Intervention Strategies in Saudi EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Verbal reports and EFL teachers’ experience at Al-Majma’ah Community College warn that underachievement is an educational crisis in the making. And in the paucity of research findings to raise the institutional awareness of the phenomenon, coupled with the lack of professional training programs, the crisis could be aggravated further. This study is the first attempt to address underachievement among the preparatory term students in the College and report certain intervention strategies that have been applied to help the students improve their performance in English. As from the fifth week of the first term of the academic year 2009/2010, a number of intervention strategies have been devised to achieve two objectives: to motivate the students to improve their performance; and to help them acquire new study skills. These strategies are: (repeated) classroom orientations, the use of Arabic in the classroom, and many methods of assessment of the students’ course-work. In the light of what has so far been done, the researcher is confident that many students have the ability to excel academically provided that they are properly informed and guided to discover these abilities.

1. Introduction

The academic year 2008/2009 witnessed the shift to the preparatory year system at King Saud University, resulting in a dramatic change in the English teaching load in the Community Colleges. Viz. the (weekly) five-hour English course NGR 101 was replaced by the present fifteen-hour course NGR 110. As the then affiliate of King Saud University, Al-Majma’ah Community College applied the new system to three of its five
academic programs: Nursing, Medical Devices and Computer Sciences. And taking advantage of the flexibility of the new system, the College chose to limit it to one term for the fear that implementing the whole program (lasting for two terms) would be at the expense of the specialist academic plans, bearing in mind that latters were originally designed to be completed in four terms. At the end of these terms the students either graduate with an associate degree or proceed to enroll in other colleges with related B.A/B. Sc programs where they could complete the third and four years (two terms each) to graduate with a bachelor degree in the relevant field.

Generally speaking, the new English syllabus could have sufficient to improve the students’ competence and performance in English had they dispensed with their secondary school learning style that is allegedly reported to draw on the leniency in the system of assessment of the students’ performance. As it will be detailed in (3) below, many students informed during the first ice-breaking class that they achieved 85+ in the English secondary certificate examination; however, only few were able answer simple Yes/No or wh-questions of the type: Do you live in Al-Majma’ah? Where are you from? Why are you late?, etc. And when asked if they earned such high scores, some of them said that they had not, explaining that about one-third of the scores had been rewarded for classroom participation (something which many did not do), attendance, punctuality and the like. Some students have even gone so far as to say that since their school teachers had also been their private teachers at home, they had often (successfully) negotiated for desired scores. The majority of the College entrants (at least those included in this investigation) ceaselessly projected their secondary school learning style onto their new
tertiary educational experience. In the light of the available literature, this learning style can initially be argued to be the main cause of “underachievement”.

2. Conceptual Background

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2007:1411), the verb “underachieve”, and hence the nominal forms “underachiever” and “underachievement”, means “to do less well than you could especially in school work”. This difference is technically conceived of in the educational literature as “discrepancy” between potential and performance. In other words, underachieving students “have the intellectual ability to do substantially better but they lack the ability to work to competition, function independently and produce with time limits” (Center for Applied Motivation, Inc.). A plethora of related terms are widely used in the literature, indicating agreement and/or dispute over the scope and relevance of the term “underachievement” to a variety of learning problems; these include “slow learning”, (Blanchard, 2007), “high achieving underachiever”, “low achieving underachiever” (Smith 2005), “gifted underachievers” (Center for Applied Motivation, Inc.), etc. Blanchard draws a comparison between the terms “underachievement” and “slow learning”, stating that they differ with regards to the measurement of the students’ performance. Viz. “slow learning” is measured against “approximate norms” whereupon slow learners “fall behind their peers” (who are talented students). As to “underachievement”, it is “measured against predicted levels” whereupon the students “fall behind the progress they are expected to make” (vis-à-vis overachievers). Another such difference between “slow learning” and “underachievement” is that while the former “signals something is different, not necessarily wrong”, the latter “signals something has gone wrong” (ibid). The point will
be detailed further in connection with the reasons of underachievement below. Where the terms “gifted underachievers”, “high underachieving underachievers” and “low underachieving underachievers” are concerned, they are apparently subcategories of the general term “underachiever” despite the performance difference among the learners so described.

