BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Grade 10 Female Students Experiences and Challenges in Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Palestinian Context

تجارب وتحديات طالبات الصف العاشر في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في السياق الفلسطيني

By

Muna Adnan Ibrahim

Supervisor

Dr. Anwar Abdel Razeq

August, 2022

Birzeit University / Palestine

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Grade 10 Female Students Experiences and Challenges in Learning English
as a Foreign language in the Palestinian Context

تجارب وتحديات طالبات الصف العاشر في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في السياق

الفلسطيني

By

Muna Adnan Ibrahim

Approved

Dr. Anwar Abdel Razeq _____ Supervisor

Dr. Khawla Shakhsheer _____ Committee Member

Dr. Ola Khalili _____ Committee Member

2022

Abstract

This study investigated the challenges that tenth-grade female students face in learning English as a Foreign language (EFL). It also studied students' recommendations to face learning challenges. In addition, it examined teachers' practices that hinder students learning and instructional supervisors' recommendations to enhance teachers' effectiveness. Social constructivism and its principles constitute the theoretical framework of this study. The researcher adopted the qualitative research paradigm for conducting the present study. The participants were thirty tenth-grade female students, five English teachers and two instructional supervisors. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used for data collection. All the interviews and classroom observations were conducted in five schools in Ramallah Governorate. Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase model was used to analyze data thematically. Results of the study confirmed that lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of motivation, peer pressure, lack of practice, classroom atmosphere, cultural and linguistic differences and English for Palestine textbook for the tenth grade are challenges that Palestinian female learners face in learning EFL. Students recommended their teachers to use different teaching methods, adopt various assessment methods, build students' self-confidence, build a good relationship with students and expose students to the target language. However, teacher-centered classrooms, heavy reliance on Arabic, lack of extra curriculum activities, lack of formative assessment and neglecting low achieving students were teachers' practices that hindered students learning. Meanwhile, instructional supervisors recommended teachers to plan, change their negative attitudes, work on improving their abilities, keep students busy, praise students and focus on practicing the language to overcome learning challenges and achieve learning objectives. Based on the results of the current study the researcher recommended further research in this area and providing in-service Palestinian EFL teachers with the appropriate training to help them overcome learning challenges and meet Palestinian learners' needs

ملخص الدراسة

تجارب وتحديات طالبات الصف العاشر في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في السياق الفلسطيني

هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف التحديات التي تواجهها طالبات الصف العاشر في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في فلسطين. كما وهدفت الى التعرف على توصيات طالبات الصف العاشر لمواجهة هذه التحديات. اضافة لما ذكر، عمدت الدراسة الى التعرف على ممارسات المعلمين التي تعيق تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية كما أشارت الى توصيات مشرفي اللغة الانجليزية للتغلب على هذه الممارسات. شكلت نظرية "البنائية الإجتماعية" الإطار النظري لهذه الدراسة. بنيت هذه الدراسة على التصميم الكيفي. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ثلاثين طالبة وخمسة معلمين ومشرفين تربويين. واستخدمت المقابلات شبه المنظمة والملاحظة لجمع البيانات حيث تم اجراء المقابلات والملاحظة الصفية في خمسة مدارس في مدينة رام الله. تم تنظيم نصوص المقابلت وتحليلها باستخدام نهج التحليل الموضوعي. وبينت الدراسة أن طالبات الصف العاشر يواجهن عدة تحديات متمثلة بالإفتقار إلى إتقان مفردات اللغة الانجليزية، وغياب الدافعية، و ضغط الأقران ، و عدم ممارسة اللغة الإنجليزية ، والبيئة الصفية، الفروقات الثقافية واللغوية بين اللغة العربية والانجليزية وكتاب اللغة الانجليزية للصف العاشر. وأوصت الطالبات معلماتهن بالتنويع في أساليب التدريس والتقييم، وتعزيز ثقة الطالبات بأنفسهن، و بناء علاقة جيدة مع الطالبات، وتعريضهن لمواد أصيلة في اللغة الإنجليزية من اجل التغلب على تحديات التعلم في اللغة الإنجليزية . إلى جانب ذلك، فقد خلصت الدراسة إلى أن هناك مجموعة من الممارسات التي يمارسها المعلمين والتي تعيق بدورها تعلم الطلبة للغة الإنجليزية وهي الصفوف المتمركزة حول المعلمين، وإستخدام اللغة العربية بكثرة، والإفتقار إلى الأنشطة المنهجية و إلى التقييم التكويني إلى جانب إهمال الطلبة ذوي التحصيل المتدني. في حين اشار المشرفون التربويون إلى مجموعة من الممارسات التي من شأنها مساعدة المعلمين على مواجهة تحديات التعلم وتحقيق اهدافه عن طريق الإلتزام بالتحضير وتغيير سلوكيات المعلمين وتطوير قدراتهم والتركيز على ممارسة اللغة الإنجليزية إلى جانب اشراك الطلبة في الحصة الصفية والثناء على إنجازاتهم. وأشارت الدراسة إلى ضرورة إعداد برامج تدريبية للمعلمين قبل واثناء الخدمة لتساعدهم على مواجهة صعوبات التعلم والتغلب عليها.

Acknowledgment

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah said**:** "Whoever is not grateful to the people, he is not grateful to Allah." Although my name appears on the cover of this thesis, I would like gratefully acknowledge people who have been inspiring and supportive. I owe great gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Anwar Abdel Razeq for his valuable guidance, infinite support and recommendations that inspired me to meet his high standards.

To My father and mother who believed in me and braced me with their Dua'. To my Husband who encouraged me to get my Master's degree. To my beloved kids who surrounded me with their unconditional love and support.

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

English is an international language and the most practiced all over the world. Due to its importance as a medium of communication in the modern developed world, significant emphasis has been placed on learning this language. Despite the differences in nations' customs, traditions and cultures, English is heavily used as a communication tool (Rao, 2019). In Palestine, English is an obligatory school subject at all K-12 Palestinian schools. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) collaborated with Macmillan Education to design the first English language curriculum for Palestinian schools, English for Palestine, which is still taught to this day. Gradually, the curriculum was implemented between 2000 and 2006 (Dajani & McLaughlin, 2009). English for Palestine curriculum document (2015) indicates that learning English as a second/ foreign language is significantly important to increase job opportunities, develop students' intellectual capacity and encourage students to appreciate other cultures.

English language teachers are required to teach students English language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Songbatumis (2017) argued that teachers' role exceeds teaching students the aforementioned language skills. In addition to that he emphasized their role in facilitating learners learning by motivating and encouraging them to develop a positive attitude towards the language. However, Palestinian students, like many other learners, face challenges in learning English as a foreign language. Ramahi (2018) argued that the Palestinian formal education system is failing to meet the modern world challenges and the requirements of socio-economic and political situations. Dajani and Mclaughlin (2009) listed some major challenges in learning the English language in the Palestinian context such as crowded classes, the lack of resources, the lack of access to the internet and teachers' low income.

Challenges in English language learning vary due to the causing factors. Bianchi & Abdel Razeq (2016) stated that English language challenges may be caused by different issues " logistical challenges in the form of poor and antiquated pedagogical training, administrative

pressures to "teach to the test", and demographic realities such as oversized classes have all conspired to create less than favorable conditions for learning English" Bianchi & Abdel Razeq & 2016, p. 29). In the Palestinian context, a lot of factors ought to be taken into consideration when studying the challenges such as the political situation, socio-economic situation, education policies and teachers' training programs. To study these challenges, the researcher reviewed the history of English language teaching in Palestine. The following sections elaborate on the different stages of the English language in Palestinian history.

Palestinian Linguistic History from Persian to Ottoman Empires

Historically, a number of empires and neighboring powers conquered Palestine. As a result, different civilizations and languages coexisted with the local language (Arabic). Throughout Palestinian history and up to the present time, the mobile residents and the upper class of the society had to be bilingual and in some cases multilingual. The Persian empire introduced the Aramaic language, which was used beside Greek by the privileged inhabitant who came to Palestine. In addition, the Jews of Palestine had studied Hebrew as a ritual language. After that, Latin was introduced to Palestine by the Roman empire (Amara, 2003).

After the spread of Islam in the seventh century, the Caliph Omar conquered Palestine. Standard Arabic, which is the language of the Holy Quran and the Muslim community, was used in government, formal communication and Islamic religious teachings. Gradually, Arabic was introduced to the area, replacing the Syrian Aramaic language. Thus, Arabic became the language of Palestinian citizens and served as Palestinian vernacular even by Christians and Jews (Amara, 2003). Consequently, Arabic was used by different communities in Palestine, Muslims, Jews and Christians, but during their religious practice, each community used its own language.

Despite the use of Arabic in Palestinian daily life, the Crusades in the 12th century introduced different languages to the Palestinian community such as English, French, Italian and German (Amara, 2003, p. 219). Later, The Ottoman empire ruled Palestine until 1917, thus Turkish became the language of government and written communication in the country, as a result, the Arabic language suffered a setback (Abdel Razeq & Bianchi,2016).

Palestine's Linguistic History during the British Mandate

Britain occupied Palestine in 1917 and education was the responsibility of the civil administration, which began developing the education system in 1920. The mandatory period witnessed the evolution of two educational systems which are the Palestinian school system and the Hebrew school system. While The Hebrew public schools were almost self-contained, the Palestinian public schools were reliant on outside guidance (Broco & Trad, 2011, P.4). In fact, the Palestinian community was divided into three religious groups, which made many international organizations and religious entities interested in Palestinians' education issues. During this time, a large number of overseas Anglican and Protestant schools were constructed. Different languages were utilized as a medium of instruction in schools run by foreign entities such as German, French, Italian, English and Greek, while both English and Arabic were taught as school subjects (Broco & Trad, 2011, p5). This continued untill the establishment of Israel in 1948.

Education in Palestine during the Israel Occupation (1948 - 1967)

Israel was established on the majority of historical Palestine in 1948 ending the period of British mandate. Israel did not occupy two areas of historical Palestine known as the West Bank and Gaza strip. Britain authorized Jordan on the West Bank while it entitled Egypt to supervise Gaza Strip (Amara, 2003). Meanwhile, the West Bank and East Jerusalem had to adopt the Jordanian English language policies and Gaza had to adopt the Egyptian ones. Thus, Jordanian and Egyptian English language policies had to be followed in these Palestinian territories. Therefore, English was taught as a school subject from fifth grade upwards (Bianchi & Abdel Razeq, 2016).

After Al nakba (1948), many Palestinians became refugees who live in 59 recognized refugees camps in Palestine, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon(Broco & Trad, 2011). As a result, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in 1949 to meet their basic needs. In 1960, UNRWA became a main provider of education in the Palestinian territories and still until now. It provides elementary and preparatory education, from the first to the ninth grade(UNRWA).

Education in Palestine (1967-1993)

After the six-day war between Israel and Arabs in 1967, Israel occupied the rest of Palestine including the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. These occupied land became known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Administratively, these territories were ruled by the Israeli government. However, The Jordanian and Egyptian educational systems were preserved in these Palestinian lands. Therefore, the west bank continued to implement the Jordanian English language curriculum while Gaza Strip kept the Egyptian English language curriculum intact (Amara, 2003).

After almost 20 years of Israel's rule, Palestinians started their first Intifada (uprising) in 1987, which created huge chaos for Israel. To stop the Palestinian bloodshed, the Palestinian Liberation Organization(PLO) and the Israeli government started negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993. By this agreement, Palestinians had partial self-rule over the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the first time (Broco & Trad, 2011).

Implications of the Oslo Accords

Oslo Accords left a huge impact on Palestinians' life. After signing the agreement, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was formed in 1994, and for the first time, Palestinians had their first Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE). Oslo Accords gave the green light to create an autonomous education system from the Egyptian and Jordanian ones by establishing the first Palestinian national curriculum (Amara, 2003). In terms of physical and human resources, Palestinian educational institutions have been neglected. So when the PNA took control, MOEHE sought help from UNESCO and fund from international donors to establish the unified Palestinian national curriculum. The curriculum involved some significant changes such as introducing new school subjects like Technology, National and Civic education and requiring the teaching of English language at the first grade rather than the fifth grade, as it was previously (Broco & Trad, 2011). To develop the first national English language curriculum, MOEHE cooperated with Macmillan British publishers that authored the English for Palestine textbooks series. The curriculum was implemented gradually between 2000 and 2006. The

textbooks were distributed to Palestinian students on a one-to-one basis annually (Broco & Trad, 2011).

In 2015, the Palestinian Ministry of Education collaborated with Macmillan education to produce a new edition of the Palestinian English language curriculum, which is called "English for Palestine". In the new edition, modern theories and research on the nature of language, language learning, human development, and pedagogy have served as the foundation for the creation of the English curriculum for Palestinian schools. Also, the authors have freely drawn inspiration from the work of other national and international curricular initiatives in the area, in Europe, and the United States. (English language curriculum for Palestinian schools, 2015, p.7). Until now, this edition of the English language curriculum is used in Palestinian public schools.

Theoretical Framework

Over time, many theories of learning and cognition have analyzed how the learning process occurs and knowledge is constructed. Social constructivism is one of them. Social constructivism emphasizes the need to understand the culture and context of a particular society in order to construct knowledge. In other words, learning cannot occur without understanding the environment and culture of learning. Social constructivists also emphasize the importance of context and culture in understanding what is happening in society and in knowledge production Derry (1999) and McMahon (1997).

Originally, the term social construction is found in John Dewey's Pedagogic Creed (1879). He points out that the" psychological and social side of education are oraginacily related, and that education cannot be regarded as a compromise between the two or superimposition of one upon the other" (Dewey, 1879, p.78). Furthermore, he believes that education is a result of empowering learners in a social context. He argues that school is an important part of a democratic community where learners receive help to construct knowledge and participate effectively in the "social consciousness of the race." (Dewey, 1879, p.77).

According to this theory, meaning, significance and comprehension are formed in collaboration with other people in a society. In fact, It has two major assumptions which are, people legitimize their experiences by developing a model of the social world and how it

works and that language is the most important method by which human beings establish their reality. (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Vygotsky (1978), the father of social constructivism, explained that cognitive development occurs at two levels, first at the social level and then at the individual level. Social constructivists believe that learners build understanding together by sharing their individual perspectives in what is called elaborative collaboration and that this understanding cannot occur in individuals alone (Greeno, 1996 and Meter & Stevens, 2000).

According to Vygotsky (1978), learning is a continuous progression of the learner's current cognitive level to a higher level that is close to the individual's potential. As a result of social engagement, the learner's intellectual development occurs in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) has defined the zone of proximal development as "the gap between the actual level of development determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development determined by problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." It represents the distance between what a learner can achieve with or without support. Rogoff (1990) mentioned that best learning is best when learners collaborate and cooperate with each other. According to Vygotsky, learner cognition is a special case of social experience. Therefore, by understanding learners' social experiences, one can understand learners' knowledge and thinking. Cole (1996) stated that culture and ZPD cognition are mutually beneficial.

Rogoff (1990) found that students make progress through the ZPD activities when they are engaged in challenging tasks that require the supervision of a supervisor who is responsible for providing an appropriate learning environment that allows students to participate effectively. Both teachers and students monitor the learning process. Students can make progress by being 'supported' by the teacher during ZPD activities, which are a non-hierarchical teacher-student relationship (Tort-Moloney, 1997). Hammond & Gibbons (2005) emphasize the importance of setting high expectations for student performance by providing effective scaffolding for learners during activities.

Scaffolding is an important concept in social constructivism. Wood & Wood (1996) referred to scaffolding as support or assistance provided by experienced and knowledgeable individuals (e.g. parents, teachers, peers) to less able and creditable learners in an educational setting to enable them to achieve the ZPD. It is based on supporting learners through the use of pictures, graphics, simple language, collaborative learning, and teacher assistance (Ovando,

Collier & Combs, 2003). Scaffolding has been divided into four types by Hill and Hannifin (2011). First, conceptual scaffolding, in which outlines, maps, and examples can be used to support students' learning and help them select relevant learning options. Second, metacognitive scaffolding, which can help students focus on learning objectives to assess what they know and what they should do next. Third, procedural scaffolding, such as charts, graphs, and navigation maps, which helps students assess resources and reduce cognitive load. Fourth, strategic scaffolding, which can include ideas to help students learn. Scaffolding can be done effectively when teachers set micro-level learning goals (tasks and activities) that align with the macro-level learning plan (Hammond & Gibbons , 2005).

