



Problems Teaching English to Deaf Students

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Abstract

This study seeks to determine the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Also, to determine the statistically significant differences about the problems of teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' point of view in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia according to the variables of gender and years of experience. Online questionnaires were used to collect the data from 186 teachers. The results revealed that the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant. Where that the problems related to English language curriculums for deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are highly significant. Also, that the problems related to the deaf students themselves from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant. Regarding problems related to the educational environment for deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are highly significant. Finally, the problems related to the English language teacher from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant. Also, the results revealed no statistically significant differences in the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in the Kingdom of Saudi according to the variables of gender and years of experience.

Keywords: problems teaching English, deaf students, Saudi Arabia

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INTRODUCTION

Learning English is vital because it has become an international language that is used by almost all communities as a second language (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Despite the challenges of learning English, Studying the language is worthwhile because it is used in almost every area of life, including technology, science, education, politics, economics, commerce, and communication (Oder & Eisenschmidt, 2018). The teacher should be qualified to link students' previous experience with the subject being learned to achieve learning goals and establish an efficient learning process (Ntinda, Thwala & Tfusi, 2019). However, the student's case will have a significant impact on their comprehension of the subject. As a result, every teacher must be creative at all times in

the class to make learning engaging and understandable (Adi, Unsiaah & Fadhilah, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, English has recently been adopted as a major language in educational plans. As a result, it has been made a requirement in all levels of education from elementary to university (Alzahrani, 2018). The government of Saudi Arabia has spent billions of dollars on educational institutions to ensure that its citizens are well-versed in English (Nicolaidis, 2007). This ensures that students with special needs such as deaf and hearing impairment are encouraged to learn English in line with highlighted of Adi, Unsiaah & Fadhilah (2017) that English teachers should understand the real circumstances of students so that they can open their minds, helping them master universal language enables them to communicate with others and to obtain access multiple sources of knowledge. According to the ministry of education (2016), there are more than 5000 Deaf students are enrolled in Saudi Arabia's educational system, the bulk of those students are enrolled in "Alamel Programs," which are isolated classrooms.

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to deaf students is a challenging mission for teachers today. About language, deaf students have a poorer language capacity than their hearing peers. As a result, deaf students need a different form of language acquisition therapy than students who are hearing (Dewi, Yawisah & Siregar, 2019). Learning English for deaf students is not the same as learning English for hearing students. Since deaf students often show severe delays in phoneme development, vocabulary, and syntax (Adi, Unsiaah & Fadhilah, 2017). Deaf students are unable to completely interpret information in the form of sounds; this can affect their reading abilities due to the lack of vocabulary arising from the sounds they are unable to process (Musyoka, Gentry & Bartlett, 2016). Ntinda, Thwala & Tfusi (2019) stated that deaf students prefer to be visual learners, which is challenging in an environment where the most important knowledge is provided by mouth word solely.

There are several points of view on the best methods of communicating with deaf individuals, some of which relate the method of communication chosen with the educational process's goal, and others with the nature and seriousness of impairment, and still others with the type of educational needs of the deaf individual (Ngobeni, Maimane & Rankhumise, 2020). Rahmah and Kholiq (2018) and Bergeron, Berland, Demers, and Gobei (2020) mentioned the most important methods of communication for deaf individuals, as follows:

- Sign language: This method is the natural language of deaf individuals and has several rules and foundations, which are the position of the hand (the sign) about the body, the shape of the hand, the movement of the hand (the sign), and the direction of the palm.
- The oral method: The principle of this method is to teach deaf individuals to speak by improving the auditory remnants of individuals; this method includes the use of speechreading and auditory training.
- Total communication: This method depends on the use of several methods of communication by each situation, ability, and need of each deaf student.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The profession of teaching English to deaf students is exposed to many problems that negatively affect their performance (Rahmah & Kholiq, 2018). No doubt revealing those problems will reduce the effects that impede the educational process. The most important problems of learning English for deaf students are:

- English language curriculums for deaf students: The academic curriculum is one of the aspects of the necessary educational process in educational institutions. The

student must understand the curriculum due to the direct relationship between them. Lack of relevance to the level of students, the failure to involve students in criticizing the curriculum, and seeking to develop are the problems related to the curriculum facing students (Alrayes & Alahmed, 2015).

