The progress of A Saudi Student in ESL Literacy:  
A Case Study

Saad Ali W. Al-Kahtani  
Assistant Professor  
King Saud University, Riyadh  
alkahtan@msu.edu

Introduction:  
Due to an interest in ESL literacy and out of concern for English writing and reading difficulties shared by many university-bound Saudi students in the United States, this research investigates the literacy development of a Saudi undergraduate student enrolled in an English College writing at an American university. This course should be taken during the first semester, however, some of the students in this course are juniors. The course is taught separately for two different groups of undergraduate students; international students who have met the university English proficiency requirements, and English native speakers. The class, in which there are 18 international students, meets twice a week (Tuesday & Thursday) for a period of 90 minutes. The main purpose of this investigation is to learn about the participant literacy experience in two different settings, Saudi Arabia and the United States, and how this experience affects his growth as a reader and a writer, focusing on both process and product. By describing the participant L1 and L2 literacy experience and analyzing his reading and writing growth, this research hopes to come up with implications, suggestions and strategies that contribute to the field of English as a second language in general, and ESL writing and reading in particular.

Collecting and Recording Data:  
Over a period of twelve weeks, fourteen class sessions were observed. A variety of methods were used to confirm the reliability and validity of the data collected. The researcher observed the student in the class, took notes regarding his learning behaviors in all of the classroom activities, and conducted informal interviews with the student after each observation. To gain insights into the teaching philosophy, the researcher also talked to the instructor and studied the course syllabus.
Moreover, samples of the student writing were obtained to identify some error production and weaknesses in his writing skills. At the end of the last session, the researcher conducted a tape-recorded interview with the participant.

To organize the data, the researcher expanded the collected notes as suggested by Anton (1996) in two sections: Descriptive notes and analytical notes. Descriptive notes record what was happening in the classroom, whereas the analytical ones record his own interpretation as well as his vision concerning the observation. For example, if the descriptive note was, “The student did not participate in the activity”, the analytical note would be “he seemed to be confused about the instruction of the activity”.

Participant’s background

Experience with L1 Literacy

The participant of this study is a young man from Saudi Arabia. He is a nineteen-year-old undergraduate student at an American University. He was born and raised in a small village in the northern part of Saudi Arabia from a family of illiterate parents and 8 siblings. As a child, he attended an Arabic elementary school in his village for 6 years before he had moved to the northeastern part of the country to attend the middle and high school for another 6 years. His elementary schooling must have been effective because he described his ability to read and write as “very good”. His teachers recognized, at that time, that his writing and reading levels were higher than some of the average high school students. Writing and reading during these grades were taught in a traditional setting, where the teacher prescribed everything to be read or written. Students at this age rarely read or wrote out of their own curiosity or interests. They were encouraged to only follow their instructors’ guidelines, and not to worry about things outside their classrooms. The participant added that his parents, being illiterate, thought that reading and writing were to be best served only through the school curriculum. His parents regarded reading extra materials such as newspapers or stories as merely a waste of time. Though his siblings were all in high school at that time, his sister, a high school student, was the only family member who used to help him with his schoolwork. She listened to him reading from the schoolbooks and always helped him answer the reading questions. For writing assignments, the teacher chose a topic once a week, such as writing about “where did you spend your summer holiday last year?” Or “write about the month of Ramadan”
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... (a fasting month where Muslims all over the world fast from dawn to sunset for one lunar cycle). The teacher gave explanatory words and guidelines in the classroom, and then asked students to write the essay at home. Students wrote their essays at home and turned them in the following class to be graded. He did not recall that he had to rewrite any of his essays. He mentioned that although he did all the assigned essays, he had never been enthusiastic to write about predetermined topics such as those assigned by his teachers.

