particularly (5.3.1, 5.3.2, and 5.3.3).

- To help solving the problems regarding the teaching and learning spoken English, this study suggests some convenient remedies. These suggestion are shown in section (5.3.3.1).

- Depending on the recent methods used for testing and assessing spoken English in the Yemeni Universities, this study recommends the instructors to think carefully of the aims of the speaking programs and make these aims match the students' needs. This study adjures the English departments to supervise what the teachers teach and how they assess and evaluate their students' progress. In this regard, the departments should design a guide for testing and assessing program to oblige the teachers to follow it in all the English language skills.

8.2.3. Reading Skill

- Many decisions and preparations need to be made before teachers actually step into the classroom. Regarding that, this study indicates that the most important information that the teachers must have as they start to design a reading course is the goals for the course or the reading abilities that students should develop during the course. In addition, this study recommends that the teachers should use the goals to guide them as they decide about the structure of the course and about appropriate ways to evaluate the students' performance and thus the courses' effectiveness. Moreover, the teachers should look at how to decide

what to teach in an EFL reading course, or the course goals, or the approach, and what considerations to keep in mind in selecting texts.

- The researcher recommends the teachers' selection for the useful and suitable models and approaches for teaching the reading skill. Additionally, it is better for each reading teacher to be knowledgeable of the whole reading models and approaches that are provided in section (6.2.2).

- About the materials used for teaching reading skill in Yemen, this study adjures the ELT teachers and the English departments to help the students to get motivated to read regularly in English and get to know the basics of reading in English that enables them to read different types of texts.

- For achieving reading aims, this study suggested some thoughts and ideas on materials, strategies, skills and styles of reading that are convenient for teaching the Yemeni students the English reading comprehension (see section, 6.2.3.3, for more details).

- The study confirms that reading skills are several, so that, what is mentioned in table (12) also are not enough in the views of the researchers. Therefore, this study provided some views on the reading skills that Yemeni teachers should consider while teaching English reading. For more details, see section (6.3.1).

- About how the reading instruction and constructing exercises in the Yemeni reading classroom, this study considers it as an important factor in motivating students and it is necessary if different skills are to be covered. In this regard, this study provides some issues related to the reading instruction and

constructing exercises in the Yemeni classroom. These issues are discussed in the sub-sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3.

- In order to overcome the reading comprehension problems that this study investigated, this study asks the ELT teachers and the English departments to take into accounts the following points: Students' interests; students' language proficiency; and preparing students to read. In its turn, this study provided valuable information about each point. These three major points are discussed in sub-sections (6.5.2, 6.5.3 and 6.5.4).

8.2.4. Writing Skill

- One of the main recommendations in this study is to emphasize that the teachers of writing skills in Yemeni Universities should shift the emphasis from grammar to communication. That means how teachers focus on how to illustrate a method for teaching writing that focuses on both the grammatical and communicative aspects of writing.

- This study adjures the writing teachers and English departments to pay more attention to the process-oriented approach, because it may help Yemeni students who are relatively unskilled in English composition. The researcher through this chapter has shown the various kinds of influence that this approach has on EFL students and how they respond and become accustomed to it according to some researchers' work in this field.

- Through the investigation of editing materials used in Yemeni Universities, this study emphasizes that the EFL writing materials must address themselves to the development of grammatical fluency; but if this practice takes place within a communicative context, grammatical and communicative competency can be developed simultaneously. Thus, Yemeni EFL students will learn to

write papers which are not only grammatically correct, but also appropriate and effective for a particular situation. This study provides some suggestions on how communicative writing is applied in teaching writing in Yemeni classrooms and through that the researcher recommends the instructors to encourage their students to follow and grasp the written communication pedagogy. For achieving that this study proposes some suggestions that should be taken into consideration while teaching the course of writing. (See section 7.3.5.)

- This study emphasizes that for the students to produce an effective piece of writing, they should go through several steps which are included in the process approach to writing. The study suggested some comments on how teaching writing should be taught in the Yemeni classrooms. Probably these comments will show why the researcher is emphasizing on following the process-oriented approach to teaching writing in Yemeni Universities. These comments are discussed in details in the following sub-sections (7.4.2, 7.4.3, 7.4.3, 7.4.4, 7.4.5, 7.4.6 and 7.4.7).

- This study emphasizes that the Yemeni Universities and English department in particular should design training programs for teaching the Yemeni graduate students to teach composition. Thus, training programs should be designed. Besides the department members can equip teaching assistants with the knowledge necessary to teach composition.

- The study recommends that English educators seem to be adapting their programs to give graduate students and other prospective writing teachers some of the necessary practice, skills, and experience in composition instruction. Thus, the English departments in Sana'a, Thamar and the other

Yemeni Universities should design a syllabus that meet the demand for more writing instruction preparation. The syllabus that should be designed has to emphasize preparing teachers in the areas of writing instruction and teaching methods or designing a thorough syllabus which include all the four skills and literature. Therefore, the study insists that, for preparing these teacher assistants to do their jobs properly, the English departments should plan programs which include several stages of instruction and practice. For details see section 7.5.

- After investigating the students' difficulties associated with the teaching of the skills of English writing, this study emphasizes on helping Yemeni students to communicate in written English, improve their oral and written expression in English and enabling students to meet the requirements of their jobs in future; instructors should teach their students some sorts of writing tasks such as: problem- solving tasks; tasks which require knowledge and information; tasks which require manipulation of grammatical structures; tasks which require creative thinking; and tasks which require communication in a well-defined situation. By performing these tasks all the aims mentioned above will be reached easily. Therefore, these tasks and skills should be improved. This improvement will be achieved through multiple draft revisions and with the instructor's skilful intervention and peer interaction.

