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**Improving English Language Learning through Exploring the Profile of 'Good' English Learners among Secondary-School Arab Students in Northern Israel**

**Long Abstract**

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# Introduction

Language learning success relies on separate factors and can be associated with a range of factors. When providing examples of these factors, we probably have to mention age, intelligence, aptitude, motivation, language learning skills and learning strategies should be included (Ur, 2012). Learners vary dramatically in terms of their speed of acquisition and attainments. Many people believe that the level that learners achieve is linked to certain innate characteristics that may lead to more successful learning. Various researchers have discussed the effects of a range of personal learning characteristic, and other different factors related to the learners, their teachers, schools, their immediate environment and social context on learning English a foreign language successfully (Othman, 2002). The current research addresses to make inquiries about the influences that the abovementioned factor and others might have on the English language learners among Arab high school learners who are learning English in a non- native speaking environment. Exploring the different characteristics of personality, learning styles, motivation, aptitude and the learning context will help in facilitating English as foreign language learning (EFL) achievements of the Arab Students in north Israel. By reaching this goal, we will be able to open the door for other students who intend to learn English but still find it as an impossible mission to overcome.

The schools included in this research cover the seventh to twelfth grades. However, many students confront a big challenge to make the switch between the two different dialects and then fail to speak Arabic properly, due to the interference of the Hebrew with spoken Arabic, the mission becomes more complicated, demands a good remedy and special learning and teaching programs. We investigated whether learning English as a foreign language in such a context renders the success more likely or may hinder and obstruct the language learning process.

## The Research Problem

The issue of this study describes a situation where Arab learners of English as a foreign language complain about the very serious challenge they always have to deal with when studying English as a foreign language, particularly when they take aim at achieving a considerable level of language skills and seek for reaching an extent where they speak English accurately as well as English native speakers or very similar to such a level. To reach this goal, both learners and teachers are expected to work harder and learn more about the techniques, learning strategies and teaching methods that might support language learning. The second mentioned, the teachers, are viewed to find out about the specific characteristics that potentially promote better learning. Besides to teaching strategies and methods, the teachers explore the 'good' learners' characteristics in order to improve other English language learners. The EFL teachers are actually required to cater for Arab learners and provide the most desirable solution for the difficulties they face when they learn English as an EFL.

# Chapter I: Theoretical Fundamental Regarding: Improving English Language Learning through Exploring the Profile of 'Good' English Learners among Secondary-School Arab Students in Northern Israel

## I.1 Arabic Language Acquisition Process and Product

This chapter surveys the most recent studies of first language teaching and learning and all the ideas and concepts of the learners' preferences. It also presents some teaching techniques and styles that language learners are facing.

This chapter will also deal with the realm of language acquisition concerning the influence of the three major theories, namely Behaviourism, Innativism, and Interactionism. These hypotheses have arisen attempting to perceive the process of second language acquisition (SLA) (Chomsky, 1966).

I.1.1.1 Behaviourist Theory

Behaviorism is the theory that relates language learning to a habit formation. It is traced to J.B. Watson (1924) who believed that learners learn language through experiences that he comes through. The experiences are the stimuli and the response they get from the surrounding environment will reinforce the action and turns it into a habit. So, a habit is found when the same particular response regularly comes after a certain stimulus. The theory of behaviorism took a very dominant role in the development of first language acquisition (FLA) for decades. It has become the language hypothesis from 1920s till the 1960s.

Behaviourist theory can be viewed as a habit formation hypothesis since it is mainly based on the connection between specific responses to stimuli where both of them constitute a habit (Watson, 1924). Most significantly, the habit is actually formed when the language learner gets used to a certain response to the very specific stimulus. The relationship between the two things affects especially because one thing affects the other supports the habit formation.

Skinner has also attempted to apply the typical characteristics of behaviorism to education. To do so, he has pointed that language teaching is devised by providing all possible contingencies of reinforcement which grant language learning. Based on the behaviourist theory, learning can probably learn even without setting up any teaching situation or context in their natural environment, but when teachers create typical learning events or circumstances, learning will remarkably be accelerated and advanced. With this in mind, these circumstances or contingencies cause or make the emergence behaviour to gradually become a desired and acquired (Skinner, 1968).

As shown above, the mediating environment which is represented by human being has a vital part in the form and amount exposure and in providing the feedback and reinforcement. Learning a language or any other habit takes place when the learning opportunities are yielded to present an adequate response to a given or a conscious stimulus. Despite the fact that the hypothesis does not obviously describe the entire process of language production, it assists perceiving the different aspects of language production by recognizing the whole process of stimulus- response- reinforcement which in turn helps in learners in perceiving grammatical and phonological patterns.

In sum, behaviorism, the psychological theory which was employed for language learning has evolved from the experiments on animals, and viewed that animals succeeded to perform many tasks by stimulating them and encouraging them to reach to habit formation. Then, same things have been copied to the experiments with humans and showed successful performances. Learners were able to learn how to respond appropriately to certain stimuli (Taxler, 2012).

I.1.1.2 Innatist theory

The theory that is well known as the innate theory, the nativist, the rationalist and the mentalist theory of language acquisition was initiated in the beginning of the 20th century by the famous American linguist Chomsky (1966). The innatist theory is mainly concerned about first language acquisition and propounds that humans have access to the knowledge that is processed innately. Chomsky’s theory came shortly after Skinner's theory of Behaviorism. He hypothesizes children have the natural, genetically endowed abilities to acquire language. This ability became known as Language Acquisition Device (LAD). This biological ability contains the main rules for all possible languages that a learner can learn and has a system that is based on this innate competence which facilitates language learning. When children have this specific device with the innate system that includes the main rules for all possible human languages used in acquiring knowledge of a language, a significant part of the language learning process is almost done (Chomsky, 1966).

The nativist theory advocates that learning languages is one of the complicated things that a child would learn and despite of this complexity you can notice that young learners have the ability to acquire a language within a very short period of time. It seems that the innate theory brings into focus the cognitive abilities, grammar and syntax, but ignores other aspects of language acquisition and precisely the major role that the environment has on the language learning. For no doubt, this makes the theory weaker and limited (Radford, 2010).

I.1.1.3 Interactionist Theory / Developmental Perspective

The theory has its origin in the social theory of the early twentieth century by Herbert Blumer (1969) and is based on the social constructivist and the interactionist hypothesis of language acquisition. As well, it derives the social processes like conflicts, cooperation and identity formation from human interaction. In other words, this approach assumes that children are endowed with biological capacities and surrounded by adults who are talking to them and with them. As a result of this fact, they take the advantage of the communication they have with others to develop the meanings and symbols of their first language (Brown, 2007). According to this theory, the language learning is a compromise between the natural and innate abilities and the influence of parents and caregivers. This emphasizes the impact of the social mediated interaction as Vygotsky has proposed in the zone of proximal development.

Reynolds (2009) proposes that Long in his assumption has compared between Krashen's notion of input and the interactionist theory that says comprehensible input is obtained in three different ways. Krashen (1987), supposed that input can be provided in context, simplified and interaction. More significantly, this theory assumes that there are specific brain structures devoted to language acquisition but psychologists attribute more considerably importance to the environment than any other learning theory such as innatist theory which believes that there are learning mechanisms in the human brain (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Vygotsky (1978) set down the zone of proximal development (ZPD) for first and second language acquisition. According to this theory, the social interactions in the child's close environment support language acquisition. Henceforth, the environment presented by the interlocutors and caregivers plays a very important role through the learning process (Brown, 2008).

## I.2 The Israeli Curriculum of English as a Foreign Language

English is taught as a foreign language in Israel and has a document that sets the national curriculum of learning and teaching English in the Israeli schools.

The Israeli national curriculum of English as a foreign language (FL) is a formed document that sets out the expected standards for the teaching and learning of English under the supervision of the ministry of education in Israeli schools. The document is an important contribution for teachers, teacher trainers and material and test writers. It can be used for classroom teaching such as unit planning, choosing course books, writing syllabi, adapting materials and teaching resources and for integrating classroom testing (State of Israel Ministry of Education, 2013).

