Chapter One

Introduction
1.0 Overview

This chapter sketches the background of the status of the English language in Yemen and its growing influence there in this day and age. It attempts to delineate the language scene in general and the ELT scenario in particular in Yemen, the scene of teacher-education, the governmental efforts for facilitating English learning, the student-scene etc. It also sheds some light upon some of the problems that affect language education in Yemen. It lays out the problem viz. the state of affairs as regards English language proficiency of the subjects of the study, which is the raison d'etre of the present investigation before the study zeroes in, in its later chapters, on the dynamics of whatever drives such a state of affairs.

1.1 English Language Teaching (ELT)

ELT is an initialism of 'English Language Teaching' done particularly with reference to people whose native language is not English. This is a British usage whose American equivalent is ‘TESOL’ which is an acronym for ‘Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages’. ELT is either ‘ESL’, which expands into Teaching English as a Second Language, or ‘EFL’ which abbreviates ‘Teaching English as a Foreign Language’.

As is known, a ‘second language’ is a language which is not one’s native language, or first language but which is learnt as a second language and which is a routine medium of communication outside the classroom whereas a ‘foreign language’ is a language which is not one’s mother tongue, or native language, and which is not used as a routine medium of communication in the country outside the classroom. EFL, an alphabetism for ‘English as a Foreign Language’ would thus mean that English is not used routinely in the daily lives of people. It may be used as a medium of international communication.
In EFL countries, e.g. France and Yemen, English is not a language of everyday communication and it is taught as a school subject solely for the purpose of giving the students competence in a foreign language for whatever reasons. India is a good example of a country where English is taught as a second language, and not as a foreign language. Outside Indian classrooms, English is used routinely in education, administration and mass media, and so on. This, as one can immediately see, has consequences for learning. In ESL countries, as opposed to EFL countries, English is available outside the formal classroom for the student to expose himself to on a regular routine and continual basis. Nigeria is another example of a country where English is a second language rather than a foreign language.

1.2 English The World Over

It is obviously true to say that English is the most powerful language on earth as of today. English is the world’s most widely spoken language. The statistics as far back as 1962 (e.g. Quirk 1962: 8) is that 250 million people speak English as the mother tongue or first language. If we add to this the number of people who have a working knowledge of English as a second or foreign language, the total is about 350 million. In 1997 (Weber 1997), English is ranked first among the world’s ten most influential languages since it has a population of 480 million speakers, both mother tongue and second language speaking. It is spoken and used in 115 countries. In Weber’s perceptive terminology these countries include core countries where English has the full official status, outer core countries where English has some official status and is an influential minority language as in India, and fringe countries where English has no official status but is an influential minority language in trade, tourism and the preferred foreign language of the young as in Japan.

It is the common means of communication between the people of different nations. It is the lingua franca in many countries, a language spoken by many people of different tongues in one nation as in India. It is one of the three official languages of the United Nations Organization. It is
thus the language of international politics and relationships. It is the media language: about 60% of the world publication is in English, especially journals, newspapers and magazines. It is widely used in radio and television by almost all countries in the world.

English is now taught as the nonnative language in schools in nearly every country in the world: east, west, north and south. Every advance in science, in engineering, in trade, in every branch of human thought is discussed, printed, disseminated and made available in English. Without a knowledge of English a young man or woman starting on a career is gravely handicapped, whatever the career may be. English opens up a world of opportunities. Anyone who doesn’t know English stands to lose in today’s world, materially, and otherwise. It has a huge say in the job market. Freshly created knowledge is almost always expressed first in English. At least the knowledge in different branches of human learning that is created and expressed in English far outweighs the amount of new knowledge created and expressed in any other language. In a word, English is an undeniably crucial passport to opportunity and employment, and undeniably crucial window to knowledge.

Third world countries or ‘developing’ countries have per force realized this fact about this most significant language. They have accordingly taken up English language teaching programmes in a big way despite the vehemence of the advocacy of local intelligentsia for mother tongue promotion.

1.3 The Yemeni Background

Yemen is an ancient Arab land. The Greeks knew it in the past as ‘Eudaiman Arabia’ and the Romans as ‘Arabia Felix’ both of which names mean ‘Fortunate Arabia’ or ‘Happy Arabia’. Many writers refer to Yemen as ‘the Arabia Felix’ for its walled cities, lush fruit-gardens and savory spices, as in Al-Harazy (2002). The Arab name for Yemen is al-Yemen. Human history
here dates back to a very early age. In fact, it is known from ancient times as the country of the origin of all Arabs and civilization.

Yemen is situated in the southeastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. It is bounded on the north and northeast by Saudi Arabia, on the east by the Sultanate of Oman, on the south by the Arab Sea and on the west by the Red Sea. Its location is geographically strategic because it looks over the Bab-al-Mandab Strait, which links the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean with the Red Sea.

Yemen’s strategic location attracted many nations to colonize it since the old ages. The Ottomans established their rule in the country, which lasted about four centuries. Their ruins can be seen in the northern part of Yemen. After the great defeat of the Turks in the World War I (1914), the Imamate family in 1918 ruled the northern part of the country till 1962. On the other hand, the British colonized the southern part of Yemen in 1839 and remained there for approximately a century and a half.