  This study provided some suggestions which probably will be helpful for teaching and learning writing skills and will help solving the students' recent problems. These suggestions are discussed in section (7.6.1.2).

- The study recommends that teachers should not lay a greater emphasis on grammatical correctness rather they should put the great emphasis on content

and organization. While the teachers' evaluation and grading of their students' writing, this study provided some measures that the teacher should follow to solve the problem at least to some extent. See section (7.7.1.2).

- This study strongly examined and solved the causes of students' unsatisfactory writing which lie partly in the teaching and evaluation practices. It also recommends that, some of the problems such as large classes for composition teaching, lack of tutorial periods etc., need to be tackled by the administration of all Yemeni Universities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix (A)

Questionnaire for Teachers of English at Faculties of Arts, Education and

Languages in Yemeni Universities

The questionnaire is a part of a research project related to the preparation of a syllabus design for teaching the English language skills in Yemeni Universities. The researcher shall be grateful if you consider it with due seriousness and objectivity. Wherever choices are provided, tick the answer you feel relevant.

Name of the teacher:

University:

Faculty:

Teaching experience:

Qualifications:

Nationality:

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1. About how many marks does an average student (admitted to B.A.) obtain in English at university entrance exam?

    a. About   (   )%.

    b. I do not know.

2. How much exposure to English do your students have outside the classroom?

    a. Sufficient to develop proficiency.   ( )
    b. Insufficient to develop proficiency.   ( )
    c. Hardly any.   ( )

3. Are your students motivated to learn English?

    a. Yes, a great deal.   ( )
    b. Not sufficiently.   ( )
    c. Hardly at all.   ( )

4. What are the principal motivating factors (if any) for learning English? List in the order you think applicable to most students. Put ranking numbers—1, 2, 3, etc.

against the choices provided.

a.	For passing exams.	( )
b.	Preparing for an occupation.	( )
c.	Communication with others.	( )
d.	Pursuing academic activities.	( )
e.	Social prestige.	( )

Any other (please specify)

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The researcher here will concentrate to some extent on each of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively.

LISTENING SKILL

5. Listening skills in Yemeni Universities are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers and is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any practice.

Agree   ( )   Disagree   ( )

6. If listening skill is taught, what are the micro-skills of listening that your course includes? Do you think the skills you teach are enough to understand attentively what the speaker says?

a.	Prediction what people are going to talk about	( )
b.	Guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking	( )
c.	Using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one understand	( )
d.	Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information	( )
e.	Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)	( )
f.	Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc. which give clues to meaning and social setting	( )

Any others (please specify)

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7. There are principles that influence the teaching of listening. Here we suggest a number of these principles. Choose those you agree with.

a.	Listening experiences that help students lessen their anxiety about listening will generally beneficially.	( )
b.	Teachers do not need to force students to speak as speaking will emerge naturally as a result of work with listening.	( )
c.	Listening instruction should allow learners to figure out meanings for themselves and not depend on presentation by the instructor.	( )

d. Consisting use of learning strategies helps students learn more efficiently. ( )
e. Instruction should aim only to provide comprehensible input, slightly about the learner's current level of competence in terms of vocabulary, syntax, discourse features, length and complexity. ( )
f. According to grammatical forms while listening requires a gradual increase in processing capacity. ( )
g. Learning materials (topics, input, tasks) are relevant if they are related to the learners' goals and interests and involve self-selection and evaluation. ( )
h. Teacher should simplify language, but attempt to keep genuine features of real spoken language. ( )
Any other principles (please specify)

8. While teaching the listening skills, what are the teaching strategies that the teacher should follow?

9. Do you agree some of the problems on teaching listening skills in Yemeni Universities are as follows?

a. Teacher doesn't give the students the opportunity for getting trained. ( )
b. Can't practice listening appropriately ( )
c. Students feel with discrimination in class. ( )
d. Students feel undesirable to study the listening skill and hate it at all. ( )
e. Students do not ask for repetition or correction. They feel shy and scared from the results of these inquiries. ( )
Any others (please specify)
. …………………………………………………………………………
. …………………………………………………………………………
. …………………………………………………………………………

10. Please provide us with the methods for assessing listening skill and the ways of evaluating student's progress that you always follow.

SPEAKING SKILL

11. For teaching spoken English in Yemeni English departments, what is the basis that you can plan for your undergraduate courses?

12. Do you agree that most of the focus in teaching the oral skills in Yemeni Universities is limited to teaching pronunciation?

Yes ( ) No ( )

13. In teaching speaking skills, do you teach your students the items below? Please tick out the ones you really teach.

a. Strategies for developing speaking skills,   ( )
b. Pronunciation, stress and intonation,   ( )
c. Lexical items,   ( )
d. Structural items,   ( )
e. Mimicry-memorization,   ( )
f. Drills,   ( )
g. Question and answer practice,   ( )
h. Interactional talk,   ( )
i. Long turns,   ( )
j. Dialogues,   ( )
k. Plays,   ( )
l. Simulation,   ( )
m. Role play.   ( )

14. Do you agree that motivating students to speak English lies on:

a. making English lessons interesting and lively.   ( )
b. giving students a chance to participate in the lessons.   ( )
c. encouraging and supporting students by their teachers.   ( )
d. making the texts and materials used for teaching as
e. relevant to the student's needs and to their daily lives.   ( )
f. using lots of interesting ways to motivate students to
g. learn and improve their English.   ( )
   Any others (please specify):
. ……………………………………………………………………………
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. ……………………………………………………………………………

15. Effective classroom organization is important. It can make the teacher's job easier and help students to learn to speak. What are your suggestions that can help classroom organization and may work for both the teacher and his students?

16. There are common problems with the speaking activities that actually Yemeni students in the university are encountered. Please mention these common problems and provide us with your suggestions to resolve them.