This designed plan was developed to represent the majority agreement of professionals in the field of teaching English under the administration of Ministry of Education (State of Israel Ministry of Education, 2001).

The English curriculum carries out the basis for quality education. It states the standards required to equip Israeli pupils with the cumulative knowledge of English in our modern world. The old curriculum has been revised to guarantee continually updated national document. It incorporates cognitive approach in English teaching and keeps the specific needs of Israeli English language learners, the Israeli social context, colleges and universities, teachers and teacher trainers.

## I.3 The Context of Arab S**c**hools in Israel

### I.3.1 Arabic as a First Language (FL) for Arab students in Israel

Officially, Arabic was declared to be the second language in Israel. In practice, however, public and governmental offices denied its legal status and assigned an inferior position to the language in the Israeli community. It can be even said that Arabic can hardly take a very secondary role and does not have the L2 status among the speakers of Hebrew. Moreover, Arabic language is threatened by the dominance of Hebrew in the Israeli society as a whole.

After the state of Israel was established, there was a predominate debate among the stakeholders around the status of Arabic. Because of that, the issue of language policy and the status of Arabic were opened for discussion in many official committees and the decisions were taken say that Arabic is chosen as the language of instruction, with Hebrew and English. In the light of this decision, Arabic will be the language of the instruction in the schools, seminaries, training colleges besides Hebrew and English as two compulsory languages.

In 1952 as a further step, the Ministry of Education and Culture has constructed an official committee to discuss the Arabic curriculum and textbooks in the national Arab schools in Israel. The Arab students were learning in textbooks that do not provide them with any national content and are not designed in a way that meets the Arab students' practical. In other words, these textbooks are void and unsuitable for Arab learners to introduce Arabic as their mother tongue (Jiryis, 1976, p.206).

Apparently, the problematic Arabic Curriculum and the status of Arabic before and after the declaration of Israel made Arabic totally neglected and marginalized second language. Instead of their first language, the Arab students started to put the focus on other languages and particularly English. They are convinced that investing big efforts learning English as an international language will be much better and more beneficial. They gradually became more interested in five point Bagrut exams in English rather than in Arabic. For learners, their parents and their teachers, English is a very significant language which can serve as a successful medium for them to communicate with larger communities around the world rather than in the very narrow form of speakers of Arabic.

### I.3.2 The Context of Arab School Learners' Beliefs – Acquiring Arabic as a *Diglossic* Language

When speaking about Arabic as a '*diglossic*' language we are actually speaking about a language that has two completely different varieties which are used by side in the same community. Each of the varieties has different social functions. In addition, one variety of dialect is referred to as the High Variety (H), formally used and in public occasions, while the second dialect is referred to as the Low variety (L), is normally used in daily life routine and circumstances. The two divergent ranges are far from each other to an extent that is almost impossible to understand as if you are talking about two different languages.

Moreover, the *'diglossic'* language position is referred to as a very common in the Arabic-speaking communities. You can find an obvious difference between the modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and the spoken Colloquial Arabic dialect (Palmer, 2007).

Looking many years back, the concept of *'diglossic'* language was presented into the literature by Ferguson (1959). According to his notion, *'diglossia'* is relatively a steady language situation in which, there are different varieties that include standards or regional standards, and highly coded, which is often grammatically more complex, superposed variety, and the structure of the written literature which is learned largely by formal education and used for formal purposes. Therefore, *'diglossia'* could be used to characterize other multilingual situations in which the varieties, the H and L, were not genetically and are not only for the dialects of the same language and such as Sanskrit (H) and Kannada (L) in India (Trudgill, 2009).

### I.3.3 The Impact of Diglossia on the Quality of Education in the Arab Region

The diglossic situation of the language makes reading in Arabic an overly arduous process. There are serious negative educational and social consequences related to these reading difficulties, including feelings of linguistic insecurity by large numbers of youth and young adults when it comes to common acts of social communication and personal expression (Mohammad, 2000). To face the challenges, Arabic speaking societies need to be a concerted effort to bring about higher levels of linguistic self-confidence and a desirable social change. The Arabic language needs urgent language planning strategies to standardize it and make it more accessible to its many speakers (Maamouri, 1997).

Arabs in Israel deal with Arabic as al-lugha al Fusha -classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)-and al-lugha al Ammiya, colloquial Arabic (Haeri, 2005). In particular, this diglossic situation of language for Palestinian Arabic speaking children in Israel, obviously has its effects due to the early exposure to literary Arabic texts on reading comprehension abilities in Arab pre-school children (Abu-Rabia, 2000) the development of meta-linguistic awareness in either normally developing children or children with reading or learning disabilities (Saiegh-Haddad, 2014), and on teaching Arabic as a foreign language within the existent *'diglossic'* situation. Within the context of native Arabic speaking students, there is a scarcity of studies examining educational methodologies, knowledge and attitude development within a *'diglossic'* framework.

### I.3.3 Arabic as a Language of Minority in Israel

The minority status of Arabs in Israel represents a unique phenomenon. Specifically, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where Arabs constitute a minority. The peculiar status of the Arabs as a minority in Israel is also related to their sense of ties with their relatives in the Arab countries. Thus, their responses and behaviors are not only determined by what is happening to them in Israel but also by what is happening in other Arab countries as well. This is particularly evident in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to its implications on the national and international scene. In addition, the difference in religion and tradition of Arabs and Jews and the internal political situation have made the minority status of the Arabs in Israel even more pronounced. Finally, there are allegations of social and economic discrimination which, if based on facts, may represent another hindrance to the Arabs' adjustment as individuals and as a group (Perez, 1970). English Language Learning of the Israeli-Arabs as a bipolar dimension, that is, at one pole there is an attachment to the Arab identity, and at the other, the identification with Israel, and these concepts should be in a constant conflict. Such a conception is akin to the psychological thinking that, as Miller puts it: "identity dimensions are frequently bipolar, and the extremes are regarded as complement of opposites" (1962, p. 676).

### I.3.5 Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Israel

In the school system in Israel, English is the main foreign language taught in all schools. It is regarded as a compulsory subject of study from elementary school through graduation, and a fundamental subject in the matriculation exams. However, in the Jewish sector, English is the first foreign language and in many of the schools, it is the only foreign language studied by all for an extended period of time in the government recognized schools. While in the Arab sector English has been the second foreign language, after Hebrew since the establishment of the state of Israel.

Israel has two separate education systems. These two systems belong to both secular and religious Jewish Israelis and to the Israeli Arabs. When it comes to English, all state schools within the two sectors have the same English curriculum. According to the Israeli English curriculum, one of the significant principles underlying teaching English is including culture as an important component of teaching English language to the learners (Shohamy, 1988). The Israeli English curriculum includes four domains and one of them is the domain of appreciation of literature and culture. This particular domain addresses the importance of understanding and being sensitive to other people of multi-cultural backgrounds. This domain of appreciation language, literature and culture perceives that different genre and pieces of literature which are written in English become commonly used by different nations who are learning English as a second or a foreign language. English literature is no longer possessed by the native speakers of the English language. Due to this fact, it is used by a great number of first and second language speakers throughout the world and Israeli population is part of the learners of ESL/ EFL.

I.3.3.1 Language Learning Styles

The issue of learning styles and their effect on the efficacy of English language learning is a question that English language researchers want to find an answer for. They believe the way and mechanism some students use to process information from the close environment. They use the way they believe it facilitates and simplifies the language learning. As known, learners have individual methods they implement employ n language acquisition. This assumption of personal differences in language information processing is viewed as a cornerstone when you want to learn about English learning styles – which have been defined as learners’ “consistent ways of responding to and using stimuli in the context of learning” (Claxton & Ralston, 1978, p. 7). It was also defined as the learners' “natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills which persist regardless of teaching methods or content area” (Kinsella, 1995, p.171).