Research Problem

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education English Language Curriculum Grades 1-12 (2015, P. 35) Palestinian students in the Upper Primary Stage (Grades 5-10) are expected to

- comprehend, interpret and appreciate texts of different genres on a variety of topics.
- develop awareness and limited mastery of reading micro skills (e.g. skimming, scanning, guessing meaning from context, etc.)
- develop ability to comprehend information in interactional discourse (verbal exchanges) and relatively extended discourse.
- enhance comprehension and interpretation skills.
- develop skills in exchanging and conveying ideas.
- develop social interaction and communication skills (negotiation of meaning and conversation management).
- use language in appropriate ways.
- produce guided/controlled written texts.
- develop awareness and appreciation of target language culture.
- develop high-order thinking skills.

The problem of the current study focuses on the challenges that Palestinian female learners face in learning English as a foreign language in grade 10. Palestinian students begin learning English as a foreign language at the first grade. As an English teacher, the researcher observed that the majority of students in these grades even after learning English for several years unable to achieve the aforementioned general expectation as outlined in the English Curriculum document for these grades. The researcher conducted the study to investigate the reasons behind such a serious issue. In conducting the study the researcher aimed at describing learners' challenges pertaining to the English curriculum issues, English teachers' issues, learners' issues and family issues. In addition, the current study investigated the reasons behind such challenges, how to overcome such challenges and the possible methods that teachers could use to aid learners to achieve the Palestinian English curriculum goals.

Research Questions

This study investigated the challenges that grade 10 female learners face in learning English as a foreign language and what are the reasons behind such a serious case. In particular, the present study aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that Palestinian grade 10 female students face in learning English as a foreign language?

2. What are the classroom teaching practices that teachers perform which hinder students' learning?

3. What teachers could do to improve student learning and overcome students' learning challenges?

4. What are students' recommendations for teachers to assist them improving their English proficiency and achieve the English curriculum goals?

Significance of The Study

The current study investigates challenges that grade 10 female students face in learning EFL. Therefore, it is considered vital for English as a foreign language teacher, foreign language learners, and educational leaders for the following reasons:

2. English language teachers become aware of challenges from their students' perspectives. In addition, it will help them provide the needed support to overcome these challenges.

3. English language learners become aware of the challenges they may face in learning English as a Foreign Language. Accordingly, they might be able to enhance their own strategies that will assist them in overcoming the challenges that they face in the learning and acquisition process.

4. Educational leaders, policymakers, teacher training and preparation programs could design professional development programs that train in-service and pre-service teachers to meet English learning challenges

Limitation of the Study

The present study was conducted in Palestine, specifically in the Ramallah directorate. The Palestinian education system is exceptional in its policies and practices. The participants in the study are 10th-grade female students in the academic year 2021/2022. The researcher cautions against generalizing the study's findings to other educational contexts, especially those with different policies and educational practices. In addition, the small number of participants may make it difficult to generalize the study's findings to all Palestinian schools. The data collected were analyzed with a high degree of objectivity to ensure reliability and credibility. Finally, I must mention that I had to conduct interviews with the students in Arabic because they refused to speak English.

Delimitation of the study

The present study was conducted during the 2021/2022 school year. The participants were thirty female tenth graders, five English teachers, and two instructional supervisors. The main purpose of the study is to examine the challenges that tenth graders face in learning EFL, teachers' practices that hinder student achievement, teachers' practices that can improve

students' performance and students' recommendations to teachers to overcome the challenges.

Summary

In this chapter the author introduced a brief history of education in Palestine and English language teaching, starting from Palestinian linguistic history from Persian Empire until education in Palestine nowadays. Further, she discussed the theoretical framework in which the current study is grounded, the research problem, the research questions and the limitation and delimitations of the current study. In the next chapter, the author will review the literature pertaining to teaching English in Palestine and the relevant studies on the issue of the current study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Researchers interested in teaching English as a foreign/second language conducted several studies on the challenges that English language learners encounter in the process of studying and learning English. This chapter reviews some of the studies that focus on the obstacles and challenges that foreign/second language learners face. The author categorized the studies that she reviewed into four categories. These include socio-cultural challenges, lexical challenges, educational challenges and economic challenges. Below, the author will discuss the studies focused on these challenges separately under different headings.

Socio-Cultural Challenges

Mohammad (2018) in his definition of cultre emphasizes the individual's belonging a specific community that it has its own history, language, and heritage. He argues that the importance of culture in learning a new language cannot be overstated, because sometimes learners identify the second language's vocabulary, but they are unable to comprehend what the phrases or expressions mean. As a result, it's critical to have a good understanding of the culture and community. Also, he considered creating a safe environment as a major challenge because students can not learn in an atmosphere, in which they are not safe. After all, it increases students' anxiety.

Nguyen (2011) explored the challenges that southeast Asian students face for Australian universities admission regarding English profeciency. The study included three Asian students and two Australian English teachers. Semi-structured interviews were used as a method for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that adapting to the English culture was a challenge that hindered students from learning the English language. He explained that giving personal viewpoints was difficult for Thai and Indonesian students, and they were extremely courteous in their behavior and communication with others, particularly professors. Their Asian culture educated them on the values of avoiding conflict with others and attempting to live in harmony with different people.

Researchers studied the effect of cultural diversity on learning the English language. Raju & Joshith (2017) studied the obstacles that Indian students face in learning English as a second language. The researchers concluded that differences between Indian culture and English culture affect English language learning. They clarified that obstacles happened when there is a mismatch between a learner's culture and the complexity of a language task assigned to them. Learning a language includes learning its skills, and learners cannot comprehend it unless they are able to use the English language in the target context. Moreover, the influence of the mother tongue delayed the learning process because language transfer may bring out language mistakes.

In the Malaysian context, Azman (2016) elucidates the implementation of English Language education reform in Malaysian primary schools and the challenges students encounter. The result of the research included many challenges such as limited language exposure, untrained teachers and the most important the threatening view of the English language as a danger towards sustaining a multilingual community. The researcher explained that multi-cultural realities are a necessity to be included in the curriculum since students experience these realities in their daily life. He also stressed creating an authentic learning experience that meets students' roles in the Malaysian multilingual community.

The socio-cultural factor is crucial in learning and teaching in a multilingual community like Kenya. A case study conducted by Dhillon & Jenestar (2013) investigated the challenges and strategies of teachers and learners of English as a Second Language in an urban primary school in Kenya. The findings revealed that unimplemented school language policy resulted in students' low performance, especially that students rely on their native language to communicate, even more, young learners use a special English language to express solidarity to their peers and cultures, which makes their English even worse. In addition, students and teachers tend to use language switching code during classes, which affected English learning negatively.

In the Arab world, much research was conducted to examine the challenges that Arab students face in learning the English language. Drbseh(2019) studied the difficulties that

Saudi learners, who learn English as a foreign language encounter during secondary school. The study included seven students from the secondary level and semi-structured interviews were the main method for data collection. In such an Islamic country that lives by Islamic conservative culture, the educational system is deeply affected by Islamic religious values. As a result, Saudi students resist learning English because it is considered a factor that leads to cultural dilution.

Similarly, Alrabai (2016) investigated factors underlying the low achievement of Saudi learners who learn English as a foreign language. The results of the study showed the influence of culture and society as a major factor in students low performance. Despite the growing demand for Saudis to acquire English, Arabian society is conservative, devout, and has deep traditions, making it hard to change or adopt a new lifestyle. Because of the social and cultural constraints, some Saudis believe that studying English will hinder their ability to learn Arabic, or that learning English will weaken their culture, customs, and identity. In addition, the Islamic religion has its effect on learning and teaching that could be seen in having sepete schools for boys and girls.

In addition, Libya suffered from cultural barriers in learning the English language. Youssef & Bose (2015) examined learning English as a foreign language in Libyan high school. They concluded that the war situation resulted in banning the English language in Libya in the 1980s. At the beginning of the 21st century, the English language, as a school subject, was reintroduced at Libyan schools. But, Libyan students' negative attitude towards the English language hindered the learning process. Libyan students consider the English language as a representation of the American Culture and policy, which have been targeting Muslims all over the world.

However, Alefesha & Al-Jamal (2019) examined the obstacles that Syrian refugee students face in the Jordanian refugees camp in Irbid city. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The researchers exposed that social difficulties are interwoven with Syrian refugees' economic crises. All the participants' stated that depression caused by the lack of basic living needs and anxiety caused by the fear of war situation affected Syrian English

learning negatively. Moreover, many students had to leave school or miss English language classes to financially support their families.

In the Irani context, Persian is the official language. Akbari (2015) studied the challenges that Irani learners face in learning English as a foreign language in junior high and high school. She revealed that many factors affect English language learning such as curriculums, teachers, teaching methodologies, assessment, students and many others. Meanwhile, the English language as a school subject is considered as a representation of western culture, the researcher explained that Iran has never been colonialized, therefore the Persian language was the only tongue for communication, which results in students' weakness in learning the English language. Even though students spend seven years studying the English language at school, they cant communicate in it.

An analytical study conducted by Kung (2017) analyzed the socio-cultural English language teaching and learning circumstances in Taiwan. In terms of learning style and attitude, Taiwanese students are heavily affected by Chinese culture. The overarching authority of instructors in the classroom, as well as students' high regard for them due to their thorough knowledge of the subject matter, are some aspects of Chinese culture. Many Chinese students do not consider asking questions in public a good practice, despite the fact that teacher-student knowledge transmission should be highly regarded and treasured. This is due to Chinese modesty and face-saving philosophy. The fear of losing face in front of others when making a mistake and lack of self-confidence contributes to pupils' passive learning attitude when studying a second or foreign language.

In addition, Yang (2019) examined listening comprehension barriers that Chinese students face. The research found internal and external challenges. The internal ones included students' insufficient vocabulary and pronunciation differences between the Chinese and English languages. The external challenges included cultural differences. English can not be understood without understanding the culture, therefore, misunderstanding the cultural background by Chinese learners leads to misunderstanding the meaning, especially since some events, holidays, and religious festivals are related to Western countries' culture.

Linguistic Challenges

In learning a foreign language learners face challenges related to language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), linguistic obstacles, teachers' methodologies and curriculum. For instance, Hartiningsih (2020) studied the obstacles faced by foreign language learners related to foreign language courses in Malang Raya in Malaysia. In this qualitative research, the researcher used a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that difficulties in learning some European foreign languages included both linguistic and non-linguistic challenges. The linguistic challenge included pronunciation and grammar. Pronunciation challenges were caused by learner unfamiliarity with the English language and differences between English and the Malay language. Meanwhile, the non-linguistic challenges included learners' fear of being behind the learning material because learners had to balance their job schedules with their English classes.

Khan (2011) studied learning difficulties in English in the Arabic bilingual context in Saudi Arabia. In her diagnostic study, the researcher found different challenges that Saudi learners encounter in learning the English language such as pronunciation, structure, tenses, capitalization and vocabulary. She explained that lack of exposure to the English language in daily life places and activities stands behind these challenges. Comparing and contrasting English and Arabic affected students learning; in fact, the researcher explained that many pronunciation and grammar mistakes happen because of the interference with the Arabic language, especially since the first language sentence structure is different from the second language.

In the same context, Vyomakesisri (2017) examined the challenges of learning English as a secondary language in India. In his research, the researcher stressed the importance of learning the English language and discussed the challenges that Indian learners face at the school level. The study concluded with four challenges in the areas of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation

and slang. Each one of the challenges was clarified separately. The researcher suggested that English grammar is complicated; therefore any mistake in using it may lead to a sentence misunderstanding. Also, the different intonations, stress and articulation created pronunciation challenges for Indian learners. He added that a lack of good pronunciation and accurate grammar mastery results in vocabulary challenges. In other words, all the challenges are interwoven and lead to each other.

In Indonesia, research was conducted to study the challenges that six-year students at elementary schools face. Observation, note taking and recording were used as tools for data collection. The study found two challenges which are English parts of speech and pronunciation. The researcher clarified that English word class is considered difficult for young learners because they can not understand the word that can be used as a verb and a noun at the same time. Regarding pronunciation, the differences between the Indonesian phonetic system and the English system led to confusion in both consonant and vowel sounds (Sundari, 2018).

In addition, Sokip (2020) studied the challenges faced by Indonesian non-native speakers in mastering the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). He explained that each skill has its challenges. Listening skills meant comprehending the listening material, therefore listening challenges included a new vocabulary list, in which students listen to words for the first time without knowing their meanings which confused them. The bad listening equipment, English different accents, and the cultural differences between English countries and Indonesia created listening skill obstacles. As a productive skill, speaking challenges were directly related to the student's environment. The study revealed that the "fear of making a mistake" in front of classmates was the dominant challenge. Like listening skills, unfamiliar words obstructed students' understanding. Pertaining to writing, transforming main ideas into understandable and readable material was the main challenge.

At the university level, Banditvilai & Cullen (2018) investigated problems and obstacles in learning English as a Foreign Language in Thailand. The researchers used a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection and the sample of the study consisted of 520 students from

different majors at Kasetsart University. The findings revealed that students had problems with writing and listening. Lack of vocabulary and grammar misunderstanding resulted in writing, students had to think first in Thai and then use English vocabulary and structure to write a sentence, which caused many errors in composing sentences. Regarding listening, the researcher stated that lack of exposure to the English language resulted in listening difficulties. The researchers added that the least challenge for students was speaking. However, students' lack of English vocabulary and the fear of making grammar mistakes prevented them from speaking English fluently.

Regarding listening difficulties, Gilakjani & Sabouri (2016) constructed a literature review about learners' Listening Comprehension Difficulties in English Language Learning. The researchers listed different challenges such as the bad quality of recorded material, different and unfamiliar accents and ambiguous vocabulary that has more than one meaning. However, the speed and length of recorded material are necessary for listening comprehension activities. Low achievers can't concentrate for more than three minutes, and fast listening material creates a problem in understanding the target language vocabulary. The researchers recommended teachers familiarize students with different accents and choose listening material that suits learners' academic levels.

Solak (2015) examined the challenges that Turkish university students encounter in learning the English language. The researcher adopted a qualitative methodology to collect data about the aforementioned subject. The participants of the study consisted of twenty-two students from different university disciplines. Twelve of them were majoring in the English language. The results of the study revealed many challenges such as English language skills, teaching methodology and language practice. Although the challenges are different, they are related. The research explained that despite the need for different language skills, the main focus was only on grammar, English skills were neglected. Besides, teachers' methodology ignored language practice and concentrated only on grammar. English language classes were teacher-centered and theory-based.

Another study by Al Nakhalah (2016) examined speaking problems and difficulties that English language students at Al Quds Open University in Gaza encounter. The researcher used interviews to collect data about the aforementioned topic. The finding of the study showed that psychological factors were the main reasons behind speaking difficulties. The factors included students' low self-esteem, feeling shy to speak in front of others, the fear of making mistakes in front of classmates, the anxiety of looking foolish because of speaking errors and students' lack of motivation. The recommendation stressed the role of teachers in creating a motivating atmosphere to overcome speaking obstacles.

Consisting with the previous study, Shen& Chiu (2019) studied EFL Learners' English speaking difficulties in Taiwan. The participants were juniors and sophomores majoring in English. The results showed various challenges including environmental, lexical and psychological difficulties. Fear of making mistakes was the dominant psychological challenge. Meanwhile, the shortage of English vocabulary was the main linguistic challenge. Further, poor opportunities to practice English resulted in creating learning obstacles.

In Spain, Kocaman (2017) examined factors impeding the learning of a second language in the Spanish school system at Valladolid University. First, second and third-year 120 students were the participants of the study. An open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Thematic analysis revealed that Spanish learners face lexical, instructional, and affective challenges. Lexical challenges included the four language skills, but the biggest challenges were speaking and pronunciation. Teachers' teaching methods and lack of authentic exposure to the foreign language caused these challenges, especially since students don't use English in their daily life.