The first three years in the middle school were not so much different from his experience in the elementary school. He only struggled a bit when his family had to move to the northeastern part of the country. It took him only one semester to adjust to the new school environment. He did not notice any major differences in the methods used by teachers in both schools. They continued to assign him predetermined reading and writing topics that made him feel frustrated and uncomfortable. He started to skip some of the writing assignments, which he wasn't interested in (e.g., topics that involved “unfavorable scenes”, “a traffic accident that scared him”)! Coming from a small village, he knew nothing about car accidents. In fact, there were only a few cars in the village where he lived and had never seen any car accidents. At this grade, two of his family members, two brothers, finished their high school and left the family to study at a nearby university. They only came to the family during weekends and holidays. He felt lonely after his brothers had left the house, but felt so excited each time they came to visit their family. He successfully finished the middle school and started the last three years in high school. At this grade, he started to dislike school and barely passed the first two-year exams. During these two years, he was a teenager who spent much of his time with friends and usually came home late at night. He hardly did his assignments to the extent that he used to ask friends for help and he even paid some writers to do the work for him. Though he did not like to read or write most of his school assignments, he started to read books from Arabic literature and write some short love stories. These books were given to him by one of his brothers when he came on weekends and holidays. He read novels such as “A Sparrow from the East” by Tawfeeq Al-Hakeem, “The Days” by Taha Hussein, “Al-Thulathiyyah” by Najeeb Mahfouz, “I Forgot I am a Woman” and “The Empty Pillow” by Ihsan Abdulqaddous and some other novels. He also read the poetry of Abo Tammam, Al-Motanabbi, Jareer, and Al-Farazdaq in addition to many Islamic history books. Due to complaints from the school and also
from his parents, all the family members got together one day and discussed how he could finish his last year in high school with a GPA that would meet universities admission requirements. In order to encourage him, one of his brothers promised to send him to the US to study English and to further his education if he finished high school with a “very good” GPA. This offer motivated him to pass the final exam of the high school with an “excellent” grade 90%.

**Experience with L2 literacy in Saudi Arabia**

In public schools in Saudi Arabia, students are taught English from the first year of their three-year junior high school, until the last year of their three-year high school. In other words, Saudi students learn English for six years, starting in the 7th grade and ending in the 12th grade. Throughout each grade level, students are taught English for four periods a week and each period lasts for 45 minutes (Al-Arfaj 1996). Though the participant of this study went through this process, he still believes that 6 years spent studying English in Saudi Arabia should not be accounted towards his experience in English:

> Of course I started to learn English in the middle and high schools. However, I do not think that we should consider what we learnt at those schools as a big deal. What we were taught at that time was only ideas about basic English uses. Teachers and students were dealing with English classes as required classes that should be taught and learned in order to pass their exams.

His statement encouraged the researcher to ask further questions as to what he meant by “a big deal.” His response indicated that his past experience with EFL in Saudi Arabia was not a positive one. The majority of English teachers, according to him, were not qualified. Zaid (1993) confirmed this point by stating that 68% of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia are recruited from Arab countries, such as Egypt, Sudan, and Jordan and are not adequately qualified to teach English. Zaid recommended that they take advanced courses in English to improve their performance in EFL teaching. With respect to EFL teaching methods, Zaid points out that students tend to memorize grammatical rules, passages of written English, and vocabulary to cope with the requirements for passing the grade level. He concludes that the English teaching methods in Saudi classes are traditional, mostly following the audio-lingual method.
Teachers in the middle and high schools rarely give students writing or reading assignments and, if they sometimes did, the participant used to ask the best student in his class to do the work for him before the beginning of the class:

*I can't recall any of the assignment I had to do. They don't usually give us too many assignments and if they did sometimes, I used to give them to my best friend in the class and ask him to do it for me. Fortunately, my friend was the best one in the English language in our class. For the exam, teachers used to give us four passages and ask us to summarize and memorize them. Two of these passages will definitely appear later in the final exam; the rest of the exams is normally grammar and multiple-choice questions.*

Unlike his experience with L1 outside the school, he did not read any books or write about anything in his L2. The only outside-classroom pleasure reading activity that he remembers is Charles Dickens’s “Great expectations.” He bought the book because it was a story, but wasn’t able to read it.