According to Curry (1991, p. 249), “there is a bewildering confusion of definitions surrounding learning style conceptualizations and there is a wide variation in the scale and scope of learning, school achievement, and other behavior predicted by the various learning style concepts.” As a potentially useful way of looking at learning style, Curry (1983) applied the metaphor of an onion with its multiple layers where each and every layer describes how learning styles are visibly affected by different factors. The first layer of the onion consists of instructional and environmental preferences and constitutes the most observable traits. This layer is open to introspection, is context-dependent, and is not fixed. The second layer of the onion refers to the information processing preferences of the learner.

I.3.3.2 Language learning strategies

These are the strategies that would be applied to facilitate English language learning. They will be utilized by speakers of other languages who attend to learning a new language and need to find which of the language learning strategies could be employed for this purpose. Many language studies were interested in examining which language learning strategies were used without putting the focus on the relation between using the language learning strategy and language learning success (Rubin, 1987).

Clearly, gender diﬀerences among language learners appear in the type of language learning strategies they choose. One evident is that female learners tend to use socially based strategies such as group learning, and pair work learning. However, the findings of the different genders are disparate in the number of strategies used which are affected by the context and culture of the language learning. They would prefer to use the strategies that support language learning and motivate them to survive foreign language learning. The most well-known and common used inventory by EFL and L2 learners is the (SILL), the strategy inventory for language learning. It was designed to recognize which of the language strategies are frequently used by ESL learners (Ehrman &Oxford, 1989).

The notion behind the SILL is to use it as modifier or as a self- report that determines the frequency of using the same language learning strategy by people who are leaning English as L2 (Oxford, 1990). By using this inventory, you will distinguish between the different learning factors. First factor to be considered is the learners' study habits and all-purpose techniques such as studying hard or organizing study time, second the functional practice which includes strategies for language practice where learners try imitating native speakers out and try to reach to their same level, then we identify speaking and communication that include the strategies that elicit conversational input as the third factor, after that we go to studying the language and practicing the language independently which include memorizing EFL material, listing words or planning, and then we go to mnemonic devices where learners use strategies for structural knowledge, words and rules revising (Oxford,1996).

# Chapter II: EFL Learning in Arab JH and HS in Israel

## 2.1 The Good English Language Learner among Israeli Arabs

Many ESL studies have a great interest in finding an answer to what is a good ESL learner and what this teaches us about EFL learning.

'Good' English language learners are learners who have innate mental abilities that enable them to learn languages. They have an inborn predisposition to language learning and have a knack for learning second language besides to other factors that may have an impact on them. Due to the fact that many factors and variables have an influence on English language learning, for years it has been demanding for researchers to propose and present the very typical attributes of a good EFL learner around the world where English is taught as a second or a foreign language (Cook, 2008; Griffiths, 2008).

### II.1.2 English Language Learning Aptitude

The concept language aptitude defines the language learner's natural abilities that help them to learn a language. It is aninbornpotential for language achievement and make a prediction for future achievement. In fact, aptitude is the gift for the language learners since it facilitates the process of foreign language learning and brings to great progress. The language aptitude actually consists of a set of characteristics and is defined as “the ability to learn from teaching” (Cook, 1991). Many studies have associated the high achievement in foreign language learning to language learning aptitude especially among adult learners (Sparks & Ganschow, 2001). Other studies claim that language aptitude is very dynamic form which is based on the cognitive resources and plays a role in analyzing foreign language (Robinson, 2001, 2005).

The different studies have presented high positive correlations between language aptitude and good performance in the target language. In his study, he tried to show that a good language learner should not necessarily be good at all language dimensions so that the learner can have his strengths and weaknesses (Skehan, 2002). As well, language aptitude is composed of three types of abilities: First, the ability is the auditory and phonemic ability which identifies new sounds and memorizes them. The second linguistic ability is the inductive language learning ability which is to recognize the function of particular words in sentences and their grammatical function as they appear in the provided language samples. The third is the memory ability which is to retain and remember the new words the learner was exposed to (Skehan, 2003).

**II.1.4 Learners' Attitudes towards English Language Learning**

Language learning attitude contributes to foreign language learning. Thus, learners who have a positive attitude towards language learning will bring about good achievements and foreign language success (Ushida, 2001). Learners with negative attitude towards foreign language learning are more likely to be found at high risk and suffer from learning disabilities (Sparks *et al*, 1993). In their study, De Bot, Lowie & Verspoor (2005, p. 72) claimed that not only learners but also teachers and researchers agree on that a positive attitude towards language learning promotes language learning and improve the quality of foreign language learning. The learner's attitude is the persistent way that helps in learning a foreign language and it also expresses to some degree their entity of favor and disfavor to the foreign language (Baker, 1988).

### II.1.5 English Language Learners' Motivation

Motives are defined as the body engine or the internal drive that pushes the learners to learn and achieve better learning (Harmer, 2016). Language motivation is considered to be a dominant concept on learning a new and can influence adaptation to a foreign culture (Gardner, 2001b). Motivation also affects to what extent language learners perceive in learning, their achievement and behavior (Ellis, 1994). Motivation is no doubt the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of foreign language. It is very obvious that successful language learners are highly motivated and this is mirrored in the high achievements they reach to. Thus, motivation yields faster and more effective language learning results than other types of characteristics and factors. When learners are motivated, they become engaged in action and persistent in action. In contrast, without motivation, success in language learning will be hard to come by (Dornyei, 2005).

**II.2 Factors that affect English Language Learning**

It has been shown that affective factors internal to the learner have a profound impact on language learning. Many factors (including beliefs, attitudes, personality, and motivation) contribute, either positively or negatively, to the emotional state of language learners. But external factors also have an effect, increasing or decreasing the effect of the internal factors. Many consider one of the most important factors to be a teacher’s personal qualities. It seems obvious that the teacher would have an immense impact, and should work toward making students comfortable. But what qualities would help teachers do this?

### II.2.1 The impact of parental involvement on L2 achievement

The aim is to review the findings of educational researches and practice and focus on the parents' intervention, their beliefs, and behaviours in regard of their children's foreign language learning. Previous studies have suggested that students' beliefs play an important role in directing their efforts and behaviour in learning situations. These beliefs and concepts are shaped by different types of interactions with other people such as parents and teachers. Their motivation, achievements and performances are developed as a result of the positive relationship they have with their parents, teachers and other adults in the close learning environment (Wigfield, et al, 2006).

Foreign language learning crosses the boundaries of school context and classroom teaching as it was proposed in a lot of the literature. Many educational studies were interested in finding more about the parental role, family factors, peer-group, and other social factors affecting language learning (Brown, 2007). Brown claimed that parents have conscious and unconscious influence on their children's attitude toward language learning. Besides, children's attitudes are also influenced intentionally and unintentionally by their parents' attitudes towards language learning. Parents' education should influence parents' skills, values, and the knowledge of the educational system which in turn affect parents' educational practices at home. This is transmitted regardless of whether parents are directly involved in language learning or not (Davis-Kean, 2002).

### II.2.3 Teachers: Role and contribution in Learning EFL

Apparently, the EFL teacher takes the responsibilities for different jobs and performs many tasks as part of his job. For instance, EFL teachers are helpers, organizers, monitors, co- communicators, explainers, involvers and more (Brown, 2001). Teachers mediate learning the language and conduct learning process for language learners. Generally speaking, teachers have a fundamental role in shaping foreign language success and lead to good level of performance.

Their job goes beyond correcting mistakes in speech and writing. They feel responsible for pleasant atmosphere that encourages language learning. Therefore, the EFL teacher create good learning conditions where learners are able to perform language, interact using the language, carry on language tasks without being worried about making mistakes. They feel confident and supported by their language teachers who will facilitate language learning difficulties. The effectiveness of EFL teachers has accordingly become a focus of attention. They are steadily of fairly highly ranked and well qualified to teach English as a foreign language. Mutual understanding, cooperation and interaction between teachers and learners has a great concern for EFL teaching and (Abu Rabia, 2005).

