AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO LOW ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AS PERCEIVED BY KUWAITI AND NON-KUWAITI ENGLISH TEACHERS

Dr. Abdullah M. Alotaibi
Paaet,CBE
Dr. Hussein A. Aldiahani
Dr. Sulaiman Alrabah
Paaet,CTS

Abstract:

   Purpose. *This study investigates why secondary school Kuwaiti students are weak in English language*. In 2012/2013, 78% of students joining the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training from secondary school failed to achieve 60% in their English placement test. This high failure rate has raised concerns at PAAET colleges. This study examines the reasons for these results from the teachers' perspective, and attempts to provide a solution.

Design/Method/approach. A questionnaire was designed and distributed across six Kuwaiti educational districts, involving more than 1,000 teachers and head teachers. The data were analysed descriptively. Official letters were obtained from the Ministry of Education and circulated to all Kuwaiti secondary schools .

Findings. The data refuted the null hypotheses and showed, first, that teachers agreed to the suitability of the curriculum and its content for secondary school students. Second, they agreed with both positive and negative statements about the interrelated factors regarding classroom teaching. Third, the most important finding was the agreement among teachers that students coming from intermediate school were very weak in English basics, such as grammar and vocabulary.

Originality/Value. This is the first study to include a large number of in-post secondary school teachers in an evaluation of the current curriculum and five interrelated factors inside the classroom. The value of this study, which should be seriously considered by the ministry, is that there is a gap between

teachers' appreciation of the current curriculum, and the poor English proficiency of secondary school students.

Keywords: EFL, curriculum, teaching methods, teachers' perspectives

Introduction:

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to students at public Kuwaiti intermediate and secondary schools started a long time ago. In 1993-94, the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced the teaching of the English to students in public elementary schools. In 2005/06, the Public Authority of Applied Education and Training (PAAET) colleges admitted the first group of students who had had 12 years' experience of learning English. Except for those who were majoring in English language, the majority of this group had insufficient opportunities to study English language further. The English course assigned for them was English for Specific Purposes (ESP), but the pre-requisite for these courses was only the English they had taken in high school. In the beginning, expectations among teachers at PAAET were high, but these soon diminished after they received the students' poor placement test results. Evidence of the low English proficiency among the students, year after year, was confirmed by a test department report of 2012/13. Table 1 shows that 5,614 students attended the EPT and only 1,186 attained the pass score of 60%. Since 1990, the English curricula for Kuwait's secondary, intermediate and elementary public schools have undergone many serious changes.

Number of registered students	Total number of tested students	Number of students failing the test (<60%)	Number of students passing the test (>60%)
7,375	5,614	4,428	1,186
	100%	78.87%	21.12%

Table 1: The number of students passing and failing the EPT, 2012/2013

Teaching in Kuwait public schools initially used United Arab Emirates (UAE) English books from 1993 for almost ten years, and then the MOE designed their own curriculum; however, this was not achieved with any continuity, as it was subject to change every other year. This meant that both teachers and students experienced stress regarding the extra effort English teachers needed to make to cope with the changes in goals, aims, and preparation. As a result, it appears that the MOE in Kuwait had not considered the exact needs of their students, or that there were other challenges facing students that were not being effectively addressed. Since no research studies have been conducted on the difficulties that face Kuwaiti students learning EFL in secondary schools, there is a real need to undertake such a study. Khan (2011, cited in Alkhairy, 2013) wrote that "[d]espite

sound planning, a purposive curriculum, suitable textbooks, qualified teachers and effective administration, the teaching learning process sometimes seems to be ineffective…and unsatisfactory" (p.1249). Furthermore, as reported in many books and studies, the challenging problems that face teaching English in foreign countries begins with four issues that might be loosely described as 'methodological': lack of discipline, lack of real testing, lack of real method, and lack of sequence".

This paper will first present what the literature says about Arabic and non-Arabic speaking EFL students as well as teachers. Then, it discusses the study methods and data collection and, finally, presents the results according to the research questions; this is followed by conclusions and recommendations for further research and instruction.

Literature review

In Kuwait, the MOE has specified goals for teaching English at public schools, including secondary schools. Two of these goals are that students should be able to write organized English passages that have correct grammar and punctuation, and that students are expected to communicate according to daily situations using a variety of notions and linguistic functions (MOE Guidelines). However, Kuwaiti students, like other EFL learners in Arab or non-Arab countries, encounter problems learning English as a foreign or second language. On this theme, many studies have been conducted from the point of view of teachers and students in Kuwait, the Gulf and Arab countries, and other countries, but with different approaches to this problem (Akasha, 2013; Alkhairy, 2013, Alkhatib, 2013; Khan, 2011; Albustan, 2009; Ting, 2009; Rababah, 2003; Cummins, 2000; Malallah, 2000; Klesmir, 1994; Collier 1987). A brief review will now be presented which will set the context for the current study by identifying issues with the learning and teaching of English as a foreign and second language.

