Chapter Four

The Modus Operandi of The Study
4.0 Overview

This chapter describes the fieldwork undertaken for this study. It elucidates the modus operandi of the fieldwork indicating how the questionnaires and test paper were prepared and the procedures followed in administering the research instruments and collecting data that drive the findings of the study.

4.1 Research Tools Used in The Study

The researcher used various tools for collecting data in the Department of English, the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University. The main tool is the questionnaire for student-teachers. A questionnaire for teachers, a test for student-teachers, interviews with some selected students as well as with some teachers and the researcher’s own observation of the interaction between the students and the teachers in the class were also used.

4.2 Preparation of The Tools

Initially, the objective of this study is to understand why many student-teachers of the Department of English in the Faculty of Education have the level of competence in English that they do have. The level is pretty low. See 3.1.1. The researcher has assumed that there is a combination of factors that seem to cause the students’ low proficiency in English. See 3.1.6. She has therefore prepared various research tools to examine the different factors as well as to explore more factors that may be unclear. As Best and Khan (1993: 183) point out these various research tools help to “get the facts about the situation or a picture of conditions that prevailed or that were developing ... Data may be gathered from population. Others are inferred from the total population”.
4.2.1 Preparation of The Students' Questionnaire

The researcher prepared a questionnaire for fourth year student-teachers of English Department. It is the main tool since this study is approached from the point of view of the students themselves i.e. it is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Through this questionnaire the researcher investigates most of the factors that affect or seem to affect the students' proficiency in English.

Data were collected in actual field settings. The researcher attempted to collect factual information. She didn’t use mailed questionnaires but questionnaires that were administered face-to-face.

This questionnaire consists of 40 items, which are divided into two unequal parts. The first part contains 25 items whereas the second part contains 15 items. This division of the questionnaires into two parts doesn’t depend on the classification of the factors, which were mentioned in 3.1.6, but on the structure of the questions. All the questions are closed ones i.e. the questions of both the first part and the second part are multiple-choice questions, but those of the second part have to do with frequency scaling. This questionnaire was piloted and modified in the light of comments received from ten respondents who are ELT experts in Yemen and India: in Hyderabad, Bangalore and Mysore.

Some items of this questionnaire were adopted from different questionnaires used in studies on language learning and teaching, and then adapted to suit the requirements of the study*. The researcher tried to write the items in simple language and with clear headings in order to enable students to understand them and accordingly respond to them. She improved the students’ questionnaire, revising it after receiving the ELT experts’ evaluation of it.

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*The questionnaires from which some items were taken and adapted are: Antonia Chandrasegaran (1981), Zugoul and Hussien (1984), Peacock M. (2001) and Ely (1986).
The questionnaire runs to seven pages. It starts with an introductory letter written for the students on the first page, assuring them that the information obtained would be used for the sole purpose of the research. There is a variety of questions to investigate the different factors assumed in this study. See the following table no. (1), which displays the information elicited by the different items in the students' questionnaire.
Table no. (1) showing the number of the items in the students' questionnaire and the information they elicited. See the questionnaire in Appendix B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Information Elicited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students’ roll no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students’ hometowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>Home support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>The students’ experience of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Attitudes towards English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>The needed language sub(skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The students’ perception of their language ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Evaluation of the students’ English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22</td>
<td>The students’ evaluation of some materials used in the English Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,23-28</td>
<td>The students’ personalities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-24</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-26</td>
<td>Risk-taking/Inhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,27,28</td>
<td>Extroversion/Introversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-31</td>
<td>The students’ exposure to English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-34</td>
<td>Teachers’ methodology:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Teachers’ use of communicative activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Teachers’ competence in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Giving students a chance to select topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>The students’ learning strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Preparation of The Teachers’ Questionnaire

For understanding teachers’ behaviour in the classroom, it is important to know their beliefs and attitudes that determine the implementation of a specific method and technique. But the teachers’ attitudes have been neglected in SL and FL classroom research. As Kleinsasser and Savignon (1991: 299) argue, “in our quest for the improvement of language teaching, we have overlooked the language teacher. Exploration ... of teachers’ perceptions of what they do and why they do it holds promise for understanding the frequently noted discrepancies between theoretical understanding of second and foreign language acquisition and classroom practice.”

