English speaking learning barriers in Saudi Arabia: A case study of Tibah University

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Abstract

The English language has certainly become the most influential international language in the world. The teaching of English attracts the attention of researchers for many socio linguistic and pedagogic reasons, especially for the development of higher education in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Various initiatives in non-English speaking countries, including the Arab world, have been launched to promote the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. More specifically, in Saudi Arabia, the critical knowledge of teaching and learning English is considered to be essential in education in order to raise the English language learning proficiency, especially in speaking. The present paper focuses on the English language learning barriers of speaking in particular, where Tibah University is presented as a case study. Accordingly, ten English speaking classes have been observed for the foundation year at Tibah University, in order to find out the reasons behind Saudi students' lack of speaking. The English programme and curriculum, teaching strategies, and students' motivation, anxiety and reticence will be discussed in detail as the most prominent factors that impact upon speaking proficiency and language learning. Therefore, it is essential to study the abovementioned factors to maximise the awareness of some of the potential English learning barriers that Saudi students face. This will help raise the overall academic English language standard, in particular the speaking proficiency, at Tibah University.

Keywords: Anxiety and reticence, Curriculum, Saudi Arabia, Speaking barriers, Students' motivation

Introduction

The teaching of English in the Gulf region in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, attracts the attention of numerous researchers and scholars, especially with regard to the programmes, curricula, teaching strategies and students' attitudes towards learning at universities. According to Khan (2011), the teaching of English at Saudi universities serves two purposes: first, it strengthens the foundation of English for Saudi students, and second, it lays the basis for a specific focus on certain aspects of English language learning, which will be used in the coming years as they pursue their specialities after fulfilling the entry requirements for their chosen departments. Although English is taught in schools as a compulsory foreign language in Saudi Arabia, insufficient attention is paid to important aspects of the curriculum. "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undergone great political, social and economic development. To meet new challenges, the Ministry of Education has introduced English as a foreign language (EFL) in schools since 1925" (Al-Ahaydib, 1986, P. 32). According to Saudi Arabia's educational policy, the aim of teaching English is to provide students with knowledge of at least one international language, and the only one which is available to learn and to teach as an official foreign language in the Saudi educational system is English. By learning English, Al Wadah (2000) believes that students will be able to communicate and represent their culture to the world using this language. Furthermore, in the Arab world, there has been an increased interest in learning English as a foreign language due to the numerous opportunities it provide its speakers in various fields. However, one needs to keep in mind the challenging and often complicated process of learning and teaching English in Saudi Arabia; more precisely, the learning and teaching of *speaking* skills, with their different levels in the Saudi education system, which includes the elementary, intermediate and both the secondary and the university stages. The speaking skill is still the only skill that is difficult to be efficiently acquired among the other English language skills. In addition, the reasons behind the student's lack of speaking are not always possible to be determined. In this paper, some of the most important language learning barriers, which have been observed during the data collection of this study, will be presented. A background of the educational system in Saudi Arabia, specifically at Tibah University, will be covered, and the English language curriculum and teaching strategies will also be analysed. Finally, students' motivation towards learning English at Tibah University and their anxiety and reticence towards speaking will be discussed in this paper.

Background

Saudi Arabia has a compulsory education system that consists of three levels: the primary level, which consists of six grades, and the intermediate and secondary levels, each of which consists of three grades. Students start learning English in the fourth year (year 4) of the primary level and are aged between 9 to 11 years. The number of weekly English sessions at the primary level is four, and the duration of each session is 55 minutes. This continues through the remaining three main compulsory educational stages in the Saudi System. In other words, the same number of classes and minutes are followed for all stages. One can state that students aged between 6 and 18 years are not exposed to sufficient English input due to the limited number of English classes, the poor quality of teachers, the English language curriculum and the teaching strategies used inside the classroom. These factors result in future language-learning obstacles when students begin their foundation year (the first year of Saudi universities) or when they communicate using the English language. For example, the implementation of English as a foreign language among

Arab Countries and the Gulf States has been given a great deal of attention as a result of the increase in globalisation, which has obliged all countries to adopt an international language. Hence, English has been finally accepted in different learning institutions in the Gulf States, such as Kuwait and the Emirates, and nations such as these are now seeking to teach English as a compulsory subject to students from kindergarten (aged between 4 to 5 years old) all the way through their education. At university levels, students must be prepared to study most of their subjects in English, which results in a better language learning outcome throughout the educational movement (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013).