17. The aims of the speaking program match the needs of the learners, so that the teaching/testing program provides just what the learner most needs and every day is happy. So, what are the ways and methods that you use for testing and assessing spoken English?

READING SKILLS

18. The most important information that the teachers must have as they start to design a reading course is the goals for the course. Can you list the goals that you think are suitable for designing a reading course for Yemeni students?

19. By looking for ways to describe the interaction between the reader and the text there are some models of how reading occurs and approaches to teaching reading. Can you provide us with the ones you follow in teaching your students?

20. Reading skills textbooks aim to improve reading abilities by focusing on the development of various reading strategies. Can you mention the materials and the reading strategies that you use for teaching the reading skill?

21. Reading involves a variety of skills. What are the skills that you actually teach your students in reading? Some skills are listed below. Choose the ones you agree with.

     a. Recognize words quickly   ( )
     b. Use title(s) to infer what information might follow   ( )
     c. Analyse unfamiliar words   ( )
     d. Identify the grammatical functions of words   ( )
     e. Read for meaning, concentrate on constructing meaning   ( )
     f. Guess about the meaning of the text   ( )
     g. Monitor comprehension   ( )
     h. Keep the purpose for reading the text in mind   ( )
     i. Adjust strategies to the purpose for reading   ( )
     j. Identify or infer main ideas   ( )
     k. Understand the relationships between the parts of a text ( )
     l. Distinguish main ideas from minor ideas   ( )
     m. Tolerate ambiguity in a text(at least temporarily)   ( )
     n. Paraphrase   ( )
     o. Use context to build meaning and aid comprehensions ( )
       Any others (please specify)

  . ……………………………………………………………………………
  . ……………………………………………………………………………
  . ……………………………………………………………………………

22. Reading is a skill which is highly valued by the students and teachers alike. But what is the reading instruction like in the classrooms in Yemen Universities? (Means how do teachers teach reading)?

23. Even though exchanges among Yemeni English students do not occur spontaneously in the ideal reading class, what are the planned activities that you can use to get students thinking about the text, reacting to it and evaluate it?

24. Do you agree that the reading comprehension exercise type have to be concentrated on the following parts? Choose the parts you agree with.

     a. Reading techniques   ( )
     b. How the aim is conveyed   ( )
     c. Understanding meaning   ( )
     d. Assessing the text   ( )
       Any others please specify

  . ……………………………………………………………………………
  . ……………………………………………………………………………
  . ……………………………………………………………………………

25. While reading English, Yemeni students encounter some problems. Can you please summarize their common problems that you always observe?

26. Pre-reading processes are that the readers use and the ways that the teachers can make the students aware of their use. For that, can you specify the reasons that you actually think are suitable for preparing students to read?

WRITING SKILLS

27. Do your students like composition periods?

      a. Yes, as much as other English periods   ( )
      b. More than other English periods   ( )
      c. Less than other English periods   ( )
      d. Hardly at all   ( )

28. In which aspects of the skill of writing your students' performance is unsatisfactory? List these aspects in the order you think the students are the poorest in. Put the ranking numbers against the choices provided.

      a. Content   ( )
      b. Grammatical correctness   ( )
      c. Logical organization   ( )
      d. Appropriateness and effectiveness   ( )

29. For which specific purposes do students need the skills of writing? Tick those which you consider relevant to students' needs in college and in real- life situations.

      a. Note-making from books   ( )
      b. Summarizing   ( )
      c. Note-taking from lectures   ( )
      d. Conveying messages in writing   ( )
      e. Answering examination questions   ( )
      f. Report writing   ( )
      g. Essay writing   ( )
      h. Paragraph writing   ( )
      i. Writing formal letters   ( )
      j. Writing informal letters   ( )
      k. Giving written instructions   ( )
      l. Making written inquiries   ( )

      Any other purposes you consider (please specify)

. …………………………………………………………………….
. …………………………………………………………………
. …………………………………………………………………

30. A free composition of an average students shows that he/she has hardly any ideas.

Agree ( ) Disagree ( )

If your answer to Q. (30) is (b) then answer questions 31, 32 and 33.

31. A free composition of an average student shows that he/she has ideas but cannot express them in grammatically correct English.

Agree ( ) Disagree ( )

32. A free composition of an average student shows that he/she has ideas but cannot organize them.

Agree ( ) Disagree ( )

33. A free composition of an average student shows that he/she has ideas but cannot express them effectively.

Agree ( ) Disagree ( )

34. How many classes a week do you devote to the teaching of writing? Mention the number.

35. Do you teach composition in the

    a. full class? ( )
    b. Tutorial groups? ( )
    c. Both (a) and (b) ( )

36. If your answer to Q. (35) is (c), mention how many composition periods you take in each.

37. Do you set exercises in

    a. free composition? ( )
    b. guided composition? ( )
    c. both (a) and (b)? ( )

38. If your answer to Q. (37) is (c) then say about how many exercises in each per term.

    a. free composition ( )
    b. guided composition ( )

39. Do you think your students are handicapped because they are weak in the skills of writing?

Yes ( ) No ( )

40. If your answer to Q. (39) is (yes) answer the following questions.
Students are handicapped:

a. at college when doing work that demands the skills of writing ( )
b. when they leave college and face situations that demands
   communication through writing ( )
c. both (1) and (2). ( )

41. What kinds of common mistakes do your students commit oftener?

a. those which interfere with comprehension ( )
b. those which violate the rules of grammar ( )

42. On which aspect do you lay greater emphasis in the evaluation of composition writing?

a. grammatical correctness ( )
b. organization ( )

APPENDIX (B)

Questionnaire for students at Faculties of Arts, Education and Languages in

Yemeni Universities

This questionnaire is meant to help us design a syllabus for teaching the

English language skills in Yemeni Universities specifically for the ELT

undergraduate students. Your experience and remarks can be of great help. So, kindly

answer the following questions after reading them carefully. Wherever choices are

provided, tick the answer you think is relevant.