A variety of methods has been employed in educational research to explore the teachers’ attitudes and beliefs, e.g. interviews (Mitchell 1988), variation of Kelly’s grid technique (Munby 1982, Olsan 1981), stimulated recall methods (Mitchell and Marland 1989) and to a greater extent, questionnaires consisting of open-ended (and closed) items (Bennet 1976, Brown and McIntyr 1978). Although such methods can give a reliable indication of the teachers’ attitudes, they cannot make any pretence to measure attitudes in the strict sense. As Moser and Kaltan (1971: 350) state, “to try and combine the answers a respondent gives to the various questions into a measurement of the extremity and intensity of his overall attitude requires a different analytical approach: and this is where scaling devices find their place.”

The researcher prepared a questionnaire for teachers who teach specialist-students in the English Department, Faculty of Education at Hodeidah. The main objective of this questionnaire is to find out how different teachers of the English Department view some of the principles and assumptions relating to teaching and learning English as an FL. In particular, it seeks to probe the teachers’ behaviour and methodology, which might affect the students’ interaction and communication in English classrooms.
The questionnaire has the form of an attitude scale and consists of 30 statements. 15 are unfavourable and 15 favourable to which respondents are expected to express their agreement and disagreement. The statements fall into five thematic issues related to the domain of investigation. The thematic issues are:

1. The importance of Grammar
2. Teaching Methodology
   a. Teachers’ roles
   b. Students’ roles
   c. Use of communicative activities
   d. Correction of the students’ mistakes
3. Needs of the students.
4. Evaluation of the students’ actual use of English
5. Materials used to teach English in the Department of English.

This questionnaire was adopted from an attitude scale used in a study undertaken in Greece* and adapted to suit this study. Here, the statements are placed according to the order of the aforementioned thematic issues and next to them is a grid consisting of five columns: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each column has a particular value viz. 5,4,3,2,1 respectively. Respondents are asked to tick the appropriate box. In addition to this scale, there is another part that contains seven short-answer questions that are about some specific details of the teachers, e.g. years of experience in teaching English and fields of specialization. This part is placed at the end of the questionnaire and not at the beginning of it like most of the traditional forms because some busy teachers may delay writing their responses to these questions if they see them at the beginning of the questionnaire claiming that they need time.

* It was taken from an attitude scale used in the study of Karavas-Doukas (1996), then adapted to suit this study.
This questionnaire was also piloted and modified in the light of feedback from the same ten ELT experts who evaluated the students’ questionnaire.

4.2.3 Preparation of The Students’ Test paper

The researcher prepared a test for fourth year students to get a picture of their grammatical competence in English. This test consists of two items: one is a completion-item for vocabulary and the other one a multiple-choice item for grammar. The total mark of this test is 100: 50 marks are for the first item and 50 for the second item. Each point of the first item has 10 marks i.e. 50 marks for five sub-parts, but the second item has 30 marks for the first two points, i.e. 15 for each point and 20 for the last point.

In the first item, the students are given definitions and they have to fill in the blanks with correct words. Students are supposed to know the missing words since they are from real-life contexts. The researcher believes that any student who has a sufficient amount of vocabulary could fill in the blanks with the correct words. Also, the last point of the last item is about a real situation, which students frequently come across and are involved in. See Appendix D.

This test might give a real reflection of the students’ level in English. It was attached to the students’ questionnaire. The researcher did attach it to the questionnaire because if the student-teachers knew that there was a test attached with the questionnaire, no one would take it and they might not have turned up.
Table no. (2) showing the items, contents, objectives and marks of the test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Assess the students’ vocabulary</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Examine the students’ knowledge of rules and their application</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no. (3) showing the form of the items and the number of the subparts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item no.</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Item Type</th>
<th>No. of the Subparts</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Multiple-choice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.4 Interviews

An interview is the act of verbal communication for the purpose of eliciting information. It is “any face-to-face conversational exchange where one person elicits information from another”, as Dezin (1970: 195) puts it. As a research technique, it is a conversation carried out with the definite purpose of obtaining certain information by means of the spoken word (Sidhu 1984: 145).