Despite the attempts of the Saudi government to effectively plan a comprehensive curriculum and to provide textbooks, the teaching-learning process seems futile because actual skills' development is lacking. The Saudi Ministry of Higher Education is extremely concerned with the pursuit of excellence in effective English language teaching and learning in the education arena; however, progress is slow, and continues to be insufficient especially at the college level (Liton, 2012). This is a common scenario in almost every stage of learning English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). In other words, the lack of English language development does apply to every stage of education and in every independent region in Saudi Arabia where teaching English as a foreign language is required to teach the same curriculum following the order from the Ministry of Education.

The teaching of English as a compulsory subject has received a great deal of attention from the Ministry of Education as well as from the Saudi community. Parents are willing to pay for extra lessons to increase their children's awareness of the language due to its importance. It is the language of economic contracts, higher studies, international aviation research, international affairs and cooperation across the globe; furthermore, it is a language that is shared by many millions of people throughout the world. In fact, the considerable development that has taken place in the field of English language teaching in the KSA cannot be denied. According to Kahn (2011), in the KSA, the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language has undergone several changes and modifications over many decades. The Saudi Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) curriculum was initially prepared in 1999 by the Department of English Language in the Saudi Educational Directorate of Curriculum under the supervision of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. This curriculum specified that the goal of TEFL is to focus on the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to enable students to communicate using English, the first spoken language in the world. According to Dr Talal Al-Hajailan (Teaching English in Saudi Arabia, 2003), during the history of English teaching in the KSA, two curriculum documents were prepared to specify the aims and objectives of TEFL. "The first document was formulated in 1987 and became the basis for all TEFL text books. The new series 'English for Saudi Arabia' was born in 1989 by a group of authors collaborating with the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia (KFUPM). The new textbooks employed the latest method of teaching 'the communicative method'. The second document for TEFL was produced and 'modified by the Department of English in the Directorate of Curriculum under the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia' (2000)" (Liton, 2012, p. 3).

However the goal of teaching English at all levels, schools, colleges and universities, in Saudi Arabia is defined in the Saudi Policy of Education and is included in each textbook, which states the aim as the following: "Providing the students with at least one of the living languages, in

addition to their original language, to enable them to acquire knowledge and sciences from other communities and to participate in the service of Islam and humanity" (Al-Hajailan, 2003, p.23).

Based on this objective, which has been adapted to teach English in Saudi Arabia, and in order to provide a theoretical and critical review of TEFL in Saudi Arabia, a case study of one of the Saudi universities will be presented in more detail to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of the educational process in teaching speaking at Tibah University. Moreover, the actual causes of the educational system weaknesses at Tibah University will be identified, and the weaknesses of the language teaching process in this context will be evaluated as well.

The Tibah University Programme and curriculum
The Royal Decree establishing Tibah University in Saudi Arabia, was issued in 2000 to grant the approval of the resolution of the Council of Higher Education, which signified the integration of the two campuses of King Muhammad Bin Saud University (in Riyadh, the Capital) and King Abdul-Aziz University (In Jeddah) into one independent university, indeed the only university, sited in Madina. In addition, the aim of teaching English was to provide programmes that were developed according to international standards of quality and academic accreditation and to prepare curricula based on a set of quality standards. Moreover, the major objectives were to conduct studies and research on the development of academic programmes in order to provide an evaluation of learning outcomes (Administration of Tibah, 2004). To achieve the aforementioned TEFL objectives, the English teaching curriculum at Tibah University has undergone significant changes due to the failure to achieve the objectives of teaching the language in each of the previously taught textbooks. According to Liton (2012), who conducted a study on the development of the EFL teaching and learning curriculum in the Saudi university and college context, the authentic EFL text should be designed and focused on grammar and writing skills, while offering many practical exercises geared towards the development of listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, English courses in schools and universities should gradually but perceptibly increase the standard of language learning, in order to assess the standard of language learning.
The textbook provided by the university has been changed numerous times. In 2001, *English for Saudi Arabia* was introduced as a compulsory textbook which is a reflection of the Saudi national Curriculum. The textbook contains two volumes, and students have to finish both books throughout the Academic year. Though each book focuses on one or two Language skills, for example reading and writing in book one, and listening and speaking in book two, still not all the language skills are given enough emphasis throughout the year and speaking skills are the most neglected., In regards to the English language text book provided for the university level, Al-Qurashi states that, "These books form a bridge between the intermediate and secondary courses" (1995.P 10). Although these books represented and included most language skills, neither the teachers nor the students can choose the skills which needed to be focused on according to the student's needs.

