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**A qualitative study on problems in speaking English as L3
The case of Arab immigrants in Sweden**

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the problems faced by Arab immigrant students when learning English as a third language (L3) in Sweden. The paper explores the views of non-native English-speaking students and teachers in adult education, about the speaking issues of Arab immigrant students in particular, by identifying the factors that result in the emergence and development of these problems. To achieve these objectives, I utilized a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews. While five of the interviews were face-to-face, one teacher answered the questions by email. The results indicate that the speaking difficulties are encountered due to similarities between Swedish and English words, weak linguistic skills (in phonetics, phonology, morphology and/or syntax) and weak speaking and writing skills due to inadequate practice. The findings from the analyses also indicate that the types of teaching methods and the differences between the cultures of the countries (i.e., Swedish and Arabic speaking countries) are the most prominent factors that affect the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. To improve students' speaking skills in English, the participants proposed a number of suggestions, including providing more lessons and activities in English. Furthermore, they suggested that English teachers should communicate only in English with their students and should have proper training. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations for policy changes will be provided.

Keywords: Speaking English, L3, Arab immigrants in Sweden, problems, factors.

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1. Introduction

The conditions of contemporary human society require effective communication between people and different cultures. It has become impossible for any individuals to live in isolation from one another, no matter how educated these individuals are. Hence, the need to learn foreign languages has become more and more apparent in many countries of the world, and most countries have adopted the principle of teaching foreign languages to their citizens to facilitate relation-buildning with the wider world. English in particular has become increasingly important as the language of international communication.

Learning any new language needs a lot of concentration and effort from the learners, especially if these learners are immigrants in another country (Dogan, 2013), and learning English as a third language (henceforth L3) after childhood can be challenging. Dogan (2013) argued, regarding speaking English in particular, that adult immigrants face more problems when speaking English than young people do, because they may lack the necessary knowledge and motivation. Yule (2017) states that learning a new language is a lot easier for children than for adults. He says “We can learn better at two or three years of age than at thirteen or thirty” (Yule, 2017, p.209). The reason behind this is that younger people have more adaptability than grown-ups, and this is particularly important when it comes to one of the most important political and cultural phenomena: immigration. Also, immigrants' lack of language skills is considered the most prominent problem they face (Barber, Beal & Shaw, 2009). Yule (2017, p.2016) adds that people need to learn a second language that will facilitate their adaptation to their new environments. There are many studies which have focused on the acquisition and learning of new languages (e.g., Barber et al., 2009; Harvey, 2010; Dogan, 2013; Nweze, 2014; Pedersen, 2016). However, most of these studies were limited to the learning of a second language (henceforth L2) and the impact of the first language (henceforth L1) on the learning of L2, while only a limited number of studies focused on the learning of a third language (Harvey, 2010; Nweze, 2014; Pedersen, 2016). On the other hand, globalization makes it increasingly important for individuals to learn more than two languages. Sweden is one of the countries that are interested in enabling their residents to speak more than one language, including their mother tongue, e.g. Arabic, Swedish as L2 and English as L3. The Arab community in Sweden has become one of the largest foreign communities in Sweden in terms of the number of residents.

1.1. Aims of the study

The primary aim of this paper is to identify and analyse the problems that adult Arab immigrants face, based on students' and teachers' reported experiences when learning and teaching English as a third language in Sweden. The study will also identify the factors that influence learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden based on four students' and two teachers' reported perspectives. Finally, a set of recommendations are proposed to improve the speaking skills of non-native English speaking students and teachers. These recommendations can benefit decision-makers in various educational institutions in Sweden and help to improve the English speaking abilities of Arab immigrants in Sweden.

1.2. Research questions

To address the aims of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. According to a number of students and teachers, what are the problems that Arab immigrants face when speaking English as L3 in Sweden?
2. According to the informants, what are the factors that affect the English speaking skills of Arab immigrants in Sweden?
3. What do the informants suggest to improve Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English?

2. Background

In this section, a comprehensive review of topics related to this study will be provided, including Swedish as L2 and English as L3 for immigrants, factors influencing the learning of L3, and previous research into the problems of speaking English as L3.