In this study, the researcher used unstructured interviews on an informal basis. This type of interviews was adopted because it affords freedom and elicits the most authentic and intense response. Also, it can provide “greater breadth of data than other types, given its qualitative nature” (Fontana and Frey 2000: 652). “This made it possible for the interviewer, i.e. the researcher, to penetrate behind unexpected clues and redirect the interview on the basis of emerging data” (Van Dalen 1979: 60).
Besides, unstructured interviews are flexible and few restrictions are placed on the respondents’ answers. It is true that the pre-planned questions may be asked but they can be altered to suit the subjects.

The researcher interviewed 40 fourth year students of English as well as 6 teachers in the English Department. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data to back up and assist interpretations of the data obtained from the questionnaires and the test. They are, in fact, depth interviews since the researcher tried to probe in depth into areas she perceived as being potentially productive in both explaining the student-teachers’ problems and in exploring new factors that had not been assumed before.

The researcher interviewed 30 students who evaluated their own ability of using English as ‘average or weak’, and another 10 students who evaluated their ability as ‘good’. The selection of the students was based on the following:

a. The students’ responses to the questionnaires i.e. their answers to question no. 17. See Appendix B.

b. The students’ teachers’ recommendations.

c. The researcher’s own experience, as she was an assistant lecturer in the Department of English there.

d. Her own observation of some classes of fourth year students.

Also, the researcher interviewed 6 teachers: 3 are Yemenis and 3 expatriate viz. Indian, out of 13 teachers in the English Department (see table no. 50). This selection of teachers based on their experience of teaching English in the Department (see table no. 54).

The students were asked different questions. The researcher pre-planned some questions. The questions, which were asked students with ‘average or weak’ English-speaking ability, are different from those, which were addressed to students with ‘good’ ability. In fact, some questions might
not be asked in every interview. The questions are related to the students’ answers to questions no. 17 in their questionnaire.

If the student judged his ability of using English as ‘average or weak’, s/he was asked why his ability is ‘average or weak’ and not ‘good’. However, if s/he evaluated his ability as ‘good’, s/he was asked how s/he improved it.

The teachers, on the other hand, were asked some questions related to the factors which they assumed affected their students’ oral communication, to their methodology and to their suggestions to solve the problem viz. students’ inadequate oral communicative competence in English.

4.2.5 The Researcher’s Own Observations

Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) propose that researchers should not approach the study with any ready-made hypotheses in mind: they should, however, take notes on whatever they observe and experience. Observation enables the researchers to get a snapshot comprehension and graphic descriptions of the subjects’ behaviour and activity. It affords investigators the chance to come to grips with their research setting and the types of problems. It also seeks to address the dynamic nature of behaviour.

Patton (1990), Best and Khan (1996), as in Al-Mekhlafi (1999: 120-21), propose the following five dimensions on the basis of which observations vary:

1. The role of the observer may vary from full participant to complete outsider. An example of the former is a teacher observing in his/her class. An example of the latter is a research assistant in the back of a classroom.

2. The observer may do his work with the full knowledge of those being observed, or with only the knowledge of some of them. An example of the first situation is that both the teachers and his students know that they are being observed whereas in the second situation only the teacher knows whereas the students do not.
3. The subjects being observed may be given full explanation, partial explanation or false explanations.

4. Observations could be as long as a full school year or as short as an hour.

5. The focus of observations may vary from ‘broad’ to ‘narrow’.

4.3 Administration of The Tools

Before submitting the questionnaires to the fourth year student-teachers in two groups (A and B), the researcher gathered the students, each group separately, during the time of their classes to discuss with them the general problems they face in the English Department and, in particular, the problems of oral communication in English. She tried to create a friendly and co-operative relationship, requesting them to talk freely about their problems and to consider her as their friend or sister. She clarified why they were selected as the subjects of this study, and promised them that all information they would provide would be confidential and only used for the sake of this academic study. She asked the students who felt shy to participate in the discussion to write their own problems in sheets of paper and give her later.

