

**EFL Teachers' Views of Fifth Grade Pupils'
Competencies of the English Language in
Kuwait Primary Public Schools**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the views of primary EFL teachers in Kuwaiti public schools of the competencies of fifth grade pupils in the English language skills after studying the language for five years. The study employed the quantitative method by means of a questionnaire. The participants were seventy three female teachers from Al-Farwaniya Educational District. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test and One Way ANOVA. The results revealed teachers' perceptions about primary pupils' competencies in English and the difficulties students encounter as EFL learners.

The study concluded with recommendations to enhance the teaching of EFL in primary public schools to benefit from those years in teaching English as a foreign language.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Female Teachers' Views, Language Skills, Competencies, Primary School, Kuwait.

وجهات نظر معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لكفاءة تلاميذ الصف الخامس الابتدائي في اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الابتدائية الحكومية في الكويت

الملخص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على وجهات نظر معلمات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الابتدائية الحكومية في دولة الكويت لكفاءة وتمكن تلاميذ الصف الخامس من مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية بعد دراسة اللغة لخمس سنوات. استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الكمي من خلال تطبيق استبيان مكون من ٣٨ بنداً وزعت على أربع محاور. بلغ عدد المشاركات ثلاث وسبعين معلمة من منطقة الفروانية التعليمية. تم تحليل استجابات باستخدام الإحصاء الوصفي، اختبار (t) واختبار (One Way ANOVA). كشفت النتائج عن وجهات نظر المعلمات لكفايات تلاميذ الصف الخامس ابتدائي في اللغة الإنجليزية والصعوبات التي تواجههم كمتعلمين. واختتمت الدراسة بتوصيات لتعزيز تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المدارس الابتدائية الحكومية والاستفادة من سنوات المرحلة الابتدائية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وجهات نظر المعلمات، مهارات لغوية، كفايات، المدارس الابتدائية، الكويت.

Introduction

The growing demand to learn English as a foreign language stems from the fact that the English language is the most dominating global language (Crystal, 1997), therefore it became a goal in most non-speaking countries to introduce it as a compulsory subject as early as the primary stage. This makes it important to focus on the language learners and how best to help them learn it. One important fact is that children's concentration span increases as they grow older (Brumfit, 1995). This is explained by Wood (1988: 70) as "the ability to keep on task and to ignore distractions is a symptom of the child's intellect, and changes in concentration span are related to intellectual development". This makes it even more important to train teachers with how best to teach English as a Foreign Language in the primary stage as instruction and schooling play an important role in teaching children how to pay attention to learn effectively. According to Brewster (1995: 9) "Mainstream primary practice embodies a less structured conception of the language and more appropriate to the educational needs of children, which focuses on questions of curriculum, content, and cognitive development". This highly stresses that EFL teachers should be aware of the nature of the English language and the nature of children's learning process as this will enable them to do so many things in the process of teaching; including developing an understanding of language processes in speaking, listening, reading and writing (Clegg, 1990). Murray (2010: 3) stresses that "to be an effective teacher requires a combination of professional knowledge and specialized skills as well as personal experiences and qualities".

Walter and Davis (2002) propose that teachers of young children should be professionally prepared and trained in child development and learning theories which explain the learning process in which children go through. Therefore, the aims of early learning of the English language must be clear in the mind of curriculum planners and teachers. According to

Brewster, Ellis, & Girard (2001: 26) it must include two crucial elements "discover another culture", a "analyze the language". Thus, the young learners will be exposed to the foreign language to be able to listen to it, understand it, speak it, read it and write it. All that serve the purpose of communicating their ideas and thoughts in a foreign language.

However, it must be taken into consideration that many countries of the world tend to put untrained teachers in classrooms (Butler, 2004). This could lead to severe unwanted problems especially in foreign language learning. Cross (2003: 42) suggests three levels of the required qualifications to produce effective EFL teachers. "First teachers should have a degree in Education. Second, teachers should obtain subject competence and mastery of language skills, as this will enable them to benefit from training in issues related to language teaching. Third, they should have professional competence in terms of the teachers' ability to execute and test current approaches, educational theory, cognitive psychology and classroom management".