Research into underachievement associates underachieving students with a host of attributes that can be summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unmotivated</td>
<td>low self-esteem</td>
<td>disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fearful</td>
<td>reluctant</td>
<td>sloppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncertain</td>
<td>uncomfortable</td>
<td>moody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncomfortable</td>
<td>isolated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distressed</td>
<td>lacking in perseverance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>lacking in goal-oriented behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unhappy</td>
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Table (1): Attributes of Underachieving Students
These attributes can be further conceived as personal (e.g. fearful, moody), social (e.g. isolated), and academic (e.g. unmotivated, lacking in goal-oriented behavior). They emanate either from research findings or general observation of the student’s educational behavior. In fact, despite the fear of being biased, teachers’ judgment can be a reliable method for identifying underachieving students on the basis of their grades, motivation, commitment to daily work and position relative to their peers (International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, p. 484). However, there are dissenting voices concerning the reliability of the notion of “underachievement” in explaining students’ performance. Smith (2005: 156) contends that “the term underachievement is not really very useful in helping us understand what is happening with regard to relative achievement in school”. Thus, the argument goes, “attempts to identify students who may be underachieving have left us with a relatively heterogeneous group of individuals with little in common…”. Smith bases her criticism on the role of standardized test results in identifying underachieving students in Great Britain, Australia, Japan and the United States of America. Now Smith’s argument against the explanatory power of underachievement can be rejected on two grounds. First, she has just been quoted classifying learners into “high achieving underachievers” and “low achieving underachievers”; this seems to detract from the logic in her view that the learners’ identification process “have left us with a relatively heterogeneous group of individuals with little in common…”. Second, and most importantly, there is empirical evidence to support the understanding that underachievement can have real world consequences and can, thus, be a powerful mechanism in accounting for the students performance. Topol and Reznikoff (1979) conducted a study, comparing, ineralia, education and career goals
of achievers and underachievers among high school senior girls. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between achievers and underachievers in that “achievers aspired significantly higher than underachievers”.

The underachievers’ attributes summarized in table (1) above are assumed to be given impetus by a number of factors. Owing to the multiplicity of the factors responsible for underachievement in the relevant literature, this paper will confine itself to three comprehensive models: Rogers et al (2008), Preckel (2006) and Marcus as shown in table (2) below:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• High or low expectations of others</td>
<td>• Personality of the student</td>
<td>• Attention deficit disorder (ADD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Text anxiety/tension</td>
<td>• Family variables</td>
<td>• Learning disability (LD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning problems</td>
<td>• School environment</td>
<td>• Various medical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fear of problems</td>
<td>• Intervention styles</td>
<td>• Emotional or psychological problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of motivation</td>
<td>• Preferred learning style</td>
<td>• Academic problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peer Pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative attitude towards school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forced choice dilemma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Missed basic skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low academic self-efficacy</td>
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Table (2): Factors responsible for Underachievement

Table (2) details that underachievement is given rise by factors that are psychological/academic (Rogers et al 2008), psychological/social/academic (Preckel
2006) and psychological/medical/academic (Marcus, online). Of course, since underachievement occurs in academic institutions, the academic factors are present in three models. Rodgers et al (2008) particularly draws heavily on the academic factors as the primary reasons for underachievement. Preckel and Marcus, on the other hand, propose a set of social and medical factors (respectively) as possible explanatory mechanisms of the phenomenon.