On 26th September 1962, revolution broke out in the north of Yemen. It was then declared a republic. Another revolution broke out in the south of Yemen on the 14th October 1963, and then it was declared a republic. There were thus two sovereign independent countries viz. North Yemen, called ‘Yemen Arab Republic’ (YAR) and South Yemen, called ‘People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen’ (PDRY). However, the two Yemens were united on May the 22nd May 1990, and thus the ‘Republic Of Yemen’ (ROY) took birth. The decade of 1990s is considered as the most prosperous and brightest in the history of Yemen.

Sana’a is the official, political capital of ‘ROY’. It is situated on a plateau, 7.260 feet above sea level. It has a population of about one million. Aden is the economic and commercial capital and the largest port in Yemen, followed by Hodeidah, which is called the ‘bride of the Red Sea’. Nowadays, Aden is considered as the free zone of Yemen. Taiz is one of the major cities, an important commercial and industrial center.
Arabic is the official language of the country. It is the language of communication at all levels: industry, business, trade, education, administration, media, religion and politics. About 98% of the population uses Arabic for day-to-day activities.

Arabic is taught in schools from the first year of the primary level. It is also the medium of instruction at the preparatory and secondary levels of education. Even at the higher levels of education, most of the subjects are taught in Arabic. English is taught as a foreign language. In fact it is the only FL that is taught in Yemeni schools and universities.

1.4 The ELT Scenario in Yemen

1.4.1 History of Teaching English in Yemen

The educational system in Yemen consists of three levels namely primary (six years), preparatory (three years) and secondary (three years). The formal education system in Yemen was established after the revolution of the 26th of September 1962, which marked the change from monarchy to republic.

The Arabic language is taught in schools from the first year of the primary level. It is the medium of instruction at the primary, preparatory, secondary and even at the higher levels of education. English is taught as a compulsory subject in Yemeni schools. Teaching English starts from the first year of the preparatory level in the government schools.

Bose (2002) points out that teaching English started in a few preparatory and secondary schools in Sana’a. It is not clear when and how English teaching began in Yemen, especially in the northern part of it. In the southern part of Yemen, during the British rule, there were a few government schools, where English teaching was given importance. However, Al-Muklafi (1999) points out that the introduction of the English language in the Yemeni educational system started after the revolution of 26th September 1962. The need for introducing the English language as a
school subject in Yemen was felt in the school year 63-64. A group of Egyptian teachers was hired to teach English in Yemeni schools. They used the English curriculum that was being used in Egypt, which was called ‘The Nile Course of English’. This course was used in the Yemeni schools until late 1960s.

This English course was replaced by another course in 1970, and this was called ‘The Progressive Living English For The Arab World’, the course that was being used in the Gulf countries. Later, this course was replaced by a series called ‘English For Yemen’ (EFY), which was introduced by the British Council in Yemen. But this series didn’t fulfill the purpose of teaching English in Yemen. This was not successful in that it didn’t enable the Yemeni students to master English. There was thus a case for replacing this as well. EFY was gradually replaced by a new series called ‘Crescent English Course For Yemen’ (CECFY) in 1995-96.

In the Yemeni schools of different levels, teachers have to follow the prescribed textbooks that are selected by the Ministry of Education. Teachers have no choice at all. They are not free to decide what to teach in the English classes in the schools. Some of the teachers are not satisfied with the textbooks. Typically, teachers find teaching these textbooks difficult and some try to adopt different teaching methods to teach these textbooks.

1.4.2 English as an FL in Yemen

English is a foreign language in Yemen. Students of different levels use English only inside the classrooms. Their use of English is restricted to formal environments i.e. classrooms. Some of them may use English outside the classrooms and colleges for limited purposes e.g. for giving directions to a tourist. Advanced Yemeni students, e.g. post-secondary students, may need English more than those at the other levels, in order to understand and to be understood by the non-Arabic speaking teachers as long as they study in the different universities. Later, these students need English to understand their
colleagues in offices, banks, factories or wherever they work with non-Arabic speakers.

English is taught as an FL even as it is ranked as the second official language coming after Arabic. The Ministry of Education realizes the significance of the English language in the world and consequently the significance of teaching it.

1.4.3 The Urgent Need For English in Yemen

One doesn't have to make out a case for English in any country in the world today, as pointed above. Yemen is no exception. There has been a concerted and sustained move in Yemen to build a 'language-competent' society. This includes competence in English. Bose (2001: 15-16) mentions a few reasons that warrant the promotion of the learning of English. The following are some of them:

- Yemen is a developing country interested in good relations with other countries of the world. English will be helpful for international communication.
- Yemen with its rich, ancient culture is becoming a major attraction for tourists from all over the world. English will help boost the country’s tourism industry.
- Higher education in Yemen is expanding and there is a need for offering advanced courses in the field of science and technology. This entails the increasing use of English in higher education.
- The number of Yemeni students going to countries like UK, USA and India for higher studies is steadily increasing and they need proficiency in English.
- The trade relationship of Yemen with other countries is increasingly strengthening and there is a growing need for English in international trade.
One could think of other reasons. For example, since the revolution of 26th September 1962, Yemen has opened its doors for many foreigners to work in different fields e.g. education, industry and health. Workers from different countries, e.g. India, Pakistan and Vietnam, have been working in large numbers in the different fields. This puts pressure on the Yemenis, especially who work with non-Arabic colleagues, to use more English.