In the State of Kuwait, where English is taught as a foreign language, the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in the primary stage has received a great deal of controversy (Al-Mutawa' 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997; Al- Mutawa & Easa 1997; & Tarish, 1993) prior to its implementations. In 1993/1994, English became a subject in the primary stage curriculum by a Ministerial Decree No. (61/93, Ministry of Education, 1993). The textbook " English for the Emirates" was adopted and went under some modifications to suit the Kuwaiti culture and environment. In 2002, "Fun with English" was introduced, as it was specially written to suit the Kuwaiti context. Modification of the textbook series was an ongoing process to overcome the weaknesses encountered during the course of teaching it (Al-Mutawa 2008).

However, despite the great attention given by the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, still the outcome results can be seen as

unsatisfactory as they do not meet the expectations (Al-Sanie: 2009). According to the Educational Indicators of the Ministry of Education (1998) the "achievement of English and Mathematics is below average" (p. 226). This explains why English is one of the subjects studied in private tutoring and school tutorials (Al-Yaseen, 2007).

The teaching/learning processes especially of a foreign language are surrounded by different types of difficulties which play an important role in shaping the learners' abilities to learn it effectively. Some of the difficulties will be related to the language teachers who lack a good command of the language and have problems in speaking it accurately and fluently (Al-Omri & Al-Abdulrahman, 2009), since they are non-native speakers of the language. This suggests that the EFL primary stage teachers shoulder a big responsibility in teaching their pupils the English language effectively. Moreover, in the classroom, teachers have to follow the instructions given to them from their supervisors such as following the scope and sequence plan and never go beyond it or lag behind (Al-Yaseen, 2000). This causes a problem for creative teachers as they are faced with regulations which they have to follow. Also, it creates a bigger problem for teachers when they have to teach pupils who have low proficiency levels in English. Therefore, Janzen (2007: 714) points out that "EFL educators believe that the faculty who use certain material prescribed as part of the school curriculum which, for example, is oriented towards either end of the Phonics or Whole Language need to balance that focus with their own material and activities".

Other problems relate to the learners who are only exposed to the language in the language classroom. In addition to the fact that the textbook could be unsuitable as a learning source as previously mentioned with "English for the Emirates", or the gradation of the teaching of the language skills and language areas does not suit the abilities of the learners (Al-Heafi 2011; Al-Mutawa, 2008; Ministry of Education , 2008). Al-Heem, Al-Azmi, & Al-Ajmi (2010) indicate that

the teaching of EFL in the primary stage faced many difficulties in the implementation stage onwards especially the lack in the coordination process between what pupils learn in the primary stage and what they will learn later in the other post primary educational stages. The Intensive amount of the English language which pupils learn during the class period does not allow young learners to have the proper practice time to enhance learning it effectively (Al- Sanic & Al-Duheem, 2011). This all play a major role in learning and practicing the English language skills with satisfactory levels.

After learning English as a foreign language in Kuwait primary public schools for five years, it is necessary to investigate the opinions of EFL teachers regarding the competencies of fifth grade pupils in the English language skills.

Research Significance

The present study is meant to shed light on the opinions of EFL primary stage teachers regarding the competencies of their fifth grade pupils. This will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of primary stage pupils in English. It will also highlight the areas of difficulties in the four language skills. In addition, it will provide suggestions to remedy these difficulties as an early intervention to prevent enlarging the scale of these difficulties in post primary education.

Statement of Problem and Research Questions

In 1993, after introducing the English language as a compulsory subject in Kuwait primary schools, students span of English was extended from eight to twelve years. With such a decision, it was hoped to provide better chances for young learners master the English language. However, there are voices from the field still indicate that there are difficulties which pupils face in learning English after they study it for five years before they graduate from the primary stage and

move forwards to the intermediate stage. According to Al-Sanie (2009) Pupils suffer from insufficient commands in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In addition, the Educational Indicator Factors of the year 2007-2008 revealed that the results are unsatisfactory (The Ministry of Education, 2007; Al-Sanie, 2009; Al-Heem, Al-Azmi, & Al-Ajmi, 2010).

The present study investigates the perceptions of primary EFL teachers in Kuwaiti public schools of the competencies of fifth grade pupils of their English language skills after five years of study. The study addresses two questions as follows:

- 1) How do EFL teachers perceive their fifth graders' competencies in the four Language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing?
- 2) Are there any significant differences among the English language teachers in terms of nationality, degree, qualification, and experience?

Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to two aspects. First, it is limited to only Al-Farwaniya Educational in the hope that study results will be a starting point for further investigations in the rest of the Educational Districts in the future. Second, the study sample is limited to EFL female teachers in the primary stage. Male teachers were excluded as there are only two schools among the twenty two boys' school in the district are taught by male teachers. This is due to the Ministry of Education's policy to feminize the teaching staff in primary stage schools (MOE: 1982). However, these are an exception to the policy as there is a maximum of two boys schools taught by male teachers in each district.