However, reading challenges were investigated by Sadeghi & Izadpanah(2018). The researchers used mixed-method research, in which they used questionnaires and open-ended questions to collect data from sixty successful teachers. The findings revealed that insufficient time was the main challenge that hinder students from enhancing their speaking skills. Teachers had to teach different skills without focusing on only one; therefore, reading skills limited hindered both the learning and assessment process. The lack of feedback was another

obstacle that Irani learners faced. High and low achievers didn't receive feedback from their teachers which led to unmotivated and bored learners.

Othman et al. (2015) studied learner perceptions and challenges in learning Eglish literature in Malaysia. The participants were secondary school students from Hulu Langat. The results of the study revealed that students have a positive perception of learning English literature. This is because of the comfortable and welcoming environment throughout the literary class. However, students faced difficulties in understanding literary texts because they do not have a basic understanding of their literary component, especially poetry since every word has a deeper significance. Besides, teachers' lack of adequate explanation for literary text hindered students from comprehending the literature correctly. Therefore, the study recommended teachers practice the text before coming to class to master it.

Although many studies investigated different language skills challenges, some studies focused on specific parts of the language. Alotaibi et al. (2018) investigated the challenges Kuwaiti English foreign language Learners encounter in learning English prepositions. Two groups of bachelor (BA) and Diploma students were the participants of the study. The results showed that all Kuwaiti learners had little awareness of English prepositions. However, BA students exceeded Diploma students in using simple and complex grammar because of their language proficiency. Moreover, the interference between Arabic and English led to misuse of the preposition. Some complex prepositions don't have equivalents in Arabic.

Educational Challenges

Teachers have an important role in creating and overcoming learning challenges. Kalia (2017) studied the trend and challenges of English language teaching in India. The research concluded with different challenges, related mainly to teachers. The incompetent teacher was a major challenge in India, their teaching methodologies, aids and materials were outdated. Teachers focused on language rules but not on applying them. In addition, students have a passive role in the classroom. They only answered specific questions asked by their teachers, in case learners had a problem. They depended on their teacher to deal with it. The researcher

considered lack of motivation a critical issue among Indian learners and stated that it was the teacher's responsibility to increase students' motivation.

Similarly, Menakapriya (2016) examined challenges in learning English as a Second Language in Indian schools. The researcher explained that the misleading objective of teaching English created a challenge since English is taught in schools as a subject rather than a language. In addition, in many elementary schools, English is taught by other subject specialists. The homeroom teacher teaches students all the subjects including the English language. In other words, English is taught by non-English specialists. At such a critical age, learners need to learn to speak, read and pronounce appropriately by expert English language graduates. He added that the nature of the English language was another challenge. This is because one form of a word may indicate different meanings.

Muhammad et al. (2018) investigated teaching and learning the English Language in Nigerian schools. The study found some challenges that both teachers and students encounter. Language differences and language transfer contributed to escalating the challenges. However, the teacher's attitude was one of the challenges. Teaches frequently rely on their learners' personal motivation to learn, especially if students were self-reliant. Another challenge was the lack of teachers' follow-up on students' work to measure their progress. The study stated that students with high academic levels had attended English classes outside school. The study recommended improving both the academic and professional content of the Teacher Education program.

In Pakistan Khan & Khan (2016) studied obstacles in learning English as a second language among intermediate students. The researchers used a mixed approach. Questionnaires for both teachers and students and students' interviews were adopted as research instruments. The research concluded that lack of Interest and poor attitude towards teachers was one of the challenges. The researchers stated that teachers who are contractual and work temporally were underprivileged of many benefits. This created an un-secure work atmosphere, which affected teacher performance that resulted in creating many difficulties for students. The shortage of English teachers was another problem. English has been taught by

teachers from other professions. In case there were English teachers, they were untrained. Besides, educators uncaring behavior created learning obstacles. Students suffered from non-collaborative teachers who refused to cooperate with students in overcoming language difficulties.

In addition, teachers' poor English skills led to unsatisfactory students' performance and created many challenges. Elibariki (2017) conducted a research study on the challenges that face primary school pupils in learning English as a foreign language in the Itigi district council in Tanzania. The researcher used a questionnaire, observation and document review as methods for data collection. The study concluded that English teachers poor language skills hindered students from learning the English language. The researcher explained that most of the teachers relied on using their mother tongue during classes because they didn't master its skills. Poverty was another challenge that both teachers and students had to face. Because of the lack of material, many students had to share one book during lessons.

Ahmed (2018) investigated the challenges of English Language teaching in Yemeni primary and secondary schools in AL-Dhalea, which is a rural area. The participants in the study consisted of twenty senior teachers and supervisors. Findings showed that English teachers' low proficiency and inadequate expertise in applying communicative language teaching approaches are considered major problems. Besides, crowded classes and a shortage of teaching aids complicated the teaching situation.

A similar study conducted by Ahmed & Qasem (2019) investigated the Problems of Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in South Yemen. The study revealed that the age of learning English affected students' performance. Yemeni students start learning English in the seventh grade. In addition, students' lack of exposure and speaking Arabic in English classes led to poor performance. Therefore, the researchers recommended applying a compulsory English language curriculum from the first grade and encouraged applying a communicative language approach to allow students to practice the language in English classes.

The inadequate time for learning English was the main challenge for Yemeni learners at secondary school. According to Muthanna & Rao(2018), Yemeni students learn English for 2

hours during the week, which is insufficient time to learn a foreign language. In case a student missed a session during the week, this means having only two English classes. The researcher explained that the Yemeni English curriculum is outdated, and teachers are obliged to finish it and do all the textbook activities. Therefore, teachers have no time to motivate students or use authentic material. Students finish secondary school without obtaining English language skills. They only memorize textbooks to pass exams.

On the other hand, Al Farizi (2019) examined the obstacles that Indonesian language learners encounter in elementary school. Class observation and interviews were adopted to collect data. The findings of the study revealed that teacher-centered class was the main obstacle that affected students' performance. Lecturing and storytelling were the main learning strategies used by teachers. Students had a passive role because they were inactive listeners. Teachers depended on textbooks and neglected any media or technology to facilitate student learning, which created unmotivated kids.

In addition, another case study conducted by Utomo et al (2020) investigated challenges faced by English teachers in Banjarnegara city in Indonesia. The results showed that different factors contributed to teaching English challenges. These challenges varied between teachers, students the learning environment and parents. Although teachers' teaching strategies hindered the learning process, the researchers differentiated between novice, middle and advanced teachers. Each category had its own challenges, but the novice had the most. They had obstacles regarding learning material, aids and class management. Even though advanced teachers had the least challenges, they struggled with unmotivated students and the declining of their memory as they are getting old.

Alhabahba et al (2016) mapped out English language teaching in Jordan. They stressed the importance of the English language in different life sectors. In addition, the researchers highlighted the issues that English language teaching encounters. The absence of national standards and guidance is a critical issue in Jordan. English curriculum and learning process is uncontrolled; therefore, many mistakes happen. Teacher-centered classes and exam-oriented assessments are other challenges. The educational system required teachers to cover all the

the material in the textbooks, no matter what are the learning strategies. Meanwhile, students focus on memorizing to pass exams, paying no attention to understanding the learning material. The researcher found that the inadequate assessment of learners exacerbated English language learning challenges in the Jordanian context. Finally, one of the most compelling factors that have resulted in low EFL student performance is the lack of effective teacher preparation programs. Teachers have bachelor's degrees in English language and literature without receiving any teaching training.

Test washback was another challenge that learners and teachers had to deal with. Rahman (2019) conducted a review article about English language teaching in Bangladesh. The article revealed different challenges that teachers and learners encounter. But it stated that both parties faced the challenge of test washback. The Bangali assessment and examination policy neglected and excluded speaking and listening skills. Therefore, students and teachers focused on skills included in the national tests, which resulted in students' lack of performance in both listening and speaking skills. In other words, neither teachers nor students practiced the language, they focused only on passing tests.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia legislated the English language as a compulsory school subject for elementary schools starting in the fourth grade in 2010. Alrashidi & Phan (2015) examined the education context and English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study tracked the history of teaching English and highlighted some challenges that Saudi learners meet. Despite spending 9 years studying English as a foreign language, students graduate from high school with low English proficiency due to teacher-centered classes, in which instructors spend the time lecturing students without giving them any chance to interact or practice the language. The use of the mother tongue was another challenge. Saudi teachers rely on Arabic to speak in English classes, depriving students of being exposed to the target language, which resulted in students lagging behind the expectations.

Lack of motivation was another challenge the Saudi university learners faced. Alhmadi (2014) conducted a case study about English-speaking learning barriers in Saudi Arabia at Tibah University. After observing ten English-speaking classes, the researcher listed

challenges that caused low performance in speaking skills. However, the lack of motivation was a major challenge, which was caused by other challenges. The researcher explained that freshmen students were taught English daily for five hours by the same instructor and in the same classroom. The fixed environment and teaching strategy reduced students' motivation towards practicing the language. In addition, lecturers were obliged by the university policy to finish the textbook, leaving them with limited time to enrich the curriculum with different attractive and interesting activities.

The Palestinian context is not different from other Arab countries. Bianchi & Abdel Razeq (2017) investigated the English language teaching situation in Palestine. The use of the mother tongue, crowded classes, teaching methodologies, test-oriented teachers, teaching policies, and the misalignment between the textbook used and the curriculum goals for each grade level were the challenges. The researchers stated that crowded classes affect teachers' ability to assess students, also deprive learners of participating and practicing the language. Teaching policies that obliged teachers to finish the textbooks for the sake of exams put teachers under pressure to focus on quantity rather than quality which created test-oriented teachers. In other words, all the challenges are interwoven and lead to each other.

At the university level, Oktay (2015) investigated foreign language teaching in the Turkish context. The researcher used the questionnaire to collect data from fourteen senior students from the English teaching department. Results showed that Turkish learners face a lot of challenges such as the insufficient Turkish policy in teaching foreign languages, teacher-centered classes, focusing on grammar and neglecting other skills, crowded classes and the insufficient environment to practice the language. The researcher stated that all challenges are related, and to overcome them, serious steps need to be taken, starting by changing the country's policy in teaching foreign languages.

Similarly, Frans (2016) conducted his study on barriers to learning English as a second language in two higher institutions in Nambia. The study examined the reasons that hinder two university students from mastering English productive skills. Many factors contributed to barriers in writing and speaking. Time pressure to finish the textbooks and the instructors'

chaotic teaching methods were challenges that hindered learning English productive skills. Besides, the researcher listed syllabi as a crucial challenge. English syllabi lacked writing and speaking activities, moreover, it was reviewed after three years by the head of the department, who focused on writing barriers and neglected the speaking ones, which made the barriers even worse.

The untrained teacher was the main challenge that the National University of Laos students encounter in learning English language. Rany et al (2013) investigated the factors that cause English language low proficiency among students who specialized in Teacher Education in English program. The study revealed that teachers tend to use the Lao language in English classes which resulted in students' low performance. The researcher recommended using different learning styles to enhance students learning.

Motivation is considered a core in the learning process, therefore its absence created challenges for teachers and students. Hussain (2018) studied the factors that lead to high or low motivation among adult English learners. Data were collected via questionnaires and interviews. The findings of the study stated that teacher motivation is a necessity to student motivation because it's contagious. Teacher enthusiasm can be transferred to students. Thus, the absence of teachers' motivation can result in student low motivation and performance. Therefore, the study recommended school administrations provide teachers with the needed support, to create a motivating work environment.

Economic Challenges

The poor financial situation in a country reflects directly on all life sectors, including education. Hossain & Phil(2018) investigated the difficulties of learning English Language at the secondary Level at Thakurgaon District In Bangladesh. Data were collected via questionnaires and interviews. The research revealed Bangladesh's economic situation hindered many students from getting the appropriate education. Students had to work as farmers to help their families. In addition, English teachers suffered from the lack of teaching aids, which are necessary to enhance students learning, such as multimedia projectors. The researcher added the undeveloped poor road system as a challenge for female students. There are far villages in

Bangladesh. Girls had to walk a long distance to attend schools, but unfortunately, they may get rapped or kidnapped. Therefore many female students don't attend school.

Likewise, Uddin (2018) investigated the challenges that secondary school students in urban and rural areas in Bangladesh meet in learning English as a foreign language. A questionnaire was adopted as a method of data collection, and the participants were 120 students and 20 teachers. The results showed that large crowded classes were a challenging teaching environment, which had to deal with 70 students minimum. In such unhomogenized classes, the high and low achievers were the same. In addition, the classroom's bad physical condition was another challenge. In the majority of schools, learners were required to sit on outdated benches and desks, which bounded their mobility. Rural schools have the most difficult situation. As a poor country, the government was unable to devote all of its resources to the education sector.

In the same context, Tariq et al (2013) examined the difficulties in learning English language in the rural areas of Pakistan. The participants in the study were students aged between 18-19 years old. The researchers used a questionnaire for data collection. The findings of the study reflected the effect of the Pakistani family financial situation on young learners' education. The Pakistani families depend on agriculture, without having a stable sufficient income. Therefore, families can not provide for their members' basic needs including education. Besides, most of the parents and family members are uneducated and they speak only Punjabi at home. As a result, they can't support their kids' learning English. The researchers stated that family educational background and parent support are a necessity in English language learning.

Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2017) studied communicative English language teaching in Egypt. The study aimed to examine the communicative approach to teaching the English language in Egyptian public schools. The researchers adopted the mixed approach and collected data via interviews, observation and questionnaires. They stated that the large size of classes affected learning English negatively. Teachers couldn't handle the huge number of students inside classrooms. In addition, Egyptian public schools depend on the ministry of education to afford their supplies. Because of poverty, the ministry provides schools with a low budget, which

prevents them from buying necessary tools such as teaching aids. The double-shift teaching system that the ministry of education adopted to adapt to the high population and lack of funding crises required shortening periods, which affected learning English language negatively.

The demanding life in the 21st century required having a fair income, therefore both parents had to work to afford their family members' needs. Misbah et al (2017) investigated the factors that cause students learning difficulties in learning English language in Malaysia. The participants in the study were students from seven different schools who couldn't achieve the Malaysian grade point average in English language subjects. The findings of the study revealed different factors such as limited language vocabulary and the effect of the mother tongue. Also, the study considered the Malaysian socio-economic situation and parental involvement as crucial factors in learners' education. Both parents had to leave home and work to enhance the family income, leaving no time to get involved in their children's education, which resulted in learners' low academic performance.

However, Baigal (2020) investigated obstacles in learning English among Mangolian first-year students. The researcher, who is a lecturer at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology, used open-ended questions to investigate thirty-three freshmen students' obstacles. Results show that learners had difficulties due to the barriers of themselves, families, and educational institutions. The researcher stated that learners' low-self confidence, lack of motivation and weak vocabulary knowledge were the main challenges. In terms of economic and emotional support, their families were unable to support them in their education. Research recommendations encouraged collaboration between teachers, schools and parents to overcome learning difficulties.

In contrast, a study conducted by Liando (2013) investigated the successful experience of Indonesian students in learning English language. The participants of the study were three English university lecturers. Interviews were used as too for data collection. The results revealed that parents and family support were important in participants' early learning experiences. Besides, technology accessibility enhanced learners' experience because they were exposed to English language, which is different from their mother tongue.

The participants also stressed the role of their school English teachers who inspired them to be English teachers.

In the same context, Salameh & Sathakathulla (2018) studied the impact of social-economic factors on students' English language performance in EFL classrooms in Dubai public secondary schools. The findings showed that various factors affect students learning such as parents, family and age. The researchers stated that class level affects English learning because older students tend to practice the language and speak English at home more than young learners. However, they revealed that parents' financial status affected students learning positively. It was noted that learners from richer socio-economic and cultural backgrounds appear to be more likely to achieve higher levels of English proficiency.