Many factors attest to differences among English language teachers. Teachers may vary in their personality traits which are related to the individual’s inherent idiosyncrasy. Some researches claim that EFL teachers’ personalities concretely have an immense impact embodied in their speeches and behaviours in the English classroom (Matlock, 2000). Therefore, a well-qualified teacher should be enthusiastic, intelligent, and productive, warm-hearted, humorous, have credibility, be supportive, fair, diligent, and conscientious, etc. (Matlock, 2000).

## II.3 The Conceptual Framework of the Research

This study draws a great attention to different variables to be considered when looking at the 'good' language learners. It attempts to take Rubin’s(1975) initiative further by investigating a wide range of variables, such as cultural context, English as foreign language in Israel, language learning in Arab high schools, and other factors in the learners' environment that have a remarkable impact on English language learners in the Israeli context. Any one of which has the potential to affect how students learn, and which, in combination, presents an extremely complex picture.

**Exploring the Profile of English Language Learners in Israeli Arab Schools**

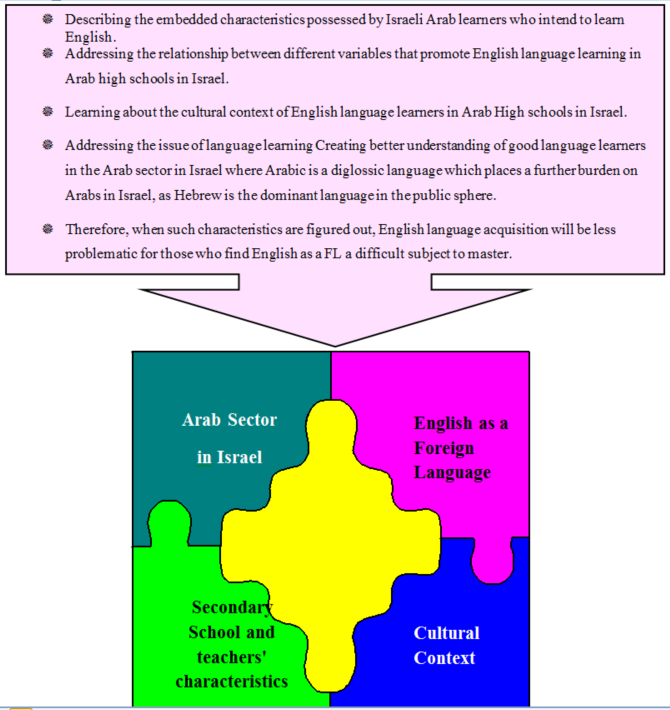


Illustration 2.1 The conceptual framework of this research

A jigsaw puzzle was selected to propose the discernible unity of the engaging components in an effective way. The chosen framework model represents the constituted process, and the way that they interact and complement each other. This conceptual framework model puts in the focus the learning characteristics in the middle but keeps it in a way that contributes to other components which are on the outside cycle of the ‘puzzle’-The cultural context of English language learners, Family Language Policy and Parents’ education, Foreign Language Teachers’ role, and Learning characteristics of English as third language.

More precisely, the framework model displays a visual unity of the different components integrated in a way that designs the whole profile of the good language learners via interaction and the impact that each factor has on the other. Many ESL studies have a great interest in finding an answer to what is a good ESL learner and what this teaches us about ESL learning.

The center of focus on the individual learners' characteristics with the recognition of the social, parental and other factors in the learners; environment will be challenging for language and sociological researchers who are curious about discovering what makes some language learners as good as they are (Cook, 2013; Ellis, 1994; Griffiths, 2008).

By and large, the jigsaw model allows the interaction between the different components and sheds the light on the component in the center. ‘Learning characteristics’ is spotted in the center of the ‘jigsaw puzzle’, since it is the synergistic outcome of appropriate and effective relationships among the other four components. Thus, exploring the contribution of the different elements that affect language learners in the Arab sector in north Israel will promote English language learning among other Arab learners who still view learning. It will solve the problem of other learners who have a problem passing their matriculation exam by the end of high school and lose their opportunities to learn at the universities and colleges in Israel.

# Chapter III: Description of the Pedagogical Research Entitled: Improving English Language Learning through Exploring the Profile of Good English Learners among Secondary-School Arab Students in Northern Israel

## III.1 Background and context

A wealth of data widely discusses the issue of 'good' learners in EFL. So, what makes the current research unique is the fact that it touches upon a minority group within the Israeli society, the Arabs. Language wise, the Arab pupil learns four languages where English is the Foreign language, Hebrew is the third language and literary Arabic is the second language. Being a 'good' language learner in a situation of learning a blend of four languages is a significant factor for my research. So, before presenting my research, this research shed the light on the status of English among Israeli-Arab learners, provides further information that explains the issue of Arabic (L1) as a *'digloassic'* language, and casts the light on the Israeli national English curriculum.

## III.2 Research Questions

Good research questions are those questions that tend to be process-oriented. It is the uncertainty that the investigator wants to resolve by performing his/her study. A researcher with a frame of mind is open, forms questions that help him to explore the surprises that pop up in his life (Kumar, 2010). They are always conditional because the researcher may find that choosing the question is conditional because the researcher may find that the very concepts and terminology used in the research question are, in fact, inappropriate or irrelevant to the participants’ previous experiences and detract the researcher from success. This fact wrecks the validity of the findings and dissipates the participant (Creswell, 2013).

The collected data would answer the research questions:

(1) What learning characteristics does the 'good' EFL learner in secondary-school within the Israeli Arab sector have?

(2) What factors in the immediate proximal environment within the Arab sector in Israel can promote or hinder the 'good' English language learners' learning?

## III.3 Research Aims

(1) To discover the personal learning characteristics of the 'good' EFL learner among high school learners in the Israeli Arab sector.

(2) To explore the major factors in the immediate proximal environment within the Arab sector in Israel that promote their language learning.

## III.4 Research hypotheses

A hypothesis is a claim, derived from an existing theory, which can be tested against empirical evidence. It is a tentative explanation that accounts for a set of facts and can be tested by further investigation. It is used when we might want to test something that has a relationship with other concepts (Creswell, 2013). In the quantitative study, we used hypothesis because I wanted to test the relationship between disparate concepts. In the present study, the researcher collected the relevant data and used statistical techniques to come to a conclusion whether to reject or provisionally accept the language learning theories hypothesis (Kumar, 2010). The entire hypothesis relate to the unique context of the secondary-school Arab students in Northern-Israel. In this study six hypotheses were tested:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable 2** | **Variable 1** | **Hypotheses** |
| The pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupils' conception about family characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English | **Hypothesis1**  There will be a very strong positive correlation between the pupils' conception about family characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English and between the pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupils' conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupils' conceptions about teacher's characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English | **Hypothesis 2**  There will be a strong and significant positive correlation between the pupils' conceptions about teacher's characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English and between the pupils' conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupils' conceptions about attitudes towards English classes that contribute to the learner's success as 'good' learners of English | **Hypothesis3**  There will be a strong and significant positive correlation between the pupils' conceptions about attitudes towards English classes that contribute to the learner's success as 'good' learners of English and between the pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conceptions of how the personal learning characteristics can contribute to the learner's success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupils' conceptions of how English language can contribute to the language learner's success | **Hypothesis 4**  There will be a strong positive correlation between the pupils' conceptions of how English language can contribute to the language learner's success and between the pupil's conceptions of how the personal learning characteristics can contribute to the learner's success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conceptions of how the learner's personal characteristics contribute to the learner's success as a 'good' learner of English | The pupils' conceptions of how communication and use of the English language can contribute to the learner's success | **Hypothesis 5**  There will be a strong and significant positive correlation between the pupils' conceptions of how communication and use of the English language can contribute to the learner's success and between the pupil's conceptions of how the learner's personal characteristics contribute to the learner's success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupils' demographic characteristics | **Hypothesis 6**  There will be a significant correlation between the pupils' demographic characteristics and between the pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
|  |  |  |
| Pupil's characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English | The boys' and girls' conceptions about characteristics | **Hypothesis 6.1**  There will be a significant difference between boys and girls in their conceptions about pupil's characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conception about his characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The pupil's age The gender of pupils | **Hypothesis 6.2**  There will be a significant correlation between the pupil's age and between the pupil's conceptions about his characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conception about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. | The number of the pupil's family members | **Hypothesis 6.3**  There will be a significant correlation between the number of the pupil's family members and between the pupil's conceptions about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English. |
| The pupil's conception about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English | The fathers' education | **Hypothesis 6.4**  There will be a significant correlation between the fathers' education and between the pupil's conception about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English |
| The pupil's conception about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as 'good' learners of English. | The mother's education | **Hypothesis 6.5**  There will be a significant correlation between the mothers' education and between the pupil's conception about his learning characteristics that contribute to his success as 'good' learners of English |
|  |  |  |