1) Studies from other countries

A number of studies have been conducted which highlight issues with English language teaching around the world. For instance, Aduwa-Ogiegbaen (2006) conducted a study to investigate the factors responsible for the poor quality of ESL teaching in public secondary schools in Nigeria. The results showed that there was no variety of teaching technique, no instructional technologies were used, and students learned in a harsh, demotivating environment. An Asian study conducted by Souvanny et al. (2008a) on the factors and issues involved in student achievements in English in Lao secondary education found that the majority of Lao students had difficulties with basic vocabulary skills, which in turn influenced reading comprehension, and with the level of the content in their textbook.

According to John (2011), the problems of learning English derive from many different factors in different environments, such as school resources, class size, the quality of teachers, and the attendance of learners. Mawere (2012) studied problems in the teaching and learning of English in Mozambique's public schools. 90% of his respondents agreed that this English teaching was poor, as some teachers were underqualified.

Regarding poor motivation, Murray and Christison (2010) observed that many students think English is a school subject and they do not see its significance for their prospective employment. Souriyavongsa et al. (2013) attempted to study the factors causing poor English learning in a Lao university. It was found that the main causes were the use of L1 when teaching, the students' lack of an English foundation and confidence in using English, and the inappropriateness of the curriculum. Furthermore, they found that the students were not motivated, considered English difficult, did not practise speaking English with native speakers, and studied in a crowded and noisy learning environment (p.180).

2) Studies from Arab countries

In Arab countries, studies have revealed that there are fundamental problems underlying the teaching and learning of English. For example, Rababah (2003) studied communication problems facing Arab learners of English, and found that, "Arab learners face many problems in all the language skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading." Akasha (2013) conducted a study to uncover the challenges facing Arabic speaking ESL students and teachers in middle school classrooms. Among his findings were the challenges of time, adequate language support, and teacher education/guidance, the difference of social context, and cultural environment. However, Samdi et al. (2013) highlighted how Jordanian teachers' attitudes towards teaching EFL were crucial, and that there were many factors that influenced these attitudes. Similarly, Shehdeh (2010) tried to understand the challenges facing Arab EFL teachers and how these could be met. He found major problems, which involved teachers being inadequately prepared, a lack of motivation on the part of learners, teacher-centred methods, and inadequate assessment techniques. Such studies reveal how in the Arab context problems with poor English acquisition stem from issues with both the teaching and learning environment.

3) Studies from the Gulf

English language teaching in the Gulf countries has also not been immune to teaching and learning issues. In Saudi Arabia, Khan (2011) studied students and listed many factors that affect their learning of English, such as limited exposure to the target language, inadequate school facilities,

inadequate teaching curricula and teaching methods, and L1 interference (p.1,256). Also in Saudi Arabia, Alkhairy (2013) pointed out the factors that demotivate the learning of EFL for Saudi undergraduates as: textbooks, behaviour in the English faculty, peer pressure, teaching methods and the insufficient use of modern teaching aids, and difficulties with English grammar and vocabulary. In summarising current research, Alkhairy (2013: 366) noted the, "valuable insights into the fact that there are five main reasons behind the low English language proficiency of Arabic speaking students: 1) poor teaching methods, 2) inadequate teaching curricula, 3) insufficient exposure to the target language, 4) lack of motivation, and 5) lack of information about the universities or colleges at which they study." However, the main deficiency, as stated by Zughoul (1986), is the lack of EFL teacher training in the Gulf region.

4) **Studies from Kuwait**

Albustan (2009) investigated non-English major ESL students' attitudes and preferences towards learning English at Kuwait University. The findings of the study included that the majority of students did realize the importance of learning English, and most participants agreed that they had difficulties in the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). The students' preferred learning methods included discussion, multimedia, and computers. The current study shares two similarities with that of Albustan: the participants had studied English in Kuwaiti public schools for 12 years, and Albustan investigated non-English major ESL university students' perspectives in her research. Finally, she recommended that her findings be taken into consideration by the MOE of Kuwait.

In Kuwait, the curriculum has recently undergone many changes which might be considered progression towards a developed curriculum. This study will investigate the teachers' perspective of the current curriculum. After this plethora of studies in the area of English language and learning discussed above, *the question of why Kuwaiti students are failing the English placement test at PAAET's colleges still remains unanswered. This question was employed by the researchers to ask English teachers of their perceptions about the reasons why Kuwaiti students perform poorly in EFL in secondary school.*

Method

The theoretical background to this study was sought from the relevant literature and the researcher's experience in the field. A survey was conducted utilizing a Likert scale in a 46-item questionnaire, handed to a random sample of teachers in the field, from six educational districts in Kuwaiti secondary schools.