At the end of this part it is appropriate to review the intervention methods employed to deal with underachievers. Educational research informs that the type of intervention adopted depends on the type of underachiever(s). In this regard, Smutney (2004) proposes that cases of underachievement should be “examined individually – with no preconceptions”. The rationale for this procedure, Smutney justifies, emanates from the fact that “underachievement is such a varied and complex phenomenon”. Figure (1) below summarises the Center of Applied Motivation model of underachievers’ types and the intervention method suitable for each type:
The Center of applied Motivation model of intervention is one that associates intervention procedures with the relevant type of the underachieving students; however, there is nothing inherent in these procedures that renders them mutually exclusive. In fact, they tend to overlap. For example, “lack of trust in oneself” is an attribute that can characterise “distant”, “passive” and “dependent” underachievers. It is not uncommon, therefore, that the same intervention procedures be applied to the three cases of underachievement. Furthermore, table (2) illustrates the fact that theorists conceive...
of underachievers’ attributes as psychological/academic, psychological/social/academic, and psychological/medical/academic, supporting the argument that the same intervention procedure can suit more than one underachievement situation.

The educational literature also abounds in intervention methods that are addressed to all underachieving students regardless of their type. Investigating learners’ reading skills, Quatroche (1999) lists six strategies to help them overcome their reading problems:

- One on one tutoring
- Extra instructional time
- Explicit teaching of letter-sound relationship and word identification strategies
- Repeated exposure to words
- Repeated reading of connected texts
- Easy reading materials

In academic environments with large classes and limited time for teaching a course in reading comprehension (e.g. weekly two hours), it is virtually impossible to implement most of these strategies despite their usefulness in improving learners’ reading comprehension.

Let us conclude this section by considering a supportive strategy that can also be of use in dealing with underachievement although it has not originally been devised to serve this particular purpose. This is the educational concept of “scaffolding”. According to Zoreda and Vivaldo-Lima (2008: 23) *Scaffolding* is “Vygotsky’s educational metaphor … in which the teacher creates affective and pedagogical support, including materials,
experiences, peer interaction, and teacher-student interaction through activities of increasing difficulty that systematically challenge a learner but are still achievable, given his or her level of experience…” The scaffolding theory was introduced in the 1950s to describe a situation where parents help their children to acquire first language (Wikipedia) but was soon applied to second/foreign language acquisition. According to Saye and Brush (2002), as quoted in the Wikipedia, there are two levels of scaffolding: soft and hard. The soft scaffolding results from classroom discussion taking place between the teacher and the students whereby the students can ask questions and get “constructive feedback” from the teacher. On the other hand, “hard scaffolding” is needed to help learners with difficult tasks. The teacher provides “hints and cues to help the students reach an even higher level of thinking”.

Scaffolding falls into three types. The two levels that have just been reported are subsumed under the “expert scaffolding”; viz. the teacher is the expert who scaffolds his students. When a group of two or more students collaboratively learn from each other, they are said to apply “reciprocal scaffolding. The newest of all the types is the “technical scaffolding”. According to this type, “computers replace the teachers as the experts or guides, and the students can be guided with web links, online tutorials, or help pages.” (ibid).

3. The Study

3.1 Subjects

The subjects of this study were 26 preparatory term students doing the English course NGR 110 at the Community College of Al-Majma’ah University during the academic year 2009/2010. They were enrolled in the College career programs of Accounting,
Medical Devices and Computer Sciences that qualify them to graduate with the associate
degree after successful completion of four terms. The students came from different
geographical regions of Saudi Arabia: The Central Region, The Eastern Region, The
Northern Region and the Western Region. Relative to the underachievement attributes
summarised in table (2) above, the subjects of this study were characterised by the
following:

1. Most of the subjects travelled every day for more than fifty kilometers to and
   fro.

2. Although they were repeatedly warned not to leave their pens, notebooks, and
textbooks at home or in their cars, they usually entered the class bare-handed.

3. At the beginning of every class, most of the subjects did not open their books
   unless the teacher had repeatedly asked them or had personally addressed each to
do so.

4. Despite the fact that tests and quizzes were announced beforehand so that they
   had ample time to study, a number of them started doing so minutes before the
   quiz time.

5. When advised to make greater effort to improve their performance, they would
   ask the course tutor to recommend a private teacher.

6. The subjects had a rich repertoire of excuses to evade Wednesday classes or to
   have a quiz repeated.

7. Except of three students, the rest of the students missed about 15-40% of the
classes.
3.2 Materials

The materials of this study consisted of the five components included in the English course NGR 110; these are: reading, writing, Listening, speaking and grammar. The textbooks used to teach these components are the Interaction Series corresponding to each component: Hartman et al (2007) for reading and writing, Tanka and Baker (2001) for listening and speaking and Kirn and Jack (2002) for grammar. The first five chapters of each textbook were prescribed by the syllabus to be covered in the first term.