Further, more and more Yemeni people are becoming aware of the significant role English would play as the language of wider communication (LWC) in the present age that is marked by its rapid strides in communication technology. They realize that they need more English everyday and in the days to come. Nearly all the different categories of the Yemenis need English to achieve everyday tasks. This is invariably to interact with non-Yemenis. A vast group of students, especially post-secondary students, needs a kind of ‘bread-butter’ English for ‘survival’ if they choose to work in English speaking environments e.g. Canadian Oxygen Oil Company. Another group of students needs higher levels of English to cope with various occupational needs in this technological age.

A small survey undertaken by some students at Hodeidah University in 1997 shows that students at the post-secondary level are really ‘English-thirsty’ and those at the secondary level advocate the idea of learning English and hope to acquire it. As a result of the Yemenis’ awareness of the importance of English, there is a steady increase in the numbers of students seeking admission to English courses in the Yemeni institutes and universities.

1.4.4 The ELT Effort in Yemen

‘English For Yemen’ (EFY) course was taught in the schools for the last 15-20 years (see 1.4.1). But it was felt that it was not effective enough to prepare the Yemeni students to use the language outside and inside the classroom as they lacked the ability to speak and write coherent English even after six years of learning.
The Ministry of Education of Yemen therefore replaced it with a new course ‘Crescent English Course For Yemen’ (CECFY) in 1995-6 since they realized the need for teaching materials with new ideas and better outlook, presumably as a result of demand from teachers, parents, educationists and others who are interested in the English education of the children in Yemen (Bose 1999).

The new materials are colourful, attractive and motivate students, with interesting lessons and activities that have understandable situations. They have fairly good effect on the learners and teachers. These materials need to be used by competent teachers who must be aware of all beliefs and assumptions underlying them to teach them communicatively and consequently to create an effective learning process.

1.4.5 A Hindrance for Teaching English

A significant hindrance to the successful teaching of English in Yemen is the lack of competence in English on the part of the teachers. The educational qualification required for teaching English in preparatory schools in Yemen is either a Diploma or a Bachelor’s degree in Education with specialization in English studies while teaching in a secondary school requires a Bachelor’s degree with specialization in English. At the school level, most teachers of English are Yemeni nationals. There are also a few expatriate teachers from neighbouring Arab countries like Syria and Palestine.

Most of the teachers in Yemeni schools are found incompetent to teach English especially the new courses viz. ‘CECFY’. They just follow what is there in the textbooks. There is no intense language activity in the classroom. When there is, the focus is more on prescriptively driven grammatical correctness, and not on the use. For example, ‘the English department’ versus ‘the department of English’. Those teachers may teach learners in the same way in which they themselves may have been taught by their teachers. Also, most of the teachers who teach in the schools, in the villages have neither the necessary command of English nor sufficient training nor
experience in teaching and they are rarely evaluated by the inspectors. As Bernard (1988), who is an English advisor of the British Council, points out, as in Al-Shamiry (2000: 19), “Yemeni teachers of English at the preparatory and secondary schools face serious problems in spoken English and therefore they may not be able to teach this skill to their students efficiently.”

Even those teachers, who are competent in the sense that they have a good command of English, do not give students opportunities to use English. They do not vary the techniques to teach English. They do not try to break the tradition, which is mere following of the textbooks. They may never try to adapt them. For example, if there are some difficult lessons, they do not simplify them and if there are not enough activities to practise the language, they do not devise activities to satisfy the learners’ needs and interests.

Consequently, Yemeni students have no competence to write simple English coherently and to use it meaningfully after six years of studying English. In other words, they are unable to meet real-life situations and the college phase that requires them to use English for achieving different communicative purposes.

This is not true just of Yemen, but of all Gulf countries in which English is taught as an FL. We can’t capture the situation better than Al-Sayed (1993) who says, as in Al-Shamiry (2000: 20): “Indeed, school English instruction in the Gulf countries can not legitimately be expected to produce students who are proficient in English, to English literature, or any other content area, in this language. The quality of graduates of even English Departments in the Gulf universities remains a subject of concern of several groups: the students themselves do not feel secure in the use of English after four years of course work in English literature and language; employers of English Departments graduates; and English Departments in those countries.”
1.5 Teacher-Education

1.5.1 New Terms Used

Some terms that are considered outdated have been replaced by other terms in this study as is the current practice in education. The term ‘training’ is replaced by the term ‘education’, the term ‘teacher-education’ has taken the place of ‘teacher-training’ and ‘Trainee’ or ‘pupil teacher’ has given place to ‘student-teacher’.