2.1. Swedish as L2 and English as L3 for immigrants

In Sweden, students at schools and universities are generally expected to communicate in the Swedish language. Aliti (2014) indicated that in order to communicate with other people, individuals should understand the language of their country. Therefore, the Swedish language should be taught to all immigrants before they work or study at the university to be able to engage in the community (Nweze, 2014).

Education in Swedish schools should be able to raise students' interest in the Swedish language through programs such as Swedish For Immigrants (SFI), which take place to improve students' Swedish language skills (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2007). Sweden also provides a more advanced course called Svenska som andraspråk 'Swedish as a second language'. This course provides additional study materials for immigrants to simplify the language learning process (Livinus, 2009). In addition to the Swedish language, Sweden recognises the importance of other languages that can serve its citizens in various fields. Accordingly, Sweden seeks to educate its residents in the English language.

Sweden hosts more than 200 different nationalities of immigrants, who have migrated for various reasons, whether for education, work or as refugees. Since "multilingual contexts are environments where individuals are exposed to more than two languages in their daily lives" (De Angelis, 2015, p. 436), the students are exposed to a number of languages that are used either at schools as a medium of instruction, such as Swedish (L2), or taught as subjects, like English (L3). For Arabic-speaking immigrants who are living in Sweden, English thus usually becomes the third language after Arabic and Swedish (Herdina & Jessner, 2002).

English is a language that is used everywhere around the world. Also, the English language is the most important language for communication and learning any subject (Pedersen, 2016). Therefore, Sweden is working on developing the English skills of the students (Harvey, 2010). Harvey (2010) stated that the aim of teaching English is to enable students to connect with others around the world, while at the same time to develop, understand, and choose relevant information.

2.2. Factors influencing the learning of L3

Researchers have noted that learning a third language is different from learning the second one (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Jessner, 2008; Du, 2009; Dogan, 2013; Pedersen, 2016). The learning of L3 depends on a combination of factors, including the influence of the first and second languages (Jessner, 2008). Jessner (2008) pointed out that the factors influencing the learning of L2 are the same as those affecting the learning of the L3, but the difference is that L3 learners have previous experiences and knowledge that affect their learning of the L3. Figure 1 shows additional factors influencing the learning of L3.

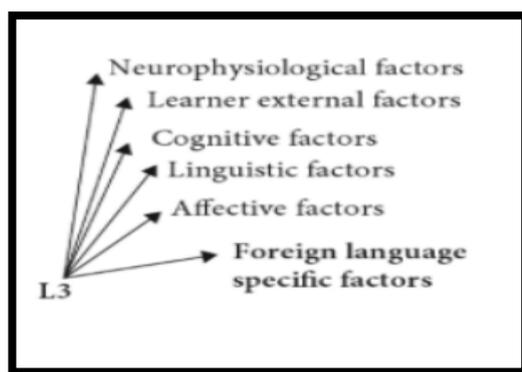


Figure 1: Factors influencing the learning of L3 (Pedersen, 2016, p.9)

The “neurophysiological factors” refer, for example, to the age of the learners, which is a key factor in language acquisition (Pedersen, 2016). The “learner external factors” include everything that the learners are exposed to and that can affect the learning process, whether they stimulate or reduce the learners’ ability to learn the language (Pedersen, 2016). For example, the frequent use of the new language in different aspects of life may help in developing the language effectively. The third type of factor is the “cognitive factors”, which represent learners’ awareness of the importance of learning the language, as well as the adopted learning strategies (Pedersen, 2016; Jessner, 2008, p. 23). The fourth group is “linguistic factors”. As L3 learners have knowledge of L2, linguistic factors are upgraded in third language acquisition (Pedersen, 2016). The fifth group, the “affective factors”, comprise some of the most important factors affecting language learning, such as motivation and anxiety. Pedersen (2016) pointed out that L3 learners may have greater motivation to learn when compared to L2 learners because they have previous experience and knowledge. Some L3 learners may have less motivation because of their prior knowledge of the amount of effort they will need to invest in order to learn a new language (Jessner, 2008). Concerning anxiety, Lightbown and Spada (2006) noted that anxiety is associated with low student confidence. Thus, motivating the students and enhancing their self-confidence leads to a greater ease in language learning. The last group of factors comprises “foreign language specific factors”, which English teachers should be aware of. These foreign language specific factors include experiences and knowledge gained by the learners when they learn the second language, which will affect the development of the third language (Pedersen, 2016, p.11). Cultural shock, which can result from having to deal with a new culture in a new country that differs from the original culture, is one of the most important factors affecting an individual's ability to learn a third language (Dogan, 2013; Fan, 2010; Lysgaard, 1995). Cultural shock