Student's name:

University:

Faculty:

Year:

Course:

Nationality:

---

1. How many marks did you get in English at the University entrance exam?

2. How much exposure to English do you have outside the classroom?

    a. Sufficient to develop proficiency.   ( )
    b. Insufficient to develop proficiency.   ( )
    c. Hardly any.   ( )

3. Are you motivated to learn English?

    a. Yes, a great deal.   ( )
    b. Not sufficiently.   ( )
    c. Hardly at all.   ( )

4. What are your principal motivating factors (if any) for learning English? List in the order you think applicable to you. Put ranking numbers—1, 2, 3, etc. against the choices provided.

    a. For passing exams.   ( )
    b. Preparing for an occupation.   ( )

    c. Communication with others.   ( )
    d. Pursuing academic activities.   ( )
    e. Social prestige.   ( )
      Any other (please specify)

. ……………………………………………………………………
. ……………………………………………………………………
. ……………………………………………………………………

The researcher here will concentrate to some extent on each of the language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing respectively.

LISTENING SKILL

5. Listening skills in Yemeni Universities are still neglected by the syllabus makers and course designers and is taken for granted by both teachers and syllabus makers as something which is exercised all the time by listening to lectures and therefore does not need any deliberate practice.

        Agree   ( )   Disagree   ( )

6. Do you think the following micro-skills of listening are enough to understand attentively what the speaker says?

    a. Prediction what people are going to talk about   ( )
    b. Guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking ( )
    c. Using one's own knowledge of the subject to help one
       understand   ( )
    d. Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information ( )
    e. Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)   ( )
    f. Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress,
       etc. which give clues to meaning and social setting   ( )
       Any others (please specify)

. ……………………………………………………………………
. ……………………………………………………………………
. ……………………………………………………………………

   7. Do you agree some of the problems on teaching listening skills and other language skills at our universities are the following?

    a. Teacher doesn't give the students the opportunity for getting trained. ( )
    b. Cannot practice listening and other language skills appropriately   ( )
    c. Students feel with discrimination in class.   ( )
    d. Students feel undesirable to study the language skills and hate
       English at all.   ( )
    e. The selection of teachers for teaching the English language skills is
       redundant   ( )
    f. Students do not ask for repetition or correction. They feel shy and
       scared from the results of these inquiries.   ( )
       Any others (please specify)

. ……………………………………………………………………
. ……………………………………………………………………

. ……………………………………………………………………………

8. Please state the methods your teachers used for assessing your listening skills.

SPEAKING SKILL

9. Do you agree that most of the focus in teaching oral skills in Yemeni Universities is limited to the teaching of pronunciation?

   Yes   (   )   No   (   )

10. In teaching speaking skill, do your teachers teach you the items below? Please tick out the ones your teachers are really teach you.

   a. Strategies for developing speaking skills,   (   )
   b. Pronunciation, stress and intonation,   (   )
   c. Lexical items,   (   )
   d. Structural items,   (   )
   e. Mimicry-memorization,   (   )
   f. Drills,   (   )
   g. Question and answer practice,   (   )
   h. Interactional talk,   (   )
   i. Long turns,   (   )
   j. Dialogues,   (   )
   k. Plays,   (   )
   l. Simulation,   (   )
   m. Role play.   (   )

11. Can you specify the common problems that you face with the speaking activities inside and outside the classroom?

12. The aims of the speaking program match the needs of the learner so that the teaching and testing program provide just what the learner most needs and every day is happy. So, what are the ways, methods that your teacher uses for testing or assessing spoken English?

READING SKILL

13. Do you feel comfortable reading in English?

   Yes   (   )   No   (   )   Not that much   (   )

14. What types of texts do you read in English?

   A. Newspaper   (   )
   B. Magazine   (   )
   C. Short stories   (   )

D. Novels   (   )
      E. Plays   (   )
      F. Poetry   (   )

15. While reading in English, what are the common difficulties that you always face?

16. If you have any comments or suggestions to improve reading comprehension classes, kindly write it down,

WRITING SKILLS

17. Do you like composition periods?

        a. Yes, as much as other English periods   (   )
        b. More than other English periods   (   )
        c. Less than other English periods   (   )
        d. Hardly at all   (   )

18. For which specific purposes do you need the skills of writing? Tick those which you consider relevant to your needs in college and in real-life situations.

        a. Note-making from books   (   )
        b. Summarizing   (   )
        c. Note-taking from lectures   (   )
        d. Conveying messages in writing   (   )
        e. Answering examination questions   (   )
        f. Report writing   (   )
        g. Essay writing   (   )
        h. Paragraph writing   (   )
        i. Writing formal letters   (   )
        j. Writing informal letters   (   )
        k. Giving written instructions   (   )
        l. Making written inquiries   (   )

        Any other purposes you consider (please specify)
. ………………………………………………………………………………………
     . ………………………………………………………………………………………
     . ………………………………………………………………………………………

19. As generalized, Yemeni students are handicapped because they are weak in writing. As a result, they are handicapped:

        a. at college when doing work that demands the skills of writing (   )
        b. when they leave college and face situations that demands communication through writing   (   )
        c. both (1) and (2).   (   )

20. What do you think the most important problem that you face in writing composition?

Appendix (C)

Interview Questions

Name:

University:-

Faculty:

Qualifications:

Courses taught:

Nationality:

LISTENING SKILLS

1. As an instructor/lecturer in the university, do you consider a listening as a skill or something related to other skills? If so, is it actually taught under any other skills?

2. What is its place in the syllabus?

3. As a teacher, how do you deal with the listening skill in the classroom teaching?

4. Do you depend on your own objectives in the teaching methodology or follow the objectives mentioned in the syllabus in terms of listening?