1.5.2 What Does Teacher-Education Mean?

Teacher-Education courses have to prepare or train the student-teachers to meet the challenges of teaching in the schools. In teacher-education courses, class-teachers are created which is at variance with the contention that teachers are born, not made. Their personalities are shaped and they are equipped with the knowledge of how students/children grow, develop and learn, how they can be taught effectively and how their inner potentialities can be brought out and developed.

We can define teacher-education, as cited in the “Dictionary of Education” (1985), (1) All the formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume the responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. (2) The programme of activities and experiences developed by an institution responsible for the preparation and growth of persons preparing themselves for educational work or engaging in the work of the educational profession.

In the ‘Encyclopedia of Educational Research’ (1982), Walter S. Monroie characterizes teacher-education as “the total education experiences which contribute to the preparation of a person but the term is completely employed to designate the programme for courses and other experiences offered by an educational institute for the announced purposes of preparing persons for teaching and other educational service and for contribution to
their growth in competency for such service. Such teacher education programmes are offered in teacher colleges, normal schools and colleges and universities.”

1.5.3 What is the Function of Teacher-Education?

Teacher-Education is needed to prepare the teacher who “is the needed architect of our future” (Aggarwal 2001: 413), to accord a professional status to the teaching profession and above all to make the optimum use of the time and energy of the teacher.” “The function of teacher-education is to produce good teachers. The good teacher is one who produces good results in meeting the central, presenting needs of life in whatever social context” (Aggarwal 2001: 414).

1.5.4 The Significance of Teacher-Education

Teacher-Education plays a great role in deciding the destiny of nations, both developed and developing. “Education is a sustainable prerequisite for moving towards sustainable development” (Seitz 2001: 67). Throughout the world especially in South Asian and Middle Eastern countries, there is a need for vigorous efforts in teacher-education, as “the destiny of a nation is being shaped in the classroom” (Dhondiyal 1988: 277). So teacher-education courses shape the class-teachers who are responsible for teaching students that constitute the future generations. Teacher-Education is the foundation of entire system of public schools since it prepares the teachers who teach and administrate the public schools, “ ... all who study and write about education (particularly the problems) come to the realization that teacher education is the foundation of our entire system of public schools. More money can be spent, more better textbooks can be bought, facilities can be improved, new curricula can be developed but the strength of the system essentially depends on the training of teachers” (ibid).
Teacher-Education programmes have an effect that is not restricted to prepare and train pre-service student-teachers but they provide in-service teaching courses viz. refresher courses. “Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are inseparable” (Kundu 1988: 221).

1.5.6 Teacher-Education Courses in Yemen

In Yemen, there are two teacher-education courses: the two-year diploma offered in the ‘high institutes’ and the four-year degree courses offered in the ‘faculties of Education’. Both of them are pre-service courses, which prepare class-teachers of English for 1000 schools in Yemen.

Apart from basic subjects such as Psychology, School Administration, Educational Theory, Physical Education, Islamic Studies and Arabic, these courses have strong components of English teaching methodology that include practicum/teaching-practice.

The English component of these courses develops the student-teachers’ proficiency of English, and the methodology courses besides the practicum, viz. microteaching and teaching-practice, develop the professional skills in them.

Diploma holders are placed in the preparatory schools while degree holders are placed either in the preparatory or secondary schools after successful completion of their courses.

1.5.6.1 The Two-Year Post-Secondary Course (12+2)

Students who complete the 12th grade and pass the General Secondary Examination enroll on this course to study for two years to be prepared for teaching English in Grades 7-9. A graduate of this course with a diploma is expected to be able to:

☐ Perceive the basic concepts and principles of the curriculum: pedagogical and academic components of the course.
Acquire positive attitudes towards the teaching profession and towards the English subject s/he is going to teach.

Acquire the knowledge of practical skills necessary for assuming his responsibilities as a teacher of English and for dealing with his/her colleagues.

This course includes four semesters. Each semester lasts twelve weeks: 36 credit hours, and a practical training period equalling one third of the theoretical training period.

The syllabus used in this course is as follows:

Intermediate Reading, Spoken English, Grammar 1 and Intermediate Writing in the first semester.

Advanced Reading, Advanced Writing, English Grammar 2, Spoken English and Methods (Theoretical) in the second semester.

Introduction to Language, Listening Comprehension, Methods (Practical) and Teaching-practice in the third semester.

Listening Comprehension 2, Study Skills, Translation and Language Testing in the fourth and last semester.

These subjects constitute the component specialization, and in addition to these, there is a set of subjects of cultural and educational components.

1.5.6.2 The Four-Year Post-Secondary Course (12+4)

Students who have completed the 12th grade and pass the General Secondary Examination enroll on this course. This course is given in the faculties of Education in Yemeni Universities. Student teachers are trained, groomed and prepared in this course for teaching English in classes 2-12 over a duration of four years. The aims of this course may be clear from the list of courses mentioned below.
This course consists of eight semesters. Each semester lasts 12-13 weeks i.e. 72 credit hours and a practical period that begins in the sixth semester and ends in the seventh semester. The syllabus used in this course has been revised in 1998-99 in Hodeidah University to suit the student-teachers’ needs and the teaching situations in the schools. It is as follows:

The First Year

A. Semester I: Spoken English 1, Grammar & Usage 1, Reading 1 and Writing 1, which were combined into one course in the old syllabus under Reading & Composition.

