The English Language Vocabulary Needs of Yemeni Students, 12th Grade, in the Light of 21st Century Skill Requirements

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Abstract:

For developing the current English Course For Yemen-6 (ECY-6) of Grade 12 (G12), this study investigated Yemeni G12 students’ EL Vocabulary needs in the light of the 21st century, mainly from the perceptions of the enrolled G12 students and EFL teachers in the public schools in Ibb City during the study-year 2019-2020. It also examined if there were statistically significant differences between the group of male and female G12 students themselves and the group of G12 students and EFL teachers in their perceptions. The tool was G12 Students and EFL Teachers’ Open-ended Questionnaires with a randomly selected sample of 356 students and 19 EFL teachers (both males and females) in Al-Dhaar and Al-Mashannah Districts in Ibb City. Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) specifically Cronbach’s Alpha, Means, Standard deviation were used. Recognizing Technology-keywords such as install, uninstall, download, configure, etc. scored the first rank with very high mean value (4.90) as the most important needs. This study strongly recommended that ECY-6 should be updated immediately accordingly to fulfill G12 students’ 21st EL vocabulary needs.

Keywords:

EL Vocabulary Needs, Needs Analysis, 21st century skills

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Summary: Amongst the objectives of this research is to develop an English language curriculum for 12th-grade students in the Mekran city government, Ibb University. The study aims to investigate the vocabulary needs of students in the 12th grade in the light of the 21st century skill requirements. The study is based on a sample of randomly selected teachers and students from 19-356 Mekran city government schools from 2019-2020. The study used the SPSS statistical software to analyze the results. The study concluded that prioritizing the teaching of English language technology and modern language skills is essential. The study also recommended that the teaching of English language should be based on the needs of students in the 21st century.
1. Introduction

English Language (EL) is still the international language franca, so most of the world countries teach it at schools and universities. Furthermore, any EL curriculum must be updated periodically mainly from the perceptions of its main users (students and teachers) through needs analysis (NA) in order to meet the emerging and up-to-date EL needs. Otherwise, this EL curriculum is not a needs-based but an old-fashioned one.

As well as being the international lingua franca, English language (EL) serves as the language of business, advertising, research and higher education, culture, entertainment, etc. Al-Mekhlafi (2017) viewed EL as a global medium of communication. Also, Gradual (2006) pointed out that EL is a main factor of globalization (as cited in Jia-Huey 2007, p. 1). Similarly, Jackson (2004) stated that EL teachers should develop their learners’ requirements needed for global competency. Also, Stewart (2007) stated that learners should develop their global competence.

In addition, needs are not fixed (Soruc, 2012). So, today’s EL needs, uses and demands are actually different from those of the previous century due to globalization, and digitalization. Globalization and digitalization of 21st century have reshaped communication affecting how and with whom we communicate and deeply altering the terrain of EL education (Lotherington & Jen son ,2011). As a result, the success of the world depends greatly on the ability of individuals to function as successful members of this small village (The Languages and Literatures Department of St. John’s University 2013). Thus, EFL and ESL students are considered “a complex, energetic, and tech-savvy individual” (Crockett, 2015, p. 2). As a result, EL curricula must be developed and updated continuously in order to meet their students’ actual EL needs.

Pedagogically speaking, any existing ELT curriculum must be updated, and developed from time to time mainly from the perceptions of students and their teachers. Richards (2013) argued that EL teachers’ and learners’ interactions is central in driving the teaching-learning process. Involvement of learners and teachers is a key factor in determining success in EL programmes (Nunan, 2010 and Thurman as cited in Al-saadi 2013, p.273). In addition, Al-Hamlan and Baniabdulrahman (2013) have argued that “Syllabus is one of the ways to applying the already existing curriculum to the personal needs of teachers and learners” (p.120).