4. Intervention Strategies

4.1 Orientation

Orientation is a process whereby entrants are introduced to the University traditions, values and academic systems so that they can function properly as members of the University community. It is considered a matter of great importance since it is arranged at all levels of the University administrative hierarchy: the Vice-Chancellor’s general meeting with all the new students of the University and the Dean’s meeting with the new students of his/her College are all ways of integrating the new entrants into the University community. The same process was continued in the English classroom. The students were repeatedly warned that about 50% of the course teaching hours were counted as credit hours; thus, if a student was to fail the course or obtain a low grade, he would likely suffer educationally to the degree that his whole academic life in the College might be jeopardized. By contrast, if they were to study hard and do well in the quizzes, tests and final examination, they would achieve an accumulative average that would enable them to resist future breakdowns. The students were also assured that they were not lacking in intelligence to excel in their academic life and that all they needed was a
positive attitude towards the subject. This was reinforced further by a story summarizing an academic discussion which took place in an international conference in Malaysia. In that conference a presenter, who was very critical of his Saudi students, was opposed by a Malaysian Professor, telling the audience that the Saudi students were the best in her class. Such a strategy was hoped to enhance the students’ perception of themselves and their ability to adapt to the new academic environment.

4.2 The Use of Arabic

It was reported in (1) above that most of the subjects failed to answer simple Yes/No questions of the kind: “Do you live in Al-Majma’ah?”. So it was apparent that if the classes were to be run in English only, most, if not all, of the students would be put at disadvantage, bearing in mind that they were doing satisfactorily in their specialist subjects. Thus, translation of new lexical items into Arabic was richly employed to facilitate the comprehension of the concepts underlying various classroom activities.

It was widely argued in the contrastive analysis literature (cf. Lee 1968; James 1980) that learners mother tongue impedes L2 acquisition through negative interference; thus, some language educators might object to the legitimization of an explicit source of L2 errors- a practice that was condemned fifty-two years ago. However, the tendency to use the mother tongue as a facilitator of L2 acquisition receives support from recent literature. Bax (2004) points out that in the post-methods era, it is legitimate to employ whatever means that can help learners digest L2 materials, including their mother tongue. Thus, given the fact the course materials were more advanced than the students’ actual levels, it was practically necessary to device ways to enhance the students’ understanding of the different components of the course. Arabic was the only
means for successful communication in the classroom. It was the language used to make requests, ask questions about different course items, etc. Another such view about the(positive) role of L1 in L2 acquisition is proposed by Butzkamm (2003, p. 31). He postulates that “monolingual learning is intrinsic impossibility”, and that even if attempts are made to “turn off” what the students have learned through their L1, it will still be “silently present” in the students minds. All things being equal, Arabic proved to be very useful in the teaching of a number of grammatical rules in the course NGR 110. For example, were it not for the explanation of the Arabic counterparts of the English conditionals, the students would have understood the situations required each of the English conditional structures.

**4.3 Course-work Assessment**

Until the academic year 2008/2009, the assessment of the students course work ranged between 30% and 50% of the full mark. In the following year King Saud University released its (online) Edugate that have revolutionized its academic transactions, i.e. timetables, students’ lists, exam results, faculty assessment (by the students), etc. have come to be posted online. One of the important consequences of this new electronic system is that the assessment of the students’ course-work has been fixed at 60% of the total mark, allocating the remaining 40% for the final examination.

The general tendency of assessment of the course-work is that the students take two mid-term exams that are corrected out of 30 marks each. The subjects of this study had their first English mid-term exam in the third week of the term. The result was frustrating for both of them and the teacher; only one student got 12 marks while the average performance for the whole group was 8 marks. The same exam was replicated the
following week but there was no significant improvement in the students’ performance.