## III.6 Research Moderators variables

In addition to the research variables, we have chosen the following moderator variables:

(1) The gender of pupils

(2) The pupil's age

(3) The number of the pupil's family members

(4) The fathers' education

(5) The mothers' education

## III.7 Research Methodology

This is an educational study that aims to examine the relationship between different factors within a specific community which is the Israeli Arab community (Bocos, 2012). The choice of the research paradigm in this current research was based on the goal of obtaining the full extent of data that would ultimately be beneficial to the learners/their parents, to the teaching colleagues, to teachers and teacher-trainers. However, there was a firm decision that applying the mixed method of qualitative and quantitative would be more sufficient and adequate for the needs of the research. The intention was to obtain the most significant data (see Gorard & Taylor, 2004, p. 1). The research tool for the qualitative process was a semi- structured interview, while the research tool for the quantitative process was a close-ended questionnaire. Very important to signify is that the results of the first part, the qualitative part, were displayed in categories that evolved from the participants' answers in the interviews. In addition, the data was collected in English and there was no need for translations to the learners' first language due to the fact that the participants in this study are 'good' English language learners.

### III.7.1 Mixed-Methods Research

In the current research, two research instruments have been used in the mixed-methods approach. A semi structured interview in the qualitative and a close ended questionnaire in the quantitative (see the table 3.1 below).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3.1 The instruments used in this researchResearch method | Research instruments | Type of instruments | Research population | Age of participants |  |  |
| Qualitative method | Semi structured interview | Original | 20 high school students  20 EFL teachers  20 parents | 14-17 years old |  |  |
| Quantitative method | Close ended questionnaire | Original | 122 students | 14-17 years old |  |  |

Table 3.1 above illustrates the instruments used in the two strands of the present research.

The first, qualitative research based on in-depth interviews was conducted with twenty parents, twenty teachers and twenty students from the Arab sector in north Israel. The second, quantitative research was a close-ended questionnaire that was completed by 122 high school and junior high students. The age group of the English language learners who took part in this current study ranges from 14 to 17 years old.

## III.8 Research Design

The current study was designed in a way that combines both the inductive and deductive methodologies. One method can be described as a qualitative research which involves observing, asking short questions, and describing events and people in a detailed way without using any numerical data. The other method is dealing with numbers and numerical data and is very dominant in the quantitative research that is concerned about measuring and controlling data numerically.

The following table presents the interviews with teachers, parents and students which were designed to reveal the multiplicity of factors and learning characteristics of good language learner's profile (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Research aims, tools population and data analysis:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Aims | Research tool | Research population | Data Analysis |
| Stage one  Qualitative study | 1. To discover the personal characteristics of the good EFL learner  2.To explore the profile of the 'good' EFL learner among Arab HS pupils | Semi-structured interviews | 60 students, teachers, parents | Content analysis |
| Stage two  Quantitative study | 1.To discover the personal characteristics of the 'good' language learner  2.To explore the profile of the 'good' EFL learner among Arab HS pupils | Closed-ended Questionnaire |  | Statistics |

## III.9 Research Population

The study examines the impact that some specific factors have on language learning and the effect that language learning context has on EFL learners in the Israeli Arab community. All of the participants needed to satisfy the following two criteria: (1) The participant was an Arab student from north Israel, and (2) The participant has studied English language not less than six years and was well-qualified and rated as a 'good' learner of English as a foreign language. The participants' age ranged from 13 to 19 years old. There were 122 participants in this study where 110 participants (90.2%) were between the age of 16-19 and 12 participants (9.8%) were between the age of 13-15 and 11 months (see Table 3.4).

## III.10 The Research Instruments

The tools used in the current study were the most powerful tools that can support our attempts to complete the research and discover, factors, learning characteristics, people’s points of view, beliefs and attitudes which believed to form the profile of the 'good' English language learner.

The quantitative research instrument was a close-ended questionnaire addressed by Exploring the Profile of 'good' English Language Learners in the Secondary Schools within the Arab Sector in Northern Israel. This questionnaire was designed for the study to measure the students' attitudes towards different factors and characteristics that affect good language learners. In the qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were used.

# Chapter IV: Findings

### IV.1.1 Qualitative Findings: 'Good' Language Learners' characteristics

**Figure 4.1 Learning characteristics of language learners that participants presented.**

Many students have mastered English language and became quite fluent. The questions this study came up with are 'How did they do it, what is the secret to that significant success? And what makes them so 'good' in English? From my well-experience in f teaching English as a foreign language, I suggest that there are specific characteristics of the good language learner that promote language learning and bring the language learners to a great success in a foreign language acquisition.

During the present study, our main goals were to study the learning characteristics of English learners perceived by high school English learners, their parents and English teachers of Arab sector in Israel. These learning characteristics consist of several underlying constructs. Results show that three groups held different perceptions to 'good' English Language Learning. The high achievement students, their parents and teachers reported specific characteristics. These characteristics are shown in figure 4.1 above.

The abovementioned figure presents all the learning characteristics that a 'good' English language learner should have as EFL teachers, English language learners and their parents view them. These characteristics are described as the learning characteristics that 'good' English language learners among the Israeli Arab learners should have. They all talked about a variety of things related but mainly mentioned that their children are 'good' language learners because they have the abovementioned characteristics. For an explanation of the categories stemmed up herein, see the following entitled "Categories".

**Table 4.1: The categories emerging from the content analysis**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Category | Sample evidence |
| 1 | *Motivation to English Language Learning* | *'I want to be one of the best English learners in my class'.* |
| 2 | Attitude towards English learning | *'English is my passion'* |
| 3 | *Learner's personality* | *'I know how to make my language better'* |
| 4 | *Learner's beliefs about EFL learning* | *'English learning is done at school in the English class but I need to work harder at home'* |
| 5 | *Language learning aptitude* | *'I was born in a family that all my relatives love English'* |
| 6 | *Language learning Intelligences* | *'I am good at learning languages but English is my best'* |

### IV.1.2 Quantitative Findings Relating to Research Question 1

In this chapter, the descriptive statistical findings resulting from analysing the students' answers are discussed. The quantification of data is done by taking the results of filling in the close-ended questionnaire which is measured according to, "*Likert-type scale*", a scale that is widely used to scaling responses which to a set of items (the scale used here is a range of 5 options to respond and specify their agreement or disagreement where the highest is 5 and the lowest is 1).

The study uses a close-ended questionnaire which was designed in such a way to obtain responses of the participants to each of the statements in the different parts of the questionnaire that were investigated under different hypotheses since it is based on the qualitative data and findings.

### IV.1.3 Testing the Study Hypotheses

This study has hypotheses which identified the specific variables that were tested according to the correlation between different variables in the study.