- Problems related to the deaf students themselves: The concepts, knowledge, attitudes, and values of students are one of the most important factors that affect the progress of the educational process, and the overcrowding of the number of students in classes and the inability to follow up on students' work are the most important problems facing students (Adi, Unsiyah & Fadhilah., 2017).
- The educational environment for deaf students: lack of all the necessary means for the curriculum and the appropriate conditions for their use and the difficulty in obtaining them, the lack of encouragement to create the curriculum using local environmental resources, and the lack of knowledge of many teachers on how to operate the educational aids (Getnet, 2019).
- Problems related to the English language teacher: the need for training courses related to the English language curriculum, the large burden placed on the teacher to prepare lessons for more than one semester, and the effort spent in following up the activities of all students are the problems that facing teachers the English language (Zakia, Sunardi, & Yamtinah, 2017).

Alrayes and Alahmed (2015) identified the difficulties facing teaching English to deaf students according to perception teachers in "Al- Amal" institutes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This study adopted a questionnaire to collect data. The results revealed that the difficulties are primarily related to the English language program, deaf students, and the environment of education. The most important of these challenges is that the English language program is not suited to the skill of deaf students, the deaf and hard of hearing do not use English in their everyday lives, there are no assistant educational aids, and English language teachers do not have access to dictionaries for various languages. The findings also revealed that there are statistically significant gaps in the realization of the difficulties of teaching English to deaf and hard of hearing students between the study samples, who teach only in intermediate schools, and the teachers' samples, who teach in various educational stages, in favor of the teachers' samples who teach in various educational stages. Also, there are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of male and female teachers about the challenges of teaching English to deaf and hard of hearing students, with male samples in favor of female samples.

The study of Adi, Unsiyah & Fadhilah (2017) described the challenges of teachers in teaching English to deaf students as well as strategies for dealing with those challenges in Indonesian special junior high schools. This study adopted interview and observation sheets to collect data. Having students' attention, interpreting words from their lip gestures, providing meanings and examples, differentiating similar words in different ways, and presenting materials relevant to students' prior knowledge were all found to be challenged. To deal with those difficulties, the teacher instructed the students to always carry dictionaries, used alphabetic signs, and waved or patted the students' shoulders to get their attention.

Zakia, Sunardi, & Yamtinah (2017) investigated the difficulties of teaching science to deaf children in Indonesia. This study used questionnaires, interviews, documentation, and observation to collect data. The findings indicate that there are some difficulties in teaching natural science to deaf children, which involves poor hearing and lingual comprehension abilities, in a science subject there are a lot of abstract concepts, textbooks that do not take into account the linguistic features of

children with hearing loss, the inadequacy of specialized learning media for deaf children and the teacher's inability to simplify the sentence in the topic.

Study [Getnet \(2019\)](#) aimed to explore the communication challenges between hearing-impaired students and EFL teachers in Inclusive English Language classrooms in Ethiopia. This study used classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis to collect data. The findings showed that during English language classes, especially listening and speaking lessons, the communication challenge is more prevalent. Also, hearing-impaired students can understand the teacher's speech at all stages of impairment; however, communication among hearing-impaired students is difficult. Also, the problem of producing sounds is so difficult that automatic vocalization and reproduction are found to be problematic; there is also the question of consonant replacement, sound exclusion, and letter transposition.

In light of the aforementioned, this study seeks to determine the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Also, to determine the statistically significant differences about the problems of teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' point of view in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to the variables of gender and years of experience.

METHODS

Research design

A descriptive design and quantitative approach were used in this study to produce a systematic and factual summary of a population's characteristics and facts. Descriptive quantitative research aims to explain or characterize the features of the state or object of study, after which the findings are presented in the analysis form ([Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016](#)).

