

Abstract

ATTITUDES OF NON-ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITIES IN HEBRON TOWARDS ENGLISH SERVICE COURSES

This study aims at investigating the attitudes of non-English majors at universities in Hebron towards English service courses offered by these universities. It attempts to find answers to a set of research questions. These include: the philosophy of Palestinian universities behind requiring these courses; the attitudes of the students at the four universities towards these service courses; whether there is a correlation between students' attitudes and final grades in these courses; to what extent there are differences in the students' attitudes due to the differences in the language of instruction; to what extent there are differences in the students' attitudes due to the differences their gender; and what graduates of the four universities say about these courses.

The population of the study included about 1,000 non-English major students enrolled at the four universities in Hebron in the second semester of the academic year 2008-2009. They were taking the required English service courses at these educational institutions. A three-part questionnaire and two interviews were designed to investigate the attitudes of these students. A sample of 189 participants was selected randomly to answer the questionnaires: 74 males and 115 females. Moreover, 33 students from HU and 30 graduates from the four universities were interviewed. In addition, the grades of 389 students taking these courses were obtained.

In general, the results showed that the participants had positive attitudes towards the English language, but different attitudes towards the English service courses. Their attitudes towards these courses were determined by different factors, such as the major,

the gender and the language of instruction used in the student's field. The results also showed that female students, and students enrolled in majors where English is the language of instruction had positive attitudes towards these courses. This is very clear in the cases of PPU and a part of HU. On the other hand, the male students, and students enrolled in majors where English is not the language of instruction had negative attitudes towards these courses. This is clearly noticed in the cases of QOU, PTC/Al-Arroub and the other part of HU. It is obvious that the students with positive attitudes towards these courses were more motivated to learn English, and in turn, they learned better and got higher grades. By contrast, the students who were less motivated to learn English and had negative attitudes towards these courses got lower grades, and they even might fail these courses.

In accordance with these results, a set of recommendations are suggested, such as promoting the students' positive attitudes towards the English language at the different stages of their lives; simplifying the materials of these courses for students whose majors are not taught in English; following-up university graduates in order to be aware of the changing needs of the students of different majors; and conducting further studies in the field.