is closely linked to language shock (Agar, 2006; Dogan, 2013). Dogan (2013) stressed that culture shock and language shock have a negative impact on an individual's ability to learn a new language.

Another factor affecting students' ability to learn a third language is the methods used in teaching foreign and second languages. Some influential language teaching methods include the Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Freeman & Anderson, 2014). Oxford (2002) emphasised that the applied methods for teaching English in some countries differed from those used in Arab countries, and Sweden generally relies on more modern methods technology, which facilitates learning and makes it more enjoyable (Karlsson, 2010). In particular, CLT is utilized in Sweden to motivate the students to interact with each other and learn (Karlsson, 2010). When students interact and try to communicate with each other in English, they use their strategies for language learning that they had gained by learning the second language. Consequently, the utilization of CLT in multilingual classrooms is considered as an effective way of learning oral and verbal skills (Bax, 2003), as it provides the students with an opportunity to reflect on their skills. In contrast, teaching English in the Arabic world relies on very traditional methods (Saeed, 2015). The educational system of the Middle East and North Africa is facing a lot of challenges and issues that need to be overcome, such as the amount that countries invest in their education system (Earling, 2015). These various factors outlined above interact with each other in the language learning process, and any imbalance will affect the individuals' ability to learn a third language, e.g. English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden, and may thus cause problems for them. These problems will be discussed in the next section.

2.3. Previous research into the problems in speaking English as L3

Only limited research has been conducted to identify the challenges that the students and teachers face when learning/teaching English as L3. Dogan (2013) tried to identify the problems that adult immigrant students encounter when learning English as L3 in Sweden, though this was from the point of view of teachers. It turned out that students face many cultural, mental and cognitive challenges. Among other things, the students suffer from a lack of linguistic skills (phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic skills). The results also confirmed that adult immigrants face more problems when speaking English than young people do, because they lack the necessary knowledge and lack motivation. The results

also indicated problems in the teaching methods used by teachers to teach English since they are not stimulating the students (Dogan, 2013).

In his study, Surkalovic (2014) aimed at exploring the level of training programs offered to *teachers* in Sweden to develop their language proficiency in connection with teaching English as L3. The study concluded that the teachers did not have the necessary language skills to teach English as a third language. Surkalovic (2014) also emphasised that the training programs offered to English teachers in Norway do not correspond to changes in schools in Sweden, where these schools are witnessing a large increase in the number of students who speak multiple languages. The Norwegian schools are witnessing a rise in the number of immigrants. Based on the results of a statistical study conducted by SSB in 2014, 14% of primary school students in Norway are immigrants (Pedersen, 2016). Dahl & Krulatz (2016) support the result of Surkalovic's study by reporting that a high proportion of the teachers in Norwegian schools were not ready to teach English as L3 and they did not receive sufficient training. As many as 89 percent of the participating teachers confirmed that they needed more courses and training programs to support their skills while teaching English as L3. Likewise, Pedersen (2016) found that English teachers lack sufficient multilingual competence to teach English as L3. Pedersen's study, also, found that the training programs offered to English teachers do not focus on the subject of multilingualism and do not focus on learning English as a third language.

Nweze (2014) conducted a study to explore immigrants' views regarding language learning in Sweden. It was found that the most important challenge for them was the similarity between English and Swedish, especially with regard to spelling and pronunciation, but also grammar. Nweze (2014) indicated that this problem was greatest for individuals who had learned English before they learned Swedish. Furthermore, respondents reported that although English lessons are supposed to focus on the learners, the teacher-talk-time is dominant, and the students often remain passive listeners (Nweze, 2014).