At this point it became clear that this assessment paradigm would put all the students in this specific group at disadvantage. Thus, there arose a need for a new intervention approach that would consider the students actual performance level. A proposal was made, replacing the two mid-term exams with ten quizzes to be administered during the last class of each week. It was approved by the Dean and the Head of the Department and put to practice as from the fifth week. Unlike the traditional assessment paradigm, the proposed system presented the course components in small amounts, i.e. part of a chapter or just one topic in a chapter to be the subject of the quiz. Also, because it was felt that three course components (i.e. vocabulary, reading and writing) needed further emphasis, additional quizzes were also regularly administered. The procedure followed with each component will be given in some detail below.

To begin with, each reading passage in the main resource of the course (Hartman et al 2007) starts with a list of lexical items. The students are instructed to tick those words that they know. For example, the following vocabulary groups of words are extracted from the first reading in Hartman et al (2007):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cities (city)</td>
<td>growing</td>
<td>afraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>countries</td>
<td>move</td>
<td>busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crime</td>
<td>work</td>
<td>crowded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>density</td>
<td></td>
<td>different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>megacity</td>
<td></td>
<td>dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monster</td>
<td></td>
<td>large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people</td>
<td></td>
<td>small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td></td>
<td>terrible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3): Vocabulary learning
One student ticked the word “people”, another ticked the words “people” and “work” while the rest of the class ticked nothing. Five students were asked if they had ever come across the word “small” but no one was able to remember what is meant. The same word was written twice on the board as “small” and “Small”; this time all the class was asked if they could see any difference between the two words on the board - only then that many students smiled with relief. As a result of this state of lexical deficiency, the students were asked to keep special record of at least twenty words that they had learned by the end of each chapter to be the basis of oral quizzes. So if the students could give the meaning or the Arabic equivalent of up to 80% of the words, they would be rewarded with 5 marks; otherwise their reward would range between 3 and zero marks. The quizzes system was highly flexible that a student could choose to take one when they were ready. At first relatively a few students were prepared to take these quizzes in the proposed time (on Saturdays) but soon the majority of the students showed interest in this form of vocabulary learning to the extent that extra time was needed to accommodate the students’ rush. This course component was emphasized because it was assumed that knowing the meaning of a lexical item would enhance the students’ comprehension of the relevant reading passage. For example, understanding the meaning of the word “megacity” seemed central to the understanding of the first reading passage in Hartman et al (2007) where it is repeated and illustrated seven times.

The second course component that received special attention was reading; it was the skill that the vast majority of the class lacked. Thus, the students were encouraged to practice it with speed and accuracy so that those who could show improvement would be generously rewarded. Once more, as from the fifth week of the term, regular reading
quizzes were started. The students were allowed to read one paragraph, short or long, more than one paragraph, or a whole passage. They could also read a passage of their own choice. Reading quizzes could take place in the classroom or the teacher’s office. With time, this approach to reading proved to be advantageous to those who had originally struggled with every word during the reading classes though they failed to acquire satisfactory reading speed.

Writing was the third activity that was emphasized and tested but fortnightly. In principle, the writing practice advocated by Hartman et al (2007) is sentence-based; viz. it trains the students to write simple and compound sentences along with such writing mechanics as punctuation and capitalization. Practice showed that the students’ writing was characterized by poor organization in terms of writing mechanics and spacing despite that fact that all they were required to do was copy sentences literally from the book or the board. The intervention strategy adopted here was to ask the students to copy whole paragraphs, paying special attention to the spaces between words. And in order to motivate the students excel in this activity, a challenging marking scheme was followed whereby smallest mistakes, e.g. leaving comma, was penalized and only faultless texts were rewarded with 5 marks. At first, all those who participated got zero but soon they seemed to have understood and enjoyed the challenge and started reaping the rewards of their faultless writing. This activity had to be done in the class for the fear that they had someone else do it for them at home. The significance of this activity stems from the fact the mechanics in question are conventional tools through which writing can be brought into being. What is more, they are to a piece of writing as the supra-
segmental sounds to the spoken language; viz. they give shape and organize the piece of writing in ways that render it communicative (Ezza 2010: 48)

To conclude the part, the intervention strategies reported in this study were basically intended to pressurize the students into acquiring new learning skills. A nine-week work proved that the students did acclimatize themselves to new learning styles and strategies that they had not tried during their pre-college education. Fortunately, the students’ pragmatic approach to education considerably facilitated their adaptation to the pressure-based teaching. In other words, most of the students repeatedly voiced their interest in having good attendance record, good accumulative average, reward for participating in the classroom activities, etc., saying nothing about academic development with regards to the course being studied.