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all English language teachers in special education schools in the Asir region that number (217) members according to the annual statistical report of the Saudi Ministry of Education (2018/2019). According to [Barreiro and Albandoz \(2001\)](#), a population of less than 500 is considered small; in this case, it is normal to use the whole population as a sample for conducting the survey, which is known as the census sample, in which questionnaires are sent to the entire population. (186) out of (217) questionnaires were valid for analysis.

Research Instrument

In this study, questionnaires were adopted to obtain the perspectives of teachers on each item in the questionnaire by Likert scale includes a five-scale from "1" (very low) to "5" (very high). The questionnaire was broken down into two parts. Part (1) collects background information of the respondents, such as 'gender and years of experience'. Part (2) consisted of 32 items to measures four of problems teaching English to deaf students: English language curriculums for deaf students include items (1-5); problems related to the deaf students themselves include items (6-13); the educational environment for deaf students includes items (14-18) and problems related to the English language teacher include items (18-32). The items in this part have been adopted based on the study of [Alrayes and Alahmed \(2015\)](#).

Validity of Instrument

To ensure the research instrument's validity, it was presented to (8) experts from Saudi teachers who are experts in the English language, who checked it for consistency, linguistic formulation, and scientific accuracy. According to expert comments, all items have been approved with slight wording changes.

Reliability of Instrument

The research instrument's reliability means that when the same instrument is used in the same situation on the same population, the results are the same. The Cronbach alpha test was used to check the internal accuracy of respondents' answers. As shown in Table1, the value that has (60 %) or more expresses a reasonable value for the reliability of the answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

Table 1. Cronbach Alpha Test

Dimensions of problems of learning English for deaf students	Cronbach Alpha Value
English language curriculums for deaf students	0.718
Problems related to the deaf students themselves	0.864
The educational environment for deaf students	0.724
Problems related to the English language teacher	0.686
Overall	0.820

Table 1 shows that the value of the internal consistency coefficient for the dimensions of learning English for deaf students was accepted upon and ranged between (0.686-0.864). This indicates that the Cronbach Alpha coefficient value for all dimensions of the instrument was greater than 0.60, suggesting that the research instrument is internally consistent. The value of the internal consistency coefficient for overall dimensions was also shown in the table that is (0.820).

Data Analysis

SPSS software was used to analyze the data in this study. To answer the study's questions, statistical functions such as means, Independent Samples T-Test, and One-Way ANOVA were used. Means were used to explaining the findings, as seen in the table below.

Table 2. Means of Respondents' Answers for Each Item and their Interpretation

Mean	Information
1.00-2.33	Disagree (DA)
2.34-3.67	Moderate Agree (MA)
3.68-5.00	Agree (A)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' profile in terms of gender and years of experience was defined using descriptive analysis. Females made up 66.1% of the respondents, while males made up 33.9% of the survey. In terms of respondents' years of experience, 63.4% have 5-10 years of experience, 18.8% have less than 5 years of experience, and 17.7% have more than 10 years of experience.

Table 3. The Respondent Profile (N=186)

Variables	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	63	33.9
	Female	123	66.1
Years of experience	less than 5 years	35	18.8
	5-10 years	118	63.4
	more than 10 years	33	17.7

To determine the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for each of the questionnaire elements, the researcher used means and standard deviation.