It is clear from the literature presented here that immigrants face many problems while learning English as L3. What distinguishes the current study from other studies is its emphasis on Arab immigrants in Sweden. The present study seeks to reveal the perspectives of students and teachers without focusing on one of the two groups only. Also, the present study focuses on the problems in *speaking* English as L3 in particular, while previous studies

have examined the problems associated with *learning* English as L3 in general, without focusing on a specific skill.

3. Methodology

The objective of this section is to describe the method that has been employed in this research project. It includes details on the overall design, the data collection, and the data analysis.

3.1. Overall design

The study utilizes a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews conducted in English, and content analysis. The views shared by the respondents (four Arab immigrant students and two teachers within the adult education system in Sweden) represent the primary data.

3.2. Interview design and layout

For the data collection, I was inspired by Paakki's (2013) interview questions, though I focused on those that suit the nature of the present study and elaborated on them to be able to achieve my specific objectives and answer my research questions.

The interview guides for the semi-structured interviews consisted of nine questions for the students and ten main questions for the teachers (see Appendix A and B, respectively). These questions were used to gather information about the students' and teachers' backgrounds, the students' problems in speaking English, factors that influence the learning of L3, and suggestions by the students and teachers to improve English speaking skills.

Berg (2004) states that semi-structured interviews provide the respondents with flexible interactional space to express their opinions. According to Dörnyei (2007), researchers commonly use this type of interview as a basic checklist that helps them to cover all research questions. Cooper and Schindler (2006) demonstrated that this kind of interview is the most common and widely used one, where the connection between researcher and respondent is a direct one, allowing the researcher to learn about the views of the respondents in more explicit ways.

The interviewees were provided with a cover letter clarifying the purpose of the study and assuring the anonymity of the data so as to motivate voluntary participation. The interview included mostly open-ended questions. In formulating the questions, I tested the interview protocol by having two pilot interviews (with one teacher and one student). Based on the experiences gained there, minor revisions were made to the questions. The interviews were done individually and in five cases face-to-face, while one teacher answered the questions by email. Each of the spoken interviews took around 50 minutes.

3.3. Population

The study population consists of Arab immigrant students and their English teachers in adult education in Sweden. The selected sampling technique in this study is the probabilistic random cluster (Showkat, 2017). While teachers were approached through phone (seven phone calls), the students were approached in person at schools (eleven students). As a result, six participants agreed to participate in this study.

3.3.1. Students' background information

The 4 students were asked to report their gender, age, nationality, the languages that they can speak, and their study background. Two of them were female (S1, S4) and two of them were male (S2, S3). The ages of the students ranged between 20 and 25 years. Regarding their nationality, two of the students were from Palestine (S2, S3), while S1 was from Jordan and S4 from Yemen. All of the students expressed that they could speak three languages, namely Arabic, Swedish and English. S3 and S4 claimed that they could speak Arabic and Swedish fluently, while S2 maintained that he spoke Swedish fluently and better than English and Arabic.

The students were also asked to report when they started learning English. S1 answered that she started learning English before she was 7 years old, and S2 that he started learning English before the age of 8. The other two students did not give a detailed answer. All the students confirmed that they, at the time of the interviews, took an English course as a complementary course to be able to attend the university. According to their study background, S1 studied English language and translation in Jordan. The rest of the students (S2, S3, and S4) had completed high-school but needed to finish some English courses such as English A and English B to be able to attend the university.

3.3.2. Teachers' background information

Two female teachers participated in this study. At the time of the data collection, T1 was 48 years old, and T2 31. Concerning their nationality, T1 was from Sweden and T2 from Syria. With respect to their English teaching experience, T1 had more than 20 years of experience, while T2 had more than 8 years. When it comes to their language skills, both teachers clarified that they could speak different languages, including Swedish, English and Arabic. The teachers were also asked to describe their level of proficiency in English. T1 said that she could speak English fluently, while, interestingly, T2 reported that she was not fluent in English.

3.4. Data analysis

As pointed out, the data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews. The answers mostly provided in-depth and rich information that helped me gain a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives. For the purpose of analysing the collected data, I utilized content analysis. This method has been developed as a means for the thematic interpretation of collected qualitative data (Patton, 2002). Hence, I produced transcripts of the interviews and read them carefully and repeatedly to make comparisons between them and reflective notes about the informants' answers. A coding system was used where I was looking for redundant and similar codes among the transcripts to answer my research questions (see section 1). The emerging themes were then grouped together to form broader categories with respect to the research questions.