**Experience with L2 Literacy in the US.**

Most of the Saudi students in the United States are graduates and have scholarships from the Saudi government. In the past decade, the government sent only graduate students whose majors can only be found abroad. For the participant of this study, the case is different. He could not get scholarship from the government, simply because he is an undergraduate student. His brother fulfilled his promise and sent him to the United States to study the language and probably get an undergraduate degree, if possible. The participant started studying in the American Language Institute (ALI) at an American university in the spring of 1997. Upon his arrival, he was placed at the AB level, which is classified for beginners. His brother helped pay the tuition fees, whereas the participant took care of extra expenses including the living costs. It took him three semesters (the spring, the summer, and the fall) of 1997 in the ALI before he was able to meet the university language proficiency requirement (i.e. TOEFL). By spring 1998, he met all requirements and got admitted to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Criminology.

In spite of learning English for six years, the participant could not speak any English when he first arrived to the United States and that is why he was placed at
level AB at the ALI. He found reading and writing in English very hard when he first arrived. One paragraph would take him from 2-3 hours to read or write. He mentioned that it was a big shock for him to discover that the English he learned in Saudi Arabia did not qualify him even for level B. According to him, he found himself faced with a “totally new experience in English”. Everything was completely different, from the orthography to the directionality of reading and writing. Instead of reading and writing from right to left, which is the case in Arabic, he had to train himself to read and write from left to right. I asked him to compare those six years he spent in learning English in Saudi Arabia with what he has learned in the United States. Interestingly, he explained that what he learned in six years in Saudi Arabia equals to only one month of the English he learned in the United States. Clearly, the participant was aware of the conditions required by the two different settings:

There is no comparison, I would consider the English I learned in the middle or high school in Saudi Arabia just like what I learned in a month or less than a month here in America. The situation is different. There, I only needed English to pass the exam. Here, I need it for academic studies and for communicating with others. Everybody speaks English here while in our country we only use English in the English class. If you want to learn English, you should learn it in a country where English is the spoken language.

The first writing assignment he had to do at the ALI, as he remembers, was to write about the Saudi Arabian culture as every one else had to do the same about their own cultures. He said that he was very excited to write something about his culture, but he could not find the vocabulary through which he could express himself. He went home, and wrote the assignment first in Arabic, and then used an Arabic English dictionary to translate what he wrote into English. The second assignment was a letter where he had to change its information with his own information such as the name of the sender, recipient, and some other information. Again, he consulted his dictionary to translate the content of the letter into Arabic and then made the necessary changes to the original letter as being asked by his teacher. It took him more than three hours to translate the entire vocabulary into Arabic only. At this level, AB, they only wrote their assignments in a paragraph or less than a paragraph. At the B level, they started to write about more complicated topics such as comparing
food in their countries with food in the United States. They also started to learn about
the writing process such as brainstorming, outlining, clustering, drafting, and
revising. The participant noticed that his writing and reading skills, at this level, were
way behind his classmates, especially students from Asia, but he was a head of them
in terms of communication skills. This is the case for most Saudi students in the US.
They are better at communication, but have some difficulties with reading and
writing. At level C, the teacher asked him to write for the ALI Newsletter. He
participated with a topic about TV. In this level, too, students were asked to write
about topics of their choices and bring them to class to be discussed in-groups. His
topic was “My First Love.” He mentioned that he was so excited to write about this
topic and share it with others. I understood from the participant that it was a real
experience that he brought with him from home. He felt so happy to talk and write
about this experience since he couldn't do that in Saudi Arabia because of cultural
constraints. This was his first time ever to work with classmates in groups, and he
was so enthusiastic to share his love experience and hear theirs. As for reading or
writing outside the class, he used to only read assigned chapters from the class
reading books as homework assigned by the ALI teachers, which occupied most of his
time. Other than that, he rarely read unless his teachers assigned it. The only
exception was reading some local newspapers. As for writing, he never did any type
of writing activities unless it was homework or something assigned by his language
teachers.