Table 4. Means and standard deviation for all questionnaire items

N	Item	Mean	St. deviation	Result
English language curriculums for deaf students				
1	The objectives of the English language curriculum do not take into account the abilities of deaf students	3.94	1.04	A
2	The subjects of the English language curriculum are not commensurate with the linguistic development of deaf students	3.98	1.07	A
3	The book does not contain pictures, figures, or illustrations for deaf students	3.67	1.24	MA
4	The subjects of the English language curriculum are not related to the culture of deaf students	3.59	1.27	MA
5	Classroom and extra classroom activities are limited in the English language curriculum	3.87	1.08	A
Total		3.81	0.78	A
Problems related to the deaf students themselves				
6	Deaf students do not accept learning the English language	3.48	1.41	MA
7	Weakness of the mother tongue of deaf students (sign language) affects learning English	3.94	1.03	A
8	The low level of the Arabic language for deaf students limits their chances of learning the English language	3.97	1.02	A
9	Deaf students lack the basics of American Sign Language	3.72	1.25	A
10	Deaf students do not use the English language in their daily lives	3.45	1.15	MA
11	Deaf students are not taught English in the early stages	3.39	1.31	MA
12	Deaf students avoid participating in the classroom for fear of making mistakes while using the English language	3.42	1.25	MA
13	Deaf students turn to those who do their homework in English on their behalf	4.01	0.99	A
Total		3.67	0.85	MA
The educational environment for deaf students				
14	The educational environment lacks modern teaching aids	3.89	1.09	A
15	Not investing resource rooms in teaching deaf students the English language	3.87	1.11	A
16	Absence of extra-curricular activities related to teaching English to deaf students	3.63	1.21	MA
17	Poor financial allocations for the educational environment needs for deaf students by the school administration	3.73	1.21	A
18	Placing English language classes at the end of the school day affects deaf students' learning of English	3.89	1.07	A

		Total	3.80	0.79	A
	Problems related to the English language teacher				
19	The conviction of the English language teacher that the deaf students are unable to learn the English language	3.20	1.27	MA	
20	English teachers are not qualified to work with deaf students	3.22	1.29	MA	
21	Weakness of the English language teacher in Arabic sign language	3.25	1.26	MA	
22	Weakness of the English language teacher in American sign language	3.30	1.23	MA	
23	Not providing dictionaries for different sign language for English language teachers	3.26	1.29	MA	
24	The weakness of the English language teacher in the alphabet of the Arabic sign letters	3.26	1.29	MA	
25	Weakness of the English language teacher in the alphabet of the American sign letters	3.16	1.32	MA	
26	The Arabic language is widely used in teaching English	3.23	1.32	MA	
27	The English language teacher does not apply the strategies of teaching English as a second language or as a third language in teaching deaf students	3.30	1.37	MA	
28	The teacher finds it difficult to assess the achievement level of the deaf students	2.34	1.27	MA	
29	The English language teacher does not use clear strategies to facilitate the retention of English language skills by deaf students	3.15	1.44	MA	
30	The failure of English language teachers to receive a monthly allowance due to their deal with students with special needs	3.39	1.25	MA	
31	Lack of training courses for English language teachers on teaching methods for deaf students	3.20	1.37	MA	
32	The shortage role of the educational supervisor specializing in special education in providing aid and assistance to the English language teacher regarding the education of deaf students	3.08	1.39	MA	
	Total	3.17	0.58	MA	
	Overall	3.61	0.53	MA	

Table 4 showed that the mean score of problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region was (3.61) with a standard deviation of (0.53). This means that the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant.

Item 2, which states, "The subjects of the English language curriculum are not commensurate with the linguistic development of deaf students" have the highest means score among the items of the English language curriculums for deaf students with (3.98), while item 4, which states, "The subjects of the English language curriculum are not related to the culture of deaf students" has the lowest score of the means among the items with (3.59). Also, Table 4 showed that the overall mean score of the problems related to English language curriculums for deaf students was (3.81) with a standard deviation of (0.78). The mean score of problems related to English language curriculums for deaf students was (3.81) with a standard deviation of (0.78). This means that the problems related to English language curriculums for deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are highly significant.

The above result explains that the English language curriculum, in general, constitutes a problem for learning English as a foreign language and is considered a problem of inadequate curriculum objectives for the abilities of deaf students. This result is consistent with the study of [Alrayes and Alahmed \(2015\)](#) and [Zakia, Sunardi, & Yamtinah \(2017\)](#).

Item 13, which states, “Deaf students turn to those who do their homework in English on their behalf” has the highest means score among the items of problems related to the deaf students themselves (4.01). While item 11, which states, “Deaf students are not taught English in the early stages” has the lowest score of the means among the items with (3.39). The mean score of problems related to the deaf students themselves was (3.67) with a standard deviation of (0.85). This means that the problems related to the deaf students themselves from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant.

