Abstract

The educational system in Yemen consists of three levels viz. primary (six years), preparatory (three years) and secondary (three years). Arabic is the official language of the country and is the medium of instruction at all levels of Education while English is a foreign language. English is taught as a (compulsory) subject from the first year of the preparatory level in Yemeni government schools. The students' use of English is however restricted to the formal environments i.e. classrooms.

A significant hindrance to the successful teaching of English in Yemen is the lack of communicative competence in English on the part of in-service teachers. Consequently, Yemeni students have no competence to write even simple English coherently and to use English meaningfully after six years of studying English in the preparatory and secondary schools.

There are two pre-service teacher-education courses: the two-year diploma offered in the 'high institutes' and the four-year degree courses offered in the 'faculties of Education'. The responsibility for the inadequate communicative competence of the in-service teachers rests with the pre-service teacher-education courses, which have the function of preparing teachers of different subjects for the government schools of different levels.

In the English departments at the faculties of Education, English is the medium of instruction used by Arabic and non-Arabic teachers alike. Student-teachers are given different theoretical as well as practical courses to train them in teaching English to the students of different levels.
in government schools. The theoretical courses deal with the student-teachers' knowledge of English (e.g. grammatical knowledge) to develop the student-teachers' proficiency in English while the methodology courses besides the practicum viz. the microteaching and teaching-practice courses focus on improving the student-teachers' professional teaching skills. In addition to these courses, student-teachers are given some 'requirement courses' in Arabic e.g. Psychology, Islamic Studies and Arabic.

In most cases the language competence of student-teachers is so low that they cannot follow the lectures in English. As West (1926) points out, as cited in Al-Zabidy (1999: 9), "they accept the right facts in the wrong language ... the effect is to encourage the students to write incorrectly and to furnish them with practice in the art of doing so." They are unable to express themselves with reasonable facility and felicity. They encounter spoken, communicational and conversational problems. This may be due to the fact that their oral communication skills are quite neglected. Consequently, most of the student-teachers avoid communicating in English with other proficient speakers. Student-teachers are aware of their problems and they feel they do not have the necessary competence in English.

The focus of this study is the student-teachers' inadequate oral communicative competence in English. The study is an attempt to understand why many of the student-teachers at the collegiate level are unable to attain a high level of proficiency in English and unable to communicate appropriately. It investigates the factors that the researcher has hypothesized to cause such low proficiency. Moreover, it also attempts to find out if there are any more factors, which are not clear, the
imponderables. Generally, it throws some light on the situation of teaching English in the faculties of Education in Yemen. The findings of the study lead to some remedial action to overcome such a problem.

The problem is approached from the point of view of the fourth year student-teachers, undergoing B.Ed course of English in the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University. They study English as a separate specialization to teach English as a compulsory subject in the schools. They represent a comprehensive sample of female and male student-teachers from urban and rural areas. The findings and generalizations of this study are thus extrapolatable and applicable across Yemen.

The researcher has used various tools for collecting data. 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 some classes have also been used. The questionnaire for the students is the main tool because this study is approached from the point of view of the students themselves i.e. it is student-centered rather than teacher-centered. The questionnaire is administered to a sample of 120 fourth year student-teachers: 43 boy-students and 77 girl-students.

The thesis consists of 'six chapters' each one feeds into the following chapter. *Chapter one* sketches the background of the status of the English language in Yemen and delineates the ELT scenario there. *Chapter two* presents a historical overview of language teaching methodology. *Chapter three* presents an analysis of the design and
methodology of this study. Also, a review of the related literature of the previous studies on the assumed factors is provided here. Chapter four gives an analysis of the various research instruments that have been used to collect the data and elucidates the modus operandi of the fieldwork undertaken for this study. Chapter five presents a statistical analysis of the data collected in the English Department. Chapter six suggests pedagogically based remedial action for improving the students' oral communicative competence in English.

A set of appendices is tagged at the end of the thesis. Appendix A shows the two lessons presented by two student-teachers whose presentation is used in the first chapter as empirical validation of the student-teachers' inadequate communicative competence. Appendix B gives the student-questionnaire. Appendix C provides the questionnaire for teachers. Appendix D presents the students' test. Appendix E displays 30 interviews with students and teachers. Appendix F shows some extracts of different classes. Appendix G gives actual samples of the student-teachers' written English. These appendices are followed by an exhaustive bibliography.