Summary

In this chapter, a variety of studies were reviewed to explore the investigated issues in the current research. It started with shedding the light on socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, it included linguistic challenges, which are related to different language skills. Moreover, it explored challenges related to teachers and the teaching environment. Finally, it highlighted the economic situation of different countries and its effect on learning the English language. Despite all the studies conducted in the field of English language learning challenges, the current study is authentic and a need in the Palestinian context. Palestinian students spend 12 years studying English language at school. However, they are still low achievers and cant meet anticipated expectations. Therefore, it is worths investigating the challenges that hinder English learning in the Palestinian context.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

The current study examined the challenges 10th-grade female students encounter in learning English as a foreign language and suggests some steps to overcome them. This chapter provides an overview of the research methods used in the study. It describes the research design that was adopted to answer the research questions stated in the first chapter. It also explains the setting and participants, the instruments used for data collection, and the approach used to analyze the data. Below is a description of the aforementioned parts of the study, including the research design, setting and participants, instruments and data collection, data analysis, and summary.

Research Design

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature as it explores challenges 10th-grade students face in learning English as a foreign language as well as their recommendations to overcome them. The core data of the study were obtained from the participants' experiences, practices, and perspectives. The research paradigm used for the purpose of this study and to answer the research questions is qualitative and uses semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. This method was chosen to gain a better understanding of the background and setting of the study. According to Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina (2005), qualitative research is a "multifaceted research method" that allows researchers to study deeply an issue. It also allowed the researcher to explore the participants' experiences, practices, and ideas, as well as the thoughts and values that underpin and influence their actions. It also enabled the researcher to observe the participants' immediate responses and identify their EFL learning issues.

Settings and Participants

This study aimed to explore the challenges that 10-grade female students face in learning EFL in the Palestinian context. The participants were 30 female students and 5 English language teachers were chosen from four public schools in the Ramallah metropolitan area and one private school from the suburban area. The schools chosen were

based on accessibility and the ability to reach those schools. The participants also included two instructional supervisors based on accessibility.

The participants of the current study were thirty female students from five different schools in Ramallah District. All participants were female in the tenth grade and have been learning EFL. In cooperation with the school principals and English teachers at the schools selected the research chose 6 students from each school: two high achievers, two average achievers and two below-average achievers. Participants' level of achievement was determined based on their report cards and teachers' recommendations. In addition, the participants include five English language teachers who teach English for the tenth grade in the chosen schools as well as two instructional English language supervisors, who have been supervising the chosen teachers. All English teachers were experienced teachers who have been teaching English for many years. The least experienced one has been teaching for 3 years while the most experienced teachers have been teaching for 8 years.

Instruments and Data Collection

Two instruments were used to collect data to answer the research questions:

1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for the research problem with each one of the participants. The interviews were 30 student interviews, 5 teachers and 2 instructional supervisors interviews. The questions of the interviews were developed to collect as much data as possible and allow participants to reflect and describe their experiences (Rudestam & Newton 2007). They were designed and asked in a manner that does not invade students, teachers and supervisors' privacy. The interview questions were reviewed very carefully to ensure that they helped the researcher collect the data necessary to answer the research questions.

The semi-structured Interviews provided this study with an in-depth understanding of not only participant perceptions but also the reasons behind them. The Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with a list of guiding questions prepared to keep the interview conversational in nature and relaxed to help participants feel more at ease. The semi-structured nature encouraged the flow of conversation and allowed for flexibility in adding follow-up questions as needed. The interview model and question sets were developed based

on pilot interviews to help the researcher formulate appropriate questions that best guide the interviews in the right direction. Participants were asked to elaborate on responses when needed. Meanwhile, Teachers' interviews were conducted after classroom observation to

reflect on teachers' classroom practices, and supervisors' interviews were conducted after teachers' interviews to discuss and elaborate on teachers' points of view.

2.   Classroom Observation

Mamo(2013) stated that classroom observation is considered a vital instrument to collect data about language learners and language teachers in different contexts. It gives critical feedback about the teaching and learning process to help teachers improve their teaching methods and class management (Halim,20018). Therefore, the researcher adopted exhaustive classroom observation as a method for data collection, to observe the quality of education students are receiving, teaching methods used by teachers, students' interactions during English language classes and assessment methods used by the teacher.

The researcher observed English language classes in five different schools in the Ramallah district. In each school, the researcher observed two classes. During the observation, the researcher paid attention to different details including the topic of the lesson, the implementation of different skills, classroom language, the number of students in each class, the number of students who participates and the role of both teachers and students in the classroom.

Instruments' Validity and Reliability
1. Interviews
To ensure the validity and reliability of the interviews the researcher did the following:

1. The interview questions were shared with specialists (faculty members at the Faculty of Education who have rich experience in the field of education, research, and linguistics. This was to ensure that the data collected was valid and to assist in answering the research questions. This also ensured that questions were not judgmental in nature, leading, or overly repetitive without intention. Based on the comments of the reviewers, modifications to the interview questions were made in terms of wording or the adding or removal of questions.

2. The semi-structured interview was cross-validated against the research study questions and the purpose of the study.

3. To ensure interrater reliability of the results achieved through the interviews, in analyzing the data the researcher worked with a colleague to analyze the data thematically ensuring consistent results. The colleague was an English language teacher who has been teaching for 6 years in public schools. This was done by comparing codes and themes drawn from randomly selected interviews leading to high reliability.

4. Collected findings were re-visited with participants for verification (respondent validation) and confirmed the validity of the data collected through the interview instrument.

1. Classroom Observation

Classroom observations are the best Issues to validity and reliability" (Cohen et al,2007, p. 412). This is because the researcher is directly collecting the data. Bernard (1994) stated that observation helps the researcher improve the validity of the research because it provides information about the influence of the physical environment on the research, and it assesses "who interacts with whom and how to evaluate how participants interact" (Savin-Baden& Major, 2013, p. 392). Thus, the researcher conducted all classroom observations herself, writing down all details without making any prior assumptions. In addition, the researcher read all the notes after the end of each classroom observation to avoid any misunderstanding or loss of data. Finally, the researcher analyzed all observations thematically using the six-phase process of coding, categorizing, and eliciting themes. Two external reviewers evaluated the themes by comparing them to the original text, and some changes were made based on their recommendations.

Data Analysis

The qualitative thematic analysis method was adopted to analyze the data. Braun & Clarke (2006, p.84) defined thematic analysis as" a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail". The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase model to analyze data.

The interviews were recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed word for word making sure nothing was missed or overlooked in the data. After completion of transcriptions, participants were contacted to confirm that the data collected is accurate and captured the information they shared. The researcher analyzed the transcribed data thematically. That is, the researcher analyzed the data using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase model as a working outline for the thematic

analysis process. In Phase One, the researcher familiarized herself with the transcribed data by reading and rereading the data several times to become familiar with all aspects of the data. During this process, notes were taken and some ideas were underlined throughout the reading and rereading process in the coding phase. In Phase Two, the researcher organized the data and code them using different highlighter colours. In Phase three the researcher searched for themes by putting the gathered codes into themes. In Phase Four, the researcher reviewed the themes and made some adjustments and edited them. In Phase Five, the researcher defined and named the themes. Finally, in Phase six a list of final themes was selected. In the same context, classroom observations were analyzed thematically, following the aforementioned steps to analyze all the written notes.

Summary

This chapter explained the methods used to conduct the study. It included a description of the research design, setting and participants, instruments and data collection, and data analysis. Since this was an exploratory study, a qualitative approach was used. The participants of the study were 30 10th grade students, 5 English teachers, and 2 instructional supervisors. Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used as instruments for data collection. A thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the data.

Chapter four

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges 10th-grade students face when learning English as a foreign language in the Palestinian context. The following research questions underpinned the study: (1) What are the challenges that Palestinian 10th-grade students face in learning English as a foreign language? (2) What are students' recommendations for teachers to help them improve their English proficiency and achieve the goals of the English curriculum? (3) What are the classroom teaching practices that teachers perform which hinder students' learning? (4) What could teachers do to improve student learning and address student challenges?

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty tenth-grade female students, five English teachers, and two instructional supervisors. In addition, ten classroom observations were conducted in five different schools in Ramallah district. A six-phase thematic analysis scheme according to (Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006) was used to analyze the collected data. After becoming familiar with the data, the researcher began to create initial codes and search for themes. Several themes emerged from the data. These themes were named and defined, and maps were created to look at the data and discuss them clearly and critically. In the final phase, results are presented to answer the research questions and demonstrate the validity of the results. The main themes that emerged from the data are the challenges of learning EFL and students' recommendations for improving their English language skills.

4.1. Challenges Palestinian Grade 10 Female Students Face in Learning EFL

The first section of the interview was about the challenges that Palestinian grade 10 female students face in learning EFL. The researcher asked students and teachers about the challenges that students encounter in understanding and practicing English language skills. The collected data emerged to form seven themes which are lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of

motivation, peer pressure, lack of practice, classroom atmosphere, cultural and linguistic differences and English for Palestine textbook for the tenth grade as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

(Figure 4.1) Major Themes

4.1.1 Lack of Vocabulary Mastery

A major problem that students encounter in learning EFL students is the lack of vocabulary knowledge which resulted in poor comprehension and practicing the language. Students and teachers interviews included many questions about students' challenges in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. All the participants agreed that lack of

vocabulary reflected negatively on students' learning skills. In reading and comprehending a text, the lack of vocabulary was an issue for students. Even though Palestinian English textbooks provide students with a variety of words, students don't memorize them, they only translate them instantly, which hinders students from understanding or using such words in the future. One of the participants (Amany) reported when she was asked about reading and writing challenges

> Generally, vocabulary. There are many vocabulary words that I don't know, as a result, I will not be able to understand a story or a text. Even in writing, I know what to say in Arabic but I don't know how to translate it into English.

Many students mentioned that a lack of vocabulary hindered them from understanding English class listening materials or starting a simple conversation with their English teacher or classmates, even though the text may lead them to the missing meanings. Noor said," I do not know the vocabulary of the listening material. I try to guess their meanings, but most of the time it doesn't work." High achievers mentioned that the nature of used vocabulary may reflect on their understanding of a conversation or listening materials, specifically vernacular. There are differences between standard English and vernacular English, in which a word may be used differently compared to standard English. Hala stated "I cannot understand street language. When I translate it literary, it doesn't make any sense and it has no meaning."

4.1.2 Lack of Motivation

Because of the difficulties learners face in learning EFL at a young age, many learners have low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn the language. They believe that their inadequate education in elementary and middle school contributed significantly to their low English proficiency. Therefore, they consider it pointless to learn English in tenth grade, especially since they do not have the basic skills to use English. They even consider English a burden and an unpleasant school subject. Thus, most students have no intrinsic motivation to learn EFL. One of the participants (Muna) stated *"I don't know how to read or speak in English; we didn't learn it appropriately. I cannot wait to finish the English class because I feel suffocated"*.

Some students today are not fully aware of the importance of English. They consider it an additional school subject that is not necessary for their university majors, future careers, or communication with people in different parts of the world, especially with the heavy use of social media. Many students are concerned about their future careers and fields of study. Some low and middle-achieving students are thinking about pursuing their studies at universities where English is not used as the language of instruction. And even if the university uses English as the language of instruction, they think about studying subjects that have nothing to do with English. Samah commented, *"I don't like English and I can survive without it. I am willing to study law, and law is taught in Arabic in all the Palestinian universities."* Another student (Ameera) added," I will be a make-up artist, therefore I do not need English for anything."

In contrast, high-achieving students were aware of the importance of English in their future choices. They viewed English as a necessity for university study and career opportunities. They had high extrinsic motivation. Only two out of thirty students had intrinsic motivation. They stated that they enjoyed learning English because they saw it as an opportunity to gain knowledge about other cultures.

4.1.3 Classroom Environment

In the interviews, students were asked about challenges in speaking, reading, writing, and completing class activities. Peers were a source of pressure that prevented students from verbally expressing themselves and actively participating in English classes. Many students felt shy, nervous and afraid to speak or read in front of their peers because they would ridicule them inside and outside of class. Therefore, they preferred to keep silent and not participate in activities during English class to protect themselves from the negative comments of their classmates. In the words of one of the participants (Asma) *"It's really bad not knowing English, and they knew I do not know English, so I feel nervous when I answer a question because they will start mocking me."*

Moreover, peer pressure affected not only low- and middle-achieving students but also high-achieving students. Tenth graders put pressure on students who could speak and read fluently. They made fun of the correct pronunciation of English words, especially since there

were some native English-speaking students in the class. This made students feel insecure when speaking English in front of their classmates and even made them feel that they were doing something wrong when speaking English with their teacher. Rawan stated

> all my classmates speak Arabic, and when I speak English they give me looks, and like they say why is she speaking English, so I feel shy and stop speaking English.

Hala added,

> the students know that I speak English well. When they need help, they come to me. Even on tests, I am the one who is asked to explain a question if our teacher was not there. But when I speak English or have a simple conversation, I feel like I am in the spotlight of the class, but in a bad way.

Many students mentioned that peers could be a distracting element during class. They would constantly talk and make comments about other students without paying attention to the teacher. Thus, they would occupy other classmates with themselves, which would hinder students' performance, especially when the teacher could not manage her class accurately. Wafa said, "*the girls' talking during class, my classmates' chaos, and lack of discipline distract me during activities.*

As a result of observing the classrooms, the researcher found that all five schools had overcrowded classes, even the private school. The lowest number of students in a class was 34, which was the case in the private school, and the highest number was 40. Overcrowded classes prevented teachers from giving students the attention they needed, especially when teachers had many low-performing students. All five teachers agreed that overcrowded classes hurt student achievement because teachers cannot address the needs of individuals. One of the teachers (Ameena) reported:

> I am aware that a third of my students are low achievers, but I can not do anything for them because I have to take care of 25 other students." Overcrowded classes hindered the implementation of some classroom activities because the space was too small compared to the number of students.

Another teacher (Sarah) commenting on employing teaching strategies, added

> I can not move around the class, neither can the students, even when I
> think of cooperative work, the students can not move to form groups.

Another challenge that impacted student learning was instructional materials. In the 8 classes I observed in public schools, only one teacher used a speaker connected to a mobile phone in a listening comprehension lesson in which students had to listen to two British men talk about traditional Palestinian dishes. In this class, two other teachers came to ask for the speaker. The speaker belonged to the teacher herself, not to the school. Students mentioned that using only English textbooks made them feel bored and not attracted to the class. But in the private school, an interactive whiteboard was used by the teacher.

4.1.4. Lack of Practice

English teachers are required to finish the English textbook by the end of each semester. They will be questioned by the school principal and the English supervisor if they have not completed it. As a result, teachers have the burden of turning in every single paper in the textbook, which leads them to focus on the quantity rather than the quality of teaching. Therefore, teachers are anxious to complete the assignments from the textbook, which prevents students from improving their English skills. As the researcher observed ten classes in five different schools, she found that students do not apply what they have learned. They come to class prepared by copying the answers of the new lesson from the Internet without understanding anything. It is important to mention that the solutions of all English textbooks can be found on the Internet. After the teacher discusses and explains the new lesson, she asks the students to do activities in the book. At this stage, students read only the copied answers they got from the Internet. This includes all reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. One of the students (Amany) stated *"I come to class ready, I prepare all the book activities from the internet because I do not want to be embarrassed in front of my classmates".* Further, teachers do not give students any additional activities to help or guide them to practically apply what they have learned, which results in students' low English proficiency.

4.1.5. Linguistic and Cultural Differences

Linguistically, English sentence structure differs from Arabic. English has verbal sentences while Arabic has nominal and verbal sentences. Sentences in English begin with a subject and then the verb, which is the opposite in Arabic. When students make sentences verbally or in written form, they think in Arabic and then translate them into English, which is incorrect and leads to errors. The same is true for connectors and prepositions. Students first think in Arabic and then shift them into English, which affects the meaning of the sentences. One of the students (Sajeda) said

> when I want to say anything in English, I feel confused because I start thinking what should I put first, is it the verb or the subject? I start thinking in Arabic and then translate them into English.