Each of these books contains almost the same number of units. The lessons vary between different skills, for example, some lessons provide listening and speaking activities, whilst others focus on grammar, reading or vocabulary learning. Finally, the skill of writing is also represented in these books but more heavily than the other skills. According to some reviews of these

textbooks, Raghada in her evaluation of the Saudi schools English books surmised it as the following: "speaking about the situation in KSA where there is a lack of qualified teachers and sufficient textbooks. Thus, teachers are bound to follow the textbooks quite heavily. The teacher's guide of EFSA takes control over the teachers which can result in the materials being taught with less variety and flexibility, and which can lead to teachers with limited teaching experiences. Therefore, teachers should evaluate their material. Another point is the lack of interference of Saudi teachers in designing the material and evaluating it, since the Ministry of Higher Education in KSA is the one in charge. In spite of the great importance of material evaluation, there seems slight empirical research as opposed to the theoretical one". (Raghada, 2010, p.2). Moreover, since the examination results of the students and the insufficient outcome of learning, the Ministry of Higher Education's assessment has failed to meet the objectives of learning. Thus, an in-depth evaluation has been adopted to change and modify these textbooks (Al-Shumaimeri. 1999).

As a result, The Ministry of Higher Education then agreed on a pilot edition of a new course book aimed at achieving effective language learning. This book, titled "Challenges for Successfully Learning English", has been designed for the secondary stage of Saudi schools and then has been approved for teaching in the foundation year at Tibah University. This textbook is a combination of two books: a "student book" consisting of studies for the English class with the teacher, and a "work book", in which students practice the exercises included individually at home without the teacher's help. Basically, the Ministry has adopted a brand new design of the contents of this book and focused on developing the thinking skills of learning English by relying on the communicative approach as an effective tool of foreign language learning. The "Challenges English text book" contains four modules that are mainly focused on two major skills: learning grammar and applying it to everyday language use via student communication within the language class. The book is divided into "receptive skills" such as listening and reading, and "productive skills" such as speaking and writing. All the four modules should be covered during the academic year, separated with two exams in between each two modules. Although the teacher still has to stick rigidly to the book plan, provided by the Ministry of Education, this new book has an excellent modern plan for teaching English language. It was especially developed and designed for KSA with the cooperation of the Ministry of Higher Education and Pearson Longman, who designed the English language course book (2010). The book has been following the Communicative Language Teaching system, which is an ideal approach to help learners acquire a foreign language effectively. According to Savignon, who contributed to the definition of communicative competence (or communicative competence), communicative competence is "relative and depends mainly on the cooperation of all participants, because it is a very dynamic conception in which at least two individuals are involved in the process of negotiating meaning" (2001, p.8).

The book had a promising start when it was first applied in both the secondary stage and the foundation year at university as it was aimed to help students with better language learning. "New challenges course books" has already helped students become more effective learners and better citizens of the world through personal development. However, although this book has only been adopted for teaching at Tibah University for two years, the Ministry of Education has now decided to change the course book again. The book failed to meet the objective of EFL teaching in Saudi universities and schools according to the ministry results of the final Academic year's

examination. In 2012, the new course book became "Flying High for Saudi Arabia", which was specially formulated by the English Language Development Project, still under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. The book adopted the plan of unites and lessons in teaching English. The book aimed to cover grammar, language functions, vocabulary and pronunciation. In spite of the variation of contents in this book and the focus in pronunciation, which is the first time Saudi Arabia has taught this as an individual skill, the book was only a pilot edition of the Saudi curriculum adopted at Tibah university, and it was once again changed in 2013 to "Cambridge Touch Stone", comprising of series 1, 2, 3 and 4. Though this textbook contains a variety of language skills designed to a high standard of language teaching, the number of units and the language skills included in each unit are quite challenging and difficult to be covered for both teachers and students. Throughout the attendance of the English language classes in Tibah university and as a part of the data collection for this research, which will be described in more details later in this paper, both teachers and students complained about the huge amount of lessons which should be covered during the full academic year according to the Ministry orders to not deviate from the lesson and unit plans. According to Khafaji (2004), the control of the teacher's guide according to the Ministry regulation will absolutely lead to the lack of creativity and flexibility in teaching the language. Khafaje (as cited in Ragadah, 2010, p. 3) further suggested that there is a need to re-evaluate the learning/teaching context in public schools and universities in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to agree to new materials which can mirror the requirements of learning English in society, taking the Saudi student's and teachers' needs into account. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education agreed on the "Cambridge Touchstone" textbook to be taught regarding EFL teaching in Saudi universities during the foundation year with respect to the various levels of the official English language textbook.