Table 4.2 Correlation coefficients (Pearson *r*) among the study's variables

|  |  | Pupil character-ristic | Family character-ristics | Teacher character-ristics | Attitudes about English classes | Importance the English language | Contact with the English language |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pupil characteristic | r |  | .371\*\*\* | .344\*\*\* | .526\*\*\* | .471\*\*\* | .424\*\*\* |
| Family characteristics | r |  |  | .328\*\*\* | .296\*\*\* | .283\*\* | .337\*\*\* |
| Teacher characteristics | r |  |  |  | .616\*\* | .151 | .161 |
| Attitudes about English classes | r |  |  |  |  | .323\*\*\* | .238\*\* |
| Importance the English language | r |  |  |  |  |  | .354\*\*\* |
| Contact with the English language | r |  |  |  |  |  |  |

N=122

\*\* p<.01

\*\*\* p<.001

**Research Question 2:**

**Figure 4.2 Main Factors Affecting English Language Learning in the Arab sector**

It is in the realm of possibility to find the factors that work as the key to understand what influences English language learning as a four language for Israeli Arab learners. As a matter of fact, many language learning researchers have agreed that language learning process is doubtlessly affected by certain factors that make a difference in which is the most successful way to teach English for this unique group of learners. The present study aimed to reveal the factors in the Arab English language learning proximal environment that promote their English leaning so to learn from the successful experience in order to solve some learners problems and make them better English language learners.

However, the second question of this research is about the factors that affect English learning and as soon as we find out about these factors we will be able to copy the successful experiences to less successful learners who still view English as their fourth language very problematic and controversial. They believe they would never reach to the same level other successful learners have reached to.

The high achievement students, their parents and teachers reported specific factors in the proximal environment. These factors are shown in six categories in figure 4.2 above.

**Table 4.3: Categories emerging from the content analysis according to research question 2**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Category | Sample evidence |
| 1 | *Language learning*  *strategies* | *'I usually use my own learning styles to develop my language.* |
| 2 | *The Arab school system* | *'We do not take the enough time to learn English which is learnt as a foreign language in Israel'.* |
| 3 | *Language exposure through media* | *' I play games with friends from abroad and we speak English'* |
| 4 | *Family's factors* | *'My parents do not stop buying books and games and send me to different programs'* |
| 5 | *English Language status among Arab learners* | *'I feel very proud and everybody is listening when I speak English'.* |
| 6 | *English teacher's personality* | *'I want to become a teacher for English because I want to be like my English teacher.'* |

## IV.2 Research Question 2

### IV.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The distribution of the students' answers to the questions in the questionnaire is brought up in (see Appendix A). In order to identify statements where the level of the students' agreement is high and those statements where agreement of students is low. The average of the answers was calculated (see Appendix 8). However, this chapter presents the findings of every variable in the study separately. The results of the agreement or disagreement are presented in Mean, *Standard deviation* and range of answers.

The results of the descriptive statistical examine the hypothesis of the study and the multi independent variables regression model to predict the dependent variables: *The pupil’s conception about his characteristics that contribute to his success as 'good' learners of English*. A summary of findings of the quantitative research will be presented at the end of this chapter.

IV.2.1.1 The pupil’s conception about his characteristics that contribute to his success as 'good' learner of English:

The variable of pupils' characteristics was measured by twelve statements (Section 1 in the questionnaire). The statements were found to have the highest average of agreement (see Appendix 8).

I feel happy if someone thinks my English accent is almost a native-speaker accent (*Mean=*4.63).

For well-educated Arabs, English is very important language to acquire (*Mean=*4.63)

The statement that has the lowest average of agreement is (see Appendix 8):

I put a lot of efforts to be well-prepared for English classes (*Mean=*3.47).

The variable ‘Pupil's characteristic’ was calculated as an average of 12 statements that measured it. The theoretical range of the variables goes between1-5, empirically, the sample of the study and the range of the measurement run between 2.9-5.00. The distribution of the variable (*Mean=*4.23, *Standard deviation*= 0.39) presents high average of agreement of students with the statements, and positive attitudes towards the pupils' characteristics (see Table 1).

This means that the 'good' English language learners' positive attitudes towards their personal characteristics, such as accent, preparation for the English class, contribute to his success as an English learner.

IV.2.1.2 The pupil’s conception about family characteristics that contribute to the learners' success as 'good' learners of English:

The variable Family characteristics were measured by 8 statements (see section 2) in the questionnaire). The following statements were found to have the highest agreement (see Appendix 8):

'In my family, my parent/s believe(s) that English is an important subject for my academic success in the future' (*Mean=*4.27).

'I improved my English through reading books and magazines that my parents have bought to me' (*Mean=*4.27).

The statement that has the lowest agreement is (see Appendix 8): 'I am good at English because my parents are good speakers of English' (*Mean=*2.83).

The variable was calculated as the mean of the eight statements. The theoretical range of the variable Family characteristics is 1-5 empirically in the sample of the study, the range of the measuring is (2.13-5.00), the distribution of the variable is (*Mean=*3.51, and *Standard deviation* = 0.60). The results present the extent of a medium agreement of the students with the statements which show their attitudes towards *Family characteristics* (see table 1). **This means that the pupil’s conception about his family characteristics contribute to his success as an English language learner**.

IV.2.1.3 The pupil's conception about teachers' characteristics that contribute to his success as a 'good' learner of English:

The variable *'Teachers' characteristics*' was measured by nine statements (see section 3 in the questionnaire). The statements that were found to have the highest agreement are (see Appendix 8):

'My teacher uses different learning styles' (*Mean=*4.04).

'I want to be as good as my English teacher' (*Mean=*4.22).

The statement that has the lowest agreement is (see section 3 in the questionnaire):

'My teacher doesn't work hard to improve our English' (*Mean= (*(1.77.

The variable *'Teachers' characteristics'* was calculated by nine statements that measured it. The theoretical range of the variable is 1-5. Empirically, the sample of the study, the measuring range was 1.86-5.00. The distribution of the variable (*Mean=*3.64, *SD=*0.58) presents the extent of the medium agreement of the students with the statements and this explains the students' attitude towards *Teacher characteristics* (see table 1). It can be said that teachers' characteristics reported as an important factor to promote English Language Learning among Arab learners. The Arab learners view teachers as the medium of the English language and culture. Mainly, their language progress is based on what occurs in class via their teachers.

IV.2.1.4 The pupil's conception about their attitude towards English classes that contribute to the learner's success as 'good' learners of English

The variable *'Attitudes toward English classes* was measured by six statements (see section 4 in the questionnaire). What was found is that the statements that have the highest agreement are (see Appendix 8).

'I feel very comfortable in the English class' (*Mean=*4.11).

'The best English learning environment is learning English in an English-speaking country' (*Mean=*4.42).

The statements that have the lowest agreement are (see appendix B):'Most of my classmates do not feel comfortable during the English classes' (*Mean=*2.62). 'My school has different programs that help us improve our English' (*Mean=*2.78).

The variable '*Attitudes towards English classes'* was calculated as the mean of the six statements (See section 4 in the questionnaire). The theoretical range of the variable is 1-5. Empirically, the sample of the study, the measuring range was 2.50-5.00. The distribution of the variable (*Mean=*3.75, *SD=*0.60) presents the extent of the medium agreement of the students with the statements and this explains the students' attitude towards English classes(see table 1). It can be seen that students have noticed the importance of English classes in their language learning and providing them with such a supportive environment will contribute to their learning and enhance their performance.

IV.2.1.5 The pupil's conception of the importance of English language as a factor that contributes to the language learner's success:

The variable *'Importance the English language'* was measured by ten statements (see section 5 in the questionnaire). The statements that were found to have the highest agreement are (see Appendix 8):

'English is very helpful for getting a job that demands trading with foreign companies where English language will be required (*Mean=*4.64).

'You need English to keep up with the rapid developments in technology' (*Mean=*4.59).

The statement that was found to have the lowest agreement is (see Appendix 8).

'I read English newspapers/magazines at home' (*Mean=*3.51).

The variable *'Importance the English language'* was calculated as the mean of the ten statements (see section 5 in the questionnaire). The theoretical range of the variable is 1-5. Empirically, the sample of the study, the measuring range was 3.00-5.00. The distribution of the variable (*Mean=*4.25, *SD=*0.45) presents the extent of the medium agreement of the students with the statements and this explains the students' attitude towards Importance the English language (see Table 1).

IV.2.1.6 The pupil's conception about the contact with the English language that contributes to the learner's success

The variable 'Contact with the English language' was measured by ten statements (section six in the questionnaire). The statements that found to have the highest agreement are (see Appendix 8):

'I use English when surfing the net' (*Mean=*4.61).