B. Semester II: Spoken English 2, Reading 2, Writing 2 and Grammar & Usage 2.

The Second Year

A. Semester I: Spoken English 3, Reading 3, Writing 3, Grammar & Usage, Introduction to Language 1 and Literary Forms 1.

B. Semester II: Spoken English 4, Reading 4, Writing 4, Grammar & Usage 4, Introduction to Language 2 and Methods & Curriculum.

The Third Year

A. Semester I: Phonetics & phonology, Poetry 1, Methods 2, Survey of English Literature and Advanced Writing Skills.

B. Semester II: Morphology & Syntax, Novel 1, Poetry 2, Drama 1 and Microteaching.

The Last Year

A. Semester I: Drama 2, Novel 2, Teaching-Practice, Contrastive & Error Analysis and Preparing Teaching Materials.
B. Semester II: Research Methods, Poetry 3 and Testing & Evaluation in an EFL Situation.

The following are the curricular objectives of this course: by the end of four years, a graduate with a Bachelor’s degree is expected to be able:

- To know the influence of Psychology and Linguistics on the teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).
- To understand the principles of language teaching and learning in order to teach effectively.
- To be familiar with Error-Analysis and Contrastive Analysis to use them for improving the pupils’ performance.
- To use English effectively and efficiently whenever the situation calls for the use of English.

One may think that this syllabus is sufficient for preparing competent teachers and the syllabus of the two-year course is insufficient because two years is a short period to prepare competent English teachers. Then a plethora of questions raises its head, and they are the following:

"Is this course really effective?"

"Are the four-year graduate student-teachers really competent in using English whenever it is required?"

"Is this course concerned with the student-teachers’ performance or does it do no more than fill them with theories?"

"Are the materials used in the course adequate to prepare competent and effective classroom teachers?"

"Are the student-teachers given opportunities to use communicative English in different contexts?" and so on.

The questions, as one can see, are endless.
1.6 Major Issues in Pre-Service Four-Year Teacher-Education Courses: A Diagnosis

Any effective treatment begins with a successful diagnosis of the problem. So before presenting the problem of this study in detail, a summary of the major issues related to teacher-education and teaching of English, which may be responsible for the student-teachers’ lack of competence, needs to be given.

1.6.1 The Selection of Students for Teacher-Education Programmes

The teaching profession may fail to attract the talented for many reasons some of which are the low status the profession enjoys in terms of social prestige, the unattractive pay scales class-teachers have, and the lack of promotional avenues for hard working teachers. But it attracts Yemeni women who have no choice other than the teaching profession and the Yemenis, both female and male, whose grades of the secondary schools are not high enough to be admitted to other professions.

It may also attract Yemeni youth who want to learn English, but they may not necessarily become teachers. The criteria for selecting students in the four-year teacher-education course include conditions other than the results of teaching aptitude test. It is true that proficiency tests (entrance tests) are conducted at the beginning of each academic year to select a limited number of the students. But some students are selected not due to their results in such tests but due to recommendations they bring along with them.

1.6.2 The Student-Teachers’ Evaluation

Student-teachers are actually evaluated at the end of the course with the help of three-hour examinations, which test their memory of theoretical facts. An examination of teaching-practice i.e. their performance, does not
serve any purpose, as their abilities as teachers are not assessed. Al-Meklafi (1999: 19) remarks:

"The Yemeni examination does seem to be making any difference between language tests and tests in history or other subjects. In fact the whole evaluation system including the question paper, question settings, and marking system is not at all sensitive to the nature of language teaching/learning and the performance evaluation techniques."

Richards (1998) also points out: “Most final exams test a narrow range of cognitive skills and probably are not adequate measures of teaching effectiveness.”

1.6.3 The Trainers’ Competence

Most of the trainers/instructors in the four-year teacher-education courses are PhD holders and a few of them are M.A holders. But most of these trainers have their degrees in specializations other than Education or ELT (see table no. 52). They never teach real classes in government schools, or face the difficulties that the real class-teachers face in the teaching situations. They may not therefore instruct the student-teachers well.

Most of the student-teachers wish that the administrative authorities in the teacher-education programmes change the traditional notion of training, which is that the trainer knows everything. To quote Verma (1995: 64), “The trainer knows his job as he has himself undergone training or that he is mature enough to learn it on the job but the trainers are ‘raw’ and need to be shaped.”

1.6.4 The Duration of the Teaching-Practice Course

As is clear in the syllabus of the four-year teacher-education course (see 1.5.6.2), student-teachers take the microteaching course in the second semester of the 3rd year. This is a practical teaching event where the
student teachers do practise teaching, which is evaluated informally by their peers, and formally by trainers.

Microteaching is a technique used in the training of teachers in which different teaching skills are practised under carefully controlled conditions. It is based on the idea that teaching is a complex set of activities, which can be broken down into different skills. These skills can be practised individually, and later combined with others. Usually in microteaching, one student-teacher teaches a part of a lesson to a small group of his/her classmates. The lesson may be recorded on tape or videotape and later discussed in individual/group tutorials. Each session generally focuses on a specific teaching task. It thus involves a scaling down of teaching because the class size, the lesson length, the number of students and the teaching complexity are reduced (Richards et al. 1985).