4. Results and discussion

The following sections present the results of the analysis, as well as their discussion. Section 4.1 summarises the participants' responses about the problems of speaking English as L3. Section 4.2 focuses on the factors that influence learning English as L3. The last section, section 4.3, brings together the participants' suggestions for improving Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English.

4.1. The problems of speaking English as L3

4.1.1 Students' perspectives

The students were asked to determine if they have problems in speaking English as a third language (Q6 in Appendix A). All the students claimed that they do have problems in this regard.

Regarding the problems in speaking English as L3 in Sweden (Q7 in Appendix A), the students indicated a number of issues. Three of them claimed that they have difficulties in pronunciation (S2, S3, and S4). S2 and S4 claimed that many similar words exist in both Swedish and English, where these words may have the same meaning but with different pronunciation and spelling, which makes it confusing. S2 added:

I use the Swedish translation to understand any English word since my L2 (Swedish) is stronger than my L1 and L3. Also, many similar words existed in both of Swedish and English. These words have the same meaning but with different pronunciation and spelling which make the spelling confusing.¹

S1 and S4 claimed that they had weak linguistic skills. S1 added that she faced a problem due to following following a principle of direct translation from Arabic to English. S4 claimed that she was weak in English grammar, and said

I am weak in English grammar and the pronunciation. Long words are difficult to pronounce. Many words are pronounced in the same way but with opposite meaning. As well, many words are similar but with different meaning and little difference in pronunciation and spelling.¹

S3 indicated that he faced writing difficulties due to inadequate practice. Table 1 summarizes the students' opinions regarding the problems that they faced in speaking.

Table 1: The students' opinions regarding the problems that they faced in speaking English as L3

¹ The respondents' answers are reproduced as they were given, including any language errors.

Student	The problems of speaking English as L3
S1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses Arabic sentence structure • produces direct translation from Arabic to English • suffers from a lack of linguistic skills
S2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses Swedish translation to understand any English word • many similar words exist in both Swedish and English, where these words have the same meaning with different pronunciation and spelling, which make the spelling confusing
S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pronunciation difficulties • has not developed a specific English accent • writing difficulties due to inadequate practice
S4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weak in English grammar and pronunciation • long words are difficult to pronounce • many words are pronounced in the same way but with different meaning and the opposite. Besides, many words are similar but with different meanings and little difference in pronunciation as well as writing • the linguistic similarities between English and Swedish

4.1.2 Teachers' perspectives

The teachers were asked to determine if their students have problems speaking English as L3. T1 and T2 answered 'Yes' and reported two main problems: 1) the difference between the teaching methods used in their home countries (e.g. Grammar-Translation Method) and Sweden (e.g. CLT), and 2) difficulties in speaking and pronunciation since the students did not use to hearing English a lot nor to saying many words themselves. T1 argued that culture shock was one of the leading problems that students encounter. Also, T2 stated that the students' problems were mainly due to the fact that they did not regularly hear English or pronounce many words. T1 reported that

Most of my students face difficulties in speaking and writing since they do not practice so much. Also, culture shock is one of the leading problems that students encounter. This shock is due to the difference between the active teaching methods in their home countries and Sweden.

Also, T2 said

Most students find difficulties in speaking and pronunciation since they are not used to hear English a lot or to pronounce many words.

4.1.3. Discussion - The problems of speaking English as L3

The results indicate that speaking difficulties are due to the similarity between Swedish and English words, the students' weak linguistic skills (phonetics, phonology, morphology and/or syntax) and inadequate practice represent.

Five of the six participants claimed that students had some pronunciation difficulties since many similar words exist in both Swedish and English. These words have the same meaning, but have different pronunciation and spelling, which confuses the students. This result is in line with Nweze's (2014) findings that the most important challenge for immigrants when learning English was the similarity between English and Swedish, especially with regard to spelling and pronunciation.