5. Do you know any teacher who thought to design a single syllabus for teaching listening and speaking as isolated skills taking into consideration the learners' needs, interests and abilities?

6. What are the improvements that you create annually in designing and teaching listening and speaking skills?

7. What are the techniques and methods you definitely follow in teaching the English language skills in the classroom?

8. What in your view are the components that make up the levels or stages in developing listening skills?

9. Several recent studies explored factors which affect the teaching of listening process in general. What factors do you feel affect your teaching practices for listening?

10. What are the classroom procedures you follow in the teaching of listening skill?

11. What are the steps you usually use for preparing your students for the test?

12. How do you evaluate your students' progress in listening comprehension?

SPEAKING SKILL

13. Do you have a certain practical theory on how to teach speaking skills? If yes, can you please elaborate it?

14. In your opinion, what are the suitable programs for teaching speaking skills in and out of the classroom?

15. In your view, why is it important for Yemeni students to learn to speak English, well and for the teachers to learn to teach speaking?

16. While planning a speaking course at the College level, do you or your English department take into account the students' level of attainment at the beginning of the course?

17. Have you taken into consideration the following points when teaching speaking skill?
    a. The goal of spoken English
    b. Essential speaking skills
    c. Characteristics and conditions of speech
    d. Characteristics of successful speaking activities
    e. Strategies for developing speaking skills
    f. Pronunciation
    g. Stress
    h. Intonation
    i. Lexical items
    j. Structural items
    k. Drills, wherever necessary
    l. Question and answer practice
    m. Varied situations, feelings, relationships
    n. Role-play and related techniques

18. What are the useful ways for developing speaking skills in your students' mind and behaviour?

19. What are in your view the barriers/handicaps that the Yemeni students are encountered in communication?

20. What steps do you recommend to avoid these barriers and handicaps?

21. Can you shed light on the problems that both the teachers and students face in the teaching and learning the speaking skill in Yemeni Universities?

22. How to overcome these problems?

23. Fluency in speaking is the most difficult to master in foreign language learning. How will you advise your students to attain that?

24. Can you state how you usually design the oral tests for testing your students?

25. What does in your view the individual learner stand to gain or lose by taking the test?

26. Can you specify the ways you assess your students' work and evaluate their progress in speaking skill?
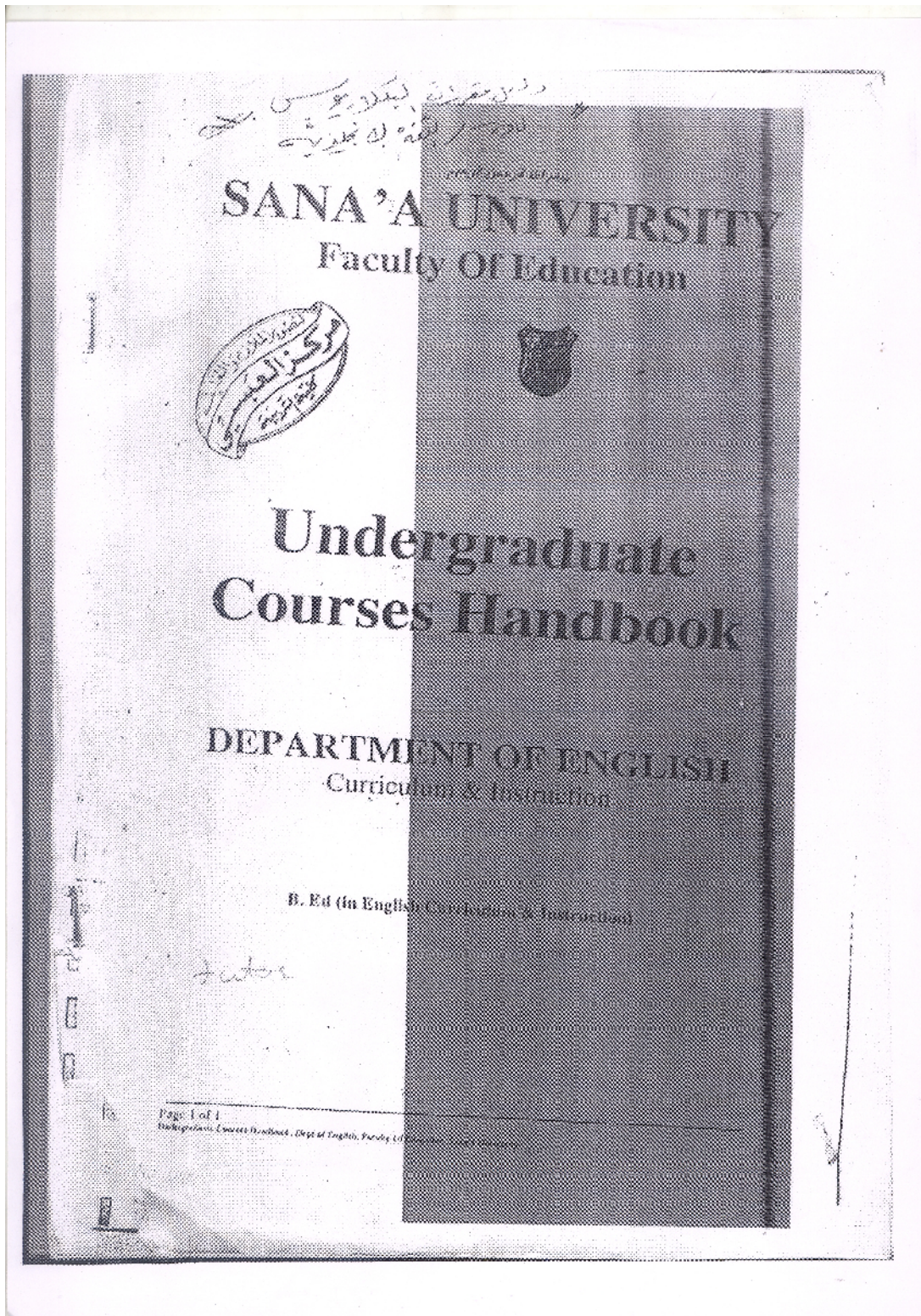
READING SKILL