Curriculum development in Saudi Arabia, Tibah University in particular, has not taken into account the factors (such as materials, language teacher opinions and learners' needs) that should be involved in rational curriculum development. Ragadah (2010, p.10), divided the rational curriculum changes and evaluation in two mains points. The first is the impressionist overview which "demands a fast look through a lot of new material from which to choose". However, this approach cannot be followed since the teachers are not allowed to change the materials and the teaching materials and lessons are already provided and planed by the Ministry of Education. The second method mentioned by Ragadah in the textbooks' evaluation, is that the in-depth evaluation of language textbooks which required an extensive and close examination that can be carried out by both the teacher and the Ministry of education in order to find out how certain skills and different materials workout for the students' language learning needs.

The evaluation of the curriculum according to Nunan, (1988, p.10) is "principles and procedures for the planning, implementation, evaluation and management of an educational program." Additionally, the Ministry of Education, and the administration of Taibah University, should provide an understanding of what takes place in each edition produced by the Ministry before adapting new English textbooks to be taught by University. The materials used in the textbooks should be evaluated under certain criteria and according to both the textbooks' objectives and the learners' objectives, which should be accomplished by the end of the academic year. Ragadah (2010) has suggested three different kinds of materials evaluation that vary according to their academies' purpose, timing and formality: "pre-use evaluation, whilst-use evaluation and post-

use evaluation. "Pre-use evaluation" requires making choices about the value of materials for their users. It can be context-free, content-influenced or context dependent. This kind of evaluation is often impressionistic, since it consists of a fast decision by a teacher or an institution, and as a result some mistakes may come out during the use of the book. "Whilst-use evaluation" deals with evaluating the material while using it, which makes it more consistent than pre-use evaluation, but it cannot measure the strong or effective learning. "Post-evaluation", is considered the most important since it can measure the effort of the material on the users (2010, p.4). Consequently, the Ministry Of Education should take into consideration the effectiveness of methods for both evaluations and assessment of English textbooks before making the judgement on the objectives achieved continuously and excessively.

Additionally, a critical evaluation of the texts should be undertaken via experimental forms and small-scale research to acquire a more in-depth understanding of what a comprehensive curriculum should involve and whether or not the Ministry Of Education is succeeding in regard to the achievement of this goal. Hirst (1968) discussed what should be involved in rational curriculum change, stating that when the curriculum consists of deliberately and consciously planned activities, which are applied in schools and colleges, the learning outcomes and objectives will certainly not be met. Language needs a more unconscious sequence of learning, rather than adherence to a consciously planned curriculum, where the latter path will lead to unsuccessful learning outcomes. Secondly, Hirst (1968) argued that the curriculum does not need to achieve all the stated objectives. It is not necessary for the specified objectives to be achieved at the end of the course via certain activities and lessons. It becomes clear that the focus of language teaching should be to provide natural and unspecified material according to the students' needs as this helps to provide learning opportunities for them. This method can unconsciously help students to learn the language, leading to a sufficient learning outcome. Third, the central point that remains crucial regarding the achievement of the curriculum objectives is the identification of the principles of the objective. For example, do the objectives take into consideration different kinds of behaviour, skills, concepts, creative capacities and students' abilities to learn and achieve the stated aims? Unfortunately, curriculum development in Saudi Arabia relies heavily on the recognition of aims, which are assessed by the end of each term via a written exam. This assessment is used to determine whether the objectives have been successfully achieved or if further changes need to be implemented. This method neglects the crucial role that other factors may play in the final stages of the learning outcome, and neglects the assessment of the speaking skill as well. Therefore, curriculum planning in Saudi Arabia in general and at Tibah university in particular, needs to consider decisions according to different characteristics and contexts, rather than being based on a general education principle that needs to be achieved at the end the term. Otherwise, without an actual understanding of the various complex elements that are integrated to produce a sufficient learning outcome, the teaching curriculum will be a complete waste of time, money and effort, leading to unachieved teaching and learning goals and a lack of proficiency.