As mentioned earlier, the participant was able to satisfy the university
requirements and got admitted for the spring of 1998 where he enrolled for four
undergraduate courses including English 101 College Writing. During his free time,
he works at the university where he studies. In order to help his brother with
covering the tuition fees and other expenses, he works 50 hours a semester for the
International Office in order to get $1000 waved from his tuition fees. He also works
30 hours a week in the Dining Hall to cover other expenses. He hopes to apply for a
scholarship from the Saudi Arabian embassy, but he has to meet their conditions by
completing 30 credits in his major with a very good GPA before he could submit his
application.
Participant inside the Classroom

The class was arranged in a way similar to the workshop format where students read and discuss each other's writing during the class. A student brings in enough copies of an essay so that everyone in the class will have a copy. Students break into small groups and, from each group, a student is picked up to show his or her clustering and then read his/her essay aloud while other group members read along. All of the group members talk about the essay and give oral and written feedback using a peer response sheet. (see appendix A).

For each essay assignment, students start the process on (Thursday or Tuesday) by doing freewriting activities (for example, notes, brainstorming writing, clustering, outlining...) and discussing how they can go about writing this assignment. They do freewriting individually, discuss their ideas in small groups, and then share them with the whole class. For next class, students write a draft (3-5 pages) and bring four copies for peer feedback sessions. They revise their drafts depending on the feedback they receive from their peers and bring fresh copies for the editing workshop session’s class. In the editing sessions, students read their classmates essays, as they do, they answer editing type questions using a peer critique sheet (see appendix B). They write each question on a separate piece of paper and then answer it. They can also talk with the writer and write on the essay itself, with the writer's permission. Using their peer editing feedback, students rewrite their drafts and prepare to hand in their final drafts along with a cover sheet (see appendix C) and bring any early drafts or notes. Then, they start the process again on new essay assignments.

It is clear that the class is absolutely student-centered. Students work most of the time in small groups while the teacher floats from one group to another through each essay. These small groups have more or less the same characteristics proposed by Brooke (1994). They include people who respect each other as classmates and friends, as well as people who are different enough (international students with different experiences) to be able to exchange different perspectives, but not so different that they are likely to feel antagonistic towards each other. Such groups also include an ideal mix of people, usually two men and two women, and ideal group size of four people, plus or minus one person. The class also meets some of McAndrew's (1998) “7 Commandments” of well-managed literacy workshops. There are patterns for keeping a balance between “lose” and “tight.” The tight characteristic is
represented by the few rules that he lays down for the class (e.g., “after the teacher takes roll, and a student arrives late, he/she earns 1/2 absence”). The loose characteristic is the risk-free environment that the class has. Students are encouraged to take risks and learn from their mistakes. They also have the freedom while working in their groups whether to talk about a paper first, or to fill in the response sheets, and then talk about the paper. Modeling is another characteristic of the observed class. The teacher brings his own writing about the same assigned topic and either reads it aloud for the whole class, or shares it with one of the groups as a model of the sharing process. Groups are connected and tied by peer response to drafts and revisions of those drafts. They are also connected to the wider community by writing about topics from the real world. The assignments are interconnected in a way that helps students think ecologically. For the first assignment, students write about culture definition. Then, they write descriptive essays on one aspect of American culture for the second essay. For the third assignment, they write comparative essays where they pick one aspect of American culture and compare it with one in their own culture. These assignments are treated ecologically and therefore are not segmented into pieces or different topics.

The teacher held the first one-to-one conference after the second paper. The first paper was “an in class-diagnostic” as suggested by Judith Kollman in Harris's teaching one-to-one book (1986) to give students and their teacher ideas about each other and familiarize students with the literacy workshop format.