The procedures used for identifying and gathering these students’ needs are called Needs Analysis (NA) which have been proved as a fundamental method in either designing a new ESL/EFL curriculum or in developing an existing one by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), Long (2005), Nation and Macalister (2010), Tudor (1996), Richards (2010), Tzotzou (2014), Priyanka, Asyiah and Febriani (2017), Aknabi (2017), Jinzhu (2018), Sabarun (2019), Komlosi-Ferdinand (2018), etc.

ECY is merely a ready-made, top-down ELT curriculum that comes from the Ministry of Education despite the idea of needs-based curriculum which has become famous in the literature of ESL, EFL and ESP designing courses. For example, Al-Naqeeb (2012, p. 11-12) asserts, “the choice of ECY was taken by the Research Center and Educational Development (CED) because this course is specially prepared for Arab students and considered to be communicative-oriented one”. Also, Al-Tamimi (2006, p.17) points out “Generally speaking, ECY has been adopted to be taught in Yemeni schools in the belief that it focuses on the communicative aspects of the language.”. Not only that, but ECY has been originally written for Qatar State Farae (Personal interview, 2018).

Based on the above-mentioned NA data, this study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the English language vocabulary needs of Grade Twelve students in the light of 21st century requirements in Ibb City public schools in the study-year 2019-2020 as perceived by G12 Students and their EL Teachers?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences of perceptions among G12 students group (Males and Females) due to the gender variable regarding the EL vocabulary needs of G12 students in the light of the 21st century requirements in Ibb City public schools in the study-year 2019-2020?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences of perceptions among G12 students and EFL teachers group concerning the EL vocabulary needs of G12 students in the light of the 21st century requirements in Ibb City public schools in the study-year 2019-2020?

2. Methods

This study was conducted under quantitative research approach to analyze the G12 students’ EL vocabulary needs in the light of the 21st century requirements. Quantitative approach presents a holistic picture of the studies phenomena (Malik & Hamied, 2016).

The research population were the enrolled 4537 students of G12 (2110 males and 2427 females) and 76 EFL teachers (6 males and 41 females), in the study-year 2019-2020 in Ibb city, Yemen. In fact, the study population is divided into two educational districts (Al-Dihaaar and Almashannah), and each educational district has a number of secondary Schools which are in turn divided into male and female schools. So, it was essential to use a random sample. Hence, the random samples were 356 G12 students and 19 EFL teachers in 9 public secondary schools representing (10%) of the G12 students population and (20%) of the EFL teachers population. Moreover, the data were collected through G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ close-ended questionnaires. Both questionnaires contained the same EL vocabulary needs with 4 items, and they were translated into Arabic to ensure the participants’ understanding (See Appendix A). Both questionnaires were based on the five-point Likert scale with strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree. The first drafts of the questionnaires were given to 16 validators (See Appendix B) from Yemen, Oman and the UK to examine if it would report valid scores. The 19 validators were given the questionnaires via their Emails with a covering letter which included the objectives and the questions of the study (See Appendix C). The 4 items were remain the same after the step of validation. The questionnaires’ reliability was assured through piloting them in the two famous secondary schools: Mujamaa Al-Saeed Secondary School (Females) and Al-Nahadah Secondary School (Males) on November 5th–17th, 2019. Almost 30 students were randomly selected from the two different secondary schools. They were 15 male students and 15 female students. The EFL teachers of each school were chosen too. They were 2 males and 2 females. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient for the students and teachers questionnaire was 0.84, and this revealed that the questionnaires were acceptable since they were used for the first time.