Despite the aforementioned arguments and the recent curriculum modification and development, the myth of the falling standards of English in KSA, and more specifically at Tibah University and the lack of focus on speaking skill as a result of the courses taught the one which have been described above, has not yet been proved with certainty. There are other foremost factors that affect the standard of EFL teaching and speaking proficiency that hinder the achievement of the

goals of the Saudi curriculum. These factors include, in addition to the curriculum, English teaching strategies, students' motivation, anxiety and students' reticence to learn English at Tibah University, which could be considered as important factors that affect the standard of learning and teaching practices in Saudi Arabia.

Strategies for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia, Tibah University.
With regard to curriculum development in Saudi Arabia, it is important to provide a description of Tibah University's ongoing English language course, particularly in the foundation year, in order to undertake a theoretical analysis of different aspects of language teaching and the significant features of the English language classes run by Tibah University. These aspects and features include students' motivation, teacher-student interaction, language focus and the general atmosphere of language classes.

As an essential component of the completion of the foundation year, Tibah University offers English language classes based on its "Intensive English Language Programmes", where the "Cambridge Touchstone" is used as the core course book of the programme. The aim of these classes is to improve students' English language competency and to help them achieve the targeted level within the contexts of the majors they will be pursuing after they complete their foundation year. The grade they achieve in this English language course will indicate their English language proficiency and determine which major they will be able to pursue.

According to the data collection and the ten classes which have been observed, the number of registered students in each language class may be as high as 30 students, and student-teacher interaction may be affected as a result. However, the number of the students who regularly attend classes is usually between 12 and 25 according to the teacher's records. Throughout the data collection period for this research, I attended English language classes at Tibah university at the "foundation year" level to find out more about the factors that affect students' English language competence, particularly in terms of speaking. The number of students in each language class continued to decrease throughout the year, as more became absent in order to study for the midterm or final exams. Moreover, the issue of absences and decreasing attendance is a habit not only among students at Tibah University but also at Saudi universities and colleges more generally. Ezza (2012) recently discussed Saudi students' attitudes towards attending English language classes at Saudi universities and colleges, and related these to different environmental and social factors, which can be summarised as follows.

Text anxiety/tension can be related to the curriculum. There can also be learning problems related to coping with the text provided, fear of problems, lack of motivation (which will be discussed in more detail later in this paper), peer pressure and a negative attitude towards the academic institution. There is also the forced choice dilemma, that is to say students are forced to attend a full day of English classes at Tibah University. This attendance rule of forcing students not to leave the campus was changed in 2011, when the course became a full nine-hour day, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every working day. Once students attend the first classes, they are unable to miss or cancel classes for the rest of the day; they are obliged to be on the university campus for the entire day, which results in a significant decrease in attendance. This is a result of the university's new rule for foundation-year students, who are no longer allowed to leave the campus during the university's working hours due to many cultural issues. Marcus (2001) as cited in Khan, raised the issue of the effect of emotional or social problems on students' performance and achievement in language learning, demonstrating that students performed better

when their emotions towards language learning were strong and positive. Khan (2007, p.1) pointed out the different factors that represent barriers to learning within the Saudi context: "The barriers are some of those that are very influential: social, cultural, parental, attitudinal, motivational, psychological, personal and pedagogical factors. Pedagogical factors in particular include teachers, action researches, teaching strategies, teaching resources and administration". The presence of such important factors can be remarkable and can contribute to the worsening of students' capacity for language learning, not only in speaking, but in all skills. Rogers (1987) stated that such factors become integrated with students' attitudes to learning, and that the language practitioner should collaborate with other consultative departments in the academic institution to solve such problems.

Student Motivation Towards Language Learning
One possible reason one can consider for students' lack of motivation to attend English language classes at Tibah University and according to the data collection of this study, is that they have to attend five hours of English classes everyday with the same teacher in the same room for an entire year. During this period, they are required to focus on only two skills, reading and writing, while almost completely neglecting speaking and listening practice. Moreover, since students' assessment is based on a written exam at the end of the term, and they do not have to use the second language outside of the classroom setting, they are unable to achieve the level of proficiency required to communicate in English using the four basic language skills. Students also use the language inside the classroom based on a specific component of the curriculum. Unfortunately, in this case, the language learning process contradicts the Ministry's stated goals related to the English language curriculum. Hedge (2000) referred to motivation as a crucial factor in language learning. This can be related to students' lack of motivation towards the English course. However, Gardner defined motivation as "the sum of effort plus the desire to achieve a language learning goal plus attitudes or the degree of interactive orientation" (1985, p. 363). Moreover, the concept of motivation "is composed of many different and overlapping factors such as interest, curiosity or a desire to achieve" (Williams & Burden, 1999, p.111). Accordingly, students who are highly motivated seek opportunities to use their second language, and they are more successful with regard to the development of oral communication skills than learners with a lower level of motivation (Lightbown& Spada, 2001). Saudi English classes include only Saudi students, whose first language is Arabic. Those students mostly speak Arabic inside the classroom and do not speak to their teacher, who is a native speaker of English. This point will be discussed in more detail later, especially regarding teacher attitudes towards teaching English courses at Tibah University.

