The Language Proficiency of the
Senior English Field-Teacher Students

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to determine the language proficiency of senior English Field-Teacher students at two Jordanian state universities (Viz., Yarmouk University and the University of Jordan). It also attempts to identify the potential causes for the weaknesses these students may have, not only from their own perspectives but also from those of their instructors.

The population of the study consisted of senior English Field-Teacher students at the faculties of Education at Yarmouk University and the University of Jordan and their instructors. The entire population was included in the study because of the relatively small number of these students (viz. 41 students divided into 30 students from Yarmouk University and 11 from the University of Jordan).
population also included 24 instructors divided into 15 from Yarmouk University and 9 from the University of Jordan.

The researcher chose the TOEFL as a measure of language proficiency. He selected certain items from some sections of the TOEFL. The adapted test was shorter but identical in nature to the TOEFL itself. After finding out that the students suffer from low language proficiency, the researcher developed a questionnaire to determine the potential causes of that weakness from the students’ and their instructors’ perspectives.

The study has revealed the following findings:

a) The students have scored low on the components and on the whole test.

b) There is a positive correlation between the students’ respective proficiency levels and their performance on the individual components and on the whole test.

c) There is a significant correlation among the students’ scores on the various components of the test except for the reading comprehension and writing components.
d) T-test statistics revealed significant differences among the students' scores on the various components of the test and the overall score on the TOEFL. These differences are attributed to the university.

e) The students and their instructors in the two universities believe that the following are the potential causes of the subjects' low English language proficiency:

- Some English courses do not motivate or reinforce students to study and learn;
- Students depend solely on the instructor;
- There is a lack of classroom interaction, discussion and dialogue skills in the courses;
- Students do not sit for a placement test;
- Students' exposure to the English language is limited to the lecture;
- Students usually do their best to get good grades rather than to benefit from the content of the course;
- English school teachers suffer from low English proficiency;
- Students do not have opportunities to practice language with native speakers;
- Most students do not listen to the radio, watch TV programs or read English newspapers and magazines.
- There is a focus on the theoretical side in most courses;
- Few opportunities are available to use English in daily-life;
- Instructors do not use proper aids in some courses; and
- Some instructors use more traditional methods of instruction.