80 students (67%) of both groups (A and B) attended the classes in which their problems were discussed. Male students participated in the discussion more than the female students. The researcher tried to give the students an idea of the questionnaires they were to take later and to get their help when she was to interview them. She centered this discussion on one general question: “Why are most of you unable to communicate effectively in English, inside and outside the classrooms?”

Majority of the students viewed the ‘internal factors’ or as they called the ‘psychological problems’ as the main or basic problem that most of them suffer from, e.g. fear and lack of self-confidence.

Some of the students said that their oral communication in English is ineffective because they lack the communicative activities in which they may practise the language e.g. listening to cassettes of dialogues between native
speakers of English and responding to it. Others said that materials they use to learn English effectively, i.e. the language of most materials is restricted to specific contexts, e.g. literary contexts, while they need to be exposed to the language of various real-life contexts.

A few of the students, those with good levels in English, said they lack necessary facilities such as language laboratory and rich libraries, the native speaker's training cassettes which could help them to improve their English and compensate for the unavailability of native speakers.

The researcher also asked the students about their relationship with the teachers. They said they feel more secure with expatriate teachers than with Yemeni teachers. (This discussion was held on 21 and 23 Sep. 2003).

The questionnaires were distributed to the students of both groups (A and B) at the same time (11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.), during the times of their classes of Drama 2 and Novel 2 (on the 1st of Oct. 2003). They filled in the questionnaires in two classrooms at the Faculty of Education in the presence of two teachers and the researcher.

The researcher was present for the students’ questions and enquiries. The students were told to be as free as they wished to be and their responses would not be revealed to anyone at anytime, i.e. what was going to be answered would be confidential. The time of the two classes was one hour and a half. But completing the questionnaire and the test since it was attached with the questionnaire (see 4.2.3) lasted an hour though some students submitted them after 20 minutes only. Then, the teachers collected the questionnaires and gave them to the researcher.

A few students, about (7-10) of both groups (A and B), asked the researcher some questions about the meaning of some words in their questionnaires such as ‘rate’ (question no. 15 in the questionnaire), ‘intelligibility’ and ‘spontaneously’ (question no. 21 in the questionnaire). See Appendix B.
Although the researcher requested the students to write their true roll numbers, 5 students submitted their questionnaires without writing their numbers. 115 students out of 120 (95.83%) wrote their numbers. They might have thought that 'if their identities became known, all the information about their problems in English would be known by the researcher and then by the staff of the English Department'.

Table no. (4) showing the number of students' questionnaires, administered and received

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Questionnaires delivered</th>
<th>Questionnaires administered</th>
<th>Questionnaires received</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table no. (5) showing the number of students who did not write their roll numbers on their questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students who wrote their roll numbers</th>
<th>Students who didn't write their roll numbers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>115 (95.83%)</td>
<td>5 (4.17%)</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After some days, some of fourth year students, those who always communicate in English, asked about the results of the test of this study that they had taken. The researcher asked them why they were anxious about it. They replied 'it was challenging and we want to know the extent of our level in English'.

4.3.1 Administration of The Teachers’ Questionnaire

Before submitting the questionnaire to the teachers, they were invited over by the researcher for chatting and getting introduced so as to create a cordial and co-operative relationship. The permission letter was shown so that the researcher could start distributing the questionnaires. In addition,
the researcher gave them an idea about the problem of her study. While discussing with them, she asked them ‘why their students, in general, could not attain a high level of proficiency in English.’

The majority of the teachers thought that students’ lack of exposure to English is the main factor behind such a problem, “the only English that students get exposed to is inside the classroom” they said. Even the English classes are restricted to the content of the materials e.g. handouts, and the teacher usually talks more than students. Students here lack questioning skills, having an idea that the teacher is a model so s/he is always right.