Research Questions
        This study will be directed by the following three main factors:
1- The biographical information of participants, which is the first section of the questionnaire
2- A description of the curriculum of English at Kuwait Public Secondary School (KPSS). This is integrated into 15-items in section two of the questionnaire
3- The interrelated factors inside the classroom as identified according to the literature: 1) teaching techniques, 2) students' behaviour and attitude, 3) allotted time and time management, 4) class environment and 5) administration and teacher evaluation. These comprise 31-items in section three.

Hypotheses
        The study will test the following null hypotheses:
        HO1: There are some statistically significant differences between teachers regarding the description of the curriculum taught at KPSS in section two of the questionnaire.
        HO2: There are some statistically significant differences regarding the five interrelated factors inside the classroom, in section three of questionnaire

Sample of the study
        The study sample consisted of 1,000 teachers and head teachers, distributed over six educational districts in the six governorates of Kuwait. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was administered to the teachers in the second semester of 2014 and 678 returned valid questionnaires were available for analysis. The participants were as follows: Alfarwania Educational –District –100 teachers; Aljahra Educational District –125 teachers; Alasmaa Educational District –108 teachers; Alahmadi Educational District –128 teachers; Hawali Educational District –106 teachers; Mubarak Alkabeer Educational District –111 teachers.

Instrumentation
        From several questions and statements used in studies conducted in the various EFL/ESL contexts, the researchers developed their own for the study (Alkhatib, 2013; Alkhairy, 2013; Khan, 2011; Albustan, 2009). ANOVA and independent sample tests were conducted to check for any significant statistical differences between the responses, based on the biographical information of teachers gathered in Section I of the questionnaire. This was performed to check for concordance or non-concordance between them regarding the items in Sections II and III.

Furthermore, the Tukey test was used to measure the significant differences found in the means of the participants, based on their nationality and educational district, with reference to the curriculum description in Section II. For Sections II and III, the researchers adopted a Likert type scale which was comprised of six response ratings of total agreement (6), little agreement (5), agreement (4), disagreement (3), little disagreement (2), and total disagreement (1).

The face validity of the questionnaire was ascertained by piloting the first draft of the questionnaire with colleagues at the college of PAAET and senior teachers at certain secondary schools in each governorate. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, which was found to be 0.87 for the questionnaire as whole, indicating a good reliability and the ability to generate authentic and realistic data (see Appendix 2). Copies of the final instrument were printed and handed to the heads of English departments in each educational district, for distribution to all participants so that data could be generated for this empirical study.

Data Analysis

The 678 responses to all the questionnaire items were received and coded using SPSS IBM version 21. Independent sample and ANOVA tests were used to calculate the descriptive statistics in terms of means and standard deviation, and to determine whether or not any significant differences existed in the participants' reactions towards the description of the curriculum at the secondary school or the interrelated factors inside the classroom. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Results and discussion
Section 1

Table (3) includes a descriptive analysis of the sample teachers in terms of frequency and percentage (see Appendix 3). This table shows that there was no significant effect of gender in the sample since there were 302 male and 376 female teachers. However, for nationality there was a huge difference, as the frequency of Kuwaiti participants was 20.8% and for non-Kuwaiti participants 79.2%. The table also shows that for educational districts the number of participants in the six districts ranged between 18.88-14.75%, as follows: the Ahmadi district had the highest number of participants (18.88%), followed by the Aljahra district with 18.44%, the Mubarak Alkabeer district (16.37%), the AlAssema district (15.93%), the Hawali district (15.63%), and finally the Alfarwaniya district, which had the least number of participants (14.75%).

Table (3) also shows that in the job field the percentage of teachers (98.08%) outnumbered department heads (1.92%). The qualification field

shows that most participants had a BA degree (96.76%), far outnumbering those with a Masters' degree (3.24%). For years of experience, almost 20% of participants had 1-5 years (19.17%), but the most represented group was those with 6-10 years (32.15%). Other groups were as follows: 11-15 years, 18.88%; 16-20 years, 15.19%; and 21 years and more, 14.60%. The grades field shows that those who taught the tenth grade comprised 35.55% of the sample, while the eleventh grade comprised 29.20%, and the twelfth 35.25%.

Table (3) shows the number of workshops attended by participants; no workshop, 25.07%, from 1-5 workshops, 61.65%, and from 6-10 workshops, 10.77%. Regarding the conferences attended by participants, almost 62% had attended none (61.95%), 30% had attended from 1-3 (30.24%), 6% had attended from 4-6 conferences (6.19%), and less than 2% had attended seven or more conferences (1.62%).

An independent sample T-Test (see Appendix 4) was run to calculate descriptive statistics in terms of the mean and standard deviation and to show any significant statistical differences regarding the gender, nationality, qualifications and job. In their evaluation of the items in Sections II or III, the test showed statistical significance of 0.02 in the means (4.38) non-Kuwaiti vs. (4.19) Kuwaitis, regarding their responses to the English curriculum implemented by MOE for students at secondary school. These numbers show that there was more agreement from non-Kuwaiti teachers regarding the suitability of the curriculum represented by the 15 items in Section II than their Kuwaiti peers.