Vowels and consonant sounds were other challenges that students face while practicing reading and writing. Arabic has twenty aight letters which include three vowels and twenty-five consonants. Whereas, English has 26 letters including six vowels (with y), which created eight diphthongs, and twenty consonants which created many consonant digraphs. Therefore, students face problems when reading and writing in English since Arabic does not have either of those. Muna stated" I *know how to pronounce a word but I don't know how to write it."* Another student (Amal) added," *when I try to read, I keep missing the right spelling because English has many letters that come together to make another sound, and I don't know them."*

Palestinian and Islamic culture is completely different from the English culture, no matter which European or American country is using the English language. Students don't pay attention to the English culture when studying the English language, which affects students' understanding, especially since there are reading comprehension and writing lessons that rely on understanding the English culture. During the interviews, the researcher had to explain the meaning of English culture to most students and had to give examples to help them answer interview questions about the culture. Students connected the culture with the accent, they considered the accent a part of a culture. One of the students (Aya) commented on the cultural factor saying

> I have many American relatives, and when they speak English I do not understand what they say, because of their American accent and the way they pronounce words, precisely that we have been learning British English.

Amany, another student, added," *I have been taught that fried potato is called chips, but recently I learned that it is French Fries in the American culture, which confused me."*

4.1.6. English for Palestine Textbooks

Most of the students mentioned that English for Palestine textbook for the tenth grade was another challenge that they had to deal with daily. Lower, middle and high-achieving students agreed that the book was not enough for them to understand a lesson. They needed the teacher's explanation and support to comprehend grammar, writing, listening comprehension, or reading comprehension lessons. In the words of one of the students (Noora)

> I don't feel the book explains anything. Grammar lessons include only examples and some simple activities, I feel like it depends on our teacher to explain everything, it is more like a practice book.

Another student (Hala) added

> Honestly, I don't feel that students have space in the book. We are talking about the tenth grade, not the first or the second. All the book activities are true or false and fill in the blanks, which is not enough. The book has to include more illustrations and practical activities than it does.

4.2. Students' Recommendations For Improving Their English Proficiency

The second part of the interview was about students' recommendations for English teachers to help them to enhance their English skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, comprehending the language and communication. The collected data emerged to form five themes which are using different teaching methods, adopting various assessment methods, building students' self-confidence, building a good relationship with students, expose students to the target language as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

(Figure 4.2) Students' Recommendations
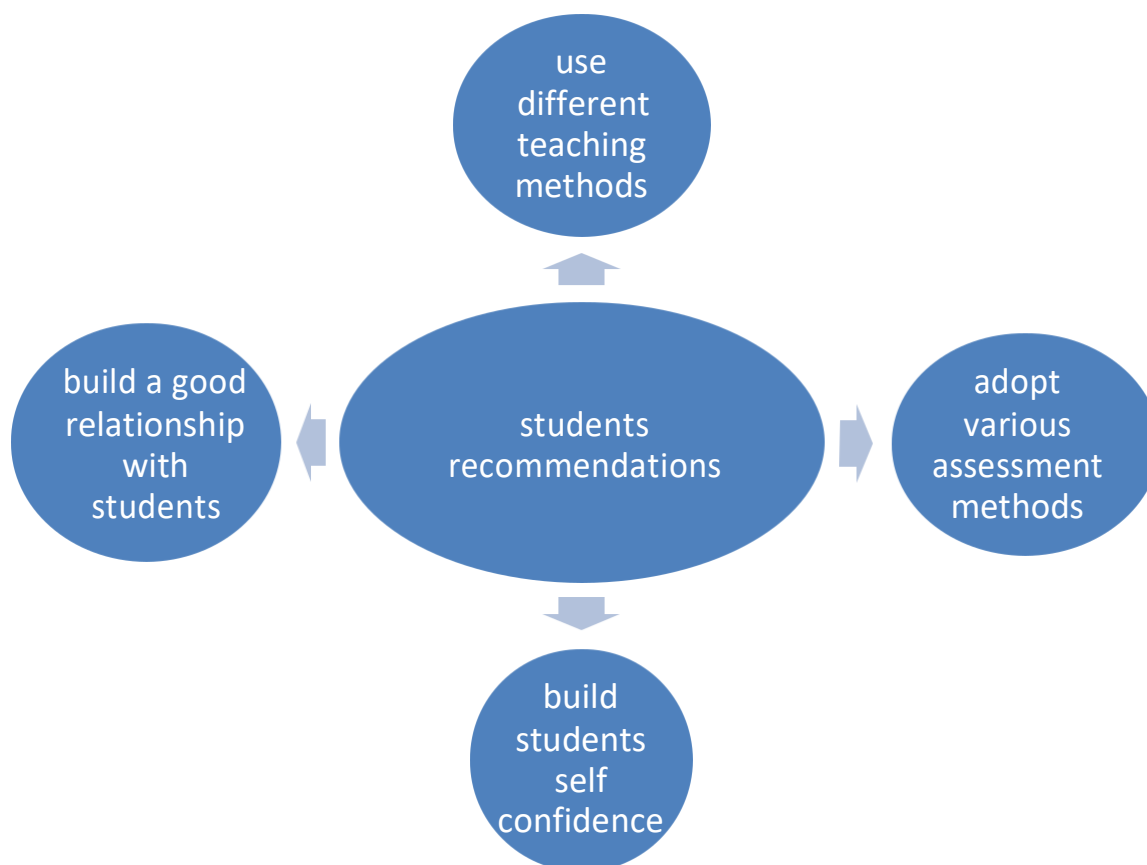
4.2.1 Using a Variety of Teaching Methods

All thirty students suggested using different teaching methods as a recommendation for teachers to attract students' attention during classes and make them more involved in the lesson. Students explained that all English classes follow the same routine in which the teacher enters the class and starts explaining the major points of the lesson, and after she is done, students do the book activities, which creates an unattractive and boring atmosphere for learning. Thus, students suggested using a variety of learning activities and connecting them to students' daily life and interests would make them more attracted and involved. One of the students (Bushara) sated

> she [The Teacher] should make more activities, we shouldn't have a
> passive role, be only receivers of the information, we could learn
> new information but attractively, in which, we may have fun and play games.

Another student (Amal) added "making a presentation would make me more involved, especially if it is about something I like". Yafa, another student, commented

> making debate, if possible, the teacher can suggest a topic related to our lives,
> in which I have to be with or against a certain idea, and me with my classmates
> can make the debate, which will make us more courageous to talk. I think this
> is a much better way to learn."

Most of the learners stressed that using different learning methods will make them practice the language more, whether verbally or in a written form. It will also encourage them to come prepared for the class. Thus, learners considered extra curriculum activities a necessity to enhance their English proficiency. Pertaining to this issue one of the participants (Muna) stated

> visiting the library with our teacher and reading stories would definitely improve
> my English skills, especially since I do not read. Also, I can summarize what I have
> read to improve my writing skills."

Many students mentioned that they hear English from their teacher and see it only through school textbooks. They are not exposed to English. Therefore, they do not understand a dialogue between English native speakers. Moreover, they cannot make a simple conversation with others, and if a native speaker talked o them, they would start laughing because they are not used to listening to authentic language. Thus, students suggested exposing them to authentic material, to familiarize them with the language and help them practice it appropriately. Some students suggested listening to authentic material, others suggested watching videos, and some suggested talking to native speakers. Noora, one of the students reported:

> I can not understand listening material in listening comprehension lessons
> because I am not used to them. Our teacher does her best to encourage us to
> listen and do some activities, but at the end she read it herself because we
> keep telling her that we do not understand. So, I think if she choose
> authentic listening material in the area of our interest, and repeated it over
> and over, we would get used to it".

Another student (Yafa) emphasizing this point added "Watching English videos would be great, especially if it includes information about the English culture."

A third student (Wafa) added

> I think if our teacher brings some native speakers to our school, and asks them to speak in front of us, it will help us be better because we can pronounce English words correctly.

It is important to mention that almost all students mentioned that they do not listen to English music or watch English movies. They only listen and watch Turkish and Korean music and TV shows.

4.2.2 Adopting Various Assessment Methods

Despite the MOE policy of using both summative and authentic assessments, many students consider it unfair. At the secondary level, students are assessed based on their skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening and literature. All skills are supposed to be assessed in a written form except speaking. In the grading system, the assessment of these skills equals 80% of the course marks. Whereas, authentic assessment accounts for 20%. Low and middle-achieving students mentioned that they reach the tenth grade without having an adequate level of skills, therefore it is not justified to be assessed based on the English textbook rather than their academic level. Amal, one of the students, stated

> English test level is higher than my level in English. Honestly, most of the time I do not understand what some questions in the test mean, therefore I don't know how to answer.

Noor (another student) added,

> I think the English test is not the right tool to use in assessing students' skills. Not all students are good at answering written forms of tests, there should be another way".

Some students recommended having a diagnostic test at the beginning of the school year, in which a teacher can recognize students' weaknesses and strengths. In this regard, Amal stated,

> maybe if the teacher gave us a test to know our level in English from the beginning, she can improve our performance by building on what we know.

Students mentioned that teachers focus only on assessing reading and writing skills and ignore listening and speaking. Even during English classes, they neglect activities that deal with listening and speaking. Thus, students have no idea about

listening and speaking skills assessment. Noora stated," *We skip listening periods and speaking activities, our teacher keeps saying that she focuses on necessary things only."*

Although the authentic assessment was added to the schools' evaluation system in 2017, it is still not implemented professionally by teachers. All students mentioned that they are assessed based on their class participation not based on tasks. They even believe that it is used to push up their final grades without exerting any effort.

Aya stated *" we do nothing to gain authentic assessment marks, it is an easy mark, the teacher told us that it is one of the ministry policies which rescue low-achieving students from lagging behind other classmates"*

4.2.3 Building Students' Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a serious issue that faces English learners. Many students have low self-esteem due to peer pressure and low academic performance. Low self-confidence made students feel unsafe and insecure in English class, which affected their performance negatively. However, teachers have a vital role in building or destroying students' confidence. Encouraging students to get out of their comfort zone by pushing their abilities to their limits and reinforcing the smallest achievement would create students with high self-confidence. And

the opposite is true. One of the high-achieving students (Bushra) reported on how a teacher discouraged a student to speak in English. In her own words

> one of my classmates, who is not good in English, needed a pencil. She told the teacher that she needs a pen. The teacher got her a pen, but my classmate said I need a "قلم رصاص"the teacher said it's a pencil and do not try to speak English if you do not know how to speak. Students need to trust their teacher and feel safe to try their best.

In addition, teachers play an important role in preventing peer negative pressure. She could set class rules for academic bullying. Students feel shy to speak and make mistakes in front of their classmates because of their negative comments. Some students recommended having clear rules to prevent any bullying. One of the students (Ghada) sated

> I think every teacher needs to make something like golden rules or behavior code, to help students feel safe and push up their self-esteem, which may ease their learning.

4.2.4 Building a Good Relationship with Students

Half of the students agreed that a good relationship with a teacher would affect students' academic performance and vice versa. Thus, many students recommended teachers build a good healthy relationship with learners to enhance their academic performance and improve English proficiency. In the words of one of the students (Muna)

> our teacher made me love English, she did not do anything special but she treated me well. I know that I am not good at English but I do my best.

Another student (Ameena) added

> it is important for us to like the teacher because the more we liked her the more they would accept her course and try to improve ourselves. In fact, if we didn't like her, we will make her suffer in our class.

4.3. Classroom Teaching Practices that Hinder Students' Learning

The researcher used classroom observation to observe teachers' practices that hinder students learning. The researcher observed ten classes for five English teachers in five different schools in Ramallah directorate. The collected data emerged to form 4 themes which are teacher-centered classroom, heavy reliance on Arabic, lack of extra curriculum activities and the absence of formative assessment. (see Figure 4.3)

(Figure 4.3) Teachers Practices
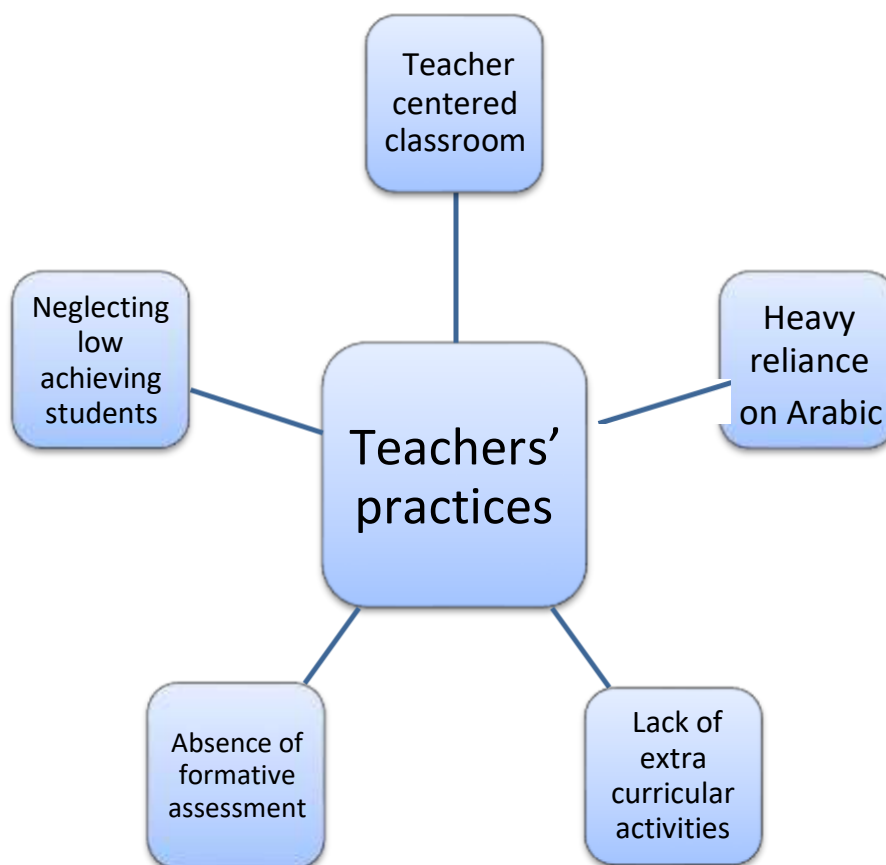
4.3.1 Teacher-Centered Classrooms

For the ten observations, all classrooms followed the same pattern: the teacher wrote the objectives of the lesson on the board and then started explaining the main points. Before doing so, she gave examples herself without asking the students. At this point, the students sat without doing anything, they just listened to their teacher and waited until she finished. They did not even ask questions about the lesson. They only participated in the book activities where the teacher read the questions and asked them

to answer them directly without giving them time to do so, as if they had to finish right away. Even in the cloze activities, the teacher read the sentences and the students answered the missing word.

All the book activities were done by students individually, the teachers didn't ask them to work in groups or to work in pairs, despite that most of the book activities suggested working in pairs or groups. During the activities, students didn't listen to each other answers because in some cases students would repeat the same wrong answer. In grammar lessons that I observed, some answers need justifications, and it was the teacher who justified the answer directly, without asking students. I asked her about the reason behind her action and she justified it with not having enough time.

In addition, reading comprehension lessons included new vocabulary activity, in which the teacher read the new word and asked students to guess its meaning in Arabic, without any choral or individual reading. Students listened to the new vocabulary only once from their teacher. Even in the reading activity, the teacher was the one who read the whole lesson, not students, and this happened in two observations. One of the observations was about a literature text, and the same thing happened, in which the teacher was the one who read the text, asked the questions, corrected students' answers, and analyzed the events of the story. The researcher asked two teachers about reading the text by themselves, they both had the same answer and it was because students do not read correctly. Students had a passive role in the class and they were not involved, everything was about the teacher. Teachers did not trust their students to do anything and did not believe in them.

4.3.2 Heavy Reliance on Arabic

Arabic is the mother tongue of the Palestinians and it's the language of education in all the Palestinian public schools. In the tenth grade, students learn 9 school subjects, all of which are taught in Arabic except English. In my observation, I noticed that most of the time English teachers spoke Arabic during English classes. Even if they said anything in English, they would translate it immediately into Arabic. And in some cases, teachers mispronounced and misspelled some English words.