3. Study Findings and Discussion

After gathering the quantitative data of the questionnaires, this raw data was coded by assigning codes and numbers to the variables. A detailed codebook was used in order to avoid any misplacing or losing of the keys of the data. The frequency provided next to each statement were given a score e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree, which helped in coding the subjects’ responses as well as in calculating the mean values and standard deviations (See Table 1 below).

| Table 4.1: Criteria for Interpreting G12 Students & EFL Teachers Questionnaires’ Results |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Values | Scale | Degree |
| 4.2–1.5 | Strongly Agree | Very High |
| 3.41–4.20 | Agree | High |
| 2.61–3.40 | Not sure | Moderate |
| 1.81–2.60 | Disagree | Low |
| 1–1.80 | Strongly Disagree | Very Low |

The data was processed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), and the results were discussed to answer the study questions. First, the total degree of importance of EL vocabulary needs of the G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ questionnaires from the perceptions of them both was discussed (see Tables 4.2) . After that the means scores of responses for each item included in G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ questionnaires were discussed separately from the perceptions of G12 students and EFL teachers questionnaires (see Tables 4.3). Then, the means scores of T-values of male and female G12 students’ perceptions of EL vocabulary needs was discussed (see Table 4.4). Finally, the total means scores of U and Z-values of G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ perceptions of EL vocabulary needs were also discussed (see Table 4.5).
Findings and Discussion Related to G12 Students’ and EFL Teachers’ Perceptions about EL Vocabulary Needs

Table 4.2: Total Means, Standard Deviations, Importance Degree of EL Vocabulary Needs from G12 Students’ & EFL Teachers’ Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Mean of Vocabulary Needs</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD = Standard Deviation. ID = Importance Degree. VH = Very High

In details, Table 4.2 mentioned above shows the total mean score of EL Vocabulary Needs in the light of 21st century requirements from the G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ perceptions. The G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ perceptions were very high since the total mean score was (4.73) and the standard deviation was (0.36). This shows clearly that the degree of importance of the four EL vocabulary needs items is very high from the perceptions of the G12 students and their EFL teachers. This result indicates that ECY-6 actually lacks the up-to-date EL vocabulary which belongs to the 21st century life.

Mean Score of Importance Degree of Each Item in EL Vocabulary Needs

As illustrated in Table 4.3 below, the means values of EL vocabulary needs domain from the perceptions of the G12 students and EFL teachers in the light of the 21st century requirements occur within (4.90) to (4.59). That is, the items (1, 2, 3 & 4) were ranked in Table 4.3 below in descending order according to their means values (4.90, 4.81, 4.61 & 4.59), standard deviations (0.31, 0.46, 0.65 & 0.66) and importance degrees (very high, very high, very high & very high) respectively. (See Table 4.3) below

Table 4.3: EL Vocabulary Needs Items According to Their Means Values, Standard Deviations, Importance Degree & Rank from G12 Students’ & EFL Teachers’ Perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items No. as mentioned in Questionnaire</th>
<th>Vocabulary Needs</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recognizing Technology- keywords such as install, uninstall, download, configure, etc.</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>VH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recognizing university context language keywords such as professor, assignment, lecturer, etc.</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>VH</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recognizing social-media apps communication keywords such as tweet, video-call, share a post, etc.</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>VH</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Recognizing non-governmental Organization keywords such as aid, coordinator, etc.</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>VH</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD = Standard Deviation. ID = Importance Degree. H = High. VH = Very High

As shown in Table 4.3 above, item 1 Recognizing Technology- keywords such as install, uninstall, download, configure, etc. scored the first rank with very high mean value (4.90) from the perceptions of the G12 students and EFL teachers. This indicates that both G12 students and their EFL teachers are aware of the importance of the technology key words. This can be due to that most of today’s G12 students have technical devices such as Ipods, smart cell phones, etc. Item 2 Recognizing university context language keywords such as professor, assignment, lecturer, etc. scored the second rank with a very high value (4.81). This result shows that G12 students and their EFL teachers are aware of the need for the words used in the university context. It also show that they are going to need these university words immediately after one year of school graduation. Item 3 Recognizing social-media apps communication keywords such as tweet, video-call, share a post, etc. scored the third rank with also a high mean value (4.61). This reveals that G12 students and their EFL teachers are in great need of these words because they face these words every day. This also indicates that they use these words in their academic life. Further, item 4 Recognizing non-governmental Organization keywords such as aid, coordinator, etc.) scored the last rank with a very high mean value (4.59), too. This result
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shows that G12 students and their EFL teachers find these words very important due to the spread of organizations today.