The ANNOVA test (see Appendix 5) was run to calculate any descriptive statistics in terms of mean standard deviation regarding the educational area, years of experience, stages taught, and workshops attended. The statistical analysis shows one significant statistical difference between educational districts regarding the description of the curriculum. The Tukey test (see Appendix 6) was used to measure this statistical significance of .019, which showed that the Farwania Educational Area received the highest mean (4.55) regarding Section II in terms of agreement with the 15 items of this section. As a general rule, the mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level for both tests. This shows that teachers in the Alafarwania district had more agreement about the suitability of the curriculum than teachers in other districts.

Section II

Table (7) below includes the results of the data analysis of the items related to the description of the MOE curriculum for high school students. Before analysing the items in Table (7), it is important to notice that the non-Kuwaiti teachers in all six educational districts and the Farwania Educational

district in particular were in favour of the items related to the description of the curriculum.

The table above contains the analysis of the 15 items related to the curriculum description in secondary schools. The participants assigned agreement to little agreement (total mean of 4.34) to all items. It is interesting to mention that the researchers tried to gather richer information regarding the participants' backgrounds (gender, position, years of experience, workshops and conferences) so that this might give some different value to the items in this section. However, what occurred was that all participants with a different biographical background were in support of the curriculum used in secondary schools. Among all the 15 items included in this section, the participants gave item one the highest value (4.78), indicating that they were satisfied with the course description of the content given to them by the MOE. This seems to suggest that the MOE was doing its best to provide a good curriculum. The second highest ranked item (4.74) was given to the statement "the course goals are clear"; this finding is to the benefit of the MOE.

This response was given by the participants whose years of experience in teaching exceeded 5-20 years in the field. Furthermore, the third highest value (4.61) was assigned to the item 'the course outcomes are clear.' The fourth highest ranked item (4.51) was given to the statement 'The teaching methods are clear.' This indicates that teacher participants were aware of the teaching methods they should have been using in the classroom, to emphasize the suitability of the content of curriculum. This finding does not confirm previous research studies which reported that: 'inadequate teaching curricula' is a major cause of the students' demotivation to learn the target language (Alkhairy 2013; Alkhatib, 2012; Khan, 2011).

	Table (7) Section 2: Frequencies of first factor items			
		Mean	SD	Items sorted according to mean
a1	The course description is clear	4.78	1.179	1
a2	The course goals are clear	4.74	1.194	2
a3	The course outcomes are clear	4.32	1.298	9
a4	The prerequisites are clear	4.32	1.269	10
a5	The course content is clear	4.61	1.171	3
a6	The duties of teachers are clear	4.39	1.415	7
a7	The teaching methods are clear	4.51	1.264	4
a8	The attachments are clear	4.44	1.363	6
a9	The assignments are clear	4.36	1.249	8
a10	The time allotted to teach weekly is enough	4.50	1.470	5
a11	Content can be covered with no pressure on the students	4.06	1.549	14
a12	Content is suitable for the age of the students	4.08	1.345	12
a13	Content matches the students' capabilities	4.06	0.852	15

a14	Local environment is reflected in the content	4.17	1.366	11
a15	There is smooth transition and continuity in the course content between the grade levels	3.76	1.433	13
	Total Mean & SD	4.34	0.852	

Table 7: Description of the curriculum

The fifth highest value (4.50) was assigned to the 'time allotted to teach weekly is enough.' The sixth highest ranked item (4.44) was 'the attachments are clear;' this means that MOE was producing supplementary materials to go with the books required for teaching and teachers were happy with them. The seventh highest ranked item (4.39) was 'the duties of teachers are clear.' As stated by some teachers, they were given guidelines to follow by the Ministry. The eighth highest ranking item (4.36) was 'the assignment of the students are clear.' This means that all participants in all six educational districts were aware of the kind of assignment each student had to do according to their grade in school. The ninth highest ranking item (4.32) was 'the course outcomes are clear.' Again, teachers were aware of what the students were expected to be able to do when they finished these curricula at each grade. The tenth highest ranking item (4.32) was 'the prerequisites are clear'. Once again, teachers commended the curriculum for its prerequisites. Items 11, 12, 13 and 14 received a similar ranking (4.17, 4.08, 4. 46, 4.06 respectively) and agreement among the participants on the items 'content can be covered with no pressure on the students,' 'content is suitable for the age of the student,' 'content matches the students' capabilities,' and 'local environment is reflected in the content.' None of these results confirm the findings of previous studies (Khan, 2011; Souriyavongsa, 2013), which reported that one of the factors causing low English learning was the inappropriateness of the curriculum. Item 15, 'there is smooth transition and continuity in the course content between the grade levels,' received the lowest ranking (3.76), which is a combination of agreement and disagreement. This was a fifty/fifty answer from the participants and may be explained by the changing of the curriculum every second year.