One of my observations was a literature lesson, it was about a boy who travels around the world in 100 days. The teacher began by reviewing the previous lesson. She asked some questions and students answered but all the answers were in Arabic, the teacher accepted their answers but she didn't ask them to answer in English. After the revision, the teacher began reading the story and translating word by word. All the lesson was translated into Arabic.

In another school, a teacher had a grammar lesson about the articles. It was the second period of the lesson. The revision was in Arabic and the teacher used grammatical terms such as nouns, adjectives and prepositions in the student's mother tongue. Moreover, the lesson included an activity to use the correct article and justify the answer, and it was the teacher who justified student's answers in Arabic. Even when students justified, all their answers were in Arabic.

In a reading comprehension lesson, the teacher followed the previously mentioned teachers. The lesson began with vocabulary in which the teacher read the new vocabulary words and students guessed their meaning in Arabic. In addition, the lesson included an activity called word formation, in which students learn to form adjectives and adverbs from verbs. The teacher did not explain anything to students, she only told them words meaning in Arabic.

In the case of the private school that I observed, the teacher spoke English all the time, everything was in English. However, students didn't speak English, they answered questions about the lesson in English, but during class discussion, they spoke Arabic. Their teacher kept encouraging them to speak English, but they insisted on using Arabic.

4.3.3 Lack of Extra Curricular Activities

All English lessons that I observed were about English for Palestine for the tenth grade. It was always about the English textbook activities. Students learned listening comprehension, grammar, reading comprehension and writing. They followed the same pattern in every unit. They kept going period after period and moved from one activity to another, which made students bored and untuned. None of the classes had an extra curriculum activity that may attract students' attention and make them involved. It was only one teacher who asked

students to look for information on the internet about certain kinds of food and bring it the next class. The next day the teacher didn't ask about the assignment and none of the students reminded her. It was like they were used to this kind of attitude.

The English curriculum gives the English teachers space to use extra curriculum activities, especially with the kind of learning material they have. For example, "Around the World in 100 Days" story can be watched as a movie, but the teacher didn't use this kind of activity. She kept using the traditional way. I asked her about not using extra curriculum activities in literature lessons, she justified it with not having enough time.

4.3.4 The Absence of Formative Assessment

Summative assessment is the evaluation method used by English teachers, in which teachers depend on midterms and final tests to evaluate students. In the academic year 2021-2022, the Ministry of Education (MOE) divided the scholastic year into four quarters, and at the end of each quarter, students have a final test. Previously, students had daily tests but not anymore. In summative assessment, teachers had to wait until the end of each quarter to evaluate students' performance. Thus, they do not recognize learners ' learning problems and do not fix them, which results in students' low achievement. To achieve learning objectives, teachers need to assess each learning stage, to avoid any learning issues. During the interviews, teachers mentioned that they do not assess students' performance after each period or even after each topic. None of the teachers used any self-assessment, peer assessment, worksheets, or pop quizzes to evaluate students' performance. They used only summative assessment which assesses students' knowledge and ignores their other abilities.

### 4.3.5 Neglecting Low-Achieving Students

Teachers tend to prefer high-achieving students because they are the easy choice who know the correct answers, most of the time. In each class, some high achievers always participated, and they were the teacher's favorites. Middle-achieving students participated in some questions but not all the time. They were the perfect choice for close-ended questions or cloze activities, but discussion questions were only for high achieving students, despite that

the discussion was most of the time in Arabic. However, low-achieving students participated rarely. They were unmotivated to learn and interact with others, and teachers did not motivate the unmotivated ones. In the observations, the researcher sat at the end of classes, and low achievers were sitting next to me. They kept themselves busy by doing other school subjects' homework, looking at English textbook pages, drawing, coloring and talking to each other. Teachers did not move their places to encourage them to participate though they notified them many times to pay attention. In fact, teachers did not know what low-achieving students were doing at the back of the class because they did not walk through the class. They were always standing before students. In some cases, low-achievers participated, but teachers would not give them a chance to answer. The researcher heard a student comment to her classmate about a teacher who did not give her a chance to participate by saying" She is not seeing us."

4.4. Teachers' Practices to Improve Students' Learning and Address Students' Challenges

The researcher used interviews to collect information about practices that teachers may use to improve students learning and address challenges. The interviews were with two experienced instructional supervisors. The collected data emerged to form six themes which are planning, changing teachers' attitudes, improving teachers' abilities, keeping students busy, praising students and focusing on practicing the language. (See Figure 4.4)

Figure 4.4 (Teachers' Practices to Improve Students' Learning)
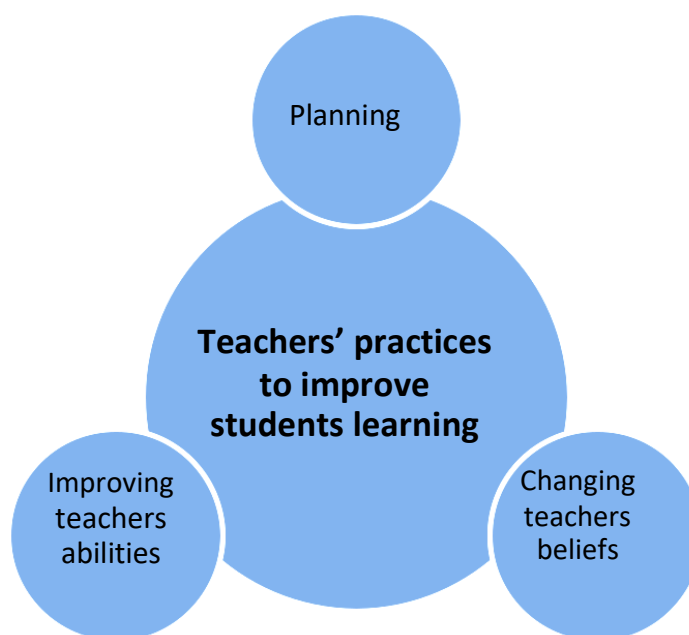
4.1.1 Planning

Both supervisors agreed that planning is the first step to improve learners learning. Before going to any class, the teacher should master the learning material, choose the suitable teaching methodology and the best teaching aid and decide the proper assessment tool to use. Knowing all the aforementioned wouldn't be possible without appropriate planning. One of the supervisors (Mohammad) stated

> planning and preparation are essential to improve students learning because without these steps teachers wouldn't know what to keep and what to change next time… teaching is not a spontaneous thing, it is well-organized and planned steps, in which each step affects the other.

Another supervisor (Suha) connected planning to classroom management and mentioned that good classroom management leads to good learning. In her own words," Teachers need to learn to manage the classroom…it assists teachers what to use, how to use it, when to use it and with whom."

By planning, teachers can keep students busy, which means making them the center of the class and keeping them involved in all details. By doing so, students will be active learners

who participate actively to obtain knowledge and develop life skills, which they will need for the rest of their life. Teachers can use various teaching methods to make students the center of the learning process such as cooperative work, making presentations, task-based assessment, authentic assessment and using technology.

The two supervisors mentioned that learners learn a lot of vocabulary and grammar lessons. They memorize them for a short time and then forget them. Therefore, teachers should work in implementing the obtained knowledge by designing assignments related to student's life, which include practicing vocabulary words and grammar. In addition, discovering students' interest and connecting it with the learning process would encourage students to use the language in topics of their choice. Each unit in the book focuses on a specific topic. Teachers need to work to connect these topics to students' interests and encourage them to practice what they have learned.

4.4.2 Changing Teachers' Beliefs

Both supervisors stressed the necessity of changing teachers' attitudes and beliefs about the English language since teachers' attitudes affect students' attitudes. They mentioned that many English teachers have a negative attitude toward learning and teaching English, especially since they deal with it as a foreign language. Suha, one of the supervisors, described teachers' practices during her supervision visits as follows

> teachers need to change if they want their students to change. Unfortunately, our teacher's idea about English is that we are Arab and we live in an Arab country. We are not native speakers. Therefore we do not need to speak English, and they focus only on grammar.

The other supervisor (Mohammad) reported that most students come from different family backgrounds that consider English a difficult school topic. Therefore, teachers need to change their attitudes to be able to change students' negative attitudes.

In addition, the two supervisors stressed the importance of changing teachers' beliefs about students. They insisted on having high expectations for students. By doing so, teachers would appreciate the smallest developments in students' performance and would encourage them to keep going. Thus, teachers need to praise students' work, make them feel valued, and encourage baby steps because they will lead to huge progress. One of the supervisors (Mohammad) put this way

teachers need to believe in their students and have high expectations because these expectations are the trigger that will guide teachers to encourage students to keep going.

4.4.3 Improving Teacher's Abilities

Both supervisors suggested that teachers need to work on their abilities. They are responsible for developing their careers because they know their professional needs. One of the supervisors suggested that self-development results directly in students' performance because teachers would look at themselves as a model to follow, and would make them believe in developing their student's abilities. Mohammad, one of the supervisors stated

a teacher can be a great model for their students when he /she works to develop themselves… when I was a teacher, I did that, and it helped me to raise my self-esteem and made me believe in my abilities.

Summary

In this chapter, the author introduced the results for each one of the research questions. She presented the results related to the challenges that female grade 10 students encounter in learning English as a foreign language. Some of these challenges include poor motivation, the lack of opportunities to practice the language and the differences between Arabic and English language linguistic systems and cultures. Pertaining to the second research question the results showed that Palestinian English teachers could differentiate their teaching and assessment methods, strengthen learner's self-confidence, have a good rapport with students and expose them to authentic language in an effort to improve students learning. In the meantime, Palestinian English teachers are advised to make their classrooms students centered, rely less on learners' mother tongue in the classroom and enrich the English curriculum with extra curriculum activities. Further, it is recommended by the English instructional supervisors that Palestinian English teachers develop a positive attitude towards teaching English and their careers as teachers, engage students in the leaning process and allow students to practice the language as much as possible. Finally, the researcher recommended conducting further studies on the issue in different school directorates in Palestine and similar contexts in the world.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

This study focused on the challenges faced by tenth-grade female students in learning EFL in the Palestinian context. In addition, it examined the students' recommendations for overcoming these challenges. It also examined teachers' practices that hinder students' learning and supervisors' recommendations for improving teachers' practices to achieve learning goals. These students have been learning English for ten years. Some of them previously attended private schools but then transferred to public schools where they face different English curricula. In contrast, many students studied in public schools where they were taught the same English curriculum.

The results of the study show that all students face challenges in learning EFL regardless of their academic performance. They face challenges related to the learning environment such as peer pressure, classroom atmosphere, lack of motivation, and English for Palestine textbook. Other challenges related to implementing learned material such as lack of practice and lack of vocabulary mastery. Cultural and linguistic differences were another challenge that students have to deal with.

Most of the participants reported that it is their teachers' responsibility to help them face learning challenges and enhance their English aptitude. They recommended teachers use various learning methods to make them involved and guide them through their learning path. Adopting various assessment methods was another recommendation that students recommended to enhance their academic performance. In addition, they reported that it is the teacher's responsibility to build students' self-confidence and build a good relationship with students to help them overcome learning challenges.

Teachers had many practices that affected students learning negatively. These practices may vary from one teacher to another, but they are generally interwoven. These practices

include teacher-centered classes, teachers' heavy reliance on Arabic as a learning language during English classes, lack of extracurricular activities, the lack of formative assessment and focusing on high-achieving students and neglecting low-achieving ones. However, English instructional supervisors recommended teachers plan and come prepared before entering any English class. They also added that changing teachers' attitudes and improving their abilities are necessary to enhance teachers' performance, which affects students' performance. They also considered practicing the English language a nerve to enhance students' English competence besides keeping students busy and involved. Participants stressed the importance of positive reinforcement by praising students in enhancing learners' attitudes toward the English language.

Palestinian students urgently need to recognize the challenges that hinder their academic achievement in learning EFL. Knowing these challenges is crucial for Palestinian learners as it would help them develop their own strategies to overcome these challenges and learn independently by developing autonomous learning strategies. Moreover, knowing their strengths and weaknesses would guide learners to improve their strengths and work on their weaknesses by choosing the right person to ask for help and the appropriate learning materials. To achieve this, learners' voices need to be heard and heeded.

The current study is very revealing as it highlights important aspects that English teachers need to be aware of. They need to provide support and help to students coming from other schools to start a new life in high school, especially since high schools in Ramallah are separated from elementary and upper elementary schools. The English textbook for the tenth grade contains new topics that students are dealing with for the first time, such as literature. Therefore, students need the teachers' help and support to teach them how to deal with such topics properly. Moreover, the tenth-grade students come from different areas of Ramallah, which poses different challenges. Knowing these challenges will help teachers to face them at an early stage. In addition, this study provides teachers with recommendations from the students' and supervisors' perspectives. Knowing these recommendations gives teachers the opportunity to choose what suits them and adapt it to the needs of their students.

Palestinian students face different challenges caused by different factors. Knowing these challenges and the reasons behind them would help policymakers make the right decisions to avoid them in the years to come. In addition, education leaders could use these challenges to revolutionize our Palestinian education system and take some radical decisions, where these challenges could be the trigger to change the current situation, especially since English is one of the challenging subjects that Palestinian students face. Moreover, teacher training and preparation programs could use the current challenges to design professional development programs that prepare teachers for these challenges before and during teaching by training teachers to avoid them in the first place and to overcome them when they're faced with challenges. Palestinian teachers study how to teach for four years, but they don't have the appropriate tools to face real-life challenges. Training programs that address the studied challenges, like the current study, would save a lot of time, effort, and money to prepare and train teachers to meet their needs and those of their students.

Challenges Palestinian Grade 10 Female Students Face in Learning EFL

The first research question that guided this study aimed to find out the challenges faced by Palestinian tenth-grade female students in their learning of EFL. The participants mentioned several challenges related to listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehending the language. Their responses indicated that many of them have the same challenges that affect their academic performance.

Despite the heavy use of vocabulary in the Palestinian curriculum, it is challenging for students to acquire vocabulary. All participants reported that the lack of vocabulary mastery affects their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, and it was even the first problem participants mentioned when asked about their learning challenges. The researcher believes that the reason for this is the teachers' use of translation methods. Students are used to translating vocabulary words without understanding them. And when students memorize them, teachers do not make a connection between the vocabulary and students' practical life, which makes them memorize the vocabulary only for a short time and then lose it. Teachers should help and support students to apply the learned vocabulary in their daily life so that students

gradually master the vocabulary. This reminds us of social constructivist learning theory, which affirms that students need teachers' support to reach the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where learners master the required skill. Vygotsky emphasized the role of the teacher in helping students reach the ZPD. This finding confirms Banditvilai & Cullen (2018) who investigated Thai student's problems and obstacles in learning English as a Foreign Language and the research ended up considering a lack of vocabulary as a problem that led to challenges in writing skills.

Lack of motivation to learn EFL was another challenge faced by Palestinian students. Students indicated that learning difficulties at a young age and a lack of awareness of the importance of the English language resulted in unmotivated students. However, two of the thirty participants had intrinsic motivation to learn English. The researchers expected this result because unmotivated teachers produce unmotivated students. Unfortunately, Palestinian teachers suffer from low salaries, the lack of laws that protect them from attacks by students, and low social status in the community; all these reasons resulted in unmotivated teachers who used to give their best. In addition, some English teachers are not aware of the importance of English because they see themselves as an example of unsuccessful people who have chosen an unsuccessful profession to work in. Therefore, the researcher believes that motivated teachers are a necessity to create motivated learners. This finding is confirmed by Baigal (2020), who studied the barriers to English language learning among Mangolese learners, and considers lack of motivation as one of the main obstacles Mangolese learners face in learning English. It also agrees with the study of Kalia (2017) who considers lack of motivation as a critical problem among Indian learners and reports that it is the responsibility of teachers to increase learners' motivation.