'I use means of media such as television programs, video games, movies, and radio programs to learn and practice new English words' (*Mean=*4.46).

The statement that has the lowest agreement is (see appendix 8):

'I read books to get develop my English' (*Mean=*3.31).

The variable '*Contact with the English language'* was calculated as the mean of the ten statements (see section 6 in the questionnaire). The theoretical range of the variable is 1-5. Empirically, the sample of the study, the measuring range was 1.83-5.00. The distribution of the variable (*Mean=*4.17, *SD=*0.67) presents the extent of the medium agreement of the students with the statements and this explains the students' attitude towards *Contact with the English language* (see table 1).

Table 4.4 The descriptive statistics of the variables of the study

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| 1.Pupil's characteristic | 2.92 | 5.00 | 4.23 | .39 |
| 2.Family's characteristics | 2.13 | 5.00 | 3.51 | .60 |
| 3.Teacher's characteristics | 1.86 | 5.00 | 3.64 | .57 |
| 4.Attitudes towards English classes | 2.60 | 5.00 | 3.75 | .60 |
| 5.Importance of the English language | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.25 | .45 |
| 6.Contact with the English language | 1.83 | 5.00 | 4.16 | .66 |

N=122

**Figure 4.3 depicts the mean scores of the variables.**

Figure 4.3 Descriptive statistics of the study's variables

Additionally, hypothesis 6 was formed in a general form and was split into five sub-hypothesis. The hypothesis:

There will be strong correlation between the pupil's demographic characteristic and between the pupil's conceptions about their characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English.

For examining the statistical relations, the hypothesis 6 was split into five sub-hypothesis.

**6.1** There is a significant difference between boys and girls according to their conception of English learners' characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English.

The hypothesis was examined by the t-test for two independent groups. The mean of boys in pupil's characteristics is *Mean=*4.19, the mean of girls in the pupil characteristics is (4.26( *t*=0.95 *df* = 120 *p =* 0.344.Therefore, hypothesis 6.1 was refuted.

**6.2** There will be significant correlation between the pupil's age and between the pupils' conceptions about their characteristics that contribute to their success as 'good' learners of English.

The hypothesis was examined by Pearson product-moment correlation. (*rs*=-0.95 *p* = 0.302). Therefore, hypothesis 6.2 was refuted.

**6.3** There will be significant correlation between the pupils' family members and between the pupils' conceptions about their success as 'good' learners of English.

The hypothesis 6.3 was examined by spearman product-moment correlation (*rs*=-0.208, *p* < 0.05). The hypothesis was confirmed. There was a significant negative relation between number of the members in the family of the student and the Pupil characteristic. When the number of the members in the student's family is small, the student has positive attitude toward his characteristics that contribute to his success as 'good' learners of English. As has been noted, the students reported that belonging to a small family can affect their English Language Learning and make the opportunities for high achievements are better (see table 4.3).

6.4. There will be a significant correlation between the pupils' father education and between the pupils' conceptions about their success as 'good' learners of English.

The hypothesis 6.4 was examined by Spearman product-moment correlation (*rs*=-0.055 *p* = 0.547). The hypothesis was refuted. There was no significant statistical relation between the father's education and Pupil's characteristic.

**6.5** There will be a significant correlation between the pupils' mother education and between the pupils' conception about their success as 'good' learners of English.

The hypothesis 6.5 was examined by Spearman product-moment correlation (*rs* =-0.145 *p* = 0.111). The hypothesis was also refuted. There was no significant statistical relation between the mother's education and Pupil's characteristic.

Figure 4.4 presents the profile of the 'good' English language learners among Arabs in Israel, based on the qualitative interviews, from which the categories of the quantitative research were derived:

The profile of the 'good' English language high school learners  
among Arabs in Israel

English language learning characteristics

Factors in the immediate proximal environment of Arab learners

# Language learning strategies

# English Language status among Arab learners

# Family factors

# English teacher's personality

# Language exposure through media

# The Arab school learning system

# Language learning Intelligence

# Motivation to English language learning

# Language Learning aptitude

# Language Learner's Beliefs

# English language learner's personality

# Attitude towards English learning

**Figure 4.4 the profile of the 'good' English language learners among Arabs in Israel**

# Chapter VI: Conclusions

## VI.1 Factual conclusion:

The evidence from this study suggests that Israeli Arab EFL students have their beliefs about foreign language learning which seem to be different when it is compared with foreign language learners around the Arab world in specific and the whole world in general. These beliefs affect the students' performances in the target language (Yang, 1992). The findings of the study indicate that Israeli Arab learners of English believe that English is a very important language to acquire and this fact motivates them to make much effort to achieve better level of English proficiency.

As a result of the study, we have obtained comprehensive results demonstrating the profile of the 'good' Israeli Arab English learner which includes different factors that promote EFL learning. This study suggest a new and innovative profile for English as a foreign language learners among Israeli Arab learners which describes the main factors that seemed to have an impact on Arab language learners such as the family and parental role, the pupil's personal attribution, language learning strategies, and EFL teachers. A special conceptual framework was designed to present the abovementioned conclusions about the factors in the Israeli Arab learners' proximate environment that affect their English language learning. The conceptual conclusion is:

**Close proximity**

**Pupil's personal attribution**

**School environment**

**Figure 6.1 The profile of the 'good' Arab English learner**

This is a new framework which was designed to describe the profile of 'good' English language learners within the Arab citizens of Israel. The figure above, indicates that there are specific concepts have been proved to have an impact on the 'good' English language learners in the Arab sector in Israel.

The study provides a strong role for teachers and the impact they have on the 'good' Israeli Arab learners. The 'good' English learners believe that their teachers are a typical sample for foreign learners who succeeded to master English language and become proficient language speakers. The Arab learners assume that a successful language teacher will definitely be able to create a pleasant classroom atmosphere, apply new and innovative teaching strategies, encourage variety of learning styles, expose learner to the English speaking media and foster language learning in and outside the classroom.

## VI.2 Implications to Teaching English as a Foreign Language

A considerable result has been gained with regard to the claims of effective language learning characteristics and techniques. It has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of the importance of these diverse factors and characteristics to design a profile of 'good' language learners among Arab learners. The factors such as personality traits, social upbringing, intelligence, aptitude and age can apply a positive impact and bring to greater achievement in high level of English proficiency. Thus, teachers of English language, the other people in charge in the ministry of education need to increase the influence of these factors and elements to create more 'good' language learners. In other words, school systems and teachers can promote English language learning more than anybody else. Parents would love to do that but they are qualified enough as English teachers. These factors have the potential to promote English language learning and this is a good reason to maintain them.

In addition, the findings indicate that 'good' English language learners among Israeli Arabs adopt various learning strategies that maintain progress and ensure high level of proficiency. They believe that using different learning strategies can enhance English language learning. In fact, language learners want to achieve this goal and become 'good' English language learners. However, it cannot be precisely assumed that successful language learners are 'good' learners or as a result of using certain strategies.

## VI.3 The Contribution of the Study to Knowledge

First, the present study outlined the increasing worldwide demand for enhancing English language teaching. It certainly reveals the on-going discussion about becoming a 'good' English language learner in the expanding ‘Outer Circle’ countries. The study overtly contributes to the understanding of the framework involved in supporting teachers in their professional development so that they can successfully meet the ever changing educational demands and social expectations in order for them to enhance their teaching styles to better English Language Learning among Arab learners. Apparently, the more we know about the learner's personal characteristics, desired learning approaches and personal concepts, their attitude toward school and English classes, the better and more productive our intervention will be.

### VI.3.1 The Israeli Context

The study examines the Israeli Arab context where English comes after Arabic (two dialects), and Hebrew. Also, it is very important to mention that the present study isconducive to learning more about foreign language teacher in the Israel Arab school systems.