Hedge (2000) suggested that there are two kinds of motivation to learn the English language: (i) students' need to use language as an instrument to achieve a specific purpose, or (ii) the desire to engage in certain activities, such as joining another group in a different culture, which is not applicable to the Saudi context. Both of these factors may be useful for interpreting student behaviour towards language learning, and particularly the issue of speaking skills in the classroom, is a limited field in which students can practise the second language outside of the classroom setting. Moreover, Nunan (1999) divided learner needs into two main kinds. Objective needs refer to those activities carried out by the teacher to diagnose the student's ability and language proficiency and to work with the student's own knowledge by providing the appropriate level of language instruction. The other kind is subjective needs. These include the student's desires, wants and expectations. This assessment is undertaken via a planning

programme proposed by the teacher with the support of the academic organisation. Unfortunately, less emphasis is placed on major obstacles such as these, which lead to the provision of an inappropriate learning environment at Tibah University. Alternatively, since language learning entails involvement in a language learning situation, the student's attitude plays a crucial role, in addition to the instructor, classroom, textbooks and learning atmosphere, among other factors. Gordon (1980) found that language attitude was the best indicator of English learning achievement among schools and colleges, while Lett and O'mara (1990) found that motivation is an important factor in achievement, even among military personnel. Similarly, Bartley (1969) found that those who withdrew from language classes had less language competence, significantly lower aptitude scores and less positive attitudes towards the language-learning environment.

Another important motivational factor linked to favourable attitude towards language learning is called the "foreign language-learning situation". According to Dornyei, and Csizér (2006), when students learn a foreign language at school without having direct contact with native speakers of that language, this has an adverse effect on their willingness to communicate and leads to less oral communication. This, in turn, may discourage students from practising their English language skills outside of the classroom setting. For example, as part of the data collection process in which to find out about the English language learning obstacles, one of the English classes I have attended for the foundation year and which are offered at Tibah University was a speaking class dealing with the "Money Unit" as part of the curriculum, based on the Touchstone course book. The major goal of the lesson was to enable students to use many different types of material to apply rules to real-life situations. Unfortunately, the teacher relied on reading from the book more than on involving students in discussions, as this is the most appropriate method to finish the unit in the textbook according to the department obligation. This may have resulted in the level of dissatisfaction with the quality of the English language classes which effects students' attitudes toward language. Humanistic language psychologists, such as Rogers (1983), emphasise the importance of dealing with the "whole learner" and stressed that "learners are not simply processers of information who, when they enter the classroom, leave the deeper layers of their identity outside: they are real people who bring with them the whole array of personal attributes and feeling. These have to be respected, if individual development and growth are to take place". (Littlewood, 1992 ,p.98).

Furthermore, Reynolds's (1991) research linked motivation with second language proficiency. This author argued that motivation plays an important role in language learning and that it is directly linked to students' language learning competence. Reynolds also differentiates between kinds of motivation. The first, which refers to the effort expended on learning a second language, is called intensity of motivation. The second kind of motivation refers to one's purpose for studying the language. Consequently, classroom performance is correlated in one way or another with students' motivation to learn a foreign language and their ability to interact effectively in the second language classroom, which appears to be missing in the case of the Saudi students who learn English at Tibah University.

Anxiety
Throughout the collection of data at Tibah University and the classes for the foundation year, and as a result of the many factors I have found collaborate to hinder students' learning language competence, especially their communication skills in a speaking class, is anxiety. In fact, many