Some teachers offered some suggestions that may help overcome such a problem:

1. Giving students a chance to use English through adding more classes, as one professor of literature called ‘tutorial lectures’, to enable students to ask whatever they want to ask.

2. Making English as the medium of instruction in the other requirement subjects such as ‘Educational Psychology’ and ‘Islamic Culture’.

All the teachers in the English Department were administered the questionnaires. In all there were 13 teachers (see 5.3.1). All of them returned the questionnaires. They were asked to feel free to ask any question they had, concerning the content of each statement in the questionnaire. The necessary clarifications were made. The collection of the questionnaires was made later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Questionnaires delivered</th>
<th>Questionnaires received</th>
<th>Questionnaires administered</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear that all the questionnaires delivered were also administered 100%. This encouraged the researcher to have a degree of confidence in the data collected. Babbie (1973) suggests that a response rate of 50 percent is adequate, 60 percent good and 70 percent very good. The rate of 80% of responses was excellent. This helped the researcher to derive the required generalization, which would help in analysis.

4.3.2 Administration of The Students’ Test

For a try-out (pilot study) 20 first year Yemeni college level students studying professional courses in India (Mysore) were selected randomly. Before distributing the test paper, they were informed the purpose. It was ensured that all the instructions were clear for them so that no difficulty was experienced while taking the test. The test was distributed to them. The researcher’s brother did the supervision. The test lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. It was administered on Mon. 7 July 2003.

4.3.2.1. Validity of The Test

Validity is an important characteristic of any test. It is defined as the degree to which a test measures what it claims to be measuring. “In general a test is valid if it measures what it claims to measure ...” (Best and Khan 1993: 218).

Hughes (1991) states, as in Al-Harazy (2002: 192), a test is said to be valid if its contents constitute a representative sample of the language skills and structures with which it is meant to be concerned. For example, a test of grammar must contain items that test knowledge of grammar. The researcher mailed the test to a group of experts in ELT, to judge the content validity of the test. They improved the ‘rubrics’ i.e. instructions of the test, and found them valid.
4.3.2.2 Reliability of The Test

Any test should have the characteristic of reliability. The reliability of a test is defined as the extent to which the results are consistent or stable. A reliable test should not produce different scores if it was taken again. As Hughes (1991) points out what we have to do is to construct, administer and score tests in such a way that the scores actually obtained on a test in a particular occasion are likely to be very similar to those which would have been obtained if it had been administered to the same students but at different times. “The more similar the scores would have been, the more reliable the test is said to be” (Hughes 1991: 29).

The most effective technique in achieving the reliability of a test is to re-test the same individuals with the same test in order to obtain the correlated stability of the test. The time-interval between the two tests should neither be too short nor too long so as to avoid having over-estimates or under-estimates, which may be felt on the proficiency of the examinees.

The researcher re-conducted the same test to the same try-out group (pilot study) after an interval of 3 weeks. That was on 28 July 2003. The researcher believed that this time lag was sufficient to reduce the memory factor. The reliability coefficient was 0.89, which means the results of such test were consistent. Such a level of reliability has been inspiring.

4.3.3 Conducting Interviews

The interviews were one-on-one, conducted in the library of the English Department. There was no limit on time spent with the respondents. The interviewer didn’t try to restrict the time to elicit only the items of her concern, but she gave the students a chance to add whatever they needed to say, relating to the problem of the study.

Before interviewing the students, the researcher called out some selected names of the students during their class-time and said that she would interview them one by one in the library of the English Department.
after their class. Most of the students, whom the researcher called out, came and waited in the Department for their turn. Few students, whose names the researcher didn’t call, asked the researcher to interview them. However, some specific students didn’t come and the researcher called their names again to interview them.