Breaking down the course components into digestible bits in the manner described in the few paragraphs above have proved to be useful at least for the specific students reported in this study. It can be argued that this process is akin to the scaffolding theory summarized in (2) above, though the researcher admits that while doing the course NGR 110, he was not sufficiently informed about this theory. Of course, working knowledge of it could have further improved the supportive strategies employed to help the students digest the course materials. The relevant literature shows that foreign/second language acquisition theory and practice considerably benefited from the scaffolding theory in devising suitable teaching and learning strategies that provide optimal conditions for effective learning to take place. For example, an important aspect of the “input hypothesis” developed by Krashen (1985), as quoted in Ellis (2008:241), is that “input becomes comprehensible as a result of simplification and with the help of contextual and
extralinguistic clues …” This confirms the scaffolding principle of providing the classroom with assistance that was reported in connection with scaffolding levels and types in (2) above. In addition, El-Turki surveyed a number of empirical studies that employed such scaffolding strategies as “Scaffolding Reading Experience, moment-to-moment verbal scaffolding, and Scaffolded Silent Reading” in reading classrooms. She concluded that scaffolding is “an effective tool for encouraging students read properly”.

5. Conclusion

Although the Saudi student is main beneficiary of the quality assurance (QA) movement that has recently been introduced into most of the Saudi higher education institutions, a number of standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment directly center upon student academic life. It is also a fact that the introduction of QA into the academia has had far-reaching consequences for the what is required of the Saudi student. All things being equal, the course description that was once given in a short paragraph has been replaced by a long course specification that amounts to 10+ pages, prescribing the knowledge to be acquired along with five different types of skills: cognitive, interpersonal, communication, information technology, numerical and psychomotor. Nothing is taken for granted. Every aspect of academic transactions is subject to different types of assessment: self-assessment, student assessment, peer assessment, internal (national) assessment and external (international) assessment.

The QA culture stipulates that the students are to be sufficiently informed of the content of every course specification. Apparently, the academic QA culture is a culture of world-class education that arms the students with the knowledge and skills in the manner
described above so that they can compete even locally, regionally and globally. However, there are six facts that get in the way of the full use of the educational opportunities that are brought about by the applications of QA at Al-Majma’ah Community College and may be at other similar institutions. First, informing the students about the knowledge and skills to be acquired and their respective resources is not enough to enable the students acquire tertiary learning strategies. This study proposes that the college entrants should be taught a separate course in study skills that prepares them to be university students. Second, the weekly fifteen-hour course NGR 110 is either taught by one or two tutors. It is possible that meeting the same tutor for two hours every day could cause boredom, and, therefore, negative attitudes towards the course among the students. Thus, since the course covers the four skills, it is highly recommended that at least four tutors should take part in teaching this course. Third, the researcher marked over 20 assignments during the term, totaling in more than 500 answer sheets as a course-work. Given the fact that his official teaching load is 14 hours per week, such a strategy to encourage the students to do more work to improve their performance and earn the marks assigned to the course-work could not be acceptable to the majority of the faculty members. What is more, owing to its time-consuming nature, the current system of teaching load does not help the faculty members to conduct classroom-based research. Thus, it is unlikely that they could share their classroom experience with other members of the academic community. Fourth, the paucity of information about underachievement causes in Saudi Arabia, owing to the lack of systematic research findings, makes it difficult for the institutions to approach the phenomenon properly. Fifth, the faculty members are entrusted with the counselling service despite being not trained to do this
Sixth, a kind of cultural gap exists between the students and the faculty members since the bulk of the latters are not Saudis and know very little about the Saudi customs.

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