Section 3

All 31 items in Section III were interrelated factors regarding teaching inside the classroom, as noted in many studies (Albustan, 2009; Alkhatib, 2012; Alkhairy, 2013; Malallah, 2005). For simplicity of interpretation, this section is divided into five sub-sections. Sub-section one consists of nine items all related to teaching techniques. Sub-section two consists of eight items related to perceived students' attitude and behaviour. The third sub-section is related to the time allotted for teaching, which consists of five items. The fourth sub-section consists of three items about

the class environment. The last sub-section consists of six items related to administration and teacher evaluation.

Table (8) below represents the first sub-section group of items and details the results of items B1-B9. All the items were included to elicit participants' responses towards various English teaching methods and techniques inside the classroom, such as: 1) the four language skills, 2) use of dictionary, 3) parts of speech, 4) words in sentences and 5) English syllabus. Highest values were assigned to the four items (B1, B3, B4, B5) that were related to teaching English vocabulary and their usage, parts of speech, words in sentences and the structural patterns. All participants reported that all the components mentioned above were very well covered in the classroom. It seems that the teachers were teaching according to the instructions given to them in the course aims and objectives by the MOE. The next four items (B7, B2, B6, B9) were related to the teachers' responses regarding the correction of mistakes, use of English dictionary, equal emphasis on the four skills, note taking and dictation. All participants assigned a high value to all these items. They considered these components very important for students, or had another justification, as they might be teaching them according to the course's specified aims and goals. The participants of this study assigned a high value of more than four to the questionnaire item B8, revealing that they considered the English syllabus to be very large and unhelpful for improving student proficiency. Careful attention needs to be paid here, as these teachers were teaching according to the rules and regulations of the MOE, and in spite of this they had concerns about the large syllabus they were teaching. The teachers seemed to be more concerned with finishing the condensed syllabus at the expense of the outcome, which was student proficiency in English. This finding confirms previous research findings which reported that a large English syllabus is considered a demotivating learning factor because teachers will ensure that the syllabus is finished, regardless of students' comprehension.

		Mean	SD	Sub-section mean rank	Overall means rank
Table (8) Section 3: Frequencies of second factor items					
Sub-section 1: teaching techniques					
B1	I encourage students to learn new vocabulary and their usages	5.54	0.833	1	1
B2	I tell students how to consult a dictionary	4.93	1.084	6	10
B3	I teach students the parts of speech (nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc.)	5.52	0.831	2	2
B4	I guide the students to use the words in sentences (small, simple and of daily use)	5.49	0.903	3	3
B5	I teach the students structural patterns to make correct sentences (which part of speech	5.46	0.935	4	4

	should come first, second and third…)				
B6	I teach the four skills with equal emphasis	4.85	1.245	7	12
B7	I'm always ready to correct mistakes made by my students in class	4.99	1.147	5	7
B8	I expose my students to different types of methods such as (note taking, dictation) to improve their listening skills	4.25	1.313	9	23
B9	The syllabus is very large and does not help improve the students' English proficiency	4.83	1.251	8	13

Table 8: Section 3, subsection 1: Statements about teaching techniques.

The second sub-section details the results of items B10-B17 in Table (9). They were included to elicit responses regarding student behaviour and attitude, such as doing homework, English is a school subject, no interest, no confidence, use of L1, tardiness and disturbance, and student's English background in intermediate school. Teachers assigned high values to items regarding their opinion of the negative behaviour and attitude of students based on their personal experience in classrooms. The finding of this study confirms the findings of other studies conducted in the Arab world regarding the above mentioned factors as demotivating factors (Alkhairy 2013; Manasreh, 2011; Javid, 2011 , Khassawneh, 2011). On the other hand, Item B16 was the only item to receive the lowest value of 2.54 from all respondents. This regards the statement that students come from intermediate schools with a good background in the basics and skills of English. This result shows that participants disagreed with the statement. Their evaluation of students coming from intermediate schools was negative, as the teachers felt that the students seemed to lack the required skills to progress to the next more advanced level of English. This should also raise a number of questions regarding the level of English proficiency as an outcome from intermediate schools in Kuwait.

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Subsection means rank	Overall mean rank
Table (9)Section 3: Frequencies of second factor items					
Sub-section 2: Student behaviour and attitude					
B10	Students do not do their homework at home	4.37	1.287	5	20
B11	Students think of English as a school subject with no importance for their future	4.78	1.232	2	14
B12	Students do not have an interest in learning English	4.31	1.313	6	21
B13	Students consider English the most difficult subject	4.24	1.556	7	24
B14	Students lack confidence using English in the classroom because they are afraid of making mistakes and feel shy	4.74	1.154	3	15

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Subsection mean rank	Overall mean rank
B15	Students always refer to L1 in discussion and asking questions	4.49	1.301	4	18
B16	Students come from intermediate school with a good background in the basics and skills of English	2.54	1.455	8	31
B17	Students' lack of timekeeping and disturbence in this school interferes with my teaching	4.86	1.266	1	11

Table 9: Section 3, subsection 2: Statements about student behaviour and attitudes.