Observing the participant inside the class, the researcher noticed that he was a bit confused during the first three weeks. While it may not be the case for most students in the classroom, it is his first experience to be in an academic class in the United States. He just finished his English language proficiency requirement and started his academic work. Since he did not have much experience with group work, he was a bit reluctant to participate at the beginning when each student had to read his/her essay aloud and receive the group feedback. He did not like to read his first essay in that class. Each time the group asked for volunteers to read their essays, he seemed to be the one who wanted to be the last. The researcher also noticed that the participant was not completing all the peer response sheets that students had to do for each member of the group. He tended to give oral feedback rather than written ones. The oral feedback he gave was more or less redundant of what other group members had said. His first draft on “culture shock” was perceived well by his group members.
They gave him feedback like: “You were writing from your experience and gave advise to other writers to respect each others cultures but need to offer more advise like how to overcome the culture shock.” He seemed to accept their feedback and showed his appreciation by thanking them for the help but he seemed uncomfortable with reading the essay of one of the group members who attacked some traditions practiced in the participant culture such as “Polygamy.” The oral feedback that he gave to the writer were like “You should respect other peoples' cultures if you really want them to respect yours.” To the contrary, the participant in his essay, suggested mutual respect and understanding between cultures. After class, he complained a lot about that students insensitivity and wished not to work with him. In this regard, McAndrew (1998) suggests that students should control their topics unless they deal with issues such as religion, beliefs, racism and the alike, which may affect the class collaborative atmosphere. Teachers should draw a line that separates cultural bias from educational benefits.

The participant interaction in the second essay was not comparable to what was observed during the initial essay. Unlike previous sessions, he listened, spoke, and responded. In fact, he was the second student to volunteer reading his paper in front of the class. It also seemed that he was very interested in getting some feedback from his peers. He offered his peers comments and feedback and completed most of the peer response sheets.

Though he was interested in his peers' oral and written feedback, he tended to believe that the oral feedback are the ones that helped him the most to revise his essay. Later, in the interview, he explained that comments on the peer response sheets did not help him as much as the oral feedback to make major changes when he revised his papers. Due to his explanation, the researcher checked the peer response sheets that the participant received from his peers. It was found that most of them had positive comments such as “exiting”, “fun”, “well organized”, “very good”, etc. Since the participant was looking for critical comments, these responses did not correspond with the kind of feedback that he was looking for. While they were mostly positives, they still provide a sense of encouragement that, the researcher believes, helps beginner writers establish adequate self-confidence.

Analysis

Despite the progress made by the participant since he came to the United States, he still has some writing and reading difficulties. L1 and L2 different orthography, the
directionality of reading and writing, and instructional background constitute the major causes for his writing / reading difficulties. According to Al-Arfaj (1996), the different writing system and the directionality of the Arabic language could cause reading and writing difficulties for Arabic beginning readers and writers of English as a second or foreign language. They need more time than native speakers or readers from other languages which use the Roman alphabet (i.e., Spanish) just to familiarize their eyes and brains with the new symbols. Al-Arfaj’s comments go in line with the findings of Henderson (1984) when he compared L2 readers of English-college–age native speakers of Arabic and Spanish with native English speaking American College students. Interestingly, Henderson found the Arabic students to read about half as fast as the Spanish group, with poorer comprehension, while the Spanish group also read slower than the American readers. This also corresponds with Smith (1994) when he asserts that it is the brain that moves the eyes in reading “provided it understands what it needs to find out (p.81).”