Literature Review

The teaching of English as a foreign language has its own nature and has been investigated internationally to focus on its advantages and disadvantages when introduced in the early years of the learning cycle, e.i. the primary stage and how best to teach it to reduce the encountered problems. What really matters at this stage of EFL teaching in the primary stage is the difficulties in learning the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) as they form the skeleton for the mastery of the English language. Kurniasih (2011: 70) affirms that "the main objective is to provide a good basis for communicative competence as a foundation to study in the secondary school". Therefore the learning of the four language skills should be taught as one interwoven piece to produce successful learning classes. Oxford (2001: 1) highlights three important factors. "First, the instructor's teaching style should address the learning styles of the learners as much as possible. Second, the learner should be motivated to learn the target language. Third, the setting should provide resources and values that strongly support the teaching of the language". Vernier, Del Moral, Del Guisti, & Barbuzza (2008: 266) comment on the notion of interwoven strands as "If these strands are not woven together effectively, the EFL class is likely to become almost as boring as a teacher-oriented lecture class". It is necessary to base the instruction in the EFL primary classroom on practicing the "four primary skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing because acquiring a new language necessarily involves developing these four modalities in varying degrees and combinations" (Oxford, 1990: 5-6). The practice of the four language skills suggests involving pupils into interesting motivating activities to ensure the learning.

Looking at the importance of the four language skills in isolation will provide us with a brief and a clearer picture of their importance and how best to present them to the language learners. Research has

demonstrated that alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness are strong predictors of successful literacy development in children (Adams, 1990; Wagner et al. 1997; Lonigan, Burgess & Anthony, 2000). Smith (1975: 98-99) highlights " ... good listeners often speak more exactly and more creatively than poor listeners; they have more words at their commands". Children get the majority information through listening. No doubt that children spend half of their time in the classroom listening to their teachers (Smith, 1975). According to Scoot and Ytreberg (1995: 21) " When the pupils start to learn a foreign language, it is going mainly through their ears and what the pupils hear is their main source of the language". What makes this skill hard for young children to master is the tendency of presenting listening activities in EFL classes as simply opportunities for learners to practice listening to English (Field, 1998). To avoid such difficulties Rost (1990) clarifies that the teaching of listening needs to be focused on discriminating sounds in words, especially phonemic contrasts in addition to deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words, predicting content, noting contradictions, inadequate information, ambiguities, and differentiating between fact and opinion. Mendelsohn (1994) emphasizes that learners should know what they are listening for and why.

The speaking skill differs in its nature in the EFL context. As Kurinasih (2011: 76) puts it " in language learning the learners are expected to have higher levels of language input (listening) than the level of language production (speaking). Thus the majority of speaking activities used in the first levels should be designed to enable pupils to participate within minimal verbal responses". Zang (2009: 34) indicates that integrating speaking and reading skills deepens students' understanding of the reading material, reveals any problem they have understanding a text, and most importantly, lets them apply the information they have read into authentic speaking practice that improves their fluency".

As for the reading skill, it is seen by Kim (2002) as a complicated process which involves a variety of elements that interact with one another. Therefore, it should be developed in graded and sequential phases. Based on Brindley's (1994: 82) point of view, EFL teachers should know that the "factors involved in reading include sub-reading skills (such as word recognition, skimming, scanning, sentence comprehension, getting the topic, etc.) and background knowledge". Allington (2006) points out, based on recent studies, that primary stage pupils spend as little as ten minutes a day involved in authentic reading experiences. Accordingly, Johnson (2008: 12) asserts that "limited opportunities to engage in real reading experiences is one of the surest ways to retard children's reading progress and limit their intellectual development". Gabb (2000) comments on learners difficulties in moving into fluency stage although they have had basic decoding skills, as a result identifies of limited vocabulary and lack of background knowledge (schematic knowledge).

The writing skill should receive greater attention in the EFL classroom as children can have their first experiences of producing a written statement in English well before they start speaking in the language (Kurniasih, 2011). Gordon (2007: 96) clarifies that "second language literacy experts recommended that literacy instruction should start early in the ESL classroom, before children develop full proficiency in a second language". Generally speaking, Effective teachers can achieve better results when they systematically teach phonological awareness skills and decoding and then reinforced these skills through reading and writing. However, teachers must introduce their pupils to all the language skills to familiarize them with to help them achieve better results.