From the above result, it is evident that the main problems related to the deaf students themselves are that the deaf students resort to other people to do their homework related to the English language on their behalf. This result is consistent with [Al Rayes and Al-Ahmad's \(2015\)](#) study.

Items 14 and 18, which states, “The educational environment lacks modern teaching aids”, “Placing English language classes at the end of the school day affects deaf students' learning of English”, respectively have the highest means score among the items of The educational environment for deaf students with (3.89). While item 16, which states, “Absence of extra-curricular activities related to teaching English to deaf students” has the lowest score of the means among the items with (3.63). The mean score of problems related to the educational environment for deaf students was (3.80) with a standard deviation of (0.79). This means that the problems related to the educational environment for deaf students from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are highly significant.

It is evident from the above result that the most prominent problems related to the educational environment are the lack of modern educational means and the placement of English language lessons at the end of the school day, which increases the difficulty of the educational process. This result is consistent with the study of [Al-Rayyes and Al-Ahmad \(2015\)](#) and [Getnet \(2019\)](#).

About problems related to the English language teacher, the results showed that the mean score was (3.17) with a standard deviation of (0.58). This means that the problems related to the English language teacher from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant. Item 30, which states, “The failure of English language teachers to receive a monthly allowance due to their deal with students with special needs” has the highest means score among the items of problems related to the English language teacher with (3.39), while item 28, which states, “The teacher finds it difficult to assess the achievement level of the deaf students” has the lowest score of the means among the items with (2.34). The mean score of problems related to the English language teacher was (3.17) with a standard deviation of (0.58). This means that the problems related to the English language teacher from the teachers' perspective in special education schools in the Asir region are moderately significant.

It is evident from the above result that the most prominent problems related to the English language teacher are the failure of English language teachers to receive the monthly allowance due to their interaction with students with special needs and the failure of the English language teacher to apply strategies for teaching English as a second or third language in teaching deaf students, which increases the difficulty of communication Teachers with students. This finding is consistent with the study of [Al Rayes and Al Ahmad \(2015\)](#); [Adi Unsiyah & Fadhilah \(2017\)](#); [Zakia, Sunardi, & Yamtinah \(2017\)](#) and [Getnet \(2019\)](#).

To identify the statistically significant differences in the problems of teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' point of view in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to the variables of gender and years of experience; Independent Sample 'T' Test and One Way Anova were used.

Table 5. Independent Samples T-Test of gender

Variables	N	Mean	St. deviation	df	t	Sig
Male	63	3.56	0.60	184	0.911	0.135
Female	123	3.64	0.50			

Table (5) showed that the mean of responses male for the problems of teaching English to deaf students was (3.56) and the mean of responses female was (3.64). Also, the Sig of two groups of gender is (0.085) and Sig of two groups of colleges is (0.163), which means that there is no significant impact of gender according to the teachers' point of view in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia about problems of teaching English to deaf students.

Table 6. ANOVA test of Years of Experience

Variable	Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Academic Ranking	Between groups	0.498	2	0.249	0.871	0.420
	Within groups	52.38	183	0.286		
	Total	52.88	185			

Table (6) showed that there are no differences among groups according to years of experience. Where, the Sig is (0.420), which indicates no statistically significant effect ($\alpha < 0.05$) of years of experience based on the teachers' point of view in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia about problems of teaching English to deaf students.

CONCLUSION

This study is to explore the problems teaching English to deaf students from the teachers' perspective in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It can be concluded that teachers are facing many problems in teaching deaf students and it is not easy for English teachers to teaching them.

By understanding teachers' problems in teaching English to deaf students, the teachers could choose the best possible curriculum for teaching English by giving

feedback and guidance. Besides, the schools' administration should take necessary procedures on the problems faced by the teachers to facilitate the teachers to have an effective teaching environment.

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