The third sub-section includes items B18-B22 in Table (10). The participants assigned a value of 4.1 to 3.94 to the four items regarding practice time in class for the four skills. This indicates that the teachers divided the time equally between the four skills in class. Another justification may be that this was done at part of the syllabus instruction. The only item with a low value of 2.90 was that for statement B22: 'I teach English for more than 3 classes each day with enough time to measure the overall progress of my students'.Participants disagreed with the statement, indicating that teachers who taught more than three classes were not able to sufficiently measure the overall progress of their students. Teaching more classes reduced their productivity and consequently had an adverse impact on students.

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Subsection mean rank	Overall mean rank
Table (10) Section 3: Frequencies of second factor items					
Sub-section 3: Allotted time and time management					
B18	There is enough time for students to practise different types of writing in class	3.80	1.447	4	29
B19	There is enough time for students to practise different types of reading in class	3.94	1.436	3	9
B20	There is enough time for students to practise speaking in class	4.01	1.390	2	26
B21	There is enough time for students to practise listening in class	4.01	1.399	1	27
B22	I teach English for more than 3 classes each day with enough time to measure the overall progress of my students	2.90	1.566	5	30

Table 10: Section 3, subsection 3: Statements about allotted time for teaching.

The fourth sub section includes three items regarding the class environment, as shown in Table (11). Very high agreement values were given to the class not being equipped with teaching aids and being noisy. The first and second ranked items were found to be demotivating factors for students, according to Alkhairy (2013). Class size on the other hand was at a

satisfactory level, as agreed by teachers, and this therefore should not be a negative demotivating factor in Kuwait as found in other countries.

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Subsection mean rank	Overall mean rank
Table (11) Section 3: Frequencies of second factor items					
Sub-section 4: class environment					
B23	Class environment is noisy	4.56	1.304	1	16
B24	I am satisfied with my class size	4.15	1.573	3	25
B25	Class environment is not equipped with teaching aids	4.56	1.304	2	17

Table 11: Section 3, subsection 4: Statements about class environment.

The final and fifth sub-section includes six items, B26-B31, regarding administration and teacher evaluation, as shown in Table (12). These items cover teacher evaluation, administration behaviour, routine duties and paper work, school rules, teacher load, and teachers' opinion of syllabus changes by the administration.

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Subsection mean rank	Overall mean rank
Table (12)Section 3: Frequencies of second factor items					
Sub-section 5: administration and teachers' evaluation					
b26	Teacher evaluated fairly in school	3.87	1.514	6	27
B27	The school administration's behaviour toward the teacher is supportive and encouraging	4.38	1.319	4	19
B28	Routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job as a teacher	5.17	1.205	1	5
B29	Rules in the school conflict with my professional judgment	4.28	1.468	5	22
B30	I am frustrated with the constant change in the syllabus	4.95	1.372	3	8
B31	I am under stress every teaching day	5.01	1.196	2	6

Table 12: Section 3, subsection 5: Statements about administration and teacher's evaluation.

The highest agreement mean was 5.17 for the statement 'routine duties and paperwork interfere with my job as a teacher.' The second highest item (5.01) was for 'I am under stress every teaching day'. These two items indicate that although there was agreement on the suitability of the curriculum, there was an issue with the syllabus and the organization of teachers' time and work. This is also supported by the teachers' agreement on the statement B30: 'I am frustrated with the constant change in the syllabus.' The high level of agreement means dissatisfaction by teachers with the syllabus and administrative overload. On the other hand, teachers strongly agreed that the 'administration's behaviour is supportive and encouraging.' Although they found that 'rules in the school conflict with my professional judgment', when the teachers were asked about the

administration's evaluation of teachers, there was a 3.87 agreement level that the 'teacher is evaluated fairly in school.' These overall results indicate that the school administration was supportive and friendly but they were rigid about the syllabus, curriculum and teacher duties. These aspects in Kuwait are regulated by the MOE and school administrations have little flexibility in this regard. When looking at the mean rankings from the overall perspective, the highest means were found in the first category of teaching techniques. Teachers had a strong agreement that they were teaching according to the syllabus, and using all the required techniques in teaching their students with encouragement. These high levels could be interpreted as subjective because the teachers were evaluating themselves, and this was anticipated. On the other hand, the researchers expected that the teachers would be more objective in their evaluation of the curriculum. The results in section II show that the teachers evaluated the curriculum highly. This means that the curriculum in Kuwait schools is not a major factor affecting the students' English level, indicating that the MOE is doing well in that regard.