Al-Omari and Al-Abdulrahman, (2009) investigate the "Obstacles of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the First Three Elementary Classes in Jordan". He finds out that these obstacles go

beyond the triangle of teachers, textbooks and learners, as they are related to other factors. In addition, he draws the attention that pupils have problems with the language skills especially in the receptive skills listening and reading which are the backbone for the productive skills speaking and writing.

With a general Look at the Kuwaiti learning context in the primary stage, we learn that it has its own nature and there are some hindrances that influence the teaching/learning process. AL-Sanie and AL-Duheam (2011) investigate in depth these hindrances that affect the educational process and conclude with a number of them related to the teachers, the young learners, the curriculum, and the school building.

Al-Heem, Al-Azmi, & Al-Ajmi (2010) investigate the problematic issues of teaching English in the primary stage in Kuwait, and they reach that more attention should be paid to the training of EFL teachers, attract the learners with suitable and interesting content and activities, and consider the learning environment to be an attractive one.

Al-Sanie (2009) addresses the reasons responsible for the low achievement levels of pupils in the primary stage from teachers' perspectives. He concludes with several reasons as follows:

- The textbooks are not written with the learners in mind, they are not suitable for pupils learning abilities and lack the element of attraction in the content of the units and activities.
- Pupils suffer from insufficient commands in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
- Lack of motivation in pupils to learn English which is reflected in their classroom interaction with their teachers.
- The teaching methods and techniques are not suitable for the nature of the learners; and

- Insufficient teaching/learning educational plan and insufficient evaluation styles.

Methodology

Who are the Participants?

The sample of this study is seventy three female teachers who all come from Al-Farwaniya Educational District. In relation to their nationality, there were 46.6% Kuwaitis, and 53.4% non-Kuwaitis who come from different Arab Countries. The teaching experience varies. There are 53.4% who have 1 - 5 years, 24.7% of them have 6-10 years, and 21.9% have more than 10 years of experience. The majority of the participants (94.5%) holds a BA degree, and only 5.5% have a BA and a graduate diploma. According to qualification, sixty four teachers (87.7%) are specialized in English language teaching, while only 9 teachers (12.3%) are specialized in English Literature (graduates of the Faculty of Arts). Table (1) represents the demographic data of the participants.

Table (1)
 Demographic Data of the Participants

Labels	Value Labels	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Dev.
Gender	Female	73	100	4.00	.000
District	Al-Farwaniya	73	100	4.00	.000
Nationality	Kuwaiti	34	46.6	1.53	.502
	Non-Kuwaiti (Arab)	39	53.4		
Degree	BA	69	94.5	1.05	.229
	BA & graduate diploma	4	5.5		

Labels	Value Labels	Freq.	%	Mean	Std. Dev.
Qualification	English Language Teaching	64	87.7	1.12	.331
	English Literature	9	12.3		
Experience	1-5	39	53.4	1.68	.814
	6-10	18	24.7		
	More than 10	16	21.9		

Instrument

Following the descriptive analytical approach, the present study employed a researcher-developed questionnaire based on reviewing related literature. The questionnaire items were short in order to encourage participants' cooperation and completion. The questionnaire included four main themes covering the language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Thirty eight items were presented.

Data Collection and Analysis Method

During the second semester of the academic year 2011, one hundred twenty questionnaires were distributed to ten primary public schools in Al-Farwaniya School District. After explaining the purpose of study, willing EFL teachers to participate were asked to fill in the questionnaire. Only seventy three questionnaires were returned for analysis. The SPSS program was used to obtain different types of descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests and F-test ANOVA from the data collected via the questionnaire.

Validity

Five faculty members from the College of Education reviewed the questionnaire. Feedback was considered to modify and clarify the wordings of some items and eliminate redundancy. Also, a pilot-study of 15 teachers resulted in the final refinement of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire used a three-point Likert scale as 3 = Agree, 2 = Neutral, and 1 = Disagree.

Reliability

Coefficient Alpha Cronbach was calculated to obtain a measure of consistency and reliability of the instrument for all items in its four domains. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability values for the four domains are as follows are presented in Table (2).