**Findings and Discussion Related to G12 Students Gender**

Regarding the differences among the G12 students related to gender in Table 4.4 below, the t-test for the two independent samples was employed in order to measure the statistically significant differences between the means values of the perceptions of the G12 male and female students. The t-value obtained for the Vocabulary Needs included in G12 students questionnaires is not (-1.03) statistically significant at (0.05) level because the p-value of the Vocabulary Needs is (0.19) higher than (0.05). The mean value (4.75) of the G12 male students is higher than the mean value (4.70) of G12 female students, so there are no statistically significant differences between the G12 male and female students. This result shows clearly that both male and female G12 students find the four items of EL vocabulary needs very important for them all.

**Table 4.4: Total Means, Standard Deviations & T-values of G12 Male Vs. Female Students’ Perceptions of EL Vocabulary Needs Regarding Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>P. value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL Vocabulary Needs</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>Not Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>354</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. S.D= Standard deviation; DR= Degree of Freedom; Sig.= Significant

**Findings and Discussion Regarding G12 Students and EFL Teachers Group**

In order to measure the statistically significant differences between the means values of the G12 students and EFL teachers’ perceptions included in the G12 students’ and EFL teachers’ questionnaires regarding EL Vocabulary Needs, Mann-Whitney (U test) test was used.

**Table 4.5: Total Means Ranks, U & Z Values of EL Vocabulary Needs From G12 Students’ & EFL Teachers’ Perceptions Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No of Ss &amp; Ts</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Ranks Sum</th>
<th>U Value</th>
<th>Z Value</th>
<th>Significance Value</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL Vocabulary Needs</td>
<td>Ss</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>183.01</td>
<td>65,151.50</td>
<td>1,605.50</td>
<td>-4.16</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>281.50</td>
<td>5,348.00</td>
<td>1,605.50</td>
<td>-4.16</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ts</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>287.00</td>
<td>5,453.00</td>
<td>1,605.50</td>
<td>-4.16</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Ss = Students; Ts. = Teachers; Sig.= Significant

As shown in Table 4.5 above, the U-value obtained for the Vocabulary Needs (1.605.50) is statistically significant at (0.05) level because the sig. value of Vocabulary Needs is (0.000) lower than (0.05) level. The mean rank of the EFL Teachers (281.50) is higher than the mean rank of the G12 students (183.01). Therefore, there are statistically significant differences in favor of the EFL Teachers. This significance reveals clearly that EFL teachers are more aware of these EL vocabulary needs than their G12 students. This result indicates that EFL teachers can represent these needs in their EFL classrooms.

4. **Recommendations**

The following points were recommended strongly:

1. The time devoted for EL subject in Yemeni public school time table is fair enough for achieving positive outcomes; 5 periods a week at the basic level and 6 at the second-
ary level. Thus, this time is more than enough for infusing the four EL vocabulary needs in the light of the 21st century requirements identified in this study.

2- Furthermore, Yemeni government should conduct a large-scale needs analysis which includes large number of ELT curriculum stakeholders e.g., students, EFL supervisors and EFL teachers, parents and any other affected parties by the reform of the ELT curriculum, ECY.

3- It is strongly recommended that the Ministry of Education in Yemen should review its policy regarding ECY-6 vocabulary needs, so it can prepare EFL students of G12 to cope effectively in their academic life or elsewhere.

4- EFL students of G12 should be given opportunities where they can practice these new findings of EL uses through authentic tasks and realia.

5- These requirements will promote students’ EL competence, technology use ability, motivation, etc.

6- The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research should cooperate with Yemeni universities to update an up-to-date BA English programme at college of Education according to these needs.

7- A limitation of this study was that the inability of involving the official members in the Ministry of Education due to the shortage of the study’s budget. So, it is strongly recommended that a large-scale needs analysis should be conducted by any further studies.

5- References