However, although the curriculum was highly appreciated by the teachers, the syllabus and administrative load were not. The teachers were overloaded with routine duties and paperwork, alongside having to teach large numbers of classes and an intensive syllabus; in this respect, they seemed unable to achieve their goals. The results show that that teachers agreed that they were not able to follow up on their students' progress, which indicates that they were either rushing to follow the syllabus, or that they were occupied with other administrative duties that caused them stress and prevented them from monitoring their students' level and progress. These explanations are supported by the high level of agreement on the items themselves.

Conclusion:
The MOE in Kuwait is currently offering the best English curriculum, textbooks, and qualified teachers, not only for students in high school but to all grades in public schools. Nevertheless, despite this tremendous effort, the percentage of students who fail the EPT (78%) suggests that there is a gap in teaching and learning.

The main purpose of this study was to determine the cause of the poor results of the Kuwaiti students in the EPT when joining the PAAET colleges from the perspective of the teachers. After the statistical analysis of the data, the researchers can now present some valuable pedagogical implications for the learning and teaching of English in Kuwaiti public schools, especially secondary schools. These implications as follows:

(1) The teachers stated that the English curriculum offered by the MOE is well organized. This contradicts our null hypothesis.

(2) The teachers stated that students were not motivated to learn and read English textbooks, as they considered English to be difficult and referred to their L1 a great deal. This view agrees with other studies, but can be overcome by introducing learning strategies to students. Learning strategies are the methods that learners use to obtain information. Abbasi, Ahmed and Khattak (2010) pointed out that language learning strategies are the specific manners or thoughts that students use to increase their language learning. Many researchers believe that learning strategies are significant in EFL/ESL, as they provide learners with the tools to achieve their goals. According to Ting (2009), students are able to overcome their weakness in some learning styles with suitable strategy training, and learning strategies that can influence achievement.

(3) Teachers stated clearly that there was a gap between the basic English skills that students have coming from intermediate school, and the expected English proficiency level they should gain in secondary schools. Secondary school teachers clearly agreed that the level of English students have at the start of their secondary school is significantly below expectation. This should be a good reason to investigate the curriculum in intermediate schools in Kuwait as well.

(4) Teachers stated clearly that constant changes to the curriculum place more stress on teachers and adversely affect the learning process of English among students. Any curriculum changes and modifications should therefore be rationalized.

References:
Abbasi, M., Ahmed, A. & Khattack, Z. (2010). Negative influence on large scale assessment on language learning strategies of the secondary school certificate (SSC) students. Procedia– Social and Behavioural Science 2(2), 4938-4942. doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.030799

Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, S. E. (2006). Factors affecting quality of English language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nigeria. College Student Journal, 40(3).

Akasha, O. (2013) Exploring the challenges facing Arabic-speaking ESL students and teachers in middle school. Journal of ELT and Applied Linguistics 1(1).

Albustan, S.A. & Albustan, L. (2009). Investigating students' attitudes and preferences towards learning English at Kuwait University. College Student Journal 43(2).

Al-Khairy, M. (2013). English as a foreign language learning demotivational factors as perceived by Saudi undergraduates. European Scientific Journal 9(32), 365-379.

Alkhatib, H., Zadourian, H. & Abdulmalik, M. (2013). Difficulties that Arab students face in learning English. Research project. Arab Open University .

Bahrani, T. & Sultani, R. (2012). What makes an English teacher stand out among others? Research on Human and Social Sciences 2(2).

Bandahana, H. (2011). Development and modification of curriculum for excellence in teacher education. Journal of Education and Practice 2(9).

Collier, V.P. (1987). Age and rate of acquisition of second language for academic purposes. TESOL Quarterly 21, 617-641.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: qualitative questionnaires and mixed methods approaches. California: SAGA Publications.

Cummins, J. (2000). Language, power and pedagogy: bilingual children in the crossfire. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Gilmore, A. (2011). I prefer not text: developing Japanese learners' communicative competence with authentic materials. Language Learning, 61(3), 786-819.

Javid, C., Farooq, M. & Gulzar, M. (2012). Saudi English major undergraduates and English teachers' perceptions regarding effective ELT in the KSA: a comparative study. European Journal of Scientific Research 85(1) 55-70.

Khan, I. (2011). Learning difficulties in English: diagnosis and pedagogy in Saudi Arabia. Educational Research, 2(7), 1248-1257.

Khassawneh, S. F. (2011). The attitudes of students towards using Arabic in the EFL classroom at Yarmouk University in Jordan. European Journal of Social Science, 2(4), 592-602.

Klesmir, H. (1994). Assessment and teacher perceptions of ESL students' achievement. English Quarterly, 26(3), 5-7.

London, J. (2011). Factors affecting quality of English language teaching and learning. eHow.Science and Education.

Malallah, S. (2005). English in an Arabic environment: current attitudes to English among Kuwaiti university students. International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 3(1), 19-43.