Table (2)
 Represent the Reliability of the Questionnaire

Variables Name	Variables Labels	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
TOT_1	Listening	34.22	4.729	0.837	9
TOT_2	Speaking	29.82	6.079	0.873	9
TOT_3	Reading	28.52	5.664	0.898	8
TOT_4	Writing	41.05	7.830	0.899	12
TOT_ALL	All items Calculated	133.62	20.367	0.949	38

Results and Discussions

The study results will be organized and discussed in accordance with the main research question "How do EFL teachers perceive their fifth graders' competencies in the four Language skills: listening,

speaking, reading, and writing?”. This is achieved through analyzing the four questionnaire domains. Frequencies and median are considered in explaining the responses of teachers and their degree of agreement or disagreement to the items of the questionnaire domains. However, it’s worth mentioning that the agreement degree is considered high if the “Median” is equal or above 3, and it is considered low if the Median is less than 3.

Regarding the listening skill, EFL teachers had to state their opinions on the nine items listed under “the Listening Skill Domain”. Table (3) represents the participants’ responses.

Table (3)

Teachers’ Perceptions of Fifth Graders’ Competencies in the Listening Skill

First Domain: The Listening Skill	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Median
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1) Differentiate between the sounds of English letters	61	84.4	5	6.8	7	8.8	4
2) Differentiate between the sounds of some alphabets such as p,b and v, f..	49	67.1	14	19.2	10	13.7	4
3) The ability to extract information in a short dialogue.	56	76.8	13	17.8	4	5.5	4
4) Comprehend short dialogues	62	84.9	9	12.3	2	2.7	4
5) Able to memorize andsequence short sentences to form short stories..	12	16.4	6	8.2	55	75.4	4
6) Able to follow short commands to perform actions.	62	85.0	1	1.4	10	13.7	4
7) Able to differentiate between minimal pairs ex., ship/sheep, ship/chip.	11	15.0	6	8.2	56	76.8	4
8) Able to follow all the instructions in English.	15	20.5	3	4.1	55	75.4	4
9) Able to apply language functions correctly.	8	11.0	5	6.8	60	82.2	4

The teachers' responses to the items in this domain vary based on their pupils' competency in the listening skill. Generally speaking items 1,2,3,4, and 6 received teacher's agreement that their pupils are able to perform and the median score is 4. On the other hand, teachers disagreed with items 5, 7, 8, and 9 as they think their pupils are unable to perform those skills with a median score 4.

Paying a closer focus on the responses we found that sixty one teacher (84.4%) agrees with item no. 1, that fifth grade pupils are able to "differentiate between the sounds of English letters". They also agree with a percentage of (67.1%) that pupils are able to "differentiate between the sounds of similar characters such as p, b and v, f", as in item no. 2. Pupils are able "to extract information in a short dialogue", as mentioned in item no. 3, which received (76.8%) of the teachers' agreement. In item no. 4, 84.9% of the teachers agree that pupils also can "comprehend short dialogues". However, 75.4% disagree with item no. 5, as pupils are unable to "sequence short sentences to form short stories". A total of 85.0% of the teachers agreed with item no. 6, "able to follow short commands to perform actions". On the other hand, 76.8% of the teacher disagree with item no. 7, pupils are able to "differentiate between minimal pairs ex., ship/sheep, ship/chip". Moreover, 75.4% of the teachers admit that their pupils find it difficult to "follow all the instructions in English", as presented in item no. 8. In addition, language functions create a source of difficulty to fifth grade pupils as 82.2% of the teachers disagree with item no. 9 "able to apply language functions correctly".

From the analysis of teachers' responses to the items in this domain, it shows that pupils have difficulties in comprehending what they listen to in order to perform it through actions or produce it in spoken or written English. This draws educators' and teachers' attention to the strategies applied to teach this important but forgotten skill as well. Such a finding matches the findings of Al-Omari & Al-

Abdulrahman (2009). Teachers have to pay more attention to teach and train pupils on necessary listening strategies to overcome any hindering problems as that will affect negatively the pupils' competences of the rest of the language skills. Ample classroom activities and strategies for how best to teach the listening skill, which teachers can apply, are presented by Scott and Ytreberg (1995), Brumfit et.al. (1995) and Brewster (2001).

The participants' responses to the second domain "The Speaking Skill" are presented in Table (4) below.