studies have analysed the relationship between anxiety and second language learning. For instance, Gardener, Day, and MacIntyre (1992) pointed out that foreign language anxiety is different from other kinds of anxiety, and that there is a relationship between anxiety and learning proficiency. This, they argued, can be linked to students' attitude towards language learning, and is identified as being specifically related to speaking and listening. Anxiety can be defined as a "subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry" (Dornyei & Schmidt, 2001, p.364). Additionally, within the language learning context, Zhang (2001, p.74) defined anxiety as "a distinctive complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". He also defined the relationship between anxiety and speaking in particular as "a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking in the second language". Furthermore both Zhang (2001) and Dornyei and Schmidt (2001) argued that anxiety can be a strong motivator for students. It can encourage them to learn a language or it can have a negative influence and prevent them from achieving the purpose of the learning process, thereby possibly preventing them from achieving good oral communication. Zhang's study demonstrates that students were anxious about oral communication as a result of their language learning difficulties. They did not have enough relevant knowledge about the second language, which made them more anxious about practising the language inside the classroom. Their lack of experience with regard to real communication made them worry about their speech production, which, in turn, led to speaking difficulties and decreased self-esteem. Khan (2001) mentioned that one of the most important factors that stands as a language-learning barrier in English classes in the Saudi context is learners' anxiety towards the learning environment. However, with regard to English language competence, Saudi students face linguistic obstacles at the tertiary level of education. According to Khan, "Since English is the medium of instruction, and the target learners' background seems to be quite humble, they are often scared of learning a subject of study in English in general and studying English in particular. Sometimes they strive to learning, but English appears as one of those barriers that they are even afraid to handle" (2011, p. 5). Moreover, one of the fundamental characteristics of effective language teaching at Tibah University has been found to be absent from the English classes. How can we expect learners with the major goal of passing the examination based on a certain curriculum (without having the choice of what to study) to learn the language? In most studies, interactive motivation between the learner and the learning environment is found to produce the best learning outcome. The simplest and most obvious factor that attracts the individual to language learning is the involvement of students in a manner that engages their minds with the language using creative resources in different contexts. This enables them to communicate using this language. Learners at the university level differ from students at the school level; the latter students need to have their space for learning in order to produce a good learning income. They need to determine with the teacher the value of the natural language class in which they work. Littlewood pointed out that "Making space for learners means that each individual learner should not feel threatened by forces outside his or her control (e.g. a negatively-disposed audience) and should not feel that his or her social identity is submerged anonymously within the class" (1992, p. 99).

Although some research demonstrated clear evidence of the relationship between personal characteristics and feelings in language learning acquisition, the findings indicate that personal feelings, such as anxiety, are considered a major factor in the acquisition of conversational and oral communication skills (Lightbown & Spade, 1999).However, it is a fact that some learners'

attitudes towards learning a second language, including their motivation and anxiety, play a crucial role that is linked to their success in interactive communication in the language class in general and in speaking skills in particular, but still the strategies of teaching English at Tibah university need to take into consideration the crucial role which these factors play in language learning and communication competence.

Student Reticence

Based on the collection of data of this study, it was noted that students prefer to remain silent in English language classes. They appeared not to have the ability to interact via oral communication. This is called "student reticence", which refers to a student's unwillingness to communicate. According to Lee and Ng (2009) in their research about student reticence, the reason behind this problem is very complex. There are many factors related to student personality, and these are integrated with other areas, such as personal attitude, confidence, motivation and anxiety. These intertwined factors affect students' behaviour in class and, in turn, result in their lack of oral communication skills. Moreover, Williams and Burden (1997) stated that students' behaviour in a second language classroom depends on a complex set of interacting factors, such as motivation, anxiety and personal attitude towards the language, which may lead to student reticence.

Furthermore, Arnold (2003) linked oral production with different personal attitudes, such as anxiety and motivation. The situation that second language learners (especially at Tibah university language classes) face when speaking is not easy. Students' lack of knowledge and confidence may lead to several difficulties, which might cause some students to prefer to remain silent and not to interact effectively due to their lack of self-confidence. Such behaviour might be the major factors behind student reticence. In addition, Gardner (2001) stated that the majority of students who are studying the English language feel very motivated and anxious in the beginning. He explained that when they come to class and the teacher involves them in speaking activities, they begin the production of speech. This is when they discover their speaking difficulties, and as a result, they may develop negative feelings towards the foreign language and may prefer to remain silent rather than participating in speaking activities due to their lack of self-confidence. However, hundreds of studies have been conducted with the aim of understanding the relationship between student behaviour and the language learning process. According to Hedge (2000), most research about second language learning and oral communication ability essentially depends on students' personal characteristics. These are the factors affecting learning and learners' motivation, as well as their anxiety and self-confidence. Students who lack certain characteristics may face learning difficulties and suffer from decreased speech production. In order to help students improve their ability to speak in the classroom, teachers should be aware of both the teaching situation, such as why learners are learning the language, and be mindful of individuals who might be influenced by different factors, such as motivation, anxiety and willingness to speak. Due to the lack of knowledge of the administration and the English language course directors at Tibah University, it seems to be that more emphasis should be given to these factors. They should also be aware that continuing to use traditional teaching methods and certain textbooks that assess written forms, while neglecting the value of oral communication inside the English language classroom, will lead to insufficient language learning. In addition, Norton (2001) suggested a variety of ways in which personal characteristics (such as anxiety and motivation) associated with oral skills can be treated in a language learning situation, and they identified how to create opportunities for the learner to