When the researcher interviewed some students, who judged their English-speaking ability as ‘average or weak’, she asked them the questions in Arabic language, which is the students’ mother tongue because it was difficult to elicit their responses in English. Besides, some of the students preferred using Arabic to English for expressing themselves. Thus, the interviews were conducted in Arabic or English according to the students’ preference. The interviews were conducted in the library with one student at a time so that the subject felt free to express himself fully and truthfully.

The questions of the interviews were not ordered in a particular way. In fact, some questions might not have been asked in every interview. Therefore, the interviewing context was as free of regulation and conscious constraint as possible. The information of the 46 interviews - 40 interviews with the students and 6 interviews with the teachers - were recorded using a tape-recorder and later some of them transcribed. See Appendix E.

Now let us look at the kind of questions asked in some of the interviews:

**A. Students with ‘average or weak’ English-speaking ability were asked questions such as:**

‘Why is your English-speaking ability still average or weak, not good?’
‘What are the reasons behind such ability?’
‘Do you have some personal problems, which affect your study of English?’
‘Do you speak English inside the classroom, why not?’
‘How do you feel when you participate in English classroom?’
‘Do the literary materials e.g. poetry/drama, enable you to speak English frequently?’
‘Do they expand your vocabulary?’
Do you use this literary vocabulary when you speak English with others?’
Do your teachers encourage you or give you a chance to use English inside the classroom?’ etc.

B. Students with ‘good’ English-speaking ability were asked questions such as:

‘How did you improve your English-speaking ability?’
‘What do you lack in the English Department to improve your English?’
‘Are the materials, which you studied in the English Department sufficient for you to be good communicators in English?’
‘Do you have any suggestions that may help to improve your English?’

C. English teachers were asked questions such as:

(The researcher, first, told them of the purpose of her study and the factors she hypothesized to affect students’ oral communicative competence)

‘Why do you think fourth year students are unable to attain high level of proficiency in English?’
‘Do you use communicative activities in the classroom?’
‘Do you think the basic subjects that students studied, e.g. writing 1-4 and Grammar 1-4, are sufficient to speak English effectively?’
‘What do you suggest to improve the students’ proficiency in English?’

4.3.3.1 Transcription: Procedure and Problems

It was mentioned earlier that the interviews with the students and the teachers, which were 46 in number, were recorded using a tape-recorder. Then, they were transcribed. Also, some students, viz. 12 students, preferred to be interviewed in Arabic. This might be because they were aware of their problems of spoken English and they actually knew that the level of their ability of comprehending English was weak. They therefore preferred Arabic to English. Consequently, the researcher had to translate these interviews into English before transcribing them.
Transcribing the speech of teachers and students of ‘good’ English-speaking ability posed no problems. While transcribing the speech of those students of ‘weak and average’ English-speaking ability was very difficult because of disfluencies, poor articulation, mispronunciation and ungrammaticality.

Disfluencies in speech were due to long pauses within a sentence so it was very difficult to locate complete sentences. This might be because students were thinking while they were answering the questions. Also, they could get the suitable words to express themselves so they repeated the same words in single sentences.

Many students mispronounced a lot of words. This created the problem of understanding what they wanted to convey. For example, these words were mispronounced by most of the students: (* is used to indicate the wrong pronunciation).

- ‘Followed’ was pronounced as */fluːləd/.
- ‘Together’ was pronounced as */tɨɡəðə/.
- ‘Watch’ was pronounced as */wɪtʃ/.
- ‘Suggestion’ was pronounced as */səɡɛstʃən/.
- ‘Parents’ was pronounced as */ˈpærənts/.
- ‘Laugh’ was pronounced as */lɑːf/.
- ‘Encourage’ was pronounced as */ɛnˈkərɪdʒ/.
- ‘Quiet’ was pronounced as */kwɪt/.
- ‘Gratitude’ was pronounced as */ɡrətɪdʒ/.
- ‘Development’ was pronounced as */dəˈveləpment/.