Instructional backgrounds have some effects on the participant’s L2 writing and reading ability. The participant attributed his greatest problem to the way he was taught English in Saudi Arabia. He believes that the way English is taught and the way that literacy (both L1 and L2) is looked at in Saudi Arabia are the two main causes of his current L2 literacy difficulties. What he means here is that reading and writing are considered as passive skills in Saudi Arabian schools. More attention is given to grammar and communication skills. Many Saudi people, outside school contexts, rarely use reading and writing. The majority of people prefer to converse rather than read or write. By observing Saudis in public places or traveling with them in trains or planes, you would easily notice this phenomenon. People tend to talk and rarely carry books or pens in their hands. The participant was not an exception from an environment like this. Most of his L2 reading/writing were exclusively devoted for academic purposes. Reading for pleasure was at the bottom of his reading list. These early practices have some effects on the participant’s literacy development in the second language. The researcher noticed that the participant was moving his lips and sounding out words when reading. This problem could be attributed to the way he was initially taught to read in Arabic. Teachers in Saudi Arabia required students at the elementary level to repeat after them and read passages aloud from the schoolbook. Some readers do not lose this early practice as they progress through grades. They continue throughout adulthood to move their lips while reading silently.
Participant progress

What can we say about the participant’s literacy in English after 12 weeks of observation?

The participant’s L2 literacy experience in Saudi Arabia was not that great but he is on his way to developing in the new culture. Being in a new environment, the participant is now more aware of the importance of reading and how it helps him understand and participate in all walks of life. He gained a deeper appreciation for the new classroom environment. Since he comes from a different educational system where students are taught in traditional settings, he was a bit confused about the role students and teachers play in the classroom, yet he did not take too long to understand the new environment and adjust to the new setting. He started to interact with his group members and developed a willingness to take the risk and reveal his experiences and feelings and share them with the group members. The new teaching environment made him wonder and he soon discovered that each teacher has his own method of teaching. By looking at his essays, it is easy to notice his confusion on the first essay and the progress he made through the second one. In the first essay, he did not know the role he should play with his group members. He also was confused about the topic he wrote about. Instead of defining and writing about culture assigned by the teacher, he wrote about the culture shock, which was not the actual assignment. Though, some of his peers noticed his confusion and wrote it on the response sheets, he did not make use of their feedback. By comparing his first and final draft, the researcher noticed that he made only a few changes to the final draft. The thing that suggests he did not follow along the workshop process, which lasted for five classes, is that he did not make use of teacher comments to refine his essay.

The teacher wrote the following comments on his first essay:

1- You didn't actually do the assignment. It was to define culture, you never did this. Instead, you wrote about and define culture shock.
2- There are many grammar problems for you to work through.
3- You need to study and master a new way to organize your writing.
The teacher also suggested that he should meet with one of the interns who attend the class and work with her on his writing each week. The teacher then put the overall grade (C-) on his paper.

For the second essay, students had to spend ten to fifteen minutes observing an interaction between people outside the classroom, take elaborated notes, then write a draft of a descriptive essay on American culture and bring them to class for peer feedback sessions. For this assignment, the participant brought a draft about an interaction that had happened in his room between his roommate and one of his friends. Though his draft was merely a dialogue and not a descriptive essay, he insisted that he should get critical peer feedback, which would help him revise his paper. In fact, he was begging them to tell him how to refine his essay. He told them that he had had a bad grade on the previous essay, and that he wanted to get a better one this time. Unlike in the first essay, he volunteered to read his essay and was willing to listen and write down his peers' feedback. He was also active in giving oral and written feedback to the other members in his group. Students offered him feedback that helped him revise his paper. They told him that his paper did not have any kind of organization and that it was merely conversation between two persons. They suggested that he should include a description of the environment where the interaction took place (e.g. the background noise, smell, their dress, nonverbal gestures, and his interpretations of what he had observed). Later, during the interview, the participant acknowledged that their feedback helped him a lot to rewrite his essay. The following is his teacher's comments on the second essay:

*Your essay is very interesting! Nice improved work. Keep meeting with your tutor, Miyuki- San.*

On his paper, he put the overall grade (B+). The participant handed his paper to some of his classmates, telling them that his grade had improved this time. One of his classmates commented: “It is not only your grade that has improved, your interaction and collaborative writing have also improved!”