Table (4)
Teachers' Perceptions of Fifth Graders' Competencies in the Speaking Skill

Second Domain: The Speaking Skills	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Median
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
10) Competent in pronouncing consonant sounds.	45	61.6	16	22.0	12	16.4	4
11) Competent in pronouncing vowel sounds.	37	50.5	21	28.8	15	20.8	4
12) Fluent in oral conversation.	20	27.4	8	11.0	15	21.6	3
13) Eager to participate even with chances to make mistakes	49	67.1	8	11.0	16	21.9	4
14) Able to communicate with classmate in English	50	68.5	7	9.6	16	21.9	3
15) Able to ask questions in English	19	26.0	7	9.6	47	64.4	3
16) Pronounce correctly similar sounds like (b & p), (f and v).	59	80.8	4	5.5	10	13.7	4
17) Able to read fluently and correctly long sentences	16	21.9	9	12.4	48	65.7	3
18) Able to apply language grammar rules correctly during conversation	17	23.3	5	6.8	51	69.9	3

It can be said that the opinions of teachers vary in their perceptions of their pupils' competencies of the speaking skill. A quick look at the responses reveal that teachers are satisfied with their pupils' performance on items: 10, 11, 13, 14, and 16 with a median score of 4 in almost all the agreed upon items except item 14 which scores 3. At the same time teachers showed their dissatisfaction as they disagreed with items: 12, 15, 17, and 18 with a median score of 3 and above.

A detailed analysis of all domain items is presented as follows. In item no. 10, 61.6% of the participants agree that fifth grade pupils are "competent in pronouncing the consonant sounds". Similarly, 50.5% agree that pupils are "competent in pronouncing the vowel sounds" as in item no. 11. However, in both items the percentages of neutral responses are very high. This suggests that the mastery of pronouncing consonant and vowel sounds has not been mastered among all the pupils of the participated teachers. This is not a good sign of mastering the phonological system of the English language and that does not help pupils in proceeding in learning it in the intermediate and secondary stages. Item no. 12, supports the above stated argument as 61.6% of the teachers do not see that their pupils are "fluent in oral conversation". However, 67.1% of the teachers agree that their pupils are "eager to participate even with chances to make mistakes", as presented in item no. 13. Consequently, 68.5% of the teachers disagree that pupils are "able to communicate with classmates in English" as presented in item 14. Moreover, 64.4% disagree that pupils are able to "ask questions in English" as presented in item 15. On the other hand, pupils are able to "pronounce correctly similar sounds like b / p and f / v" with agreement of 80.8% on item no. 16. Nevertheless, pupils are unable to "speak fluently and accurately long interactions" as 65.7% of teachers disagree with item no. 17. Finally, 69.9% of the teachers disagree with item 18 pupils still lack the ability to "able to apply the language grammatical rules correctly during conversations".

The above discussion reveals teachers agree that their pupils' that in the primary stage , pupils are not expected to be able to speak fluently. There are limitations because of their lack of mastery over the phonological system of the language. However, teachers must help them to pick up the language through practice and meaningful activities. Formulaic language could be an excellent solution as pupils are taught routines and patterns which they can memorize and retrieve easily (Brewster, 2001, Scott and Yreberg, 1995). Such findings match the findings of Al-Omari & Al-Abdulrahman (2009).

In relation to the third domain " The Reading Skill", teachers responded to 8 items as presented in (Table 5).

Table (5)
Represents Teachers' Perceptions of Fifth Graders' Competencies in the Reading Skill.

Third Domain: The Reading Skills	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Median
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
19) Able to classify words into parts of speech (verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc...).	64	87.7	5	6.8	4	5.5	4
20) Able to read two syllable words and more.	55	75.3	5	6.8	13	17.9	4
21) Able to read short sentences.	44	60.3	17	16.4	17	23.3	4
22) Able to read fluently.	8	11.0	2	2.7	63	86.3	3
23) comprehend short reading paragraphs.	5	6.8	17	23.3	51	69.9	4
24) Able to read short stories.	10	13.7	6	8.2	57	78.1	4
25) Able to read words with consonant clusters (ph, sh, gh, ch).	20	27.4	8	11.0	45	61.6	4
26) Able to read correctly words with silent initial letters like: write, hour, know etc...	9	12.3	3	4.1	61	83.6	3

The agreement degree of teachers to the 8 items varies as follows. However, items 22,23,24, 25, and 26 which received teachers' disagreement regarding the pupils' ability to perform were more than items 19, 20, and 21 which pupils can perform. The median scores for all agreed and disagreed with items were equal and more than 3.