Peer pressure can be an invisibly powerful tool that makes students do things they do not want to do. Many participants reported that peer pressure prevented them from participating in class or concentrating with the teacher. It even affected highly achieving students and kept them from speaking in front of others. Many participants indicated that they felt shy or were afraid to answer the teacher's questions because of their classmates' comments. Academic bullying was a common phenomenon shared by most students. The

researcher believes that students express solidarity with their groups by engaging in peer pressure and bullying, especially that students with the same academic performance make a group. Feeling accepted is important to students because it makes them feel welcome within a group. Therefore, students make fun of the way other students speak English and pronounce words in order to feel accepted within their group which makes fun of others. Although peer pressure is practiced by students, teachers play an important role in preventing it by establishing clear rules that prevent academic bullying and sarcasm toward others. Meanwhile, teachers can promote positive peer pressure that helps students improve their English skills. Sokip (2020), who examined the challenges faced by Indonesian non-native speakers in the four foreign language skills, found that " the fear of making mistakes" in front of classmates was the biggest challenge in productive skills.

The English curriculum prepares students with a variety of skills that enable them to use the English language with ease. Participants indicated that they could not practice the material they learned in English class. Even if they tried to practice English outside of class, they would not know how. Teachers pay great attention to grammar but not to practicing it. The researcher believes that it is the teachers' responsibility to teach students how to practice the language and design classroom activities and tasks to ensure the practice of the learned skills. They need to make sure that their students do the activities independently and not copy them from the Internet. Nevertheless, the teachers themselves have a problem practicing the language because they do not have the right skills to apply what they have learned in real-life situations. In fact, all the teachers asked the researcher to conduct the interview in Arabic, which indicates that the teachers themselves have some issues in practicing the language or are not qualified to teach English. However, it is the responsibility of MOE, to work with teachers to improve their skills by developing in-service training courses that meet teachers' needs. This finding confirms Shen & Chiu's (2019) study, which reported poor opportunities to practice English as one of the main difficulties in English language learning for Taiwanese EFL students. Similarly, Solak (2015) confirmed that focusing on grammar and neglecting English language practice led to low academic achievement among Turkish students.

Participants indicated that overcrowded classes and the lack of instructional resources present challenges that negatively impact student achievement. A crowded classroom is an interwoven challenge that contributes to the other challenges. In other words, overcrowded classes increase peer pressure due to the high number of students and distract teachers from practicing acquired skills with students because they are unable to focus with a large number of learners. It is unfair because students do not get enough attention from their teachers, which negatively affects their academic performance. It is important to mention that the Palestinian school policy considers a class of forty-two students as a normal class size, regardless of the size of the classroom; when the number of students becomes forty-three, schools must divide students into two different classes. In addition, Palestinian English teachers do not have technical teaching aids to facilitate vocabulary, reading, and listening comprehension instruction. Technical teaching aids would help students to pronounce vocabulary correctly and to listen to authentic listening materials, especially since the English curriculum is equipped with authentic listening materials, but the lack of audio and video teaching aids prevents teachers from using them. The researcher believes that it is the responsibility of policymakers at MOE to change the current situation and make serious decisions about overcrowded classes and offer financial support to equip schools with the needed teaching materials. This comes in line with what Ahmed (2018) stated in considering overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of teaching aids as obstacles that made teaching English in Yemen worst.

It is challenging for Palestinian students to learn EFL because of the linguistic differences between Arabic and English. The way sentences are constructed and letter sounds are pronounced are different in English than in Arabic. The translation method used by English teachers causes students to think in Arabic when writing, speaking, or thinking about an idea in English. Additionally, the lack of phonetic practice resulted in students having difficulty pronouncing and writing English words. Unfortunately, Palestinian English teachers are responsible for this problem. They tend to teach about the English language, not the language itself, they neglect the English culture, and they do not encourage the students to think in English, which leads to the students' low academic performance. The researcher believes that additional reading and exposure to Western culture would help students learn the language

and better accept English culture. This result was supported by Sundari (2018) who reported that the differences between the Indonesian phonetic system and the English system lead to confusion in both consonants and vowels. On the other hand, Arabic and Islamic culture was a challenge that prevented Saudi learners from accepting Western culture as they consider English as a factor of cultural dilution (Drbseh.2019).

The tenth-grade English for Palestine textbook was another challenge for students in learning EFL. Students reported that the textbook is complicated and does not contain clear instructions to help students learn. Also, it has simple activities that are not appropriate for tenth-grade students. The researcher believes that students are overwhelmed with studying Palestinian English textbooks because of the textbook approach. The English for Palestine curriculum follows the discovery learning approach and uses inductive and deductive methods to guide students to find out the right information. Palestinian students are not used to this approach to teaching because they are not trained to be autonomous learners. They rely heavily on the teacher to provide them with the information. Although the curriculum provides this approach to give more space to the students, English language teachers prefer to take the responsibility of explaining everything to the students, which results in the students not being able to use the book.

Students' Recommendations for Improving Their English Proficiency

The second question of the study examined students' recommendations for teachers to improve their English proficiency. The results show that teachers are the most important key to improving student achievement, increasing their English proficiency, and achieving the goals of the English curriculum. The participants recommended teachers to use different teaching methods to attract students' attention and make them more involved. They suggested using cooperative work, presentations, watching videos, and using students' different skills, such as drawing and painting, as learning methods. They also recommended using other assessment methods besides tests. The researcher believes that students are aware of their learning styles and therefore traditional teaching methods are not suitable for all. They need to be taught in a way that suits their style and needs. Also, they want to have fun in English classes because if they have the same routine every day, they will get bored and have no interest in learning or

participating. The same goes for using different learning assessments. The policy MOE requires teachers to use English midterm and final exams as assessment methods to evaluate student learning. Test scores make up 80% of the course grade, which could be unfair to low-achieving students. Students are aware that they may be assessed differently because they learn in different ways. Nevertheless, it is not enough for them that 20% of the course grade is on authentic assessments. They suggested setting assignments and doing school projects to assess their learning skills differently. It is important to emphasize the role of the teacher in knowing students' needs and abilities to apply appropriate learning methods and design assignments based on their abilities to assess them appropriately. Therefore, they need to receive in-service training courses on teaching and assessment methods and their application. These findings are consistent with Akbari's (2015) statements that teaching methods and learning assessment systems are challenges that hinder Iranian students' English learning. She pointed out the importance of knowing students' requirements to overcome learning problems.

Additionally, students indicated that they recommend English teachers to increase students' confidence and build a good relationship with students to overcome learning difficulties. Students indicated that their past experiences with teachers have influenced their academic performance and attitude toward English. Thus, they are aware of the importance of having a healthy relationship with their teachers and believe in the teacher's role in making students like or dislike a school subject. The researcher considers these two recommendations as a priority for teachers because a good relationship with students would help the teacher to identify students' abilities, skills, hobbies, and interests, which she would use to develop students' English proficiency and thus increase students' self-confidence. These two recommendations are intertwined and lead to each other. This reminds us of social constructivist learning theory, in which Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of understanding learners' social experiences in order to understand their knowledge and thinking.

Speaking with native speakers, watching English movies, listening to English grammar, and reading American and British stories would definitely help Palestinian learners improve their English. Students recommended that teachers expose them to the target language in

order to learn the language from authentic sources. Some participants stated that being taught by a non-native speaker would affect their education because teachers may mispronounce English words. In addition, English teachers do not necessarily know all of the English vocabularies, so having authentic material to watch would help learners learn words and their correct pronunciation. This finding confirms Azman's (2016) research finding that limited language exposure is a challenge for Malaysian English language learners encounter in learning English. The researcher emphasized the importance of an authentic learning experience that matches students' roles in the Malaysian multilingual community.

Classroom Teaching Practices that Hinder Students' Learning

The third question in the study examined teacher practices that impede student learning. The researcher identified five practices: teacher-centered classroom, heavy reliance on the Arabic language, lack of extracurricular activities, lack of formative assessment, and neglect of low-achieving students. The teacher-centered classroom led English teachers to other practices. Unfortunately, Palestinian teachers are used to taking the leading role in the classroom, where the teacher is the one who does everything in the class, leaving little room for students to express themselves. This responsibility has led to teachers not enjoying teaching because they have the burden of finishing the English curriculum and turning the pages of the textbook. This situation led teachers to neglect extracurricular activities where students have more space to practice the language. This also led them to not focus on getting formative feedback from students, especially since students play a passive role and are not used to taking a leading role in the classroom. The researcher believes that teacher-centered classrooms discourage lower-achieving students from participating because this type of classroom expects learners to respond to the teacher's questions and commands according to the teacher's way of thinking rather than the students' way of thinking or needs. Being an English teacher myself, I am not familiar with formative assessment methods or student-centered classrooms without my master's degree in education. Considering that I have a bachelor's degree in English language and literature, I have only taken one course on teaching English as a foreign language, which might be the case for many other English teachers. In other words, English teachers need

to receive training on student learning differences, assessment methods, and student-centered classrooms. MOE needs to design in-service training programs to prepare teachers to put students at the center of the learning process. This finding confirms what Al Farizi (2019) reported that teacher-centered class is the main obstacle to Indonesian students' achievement in English.

The heavy reliance on Arabic was another challenge practiced by teachers that affected students' academic performance. The researcher found that Arabic was the language of instruction, discussion, and speech during English classes, while English was used during reading activities or when answering questions from the book. The researcher believes that the reason for this practice is unqualified teachers who do not know how to speak the language. English teachers have to pass a written test and an interview to get a job in Palestinian public schools. In both cases, teachers' language skills are not assessed, so many teachers become English teachers without having speaking skills, which negatively affects students' English skills, which is why researchers believe that policymakers need to establish rules to ensure that all teacher candidates' English skills are assessed before they officially become English teachers. This comes in line with what Elibariki (2017) stated about the challenges that Tanzania learners face in learning EFL. He reported that teachers relying on learners' mother tongue hindered students learning.

Teachers' Practices to Improve Student Learning and Address Student Challenges

The fourth question in the research examined the practices that teachers could adopt to improve student learning from instructional supervisors' perspective. Supervisors emphasized the importance of creating an annual plan, a weekly plan, and a daily plan. The plan should include learning objectives, teaching materials and aids and the assessment method to be used by the teacher. In our Palestinian context, some teachers refuse to prepare before going into the classroom because of their long professional experience. However, the researcher believes that planning and preparation are necessary because they allow teachers to reflect on the lesson at the end. After all, reflection is impossible without preparation. In addition, we humans forget things

, so planning and preparing before teaching would help teachers remember everything they need to teach.

Changing teachers' attitudes was another recommendation made by supervisors to improve student learning. Teachers have a negative attitude toward teaching speaking and listening, focusing on teaching grammar. This kind of attitude has produced a generation of learners who cannot use the English language. In addition, some teachers have a negative attitude toward modern teaching methods and insist on using the traditional method. This attitude prevents students from improving their teaching skills. The researcher believes that the lack of teacher evaluations has led to a negative attitude towards teaching. An English teacher receives a monitoring visit from the instructional supervisor once a year and from the principal twice a year. The result of these visits does not lead to a salary increase, better placement in the school, or appointment to a better position, so teachers do not pay attention to supervisors and school principles notes, which makes them stuck with their teaching attitude. This finding confirms Muhammad et al. (2018) research result that considered teaching attitude as a challenge that Nigerian learners face, the researchers reported that focusing on the academic and professional content of the Teacher Education program is a necessity to overcome this challenge.

Practicing English in innovative ways that connect to students' lives and interests would keep students engaged. Both supervisors reported that students get bored when they have nothing to do in class. Therefore, teachers need to design fun and challenging activities that encourage students to work and learn while practicing the language. Rogoff (1990) stated that learners can learn through ZPD by engaging them in challenging activities. In addition, teachers should use positive reinforcement, especially with low-achieving students who need teachers' support and help to improve their academic performance. The researcher believes that all of these practices are related and can not be separated from each other, so teachers need to learn how to use them properly.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The current study investigated the challenges faced by tenth-grade female students in learning EFL in the Palestinian context. In addition, it examined the students' recommendations for overcoming these challenges. It also investigated teachers' practices that hinder students' learning and supervisors' recommendations to improve teachers' practices to achieve learning objectives. The theoretical framework of the present study is the social constructivism learning theory by Vygotsky (1978). Various studies were synthesized and elaborated to show the obstacles and difficulties that English language learners faced in learning EFL and ESL. Semi-structured interview and classroom observation was the tool for data collection. The study was carried out at the tenth-grade level in four public schools and one private school in Ramallah governorate. The participants of the study consisted of 30 female students, 5 English teachers and 2 instructional supervisors.

Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis model was used to analyze data. The result of the study confirmed that lack of vocabulary mastery, lack of motivation, peer pressure, lack of practice, classroom atmosphere, cultural and linguistic differences and English for Palestine textbook for the tenth grade are challenges that Palestinian female learners face in learning EFL. To enhance students' English proficiency, students recommend their teachers to use different teaching methods, adopt various assessment methods, build students' self-confidence, build a good relationship with students and expose students to the target language. Regarding teaching practices, the research reported teacher-centered classrooms, heavy reliance on Arabic, lack of extra curriculum activities, lack of formative assessment and neglect of low-achieving students as practices that hindered students' learning. To achieve the curriculum objectives and enhance students learning English, instructional supervisors recommended teachers to plan, change their negative attitudes, work on improving their abilities, keep students busy, praise students and focus on practicing the language.

The four questions in this study targeted challenges that tenth-grade female learners face in learning EFL from the student's point of view. However, there are some gaps in our knowledge regarding teachers' points of view, the Palestinian male students and other Palestinian cities

challenges. Future research may include more participants since it may offer more validation to the research and may use a checklist as a tool in observing classes. Further, research may be conducted in other Palestinian cities and suburban areas. It is worth it to conduct research on Palestinian male learners' challenges in learning EFL. Further, research may expand for a longer period, to observe more classes.

References

Ahmed S. T. S. & Qasem, B. T. A. (2019) Problems of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in south Yemen: A case study of Lahj governorate. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies on Humanities, 2*(4), 485-492. Retrieved from https://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/jish/article/view/7458/4472

Ahmed, S. T. S. (2018) Challenges of English language teaching in Yemeni primary and secondary schools. Academic paper presented in GRIN Verlag, Germany, 1-11. Retrieved from https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/60614545

Akbari, Z.(2015) Current challenges in teaching / learning English for EFL learners: The case of junior high school and high school. *Social and Behavioral Science, 199*, 394-401. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283165642

Al Farizi, M. F.(2019) Analysis of Indonesian language learning obstacles in primary schools. *International Journal of Educational Methodology, 5*(4), 663 - 669. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bb85/6c9dc47ba5fef5ef86f3ffdc15ecfe44af1d.pdf?_ga =2.14491890.412055346.1660334648-1655919607.1660334648

Al Nakhalah, A. M. M. (2016). Problems and difficulties of speaking that encounter English language students at Al Quds Open University. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, *5*(12), 96-101.

Alefesha, H.M.N. & Al-Jamal, D. A. H.(2019) Syrian refugees Challenges and problems of learning and teaching English as a foreign language(EFL): Jordan as an example. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural studies,6*(1), 117-129. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334442635

Alhabahba, M. M. & et al (2016) English language education in Jordan: Some recent trends and challenges. *Cogent Education, 3*(1), 1-14. Retrieved from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1156809?needAccess=t rue

Alhmadi, N. S.(2014) English speaking learning barriers in Saudi Arabia: A case study of Tibah University. Arab World English Journal, 5(2),38-53. Retrieved from https://www.awej.org/images/AllIssues/Volume5/Volume5Number2June2014/4.pdf

Alotaibi, A. M. & et al (2018) Challenges in learning English prepositions by Kuwaiti EFL learners: A call for bridging the gap in Kuwait's new English language curriculum. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal,5*(11), 516-530. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Shu-Hua-Wu/publication/331475987

Alrabai, F. (2016) Factors underlying low achievement of Saudi EFL learners. International Journal of English Linguistics,6(3), 1-17. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298374473_Factors_Underlying_Low_Achievement_of_Saudi_EFL_Learners

Alrashidi, O. & Phan, H.(2015) Education context and English teaching and learning in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: An overview. *English Language Teaching,8*(5), 33-44. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1075240.pdf

Amara, M. H. (2003). Recent foreign language education policies in Palestine. *Language problems & language planning, 27*(3), 217-232.