practise the target language according to their needs. Scrivener (1994), Thornbury (2005), Harmer (2007) and Arnold (2003) suggested different procedures and activities that might help students to be more motivated, less anxious and more positive towards learning, thereby possibly helping them to overcome the aforementioned problems. The main point on which these authors all agree is that it is important to stimulate students' desire to speak the language and to involve them in as many activities as possible. Scrivener (1994) suggested that teachers should encourage students to engage in effective interaction and give them the choice to speak. Moreover, according to Dornyei and Schmidt (2001), students who are highly motivated welcome communicative classes and prefer those that balance the role of the teacher with learner-centeredness. Consequently, Scrivener (1994) suggested that teachers dedicate little time to individuals at the beginning of the speaking activity, then they can organise the activities in pairs, trios and small groups before involving the entire class, including the teacher, in the discussion. The less motivated students may see this as a beneficial opportunity to participate, as they will be speaking mostly to everyone in the class, including the teacher. In addition, Arnold (2003) stated that the teacher may focus more on students' attitudes rather than the techniques used in the speaking class, which teachers may benefit from in the case of the language centre at Tibah University. He maintains that "success (in language) depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (Arnold, 2003, p.5). In other words, the teacher should create a positive atmosphere for learners to encourage them to participate and to involve them in speaking activities that facilitate the development of their communication skills. Furthermore, I think students in language classes at Tibah University need to determine what might stimulate their desire to be engaged in oral communication and understand what may make them motivated. Also, it would be helpful if the language teacher assesses the strength and the weakness of their students' language ability, builds up their decision according to the students' need, and involves the students' experience throughout communication using the English language. Presently, according to the university educational system and the Ministry of Education's curriculum, it is difficult for both students and teachers to learn in freer environment, without being bound to textbooks. However, according to Scrivener (1994), teachers should try setting a particular topic related to the students' own problems rather than choosing a topic based on textbooks provided. In this way, even the less talkative students may view it as an opportunity to discuss their own interests and feelings and be more encouraged to interact.

Finally, as anxiety, within this context, is a complicated matter associated with different feelings towards learning a second language, Zhang (2001) suggested that teachers may encourage students to speak about their feelings and interests; this can be done in their free time or at the beginning of the class. In addition, Saudi students at Tibha University need to have time for private consultation with their teachers to determine if there are any problems related to language learning, class or school, and the aforementioned factors should be taken into consideration by the English language course director. As a result, students may have positive attitudes towards the second language and be more motivated to practise English and acquire the language both inside and outside of the classroom.

Conclusion and Remarks
It is clear from my research and participation in English classes at the Tibah University, that the educational system in Saudi Arabia for teaching second languages could be reformed. The two

most important skills for life are speaking and listening, but apart from one textbook in circulation for only two years between 2010-12, the Ministry of Education has not produced a course for students that stresses the importance of verbal communication. Instead, course books focus on reading and writing, thus causing a myriad of problems, most notably anxiety and reticence when called to practice speaking.   Furthermore, student motivation has been compromised by the Ministry of Educations' rigid English curriculum: for their foundation year at university, students must spend many hours in a classroom each day, with the same teacher, trying to get through the strict textbook. Neither teachers nor students are allowed to deviate from the course, causing both a huge loss in motivation. Teachers cannot use their own initiative or introduce topics that might be more relevant to their students' personal lives, and learning English becomes a race to get the textbook finished in time for exams at the end of the year. Speaking is not prioritised at all, in fact, the exams only come in written form, and students are not encouraged to talk to each other in English inside and outside the classroom. The Ministry of Education and The Higher Administration of Tibah University, as well as academic instructors and language teachers throughout Saudi Arabia, should be aware of these crucial problems and learning barriers in English teaching, and a process of language learning should be developed that will create opportunities to improve students' communicative abilities, and at the same time allow teachers their own input into their students' learning programmes.

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