In details we find that in item "19" 87.7% agree that their pupils are "able to classify words into parts of speech (verbs, nouns, adjectives etc...)". Moreover, 75.3% of the teachers agree that pupils are "able to read two syllable words and more" as stated in item no. 20. Furthermore, pupils are "able to read short sentences" scored 60.3% of teachers' agreement with item no. 21. However, 86.3% of the teachers see that their pupils are "unable to read fluently" as presented in item no. 22. As for Item 23, 69.9% of the teachers disagree that their pupils "comprehend short reading paragraphs". In addition, pupils seem to have a difficulty in reading short stories" which suggests that their reading skills need to be developed and they should practice reading aloud more. This is clearly seen in teachers' response to item no. 24 as the disagreement percentage is 78.1%. Moreover, 61.6% of the teachers disagree with item 25 that pupils can "read words with consonant clusters like: ph, sh, gh, ch correctly". They also disagree with item no 26 "able to read correctly words with silent initial letters like: write, hour, know etc.." with a 83.6%.

It can be concluded that, the difficulties which pupils face in the reading skill are not surprising, since there is a gap in the gradation of the teaching of the reading skill in the first three years of the primary stage (Al-Humos, 2012; Al-Heifi, 2011, Al-Mutawa, 2008), which really affects the competencies of pupils in learning such an important skill. According to McDonough (1995: 38) " Learning to read in a second language can therefore be seen as a dual problem of acquiring sufficient knowledge of the language itself and learning to use the reading skills present in the L1 and in the L2".

The fourth domain discusses teachers' responses to "the writing skill". Table (6) represents the participants' responses.

Table (6)

Teachers' Perceptions of Fifth Graders' Competencies of the Writing Skill

The Fourth Domain: The Writing Skills	Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Median
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
27) Write the English language alphabets correctly	59	80.8	3	4.1	11	15.1	4
28) Know when to use Capital or Small letters	56	76.7	4	5.5	13	17.8	4
29) Copy words correctly	42	57.5	7	9.6	24	32.9	4
30) Spell words correctly when dictated	49	65.8	10	13.7	15	20.5	4
31) Write words write consonant clusters (ph, sh, gh, ch) correctly	6	8.2	2	2.7	65	89.1	4
32) Write correctly words with silent initial letters like(write) (hour) (know) etc..	18	24.7	6	8.2	49	67.1	3
33) Use punctuation marks correctly	8	11.0	7	9.6	58	79.4	3
34) Write regular and irregular verbs in the past tense correctly	20	27.4	6	8.6	47	64.0	4
35) Form questions correctly	19	26.1	3	4.1	51	69.8	3
36) Know the correct order of the sentence structure	18	24.7	7	9.6	48	65.7	3
37) Able to write words into meaningful sentences	14	19.3	5	6.8	54	73.9	3
38) Write a short paragraph coherently	2	2.7	2	2.7	69	94.6	3

According to the participants, after studying English for five years, pupils are still unable to perform certain writing skills as presented in items 31,32, 33, 34, 35,36, 37, and 38 which form most of this domain items in this study with a median score equal to 3 and above.

A detailed presentation of the responses is the focus of this section. Teachers agree that their pupils are able to "write the English language alphabets correctly" with a total of 80.8% of agreement as seen in item 27. As well, pupils "know when to use Capital and Small letters" according to the agreement of 76.7 % of the teachers as seen in item no. 28. Teachers 57.5% agree with item 29 that pupils can "copy words correctly". In addition, 65.8% of the teachers agree with item 30, that their pupils are able to "spell words correctly when dictated". However, pupils face a difficulty in "writing words with consonant clusters (ph, sh, gh, ch) correctly" as 89.1% of the teachers disagree with item 31. Moreover, pupils are unable to "write correctly words with silent initial letters like (write) (hour) (know) etc.." with a disagreement percentage of 67.1%, as has been presented in item 32. Clearly, teachers see that their pupils have problems in "using punctuation marks correctly" with a percentage of 79.4% as in item 33. Similarly, pupils have a problem in writing "regular and irregular verbs in the past tense correctly" with a 64.0% disagreement in item 34. Teachers also disagree with item 35 that pupils can "form questions correctly" with a 69.8%. Pupils' have a problem in witting sentences in the correct order as 65.7% of the teachers disagree with item 36 "know the correct order of the sentence order". Teachers (73.9%) as well disagree with item 37 "able to write words into meaningful sentences". This leads to another difficulty which pupils face as stated in item 38 "write a short paragraph coherently" which received 94.6% of teachers' disagreement.