While transcribing the students’ speeches, the researcher repeated pressing the ‘rewind’ button of the tape-recorder. This helped the researcher to identify the words in context. Many students mispronounced numerous words, but the researcher’s focus here was not analyzing the errors committed by the students. So she gave only theses examples to justify her problems of transcribing the students’ speeches.
Most of the students’ sentences were syntactically or semantically wrong. Even some of those students who evaluated their English-speaking ability as ‘good’ made many ungrammatical sentences. For example, some students said: (* is used to indicate wrong sentences)

- There are many reasons, first of my psychology.
- There is no someone to speak English with me.
- English is not the same language as we the native speakers.
- Sometimes I feel shame when I speak English in the class.
- I feel afraid to make mistakes o may be as he nature from girls.
- We can’t speak English very good.
- Some words we are use it.
- We are gratitude to them because they develop us.
- My speaking English is so little.
- There is some students laughed about others.
- If little students in he class it will be good.

To add to our problems, some of the students especially girls, when unsure or confused of what they were saying, used the strategy of ‘inaudibleness’ (a deliberate lowering of the voice). Therefore, we got some near-gaps in our recording.

Thus, while transcribing the students’ speech, we identified a number of repetitions, incomplete and ungrammatical sentences and mispronounced words this created problems for transcribing their speech and made the transcription un-understandable. For this some transcriptions are appended at the end of this study i.e. those transcriptions, which were understandable and rich with precious information.

4.3.4 Observing Some Classes

The researcher of this study observed some classes of the fourth year students in order to support the data obtained by the different tools (see 4.1). Six classes were observed to provide a description of the teachers’ techniques and steps of teaching used in the classrooms and to know the
extent of the students’ participation in English and their behaviour inside the classroom. The researcher observed different classes of 'Novel 2', 'Drama 2', 'Preparing teaching Materials' and 'Contrastive Analysis & Error Analysis'.

The researcher's own observations were recorded in the form of notes. The researcher focused her attention on the following:

1. **Students’ behaviour in the classroom** in terms of questions such as 'Do they participate in the English classroom? Do they ask/answer questions in English? What do most of them do during the lectures?'

2. **Teachers’ talk.** Is the teacher’s language clear for the students? Is there a balance between the teachers’ talk and the students’ talk?

3. **Teachers’ Methodology:** What are the techniques teachers followed inside the classroom? Do they use communicative activities in the classroom?

Six classes were observed and the length of every class was one hour and a half. The researcher took permission from the teachers to attend their classes as a non-participant. She sat at the back of the classrooms and took notes of what she was observing. She observed the classes with quite a good knowledge of the students and teachers those being observed since she taught these students when they were in the first and second years. Some of those teachers she observed were her own teachers when she was an undergraduate student in the English Department, Faculty of Education at Hodeidah.

### 4.3.5 Obstacles

The researcher faced some obstacles while administering the questionnaires, the test and interviewing students and the teachers. They merit mention:

a) Some English teachers were not helpful and co-operative. They gave some excuses for returning the questionnaires late, not within the period provided. Some others didn’t write their answers to some questions viz.
those short-answer questions, which are about their personal details. They said ‘we forgot to answer them’ when the researcher showed them the questions. Others never offered any help in collecting the data with their colleague viz. the researcher.

b) The researcher didn’t find a suitable place for conducting the interviews with the students. All the rooms of the English Department were busy. Then after getting permission from the Dean, the library of the Department got vacated to use as a setting for interviewing the students.

c) It wasn’t allowed for the researcher to use the administrators’ room in which she used to sit before leaving the English Department. So, she did not feel comfortable since she needed a specific place in the Department, which is known for the students who wanted to meet her to discuss about their problems.

d) Some of the students didn’t respond to the test, which was attached to their questionnaires.

e) The financial incentive granted by the university was too meager to support the researcher to carry out a fieldwork research.

f) There were two groups of fourth year students, namely A & B. So the researcher administered the students’ questionnaire and the test in two big classrooms. It was extremely difficult for her to be present in both the classrooms at the same time since every class was in a different floor.

g) Some students didn’t respond to some questions in their questionnaires and others didn’t come to be interviewed.

h) The co-operation from the university administratively and academically was not satisfactory.