Azman, H. (2016) Implementation and challenges of English language education reform in Malaysian primary schools*.* Language, Linguistics and Literature, *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies, 22 (3),* 65-78. Retrieved from http://journalarticle.ukm.my/10728/1/13527-44195-1-PB.pdf

Banditvilai, C. & Cullen, R. (2018) Problems and obstacles in learning English as a foreign language. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 8*(12), 289-294. Retrieved from http://www.ijssh.org/vol8/977-ED3015.pdf

Bianchi, R., & Razeq, A. H. A. (2017). The English Language Teaching Situation in Palestine. In English Language Education Policy in the Middle East and North Africa (pp. 147-169). Springer, Cham.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Broco & Trad (2011). Education in the Palestinian terittories. Context. *Participatory Educational Research, 2*(1), 106-115. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555482.pdf

Dajani, D. and Mclaughlin, S. (2009). Implementing the first Palestinian English language curriculum: A need for teacher empowerment. *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies, 14*(2): 27-47. Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/93184233.pdf

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., & Giardina, M. D. (2006). Disciplining qualitative research. *International Journal of qualitative studies in education*, *19*(6), 769-782

Derry SJ. 1999. A fish called peer learning: Searching for common themes. Cognitive perspectives on peer learning, 197-211.

Dewey. J(1879). My pedagogic creed. The School Journal, 54(3): 77-80 Retrieved
    from *http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm*

Dhillon, K. J. (2013) Challenges and strategies for teachers and learners of English as a second
    language: The case of an urban primary school in Kenya. *International Journal of English
    Linguistics, 3*(2), 14-24 Retrieved from
    https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268515741

Drbseh, M. M. H. (2019). Saudi EFL learners' difficulties in learning English: A case of secondary
    school students. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 6(4),* 140-
    151.Retrieved from http://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/view/1046/pdf1046

Elibariki, M.(2017) Challenges facing primary school pupils in learning English as a foreign
    language: A case of primary schools in Itigi district council. (Unpublished master
    thesis). Open University of Tanzania: Tanzania. Retrieved from
    https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/161548248.pdf

Frans, T. H. A. (2016) Barriers to learn English as a second language. Unpublish dissertation.
    University of South Africa. South Africa.

Gilakjani, A. P. & Sabouri N. B.(2016) Learners' listening comprehension difficulties in
    English language learning: A literature review. *English Language Teaching,
    9*(6). Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1101226.pdf

Halim, S.& et al(2018). Classroom observation- a powerful tool for continuous
    professional development. *International Journal on Language, Research and
    Education
Studies*,2(2),162-168.

Hammond, J. & Gibbons, P. (2005) What is scaffolding? *Teachers voice*, *8*,8-16.

Hartiningsih, S.(2020) The obstacles on learning European communication at foreign
    language Course in Malang Raya. *Sociology Study, 10*(5), 200-206. Retrieved from
    https://davidpublisher.com/Public/uploads/Contribute/5fd82616cb5e8.pdf

Hussain, A. (2018) Difficulties of learning English language at the secondary level: A case study
    of Thakurgaon district. *Journal of Education and Training, 5*(2), 165-181. Retrived from
    https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/61135125

Hussain, M. S.(2018) Motivating English as a foreign language (EFL) adult: Challenges to prepare

them for future and job market. International Research Journal of Arts and Humanities, 46(46), 121-147.

Ibrahim, M. K. & Ibrahim Y. A.(2017) Communicative English Language Teaching in Egypt: Classroom Practice and Challenges. *Educational Research*, 27 (2) 285-313.

Kalia, P.(2017) English language teaching in India: Trends and challenges. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology, 2*(3), 33-37. Retrieved from https://ijeast.com/papers/33-37,Tesma203,IJEAST.pdf

Khan, I. A.(2011) Diagnosis of learning difficulties in English: the Arabic bilingual context. *Elixir Psychology*, 36, 3448-3454. Retrieved from https://www.elixirpublishers.com/articles/1350545453_36%20(2011)%203448-3454.pdf

Khan, T. J.& et al(2017) Obstecal in teaching English as a second language (ESL) among pre-university students of district Mianwali(Pakistan)- A Pakistan case study. International Journal of Pure and Applied Researches, 1(1), 62-72. Retrieved from http://www.ijopaar.com/files/IssueContent/D-D17101-1008.pdf

Kocaman, O. (2017) Factors impeding the learning of a second language in Spanish school system: Valladolid University sample. Journal of Language and Linguistic studies,13(2), 578-592. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322987210_Factors_impeding_the_learning_of_a_second_language_in_Spanish_school_system_Valladolid_University_Sample

Kung. F.(2017) Teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Taiwan: A socio-cultural analysis. The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language, 21(2), 1-15. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1153833.pdf

language students at Al Quds Open University. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 5(12), 96-101.Retrieved from https://www.ijhssi.org/papers/v5(12)/version-3/O5120396101.pdf

Leeds-Hurwitz W. 2009. Social construction of reality. Encyclopedia of communication theory, 892-895.

Liando, N. V. F.(2013) Success in learning English as a foreign language. *LITERA, 8*(2), 146-164.

Retrieved from
https://www.academia.edu/34336501/Success_in_Learning_English_as_a_Foreign_Language

Mamo, K.(2013)the use of authentic materials in teaching listening skills to college students: the cause of Bonga collage of teacher Education.Unpublished Master Thesis. Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

McMahon M. 1997. Social Constructivism and the World Wide Web - A Paradigm for Learning. *Paper presented at the ASCILITE conference*. Perth, Australia.

Menakapriya, P.(2016) Challenges in learning English as a second language. *South Asian Journal of Engineering and Technology,2*(14), 22–25. Retrieved from http://ishitvtech.in/pdf/sajet-vol-12-no14-4.pdf

Misbah N. H.& et al(2017) Identifying the factors contributing to students' difficulties in English language learning. *Creative Education, 8*, 1999-2008. Retrieved from https://www.scirp.org/pdf/ce_2017101114302406.pdf

Mohamad H. M.(2018)Challenges of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) by non-native learners .*International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*,3(4), 1381-1400. Retrieved from http://www.ijsser.org/2018files/ijsser_03 97.pdf

Muhammad, H. A. & et al (2018) Teaching and learning English language in Nigerian Schools: Importance and challenges. *Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, 3*(1), 10-13. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ee3b/6425a6139cc10cfbf534765833ebb68bc1fc.pdf

Muthanna A. N. G.& Rao L. V. P.(2018) The major threats and Obstacles of learning English LanguageL2 in Yemeni Context. Retrieved from https://ijisrt.com/assets/upload/submitted_files/1564041268.pdf

Nguyen C. T. (2011) Challenges of learning English in Australia towards students coming from selected southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. *International Education Studies,4, 13-20. Retrieved from* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1066393.pdf

Oktay, A.(2015) Foreign language teaching: A problem in Turkish education. *Procedia – Social*

Behavioral Sciences, 174,584 – 593. Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277651559_Foreign_Language_Teaching_A_
Problem_in_Turkish_Education

Othman, N. I. & et al(2015) Personalizing learning of English literature: Perceptions
and challenges. *Journal of Personalized Learning, 1*(1), 104-112. Retrieved from
https://spaj.ukm.my/jplearning/index.php/jplearning/article/view/16/55

Ovando, C., Collier, V., & Combs, M. (2003). Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching multicultural
contexts (3rd ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Rahman, M.M. & *et al.* (2019)English language teaching in Bangladesh today: Issues,
outcomes and implications. *Lang Test Asia,* **9(**9). Retrieved from
https://languagetestingasia.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40468-019-0085-8

Raju, N. & Joshith, V. P. (2017). Adversities and obstacles in learning English as second
language in Indian context: *International Journal of Advanced Educational and Research*
2(4), 48-
51. Retrieved from
http://www.alleducationjournal.com/archives/2017/vol2/issue4/2-4-18

Ramahi, H. (2018) Education in Palestine: Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives.
Ramallah, Palestine: RLS Regional Office Palestine & Jordan.

Rany, s., Abidin, M. J. Z. & Mei, L. L. (2013) Factors causes students low English language
learning: A case study in the National University of Laos. *International Journal of
English Language Education, 1*(1), 179-192. Retrieved from
https://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ijele/article/view/3100/2631

Rao, P. (2019). The role of English as a global language. Research Journal of English,
4(1) retrieved from www.rjoe.org.in

Rogoff, B. (1990). Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context. New
York: Oxford University Press

Sadeghi, M. & s Izadpanah, S. (2018) Barriers in teaching reading to ELLs and ways of
overcoming those obstacles. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 9*(2), 295-301.
Retrieved from http://academypublication.com/issues2/jltr/vol09/02/10.pdf

Salameh, W. & Sathakathulla, A. A.(2018) The impact of social-economic factors on students' English language performance in EFL classrooms in Dubai. *English Language and Literature Studies, 8(*4), 110-118. Retrieved from https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ells/article/view/0/37611

Savin-Baden, M. and Major, C. (2013) Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice. Routledge, London.

Shen, M. & Chiu, T. (2019) EFL learners' English speaking difficulties and strategy use. *Education and Linguistics Research, 5*(2), 88-102. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-EFL-learners-difficulties-in-speaking-English_fig1_336556602

Sokip . (2020) Overcoming the problem of learning Foreign Language Skills in the classroom.

Universal Journal of Educational Research, 8(2): 723-729. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339455463_Overcoming_the_Problem_of_Learning_Foreign_Language_Skills_in_the_Classroom

Solak, E., & Bayar, A. (2015). Current challenges in English language learning in Turkish EFL context. *Participatory Educational Research*, *2*(1), 106-115.

Songbatumis, A.M. (2017). Challenges in Teaching English Faced by English Teachers at MTsN Taliwang, Indonesia. *Journal Of Foreign Language Teaching & Learning, 2*(2),54-67.

Sundari, W. (2018)The difficulties of learning English for the beginner English Learners. *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies*, *2*(1), 34-41. Retrieved from https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/culturalistics/article/view/2050/1367

Tariq, A. R. & et al(2013) Difficulties in learning English as a second language in rural areas of Pakistan. *Academic Research International,4*(6), 103-113. Retrieved from http://www.savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.4(6)/2013(4.6-13).pdf

Tort-Monoly, D.(1997). Teacher autonomy: A Vygotskian Theoretical Framework. CLCS Occasional Paper No. 48.

Uddin, Sh. (2018) Challenges in teaching and learning English as a foreign language: Context of Bangladesh. *Online Cloud Publication, 1*(1), 72-95. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/37903272/CHALLENGES_IN_TEACHING_AND_LEARNING_ENGLISH_AS_FOREIGN_LANGUAGE_CONTEXT_OF_BANGLADESH

Utomo, H. W. & et al(2020) Challenges faced by English teacher in teaching: Case study of junior high school in Banjarnegara regency. Journal of Education, Teaching, and Learning, 5(1), 34-40. Retrieved from https://journal.stkipsingkawang.ac.id/index.php/JETL/article/view/1689/pdf_1

Vygotsky LS. 1978. Mind in society. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Vyomakesisri, T.(2017) Challenges in learning English as a secondary language. *International Journal of English and Literature, 7*(6), 21-24. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321216624_Challenges_in_Learning_English_as_Secondary_Language

Wood, D. & Wood, H.(1996). Vygotsky, Tutoring and learning. Oxford Review of Education, 22(1), 5-16.

Yang, X.(2019) On the obstacles and strategies in English listening teaching. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies,9*(8), 1030-1034. Retrieved from http://academypublication.com/issues2/tpls/vol09/08/22.pdf

Yousef, A.M. &Bose, H.(2015) Challenges in the learning of English as a foreign language in Libyan high school. *International Journal of English,5*(1), 17-22. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/10295092/CHALLENGES_IN_THE_LEARNING_OF_ENGLISH_AS_A_FOREIGN_LANGUAGE_IN_LIBYAN_HIGH_SCHOOL

Appendix A

Grade 10 Female Students' Challenges in Learning English as a Foreign language in the Palestinian Context

1. What are the challenges that Palestinian grade 10 female students face in learning English as a foreign language? (students and teachers interview)

Students Interview Questions:

1. Do you like English? Why?
2. Why do you learn English?
3. What do you think English will offer to you (better job, better university education….etc?
1. What language does your teacher speak during English classes?
2. Do you think that all English skills are equally important? If No, which is the most important one? And why?
3. How engaged do you feel when you are in an English class? Explain.
4. How do you feel when you speak English in front of your classmates? Explain.
5. Can you express yourself clearly in English? Why?
6. Does your textbook have enough illustrations to help you understand the topics effectively?
7. Do you watch English movies or listen to English music?
8. Do you like English for Palestine 10 topics? Are they what you need to learn about?
9. What kind of activities do you have in English lessons? Is their specific activity related to a specific skill?
10. Do you enjoy these activities? If not, why?
11. What kind of teaching aids does your teacher use(LCD, Whiteboard, audio files, posters, videos….etc? If she doesn't use them, would you prefer your teacher to use such aids? why?
12. Do you know how you are evaluated in English language as a school subject? Explain.
13. Do you know what is an authentic assessment and how you are evaluated? Explain.
14. If you need help in English, who do you ask for help? Why?
15. Do you depend on the internet to get answers for English for Palestine 10 activities or do you try to do them by yourself? Explain.
16. Do you think if you had taken more periods in elementary and preparatory levels your English would be better?

Teachers Interview

1. What is your university degree? What major?

2. Did you receive any pre-service training programs? Where? How was it?

3. Do you receive any in-service training programs? If yes, what courses? Explain.

4. If you have any problem regarding teaching, who do you ask for help? Did you receive any training about it later?

Teaching methodology

5. What teaching methods do you use?
6. We have different learners who learn in different styles, how do you deal with them?
7. If any of your students had a problem regarding a certain skill, what do you do?
8. Do you think that 10th graders' attitude towards "English culture" affects young learners' attitude to the language? Explain.
9. What is your teaching language? Do you speak Arabic inside the class? Explain
10. What evaluation methods do you use with 10th graders? Do you think it affects their academic performance?

Textbooks and teaching policies.

1. Does English for Palestine 10 addresses learners? If not, why do you think so?
2. Does English for Palestine 10 meet students' needs? If not, why do think so?
3. Do you think 10th graders' textbook vocabulary suits students' level? Explain.
4. Do you think the number of periods weekly is enough to cover the material?
5. Do you think it's necessary to finish the whole textbook?
6. Do you think that the number of periods in primary and preparatory levels affected students' performance in 10th grade? Explain.
7. Do you think the class environment (LCD, whiteboard, number of students) affects 10th graders' academic performance? Explain.

Q2. What are students' recommendations for teachers to assist them improving their English proficiency and achieve the English curriculum goals? (students interview)

1. How do think you can improve your academic performance in English language?
2. What teaching aids would you like your teacher use?

3. Would you prefer your teacher to cover all the material or just focus on the quality of education? Explain.
4. What language would you prefer your teacher use during classes?
5. Would you like your teacher to use different methods? What kind of methods?
6. Would you prefer to have more roles during classes? How?
7. How would you prefer to be evaluated? Explain.
8. How do you think you can improve your vocabulary?
9. What do you think your teacher can do to make all students involved in classes?
10. How can she deal with your crowded class during activities? (if it is crowded)
11.

Q3. What are the classroom teaching practices that teachers perform which hinder students' learning? (Classroom Observations)

Q4. What teachers could do to improve student learning and overcome students' challenges? (Instructional Supervisors interview)

1. Does teachers' preparation affect students' performance? Explain.
2. Are you familiar with the pre-service teachers' training program?
3. How do pre-service training programs prepare teachers to face students learning challenges?
4. How do you recognize teachers' needs? Explain.
5. Do in-service training programs support English teachers' needs?
6. What do you think teachers should focus on, the quality or the quantity of education?
7. Do you think the ministry policies (number of periods and students) affect students' performance? How can a teacher deal with these policies to improve student English proficiency?
8. If the class environment hinders students' performance, how can a teacher adapt it to overcome students' challenges?
9. How do teachers' teaching methods affect students' performance? What should they do to improve them?
10. If students suffer from a lack of vocabulary, what can the teacher do to face this challenge?
11. Do you think evaluation methods hinder students' performance? If yes, what should they do to overcome this challenge?