Manasreh, M. (2010). English in an Islamic cultural context: Students' attitudes to English and advised practices. Paper presented at the 44th annual International ITEFL conference, Harrogate.

Mawere, M. (2012). Reflection on the problems encountered in the teaching and learning of English language in Mozambique's public schools. International Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 5(1), 38-46

Murray, D. & Christison, N. (2011). What English language teachers need to know: volume one –understanding learning. New York: Routledge.

Rababah, G. (2003). Communication problems facing Arab learners of English: a personal perspective. In TEFLWEB Journal 2(1), 15-28.

Samadi, O. & Alghazo, A. (2013). Jordanian teachers' attitude toward foreign language teaching and their relationship to these teachers classroom practice. Journal of Education and Practice 4(17).

Shehdeh, F . (2010). Challenges of teaching English in the Arab world: why can't EFL programmes deliver as expected? Procedia–Social and Behavioural Sciences 2(2), 3600-3604.

Souriyavongsa, T., Ray, S. & Zainuldin, M. J. (2013). Factors causing students low English language learning: a case study in the National University of Laos. International Journal of English Language Education 1(1).

Souvanny, B., Mashashi, S., & Yukiko, H. (2008a). Determinants and issues in student achievement in English at Lao secondary education level. In R. Paul, & N. Roger (Eds.), Asian EFL journal quarterly, 10.

Ting, L. (2009). Language learning strategies –the theoretical framework and some suggestions for learner training practice. English Language Teaching, 2(4), 199-206.

Zughoul, M. (1986). English departments in the third world: Language , Linguistics , or literature? English teaching forum (24) : 10-17

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Table 1: Results of the EPT exam for students in year 2012/2013

No. of registered students	No. of tested students	No. of failed students	No. of passed students
7375	5614	4428	1186
	100%	78.8%	21.2%

Appendix 2: Table 2: Reliability statistics.

Table (3) Reliability Statistics		
Factor	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
First	15	0.90
Second	39	0.78
Whole Questionnaire	54	0.87

457

Appendix 3: Table 3: teacher biographical information

Table (4) Frequencies of Main Data		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	302	44.54
	Female	376	55.46
Nationality	Kuwaiti	141	20.80
	Non-Kuwaiti	537	79.20
Educational Area	Assema	108	15.93
	Ahmadi	128	18.88
	Hawalli	106	15.63
	Mubarak	111	16.37
	Jahraa	125	18.44
	Farwaniya	100	14.75
Job	Teacher	665	98.08
	Department Head	13	1.92
Qualifications	PA	656	96.76
	Master	22	3.24
Years of Experience	from 1-5 years	130	19.17
	from 6-10 years	218	32.15
	from 11-15 years	128	18.88
	from 16-20 years	103	15.19
	21 years and more	99	14.60
Stage	Ten	241	35.55
	Eleven	198	29.20
	Twelve	239	35.25
Workshops	no workshop	170	25.07
	from 1-5 workshops	418	61.65
	from 6-10 workshops	73	10.77
	11 workshop and more	17	2.51
Conferences	no conference	420	61.95
	from 1-3 conferences	205	30.24
	from 4-6 conferences	42	6.19
	7 conferences and more	11	1.62

Appendix 4: Table 4: Independent Sample Test Nationality T-Test

Independent Sample Test Nationality		N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teaching Subject content	Kuwaiti	141	4.19	0.916	-2.339	676	0.02
	Non-Kuwaiti	537	4.38	0.831			
Teaching method in classroom	Kuwaiti	141	4.47	0.434	1.173	676	0.24
	Non-Kuwaiti	537	4.42	0.425			

Appendix 5: Table 5: ANOVA test educational districts

Table (5) ANOVA by Educational Area									
		N	Mean	SD		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teaching subject content	Assema	108	4.24	0.932	Between Groups	8.509	5	1.702	2.369	0.04
	Ahmadi	128	4.36	0.750	Within Groups	482.707	672	.718		
	Hawally	106	4.34	0.755	Total	491.216	677			
	Mubarak	111	4.18	0.890						
	Jahraa	125	4.38	0.937						
	Farwaniya	100	4.55	0.795						
	Total	678	4.34	0.852						
Teaching method in classroom	Aassema	108	4.36	0.440	Between Groups	1.557	5	.311	1.714	0.13
	Ahmadi	128	4.48	0.368	Within Groups	122.118	672	.182		
	Hawally	106	4.37	0.366	Total	123.676	677			
	Mubarak	111	4.44	0.475						
	Jahraa	125	4.47	0.451						
	Farwaniya	100	4.45	0.452						
	Total	678	4.43	0.427						

Appendix 6: Tukey test for Alfarwania

Multiple Comparisons of Tukey HSD (Educational Area)				
	I	J	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Teaching subject content	Farwaniya	Mubarak	.37136[*]	.019
*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level				

459