Despite the fact that English comes in the third or even a fourth place to Arab English language learners in Israel, many Arab learners believe they have to gain high level of English since it has a global language and mastering this language will give them a high status. Primarily, they want to acquire English that will be very helpful for them in the different aspects of their lives. They believe English is the language of hundreds of millions of people of native and non-native speakers which can travel with them to many countries around the world for trading, working, learning and traveling. From their point of view, English gives a great number of opportunities where it can be used. To name some of the reasons why English is valuable, for Arab learners, it is the language of diplomacy, the official language of the free trade, academic studies and technology.

Many Arab learners, their parents and EFL teachers have stated that speaking English leads you to successful communication with people in many countries around the world and opens up lots of possibilities for you to seek work where companies are likely to require an evidence of a high level of proficiency in English before they will consider you for the job. To adapt themselves with this big desire to master English, they all plan for preparing the Arab learners to be as good as they could be. Learners can achieve the high level of English when they get the support of their teachers in the classroom and in their realistic environment.

### VI.3.2 The Importance of the English Language

The findings of this study would seem to demonstrate that Israeli Arab learners, their parents give great importance to English as international language. They actually believe that English, according to some measures, is the most widely spoken language in the world, the de facto lingua franca. Therefore, it is a vital language and absolutely necessary for their progress. This evidence explains why many Arabs learners are determined and persistent to achieve high level and effective mastery of English.

### VI.3.3 EFL Classes

Israeli Arab learners are mainly exposed to English in the English classrooms. These classrooms are considered as a foreign language learning context. Thus, we all know how precisely important the EFL classrooms for those Arab learners who lack English exposure in their proximate environment. Due to this fact, English should be widely and immensely used in classrooms to improve the students’ skills and the mastery of the English language.

For achieving this, teachers should set measurable goals for every English class. When teachers enter the class, they should come well organized and aware of every detail that would support language learning during the English class. As a result, they will be certain that they have come to great results of their language teaching. However, Arab learners of English internalized the fact that their maximum exposure to English is mainly in EFL class with the support of the EFL teacher and they should take this opportunity to develop their capabilities in the target language. For that reason, 'good' language learners did not support any random use of Arabic as their native language in the English class. They were aware of the negative effects of its over-use in the EFL classroom.

In the same token, parents and learners revealed the fact that they viewed about EFL teachers. They related their success to their EFL teachers. It was the teachers' responsibility to be ready and capable to teach the target language. This should be achieved when teachers are seeded and funded to run a range of development activities, including a website, publication, an annual conference, and professional development activities.

## VI.4 Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge -Arabic as a Diglossic Language

A growing body of evidence from this study presents that students face a lot of difficulties learning the Arabic language due to its *diglossic* nature that refers to the two varieties coexist side by side and available for use by the same speaker but in different situations each of which enables him to perform a particular social role of the same language.

Thus, the findings of this study will contribute to a great extent to the Israeli Arab language learners whose language has sociolinguistic condition known as '*diglossic*' and in the meanwhile they are expected to master their Standard Arabic (Fusha) (despite of the very limited exposure to it), Hebrew as a second language which they start to learn in the second or third grade and later comes English as a foreign language where they start to learn in the third or fourth grade. In the meantime, Hebrew is more dominant than Arabic in the Israeli society and using Arabic is very limited.

So, the ministry of education should find a remedy plan and a solution to the shortage in educational and pedagogical materials and in the hours of English classes. There is an absolute need for a reform in the educational system in the Arab schools in Israel. This reform should take into consideration the impact of speaking a *'diglossic*' language before they start learning English. Therefore, there should an Arab cooperation in English curriculum development, textbooks production and teaching training courses in order to be aware of the dialectal differences.

## VI.5 Contribution to Practical Knowledge

### VI.6.1 Minding the Gap

The findings could possibly support decision makers and may contribute greatly to the improvement of English teaching in EFL classrooms. It can potentially provide English teachers with strategies that develop and maintain a good relationship with their students. For instance, applying good strategies will improve students’ performance and bring to a very good situation where learners can interact and make their English better.

The gap between 'good' English language teaching and good learning in the Arab sector in Israel can be narrowed when teachers address intuitive and personal practical knowledge, perspectives and context-specific needs when designing teaching programs. EFL teachers should develop a thorough understanding of their audience and vary the services offered accordingly. With this great understanding, EFL teachers may address the differences among learners in the Arab sector. EFL teachers have to broaden their cultural knowledge and their linguistic awareness/knowledge for locals. This will help teachers in learning the discourse of the field and become able to articulate their knowledge and conceptions.

The strong point of this work lies in the importance of the EFL teacher's role in the English learning process. It is very obvious that one of the most important intellectual traits of successful language teacher is to be ready to stay a life-long learner and a role model for learning. In fact, developmental programs and study days for EFL teachers in the Arab schools should be widely provided. Besides, the process of selecting teachers should be accurate and based on specific characteristics. When they want to be teachers, they should have a considerable knowledge of English, dealing with students, familiar with school systems, acquainted with the norms of the Arab community, and become proficient in the knowledge of the methods they would use with different students and solve their language problems.

Teachers should spend time with students outside the classroom which allows them to learn about the students’ strong passions, their dreams, and what they face each day in order to get to school. Their great desire to learn is reflected in their actions. Those teachers who model high expectations for themselves tend to get the same from their students.

Arab students have declared that they performed better in classes where they felt that the environment is safe, the teacher is there to help and support them and in classes where they were engaged and found themselves at the center of the learning process.

### VI.5.2 Recognizing 'Good' Language Learners

In fact, many people believe that successful learners are those learners who get good grades. However, it is important to realize that good English students are not necessarily the most intelligent learners in the class but they should possess some characteristics in order to become good English learners. Ideally, they are those students who are responsible for their learning, attend classes regularly, take advantage of extra opportunities when offered, are attentive in class, do their best in given assignments, see their teachers before or after class, and if they miss their English class, they feel very sorry for losing the opportunity to learn. The idea here is that there are some guidelines that EFL teachers and parents can follow which will help the learners get down to the business of becoming serious, successful English language learners.

## VI.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This study can be virtually addressed as the first to investigate the profile of English learners within Arab English language learners in Israel. It has initiated the discovery of specific characteristics and factors that promote language leaning and can be implemented to support successful English language learners.

A further research can be performed to estimate the professional development of language teachers working in EFL settings which would be conducted as a longitudinal ethnographic study through which a deeper understanding of the process of teacher conceptual development could be obtained.

One more additional work would help us advance our understanding in this field by conducting future research in other countries and other EFL settings to gain comparative perspectives on the on-going development of learners in different *'diglossic'* language speakers of the language.

A further work might be done in the area. It can be an interesting future research which explores how individuals’ English learning characteristics relate to acculturation over the long term. When English language learning characteristics are more internalized, the students will be more comfortable and persevering with the English language learning process.

This suggests that, despite congruence, acculturation may be hindered by external motives and other proximal factors in the learners' environment. Therefore, a future research should deal with the impact of characteristics on acculturation and address the relationship between characteristics and acculturation.

## VI.7 Limitations of the Study

This study clearly has some limitations that could be considered in order to simplify the research process.

(1) The most important limitation is as a result of the fact that the current study is investigating 'good' English learners among Israeli Arab learners in north Israel. This condition has made the study more difficult because we need to look for specific pupils in different schools.

(2) The current study was limited by the number pupils in the sample groups on which the study was based. This will have an impact on the quantitative portions of the data collection, where greater statistical significance would most likely be gained from larger number of samples. With enough responses, correlation could likely be found that could more precisely map the characteristics of 'good' learners and different factors.

(3) The fact that the responses were taken directly by the researcher. It has simply taken longer period until all the participants were interviewed. All the issue of teacher/researcher authority was determined in order to keep confidential context for the participants.

(4) More information about the past learning experiences and their English teachers should be gathered to investigate how these experiences have affected their good English learning.

(5) Direct observations of English teachers would help to uncover any apparent differences in teaching styles and personality traits which might affect their Arab learners' attitudes towards English learning.

(6) The administration of the research instrument could be improved and online interviews can be used and affect the responses by providing privacy and flexibility.

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