The low grade that the participant got on his first paper seemed to hit a nerve. During the process of the second essay, he was asking every one, including the researcher, if that grade would affect his overall assessment, and if there was a way to improve it. Circumstances such as maintaining a high GPA and applying for
scholarship created a kind of anxiety and worry about grades. Along with these anxiety and worries, the participant holds positive attitude toward learning and was motivated to collaborate with his peers. He has a positive attitude of the kind that Baker (1992) described as attitudes “obtained through the need for security and status within a group and through societal demands.” With this kind of attitude, he was trying very hard to progress in his learning in general and on reading and writing in particular.

It should also be noted that electronic mail and the Internet helped the participant overcome some L2 literacy problems. Interacting with his friends in English through electronic mail and reading online publications was of great benefit to his second language reading and writing. In addition, the participant was subscribed to a discussion list called “Saudi-Student list” for Saudi students in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. Subscribers to this list could only exchange messages in English because of technical issues. The participant found exchanging electronic messages in L2 with students from the same culture to be a wonderful experience. In this regard he says:

*Communicating with people from my country via e-mail has improved my English in general and my reading and writing in particular. It took me ages to compose few sentences when I first came to the United States. Now, it takes me only few minutes to reply to a message. I really like exchanging messages with Saudis and can’t think of staying away from their list.*

The participant added:

*The most important thing that makes me feel to write email messages is the fact someone from my country will read and probably respond to my message. Knowing that our list members are all Saudis encouraged me to write without fear of my mistakes.*

Despite the literacy struggles the participant faced in the new environment, he was trying very hard to improve his reading and writing to fully participate not only in his classrooms, but also in his L2 society. From the data obtained from this study, the participant seemed satisfied with teaching approaches that put more emphasis on
group work such as brainstorming the ideas with classmates, exchanging drafts for peer feedback, and producing multiple revisions. This implies that the participant was very well suited to the process approach, which has been advocated by many scholars (e.g. Flower & Hayes, 1980; Jones, 1982; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1983). The progress in L2 literacy exhibited by the participant since his arrival to the United States suggests that he is moving in the right direction. His motivation, attitude, and reading and writing performances indicate that he is increasingly gaining confidence in his reading and writing ability.

Implications and suggestions

The researcher would like to offer some implications and suggestions for ESL/EFL reading classes. First of all, he suggests that ESL/EFL reading classes are to be taught by the most competent and qualified teachers in Saudi Arabia. Unlike competent teachers who can make reading and writing enjoyable activities for students, unqualified teachers can create unpleasant experiences and therefore cause learners to develop negative attitudes toward reading and writing in English. Secondly, teachers should be aware of orthographic and linguistic factors, which may have some impacts on learner’s reading and writing ability. Literacy teachers need to learn about their students reading and writing difficulties, and focus mainly on students from different reading and writing systems. They should also encourage them to read outside the classroom and use strategies such as reading quickly and guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words form the context in which they appear. ESL/EFL teachers should also tell their students to overcome the habit of subvocalizing words for it could slow their reading and affect their comprehension negatively (Smith, 1994). Moreover, the habit of not reading and writing outside the classroom are to be eradicated by offering different titles of books and magazines for students to choose from. For English teachers teaching in non-English speaking countries, using reading materials from local magazines and newspapers would help their students’ reading since they are related to their culture. Finally, ESL/EFL teachers should tell their students that they don’t need to read every single word. Instead, their reading must be fast, selective and in chunks. Smith (1994) suggests that “a reader is unlikely to comprehend while reading slower than 200 words a minute, because a lesser rate would imply that words were read as isolated units rather than as meaningful sentences”(p.80). In conclusion and as suggested by (Leki, 1995), teachers should
assist their students to use the reading/writing strategies that they already use, and suggest others that they have never used before.
References