27. Did you have any kind of training on how to teach the reading skill? If yes, can you talk briefly about it?

28. What are your aims and objectives for teaching reading comprehension?

29. What are the reading comprehension skills that your students should develop during their course?

30. How do you help your students to develop these skills and what techniques do you follow?

31. Does your teaching of reading have different phases? If yes, what are the techniques that you use in each phase?

WRITING SKILL

32. Do you teach students how to have a clear goal in mind before they start writing their composition? How do you teach it?

33. When students write in English, do you find them using the same discourse patterns that they use in Arabic?

34. How do you deal with this transfer?

35. Do you teach your students how to deal with different registers (viz. special vocabulary for certain audiences and certain situations)?

36. In your teaching, do you follow exactly what is in the syllabus? In case, you do not do so, why not?

37. Do you teach the writing skill by using the process approach to writing?

38. What are the steps or processes you use when teaching writing?

39. What kind of writing composition you usually assign to your students? Why do you choose those?

40. How many assignments do students should write per term?

41. What kinds of techniques do you use in teaching composition writing?

42. What are the most successful techniques you find to teach writing?

43. What are the weaknesses and strengths of the techniques of peer review?

44. Do you introduce your students to the following writing points:

   a. Grammar of each sentence
   b. Grammatical relationship between sentences
   c. Content/ meaning
   d. Purpose
   e. Clarity
   f. Relevance to the topic
   g. Sequencing of information
   h. Writing for a specific audience
   i. Avoiding literal translation from Arabic to English
   j. Developing a paragraph
   k. Examples of paragraph structure already taught
   l. Style
   m. Coherence

45. Do you correct every student's assignments?

46. What are the problems you face when you correct their writings?

47. What are the criteria you use when correcting the assignments?

48. How do you evaluate your students' progress during the semester?

49. What are the common problems that students face in writing composition?

50. How do you tackle these problems?

51. What are your suggestions to enhance the teaching of composition writing?

Appendix (D)

SANA'A UNIVERSITY
Faculty Of Education

Undergraduate
Courses Handbook

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Curriculum & Instruction

B. Ed (In English Curriculum & Instruction)

		SANA'A UNIVERSITY, SANA'A		
		FACULTY OF LANGUAGES		
		DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH		
		B. A. IN ENGLISH STUDIES		
		COURSES OF STUDIES (EFFECTIVE FROM 2002-2003)		
VEL	COURSE CODE	SEMESTER I (COURSE TITLE)	COURSE CODE	SEMESTER II (COURSE TITLE)
NE	111	ENGLISH GRAMMAR I	121	ENGLISH GRAMMAR II
	112	READING COMPREHENSION I	122	READING COMPREHENSION II
	113	WRITTEN ENGLISH I	123	WRITTEN ENGLISH II
	114	SPOKEN ENGLISH I	124	SPOKEN ENGLISH II
	115	ARABIC I (UR)	125	STUDY SKILLS
	116	FOREIGN LANGUAGE I (DR)	126	ARABIC II (UR)
	117	ISLAMIC CULTURE (UR)	127	FOREIGN LANGUAGE II (DR)
VO	211	ADV. ENG. GRAMMAR AND USAGE I	221	ADV. ENG. GRAMMAR AND USAGE II
	212	ENGLISH COMPOSITION I	222	ENGLISH COMPOSITION II
	213	INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE I	223	INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE II
	214	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	224	INTRO. TO LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
	215	TRANSLATION I	225	TRANSLATION II
	216	ARABIC III (FR)	226	ARABIC IV (FR)
	217	FOREIGN LANGUAGE III (DR)	227	FOREIGN LANGUAGE IV (DR)
REE	311	ENG. PHONETICS & PHONOLOGY	321	ENG. MORPHOLOGY & LEXICOLOGY
	312	TRANSLATION III	322	VARIETIES OF ENGLISH
	313	MOD. ENG. PROSE (ESSAYS & S. STORIES)	323	RENAISSANCE DRAMA
	314	17TH & 18TH CENTURY POETRY	324	18TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL
	315	HISTORY OF MODERN ENGLISH	325	19TH CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY
	316	ESP	326	APPLIED LINGUISTICS
UR	411	ENGLISH SYNTAX	421	ENGLISH SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS
	412	19TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL	422	THEORIES OF SYNTAX
	413	RESTORATION AND AUGUSTAN DRAMA	423	20TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL
	414	STYLISTICS	424	20TH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA
	415	19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE	425	20TH CENTURY POETRY
	416	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	426	20TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE
			427	RESEARCH PROJECT AND VIVA

- Each course carries 3 credits.
- Total No. of credits: 459
- Total No. of courses: 53
- Language and Linguistics courses: 25
- Literature courses: 14

6. Translation courses: 3
7. Departmental Requirement courses: 4
8. Faculty Requirement courses: 2
9. University Requirement courses: 3
10. Research courses: 2

Appendix (E)

SANA'A UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

B.A. IN ENGLISH STUDIES

COURSES OF STUDIES

Department of English

The Department of English in the Faculty of Languages is not just another department of English in Sana'a University. It is different from the departments of English in the faculties of Arts and Education. The focus of attention in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, is on the literature written in English language and that in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, is on producing teachers of English, whereas the focus of attention in the Department of English, Faculty of Languages, is on a critical study of the various aspects of English and its use as a language in day-to-day communicative activities. This Department will produce graduates who would not only be efficient teachers of English but also competent translators and executives in government offices, private companies, business concerns, diplomatic services, banks, travel agencies, tourism departments and in such other places where the use of English is almost obligatory. The Department, thus, has a unique personality

The Department is presently offering courses leading to the degrees of BA, MA and Ph.D. in English Studies besides teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses as a university requirement in various faculties of Sana'a University.