Also, student-teachers take a teaching-practice course in semester I of the last year and practise teaching English in Yemeni government schools i.e. preparatory and secondary schools. The time spent on microteaching and teaching-practice is not at all sufficient to train student-teachers, to develop their professional skills and to meet different teaching situations inside the classrooms. Student-teachers do not encounter the regular problems of the school that class-teachers face e.g. management problems that are common in real classrooms. The performance of student-teachers cannot be assessed through these limited-time courses.

1.6.5 The Student-Teachers' Competence

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.” The students lack an adequate command of English. They are unable to express themselves with reasonable ease and felicity.
In fact, the examinations, as was mentioned earlier, are not a real measurement of the testees' aptitude. They have been adjusted to these average pupils and students have passed out of the college with the degree.

1.6.6 The Student-Teachers' Needs

It is clear that the responsibility is greater at the faculties of Education where teachers of English are prepared for the Yemeni schools. The focus of attention should be, first of all, on the students themselves to develop their proficiency in English through making their needs and the teaching situations the center on which the evaluation, materials and teacher-education programmes stand.

What the students need in order to be class-teachers is to develop a set of skills to listen, speak, read and write. In other words, they need communication skills to argue, negotiate and respond according to the people they are interacting with, in accordance with different situations and topics. They also need strategic skills to compensate for what they lack grammatically (see 2.7.1.4) and skills of taking notes and summarizing in English etc. All these needs must be taken into account. The focus in our teacher-education courses must shift from teaching as unidirectional, teacher-centered, knowledge-oriented and input-based activity to learning as learner-centered, intake-based and interactional activity (Verma 1995).

1.6.7 The Syllabi

It is natural that the syllabus of teacher-education courses will be affected whenever there is a change in the school syllabus. As was mentioned earlier, there was a change in the school syllabi in Yemen in 1995-96 when 'English For Yemen' course was replaced by 'Crescent English For Yemen' course but, unfortunately, the syllabi in most of the four-year teacher-education courses in the Yemeni faculties of Education at the universities did not undergo any revision, except in Hodeidah University (see 1.5.6.2).
As the language teaching profession moves towards improving the teachers' training, it must be constantly aware of what is happening in the preparatory and secondary schools so that the institutions involved in that training may adjust their programmes to provide for new needs.

The four-year course syllabus of Hodeidah University was changed in 1998-99. The change may make the teachers' training effective especially if the syllabus is a material execution of the curricular objectives, which it is not at the moment.

1.7 The Scope of The Study

This study is not concerned with education in its broad sense, but it is concerned with the four-year teacher-education course that prepares English class-teachers for Yemeni preparatory and secondary schools. The researcher is a trainer/teacher of English in the faculty of Education at Hodeidah University, and she, for the past three years, has been engaged in teaching English to the student-teachers and in the microteaching and teaching-practice courses there. During the course of her teaching, she has come across innumerable problems that a teacher may come face to face with there.

1.8 Issues The Study Problematises and Probes

The study is both exploratory and investigative in orientation. It addresses two basic questions.

a. What is the state of English language competence of student-teachers in Yemen in general and of fourth year student-teachers in the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University in particular?

b. What is the dynamics of whatever drives this state of affairs?

The first question does not require research for an answer. It is known that the competence level in English is pretty low. Yet for some empirical validation in this study the question is addressed by interviewing some
students and teachers and administering language test to the subjects of the study, and then evaluating them. Questionnaires for students and teachers have been used as instruments as part of the attempt to probe the question of the dynamics that drives whatever English competence the subjects have.

The subjects of the study are fourth year student-teachers who are being trained as English language teachers in the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University. We believe that the findings and generalizations are extrapolatable across Yemen. Some concrete action is suggested to remedy the situation.

The focus of this study is the student-teachers’ inadequate oral communicative competence to use English effectively in different situations. We have provided below empirical validation of the level of the English language competence of the subjects of the study.

1.8.1 Empirical Validation of The Student-Teachers’ English Language Competence

As was mentioned earlier, the researcher of this study is one of the trainers in the English Department, Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University and she has been involved in teaching English to the student-teachers and in instructing student-teachers in their microteaching sessions.

In supervising the student-teachers, she has come across the problem of student-teachers’ inadequate oral communicative competence in using English coherently while presenting their micro-lessons.

Each student-teacher has to teach four times: two times for each student to present ‘micro-lessons’ that are taught by a group of students i.e. each student is responsible for presenting one or two stages of a lesson, e.g. introduction and presentation stages, and two times for presenting ‘mini-lessons’, which are longer than micro-lessons and taught by the students individually. So each student-teacher has a chance to improve his/her
teaching skills and tries to do his/her best in presenting the lessons. If the student-teacher develops negative mental states like fear, shyness because s/he has some difficult abstract items to teach for example, s/he can overcome such barriers in the other chances given to her/him.

