Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Umm Al-Qura, 2005)
BA (University of Umm Al-Qura, 1996)


Department of Linguistics

Friday, July 27, 2018
3:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Li-Shih Huang, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Sonya Bird, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)
Dr. Helen Raptis, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Scott Douglas, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia Okanagan

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Gregory Rowe, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Using quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, the current study examines Saudi students’ perspectives, coupled with EAL instructors’ views, regarding Saudi students’ English language-learning needs. Two data collection tools were used, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study \((N = 172)\) included samples of EAL learners \((n = 127)\) and EAL instructors \((n = 45)\) both in Saudi Arabia and Canada, Victoria. The mismatch between the skills identified as important and areas identified as needing support by the learners, in addition to the divergence between learners’ and instructors’ perceptions, underscores the necessity of triangulation when using needs analysis to discover language-learning needs. The study delineates oral communication (i.e., being able to interact by using the language appropriately and efficiently) as a language-learning need identified by both Saudi students and their language instructors. Quantitative (skill ratings) and qualitative (responses to open-ended questions and interviews) data suggest that both students and instructors view writing as a challenging area for Saudi English-language learners. The results also indicate issues that contribute to the challenges faced by Saudis in the process of learning English. Findings show the importance of educational background and cultural differences in the students’ language development. Responses report that reading is devalued in the Saudi educational system and Saudi culture in general. Hence, both Saudi students and instructors in Canada pinpointed reading as an area needing support. Based on the key findings, it is evident that the language-learning needs of Saudi students are shaped according to the requirements of their immediate study context and their prospective goals.

The study contributes crucial findings about participants’ perceptions of the importance of skills and their assessment of skills status in Saudi Arabia and Canada. In addition to the implications for English language learning in Saudi Arabia, these findings can be informative for educational institutions and practitioners in the English-speaking world. Most importantly, the multi-level analysis confirms that language learning needs are context-specific.