SANA'A UNIVERSITY, SANA'A
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
B. A. IN ENGLISH STUDIES
COURSES OF STUDIES (EFFECTIVE FROM 2002-2003)

YR	COURSE CODE	SEMESTER I (COURSE TITLE)	COURSE CODE	SEMESTER II (COURSE TITLE)
ONE	111	ENGLISH GRAMMAR I	121	ENGLISH GRAMMAR II
	112	READING COMPREHENSION I	122	READING COMPREHENSION II
	113	WRITTEN ENGLISH I	123	WRITTEN ENGLISH II
	114	SPOKEN ENGLISH I	124	SPOKEN ENGLISH II
	115	ARABIC I (UR)	125	STUDY SKILLS
	116	FOREIGN LANGUAGE I (DR)	126	ARABIC II (UR)
	117	ISLAMIC CULTURE (UR)	127	FOREIGN LANGUAGE II (DR)
TWO	211	ADV. ENG. GRAMMAR AND USAGE I	221	ADV. ENG. GRAMMAR AND USAGE II
	212	ENGLISH COMPOSITION I	222	ENGLISH COMPOSITION II
	213	INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE I	223	INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE II
	214	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	224	INTRO. TO LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
	215	TRANSLATION I	225	TRANSLATION II
	216	ARABIC III (FR)	226	ARABIC IV (FR)
	217	FOREIGN LANGUAGE III (DR)	227	FOREIGN LANGUAGE IV (DR)
THREE	311	ENG. PHONETICS & PHONOLOGY	321	ENG. MORPHOLOGY & LEXICOLOGY
	312	TRANSLATION III	322	VARIETIES OF ENGLISH
	313	MOD. ENG. PROSE (ESSAYS & S. STORIES)	323	RENAISSANCE DRAMA
	314	17TH & 18TH CENTURY POETRY	324	18TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL
	315	HISTORY OF MODERN ENGLISH	325	19TH CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY
	316	ESP	326	APPLIED LINGUISTICS
FOUR	411	ENGLISH SYNTAX	421	ENGLISH SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS
	412	19TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL	422	THEORIES OF SYNTAX
	413	RESTORATION AND AUGUSTAN DRAMA	423	20TH CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL
	414	STYLISTICS	424	20TH CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA
	415	19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE	425	20TH CENTURY POETRY
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			427	RESEARCH PROJECT AND VIVA

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6. Translation courses: 5

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9. University Requirement courses: 3

10. Research courses: 2

SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN YEMENI UNIVERSITIES

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Applied Linguistics

by
MUTHANNA M. MOKBEL ALSHOAIBI

Supervisor
PROF. PANCHANAN MOHANTY

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School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad - 500 046
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February, 2011

SYNOPSIS

SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN YEMENI UNIVERSITIES

The present thesis entitled "Syllabus Design for Teaching the English Language Skills in Yemeni Universities" is an attempt made in the time when English language becomes the significant means of communication all-over the world. Almost all countries pay much attention to English language learning and teaching and Yemen is no exception. English language teaching has been paid much attention to in Yemen at both school and university levels. This research study arose from the awareness of the fact that effective courses in English for Yemeni students are in highly demand. Thus, the fundamental goal of this research is to understand and develop better syllabi, effective teaching and learning pedagogy and mastering the four skills namely, listening, reading and writing. Each of these skills has been explored and examined thoroughly in separate chapters, namely, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Thus, how these skills are to be handled in the class has been the concern of many researchers and teaching experts. Different kinds of approaches, methods and techniques have come to existence. Thus, this thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the study, including the background discussing the situation of teaching and learning English at the secondary level and the problems affecting it. It also discusses the significance of the study, purpose of the study, an overview of the classification of the English language skills and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter two presents the review of literature. In fact, several studies, methods, approaches and different issues and views up to date have been thoroughly discussed. Interestingly, it provides an overview of the communicative approach and

its development; the principles of communicative approach which distinguish it from the other approaches to language teaching. Theories of basic communication skills are also discussed. It discusses the concept of communicative competence and its components including grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. This chapter also provides detailed information about the communicative syllabus design pinpointing definitions of the syllabus, approaches to the syllabus, types of communicative syllabus design. A brief survey on communicative materials and the communicative methodology has been tackled. Finally, this chapter thoroughly examined some points regarding methodology including defining methodology, changes in methodology, communicative methodology, communicative procedures and techniques and teacher preparation.

Chapter three deals with the methodology followed in this study. It discusses the study site and respondents. The site of this study is Faculties of Education, Arts and Languages in Sana'a University, and Faculties of Education and Arts in Thamar University. The subjects of both universities have been described including both teachers and students. Several strategies of data collection such as conducting questionnaires, interviews and class-observations, and many kinds of data analysis most suitable for the researcher's purpose and preferences are presented. Another point is accentuating the results from the data analysis designed to explore the real situation of teaching English language skills in Yemeni Universities. The data are designed particularly to examine the syllabuses designed for the four English language skills, the approaches and materials used; the cadres who implement the teaching of the English language skills; and the focus on the Yemeni EFL students: their needs, interests, abilities, and their motivating factors to learn English.