This researcher has observed that most of the student-teachers do not have a good command of English. Here, we don’t mean a native-like English, but the kind of English that is spontaneous, felicitous, meaningful and expressive. The student-teachers’ English speech can be described as ‘broken’ because they pause after each sentence while explaining the lessons. They may try to remember what they have written in their lesson-plans and what they have already memorized. So their teaching is just a skill of rote teaching of what has been planned.

Given below are some extracts of some micro-lessons that have been presented by some of the student-teachers: one is a boy student-teacher, from the third-year level students (in the microteaching course), and the other one a girl student-teacher, from the fourth year level students (in the teaching-practice course). The following transcripts lead to the impression that most of the students-teachers have inadequate oral communicative competence in English. They lack ‘performance skills’ to teach English effectively in the classroom.
1.8.1.1 Extract I

Student-teacher’s name: (Mr. X)  Level: III year, English Department.
Setting: Faculty of Education  Room no. 110
Chance no. 3  Group no.  Tutor: Ms. Nemah A. A.
Course: Microteaching  Date: 10th May 2002.
Lesson taken from: ‘Crescent English Course For Yemen’ (Pupils’ Book 2).
Unit: 4  Lesson: 4  Page: 57

Title of the Lesson: “The White Falcon” (See Appendix A, Lesson 1)

T. stands for teacher.
Pp stands for pupils.
(*) is used to indicate the student-teachers’ syntactic and semantic mistakes.
(...) indicates the pauses in student-teachers’ speech.

After the teacher asked the pupils (his classmates) to read the first paragraph silently, he asked them these comprehension questions:

Paragraph 1:

T. *Who did say ‘Look at this it’s terrible’?
Pp. (Raising their hands up)
P1. The teacher said that.
T. Which teacher?
Pp: Ah ...?
T. *Ahmed teacher, Saleh teacher or Rashid teacher?
P2. Rashid’s teacher.
T. *His teacher likes his homework?
Pp. No ...
T. Why?
P3. Because lots of things were wrong.
Paragraph 2:

T. "When Rashid father came home?
P4. At seven o’clock.
T. "Is he happy?
Pp. No.
T. "Is he angry?
P5. Yes, of course.

For presenting the meaning of the word ‘falcon’, the teacher did the following:

T. (Pointing to the picture of the falcon that is already in the pupil’s book) "look at the picture, this is a falcon */fælkon/*”, he said.
Pp. ‘A small bird’ (they said in Arabic ‘a dove’).
T. Ah ... No. (Then, he said the name of a falcon in Arabic).
The teacher translated the meaning into the pupils’ native language, Arabic, instead of using English to give them a description of the falcon.

Comments

☐ The teacher’s questions were ungrammatical and badly formed in English. For example, he asked the pupils: ‘Who did say, “Look this”?’ instead of ‘Who said, “Look at this”?’ ‘His teacher likes his homework?’ (with the declarative intonation) instead of ‘Did his teacher like his homework?’ ‘When Rashid’s father came home?’ instead of ‘When did Rashid’s father come home?’

☐ His use of the tenses was improper. He asked ‘Is he happy/angry?’ in the simple present tense while he should have used the simple past tense.

☐ He mispronounced the word falcon.

☐ In the last extract above, the teacher was unable to give an explanation of the word falcon in English so he used Arabic language to get rid of such situation.
1.8.1.2 Extract II

**Student-teacher’s name:** (Ms. Y)  **Level:** IV year, Eng. Dept.

**Group no. 1**  **Chance:** 2

**Setting:** Hayel Saeed Preparatory & Secondary school

**Pupils’ level:** I-year secondary level  **Tutor:** Ms. Nemah A. A.

**Course:** Teaching-Practice  **Date:** 29th Nov. 2002.

**Lesson taken from:** ‘Crescent English Course For Yemen Pupils’ (Book 4)

**Unit:** 2  **Lesson:** 13  **Page:** 13

**Title of the Lesson:** "The early days"  (See Appendix A, Lesson 2)

T. (Pointing to the first picture in the lesson) she asked aloud:

'What you see here? Then she said, ‘Oh ... sorry’ and asked the question again, What can you see here?

P₁. A plane.

T. "What we call it? "Oh ...” what do people call it?

Pp. What teacher?

T. (Pointing to the aeroplane) ‘this, in the picture’?

P₂. (Raising her hand up) a flying boat.

T. Very good, it is a flying boat.

P₃. Teacher! Why is it a boat, not a plane? People use a boat for fishing in the sea not to fly in the sky.

T. Ah ... because this plane is like a boat.

P₃. But ... it is not a boat.

T: It is written here, she said angrily then indicated and read the statement that is beside the picture in the pupil’s book.

P₃. Silent.

T. (Pointing to the paper that is taken from the writer’s diary and already in the pupils’ book) ‘Please look at this’. What is this?

Pp. (In chorus) a letter.

T. Oh, no, it is a diary */dairi*/

Pp. Teacher, it is a letter.

T. (Aloud) No. She directly asked another question.
Paragraph I

The teacher asked the pupils some comprehension questions based on the first paragraph.

T. What is the date of this /dairi/?

P4. 8th Sep.