Based on the analysis, the accumulative weaknesses in the previously discussed language skills will no doubt have their influence on the writing skill. Therefore, pupils encounter a serious problem in mastering the writing skill, especially that it "has certain characteristics which seem to make it difficult for pupils to get grips with, especially for younger pupils, ... [including]" handwriting, grammar, spelling, punctuation which are often given priority over content. (Scott and Yretberg, 1995: 69). Teachers have to help their pupils learn carefully

this skill by providing them with specific activities which scaffold them to write properly, in addition to “providing them with key vocabulary and structures” (Brewster et al., 2001: 80).

In relation to the second research question “Are there any significant differences among the English language teachers in terms of nationality, degree, qualification, and experience?”, both t-test and One Way ANOVA test were applied. The results represented in Tables 7 and 8 explain the findings.

Table (7)
 t-test results of TOT_1 to TOT_4 Per Nationality

Variable Names	Kuwaiti			Non-Kuwaiti (Arab)			T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.			
TOT_1 Listening	34	3.601	.429	39	3.977	.544	-3.244	71	.002*
TOT_2 Speaking	34	2.996	.635	39	3.589	.587	-4.140	71	.000*
TOT_3 Reading	34	3.382	.541	39	3.724	.799	-2.107	71	.039*
TOT_4 Writing	34	3.188	.556	39	3.608	.677	-2.871	71	.005*

According to t-test, there are significant differences in all TOTs with reference to “Nationality”. The mean values as shown in Table (7) show that Kuwaitis have more positive attitudes than non-Kuwaitis (Arabs) with reference to this domain.

However, according to the following variables : degree, and qualification, there were only four teachers who had a Diploma after the

BA degree compared to sixty nine teachers holding a BA degree. The same is applicable to teachers' "qualification" as there were only nine teachers were qualified in English Literature compared to sixty four teachers qualified in English Language Teaching. This is due to the fact that the number of participants does not help to run such a comparison. The t-test level of significance for both "Degree" and "Qualification" is $p \geq 0.05$.

Table (8)
 F-Test (ANOVA) of TOT_1 to TOT_4 Results Per Experience

Variable Name	Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Ration	Sig.
TOT_1 Listening	Between Groups	270	.099	0.50	0.176	0.839
	Within Groups		19.783	0.283		
TOT_2 Speaking	Between Groups	270	.017	0.08	0.018	0.982
	Within Groups		32.831	.469		
TOT_3 Reading	Between Groups	270	.633	0.748	.625	0.538
	Within Groups		35.464	0.413		
TOT_4 Writing	Between Groups	270	.493	.247	0.569	0.569
	Within Groups		30.348	.434		

There are no significant differences between the total of answers according to the "Years of Experience", (ANOVA) as the level of significance is Prob. ≥ 0.05 . These results show that the participants hold the same opinions regarding fifth graders' competencies of the English language.

In summary, according to the second research question "Are there any significant differences among the English language teachers in terms

of nationality, degree, qualification, and experience?", it shows from the analysis that only nationality as an independent variable showed significant differences in the responses of the participants.

Conclusion

English language teaching as a Foreign language to young learners is not an easy task. It requires a lot of effort from the teachers' side to be able to attract their attention and motivate them to learn. Ignoring the nature of young learners and the way they learn especially with such a subject will lead to severe problems and insufficient learning of its skills which will be a main cause for accumulative weaknesses in post primary education. In light of the results of this study, pupils lack a good command of the English language skills as their competencies of how to apply what they learnt is somehow below expectations.

In order to achieve a good command of the English language, it is very important to associate the learning process with fun and movement to benefit from the energy pupils possess at their early years of life. In addition, learning should be associated with practice to help pupils assimilate and/or accommodate what they learn in English drama, storytelling, story reading and arts could be a good introduction to learning the English language and mastering its four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Therefore, educators and curriculum planners must be aware of this fact that learning is best achieved through concrete education which depends on practice and hands on activities, as well as providing them with all the opportunities to explain to them what to learn and why.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that teachers should be trained on how best to apply educational activities that suit the young learners learning schemata and styles.
- It is also recommended that educators and decision makers have to reconsider the intensive amount of information and knowledge presented in the pupils' textbooks.
- It is recommended to reduce the content to provide more space for children to practice the English through authentic materials and learning situations which reflect real life.

Suggested research:

- It is recommended to do further research to investigate the views of EFL teachers in the rest of the Educational Districts in the State of Kuwait.
- It is also recommended to do qualitative research to get an indepth understanding of the reasons responsible for such language incompetency among EFL learners and receive feedback from teachers on how to improve pupils' EFL skills.

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