Chapter four discusses mainly the listening skill and how it should be taught in Yemeni Universities. Listening skill as an isolated skill of a language, its importance, the critical role listening plays in second/foreign language acquisition and learning has been discussed. This chapter also discusses the determination of the entry level of students of English in Yemeni universities. This point explores and analyzes the teachers' and students' views on the students' entry level followed by the concluding ideas and the suggestions provided. Other main points that this chapter includes are the nature of listening courses in Yemeni universities; teaching listening comprehension skill; problems associated with the teaching and learning listening in Yemeni universities; and methods of assessing and evaluating students' progress. For each section mentioned above, this chapter investigates and analyzes the teachers' and students' views, and provides them with the conclusions and proposes suitable suggestions.

Chapter five examines the Speaking Skill, introducing the importance of speaking, essential speaking skills and the characteristics of a successful speaking activity. The second point in this chapter is the basis for planning spoken English courses in Yemeni universities. It discusses and analyzes the teachers' and students' views on the subject and it comes up with the conclusions and the suggested ideas by the researcher about what should a course in spoken English prepares a student to do. The suggested ideas include the course objectives, students and teachers, course content and methods and techniques. The third point is teaching and developing English speaking skills. This point discusses some relevant issues that are related to the situation of teaching spoken language in Yemeni universities including teaching speaking skills, motivating factors that motivate students to speak English in the classroom, classroom organization and the problems associated with the teaching of

spoken English in Yemeni universities. Through the investigation and analysis for the teachers' and students' views on each issue that are included in the third point, the researcher came out with some useful conclusions and accordingly proposed suitable suggestions and solutions. The last point in this chapter was about testing spoken English. This point contains a brief introduction on oral test and discusses the teachers' and students' views about the ways and methods that they use for testing and assessing spoken English in Yemeni universities. Through the analysis and conclusions, this study proposes some suggestions that are suitable for teaching spoken English to Yemeni EFL students.

Chapter six critically reviews five basic areas in Reading Comprehension. These areas include the scope of reading, reading components which consist of the reader; the text; and the interaction between reader and text. The second area concerns the reading courses and describes the goals, methods, approaches, and materials. About the course goals, it discusses the teachers' views on the goals/objectives of the reading course they put at the beginning of designing stage. The investigation and analysis of the teachers' views came up with some conclusions. Accordingly, it suggests many decisions and preparations that need to be made before teachers actually step into the classroom. For the models and approaches to teaching reading, this chapter also discusses the teachers' views on the models of the reading course and the approaches to teaching reading that teachers actually use in Yemeni universities. After investigating and analyzing the teachers' views, the researcher recommends the teachers' opinions and provides some suggestions from the current literature in reading regarding these subjects which will be associated with the levels of Yemeni students. Regarding the materials used for teaching reading comprehension, this chapter discusses the teachers' views on the materials used for teaching reading in

Yemen and investigates the students' views on their feelings and motivations to read in English. The third area is teaching reading comprehension. This area discusses some points which are considered the focus of reading comprehension including reading skills, reading strategies, differences between skills and strategies and reading styles. Through investigating the teachers' views on the reading skills, strategies and reading styles, this study concluded that the actual skills and strategies taught in Yemen are limited, providing some researchers' views on reading skills, strategies and styles that Yemeni reading teachers should consider when teaching reading comprehension skills. The fourth area concerns the reading instruction in the Yemeni classrooms discussing and analyzing the teachers' views on the reading instruction in the classroom, the planned activities taught in the Yemeni classroom, constructing exercises in the reading classroom and classroom procedures. Through this analysis, this study came up with some conclusions and proposed some suggestions. The last area discusses the matter of understanding students' difficulties in reading the text in English. It discusses the difficulties reported by the respondents regarding reading the English text. After reviewing the problems listed by both the teachers, students and the problems which are shown by the researcher through his class observation, this study came up with some conclusions and suggested some solutions to overcome the problems mentioned.

Chapter seven concentrates on writing skill. It discusses the process of teaching and learning written English as a foreign language in Yemeni universities. This chapter discusses many issues such as the definitions and purposes of writing, exploring the differences between speaking and writing, the various forms and kinds of writing and the second language instruction and second language writing on the process approach. The second issue is about the unsatisfactory performance in the

writing of English among Yemeni ELT students. This issue explains the teachers' and students' views on the defects and other issues in the teaching system of writing. Through the analysis of the respondents' views, this study concludes that there are some principal causes of students' unsatisfactory writing in English. The third issue discusses some views on the approaches to teaching writing. It discusses briefly the product-oriented and process-oriented approaches to writing. The teachers' views on the approaches used for teaching written English in Yemeni universities providing conclusions and suggestions to paid attention to. The fourth issue is about teaching of writing. This issue discusses the teachers' and students' views on the skills of writing that are taught in their universities supporting it with the conclusions and suggestions. This area also discusses other relevant points which include the teaching style of writing, the collaborative writing as the most paradigm for teaching writing in Yemen, the writing process, class interaction, journal writing, how students improve their writing and how to structure the writing class. The fifth issue discusses the teaching of Yemeni graduate students to teach composition reviewing the writing crisis that is still unsolved in Yemeni schools and universities and provides some suggestions to overcome this crisis. The sixth issue concentrates on understanding the students' difficulties in composition writing examining the teachers' and students' views on students' difficulties, showing some concluding ideas and providing solutions for that. Some basic writing problems that should be considered by the writing teachers while teaching the writing skills are examined. The last issue is about the evaluating and grading students' writing reviewing the teachers' views on how they evaluate and grade their students' writing and concluding with some ideas and providing some suggestions regarding evaluating and grading the students' writing.

The final Chapter presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. Regarding the findings, many findings have been examined thoroughly for each and every Chapter. Regarding the conclusions of the study, this chapter presents the conclusions ended up with. Based on the findings and conclusions, some suggestions and recommendations are proposed to university teachers to better the teaching of English language skills in Yemeni universities.

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