T. *Where the writer wrote it?

P6. *In his /dairi/.

T. No, what is the country?


T. Where did the plane land?

P7. On the clear water of Greek (pointing to the sentence written in her pupils' book).

(A pupil was raising her hand up to ask a question)

P8. What is Greek?

T. Ah ... it is a country.

P8. In Dubai?

T. No ... (The teacher directly asked another question)

T. How many cars were waiting for the people?

P9. Three cars.

For presenting the new vocabulary of the second paragraph, the teacher asked the pupils to underline the new/difficult words to explain for them.

P1. What is 'bumpy'?

T. No response.

T. Ah ... (It wasn’t included in her lesson plan so she got embarrassed and tried to guess the meaning of the word) it is a name of a road there, Bombay road.
P1. In India?
P2. (Indicating a word in her book, magnificent */magnifikant/.
T. (Pronouncing it, */magnifikant/ means nice.
P3. Courtyard.
T. It means a big place.
P3. (Raising her hand up) I do not understand.
T. The building is large and the courtyard is also a big place, *you understood?
P3. Ah, yes.

Comments

☐ The teacher was totally confused while asking the pupils questions. She asked a question twice (first wrongly then correctly), using different structures e.g. what you see here? Then, she asked ‘what can you see here?’

☐ She mispronounced most of the new vocabulary e.g. ‘diary’, ‘magnificent’ were pronounced as */dairi/ and */magnifikant/. Consequently, pupils mispronounced these words.

☐ She was absolutely intolerant in receiving pupils’ questions and tried to change the matter by asking them other questions. This might be due to the fact that she was unable to clarify their ambiguities using English. She might have insufficient vocabulary. For example, she got angry when one of the pupils asked her about the flying boat: ‘why is it a flying boat not, a plane?’

☐ She didn’t give sufficient illustration to explain the meanings of the new words sine she isolated the words from their contexts and didn’t support her explanation to them with examples.

☐ She didn’t have the skill of guessing the meaning of words according to the contexts. For example, she illustrated the meaning of 'bumpy' wrongly, giving irrelevant meaning for it.
Her English may be described as 'broken English', i.e. she paused most of the time while presenting the language items in English.

1.8.1.3 The Conclusion

Depending upon the presentation of some of the student-teachers' micro-lessons above, we come to the following conclusions:

- The student-teachers don’t have a good command of English since they are unable to present the language, e.g. new vocabulary, coherently and spontaneously. Therefore, they avoid the pupils’ questions. They do not actually cope with the demands of the teaching situations inside the classrooms.

- They lack the performance skills, which enable a teacher to present an explanation clearly and fluently. “Teacher performance is the most crucial input in the field of education ... aspect of teacher performance ... impinge directly upon the totality of education system” (Wallace 1991).

- They are unable to express their ideas/thoughts to the pupils. It may be due to their insufficient vocabulary or their inability to negotiate, argue and converse. “Foreign language teacher has to have the ability to react spontaneously and effectively in the classroom, in giving his explanations or in uttering a word of praise or censure ...” (Satyanarayan 1983: 135).

- They encounter problems in spoken English, especially in pronouncing English words. This might be because they don’t have sufficient practice in using English i.e. in listening and speaking English.

- Student-teachers’ inadequate competence to explain clearly in English has led them to deal with the new items, e.g. words, in isolated contexts, and not putting them in sentences in an attempt to simplify their meanings.

- They lack the necessary strategies, which may help them to fill the gaps in their linguistic competence (see 2.7.1.5).

- As a result, the pupils in the schools have not understood the micro-lessons that are presented by the student-teachers and they have
accordingly asked their original class-teachers in their schools to re-explain the lessons for them. They have really expected something but found something else.

1.9 Rationale of The Study

The low proficiency of Yemeni student-teachers in the English departments, in the faculties of Education at different universities has always been the main concern of the mass media, experts and advisors of English language teaching in Yemen. Also, teacher-education programmes have always been the focus of the policy-makers, planners and trainers since most of the responsibility of man-making process is delegated to these programmes in the different institutions in Yemen.

Moreover, Yemeni student-teachers in the English departments feel frustrated because they do not reach the required standard even after spending four years of learning English in the different Yemeni universities. They are totally aware of their inadequate communicative competence and the problems of oral performance in English.

Thus, the need for research in this area arises from these difficulties and problems that the Yemeni student-teachers encounter in the English departments in the faculties of Education in Yemen.

This exploratory study, to repeat, investigates the dynamics of the English ability of the subjects of the study viz. the fourth year students in the English Department in the Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University. The dynamics would include things like different factors affecting the student-teachers’ oral communicative competence. It examines the role of the non-linguistic factors, e.g. motivation and gender as well as the linguistic factors, e.g. materials used to teach English in the English Department.
More generally speaking, this study throws light on the status of the foreign language learning/teaching in the Yemeni universities. It sketches the problems and difficulties of the advanced Yemeni students at the tertiary level. The findings of this study leads to concrete suggestions for improving the teaching methodology and materials. Also, it gives the educators a real picture of the situation in the faculties of Education that prepare class-teachers who decide the destiny of our country.