Two of the participants (S1 and S4) mentioned that weak linguistic skills represent another problem that Arab immigrant students face in Sweden. This result is in line with the findings by Dogan (2013) and Nweze (2014). Also, Nweze (2014) found that linguistic overlap between English and Swedish was another challenge for immigrants who learn English.

Two other participants (T1 and S3) claimed that Arab immigrant students face speaking and writing difficulties due to inadequate practice. This result is in line with Dogan's (2013) claim, that the frequent use of the new language in different aspects of life might help in developing the target language effectively.

Three participants (S1, S2, and S3) claimed that they had problems due to the difference between the used teaching methods in their home countries and in Sweden. In this regard, Oxford (2002) emphasised that the contemporary methods, such as CLT, used for teaching English in foreign countries differed from those used in Arab countries. Harvey (2010) found that the teaching process was a factor affecting students' ability to learn a third language.

The participants also indicated other problems, including the use of Arabic sentence structure, linguistic issues (English grammar weakness), and the use of Swedish translations to understand English words.

4.2. The factors that affect learning English as L3

4.2.1. Students' perspectives

The students were asked to reflect on the factors that affect learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. All the students claimed that the methods used for learning English, the amount of the teachers' experience and their competence in teaching English, as well as the different cultures in Sweden and the students' home countries, were the most important factors that affect learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. S3 argued that teachers and schools did not dedicate enough time and effort to teaching English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. S1 added that teaching techniques should be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered by focusing on activities related to the students.

S1, S3, and S4 claimed that substantial teacher support increases students' motivation to learn a new language. Moreover, S3 and S1 claimed that the students' ability and desire to learn English as L3 constituted a basic factor to acquire it. S3 said

The motivation from the teachers, the effort spent by the teacher to teach the English language, the used learning method, the difference between the active teaching methods in my home country and Sweden and the amount of my desire to gain the L3 are the most crucial reasons that lead to the students' success in learning English in Sweden. I believe that teachers do not spend enough effort to teach English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden.

The factors that S3 raised in this quote are related to both students and teachers. He added that the desire to learn the language was the key to success in learning English in Sweden.

S1 mentioned another important factor, which is the number of lessons dedicated to teaching English speaking:

It is worth to mention that students have one Swedish lesson every day and two English lessons per week.

Table 2 represents the students' opinions regarding the factors that influence their English studies.

Table 2: The most important factors that affect the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden based on the students' perspectives

Students	Factors that affect learning English as L3
S1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students' desire and attitude towards learning English • the amount of support from the teacher • the number of classroom hours to teach English speaking • cultural differences • the dominance of L1's structure • the use of the L1 (Arabic) in translation • the type of learning method
S2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the used teaching methods in education • the skills of the teachers and their proficiency in English • the techniques used in education • cultural differences • the use of the L1 (Arabic) in translation
S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need for motivation from the teachers • the used method for teaching • the desire to learn the third language • the amount of provided effort by the teachers
S4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor teaching skills in teaching English to Arab immigrant students • the extent of motivating students to learn English as a third language • culture shock and differences between countries

4.2.2. Teachers' perspectives

The teachers, too, were asked to determine the factors that influence the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. Their answers were very similar to the students', as can be seen in Table 3.

The teachers claimed that the methods used to teach the students, the different cultures, and the number of English language classes were among the most important factors affecting students' acquisition of English. T1 added another factor, which is the amount of students' motivation towards learning a new language.

Table 3: The most important factors that affect the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden based on the teachers' perspectives

methods used to teach students
the degree of learner motivation
the students' ability to learn English as L3
the total number of English lessons
the use of L1 in translation
the amount of teachers' experience in teaching English

T1 argued that interesting teaching methods should be used to increase the students' interest in learning a new language. T1 said

There are many factors that are difficult to collect, but in my opinion, the most important of these factors is the used educational approach to teach students... Also, I think that exciting methods can attract students' attention to learning a new language.

In addition, T2 added that different levels of students require the use of different teaching methods suited to their different abilities.

4.2.3. Discussion - The factors that affect learning English as L3

The participants claimed that the type of methods used to teach students and the different cultures between countries were the most important factors that affect learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. This result is in line with Jessner (2008), Harvey (2010), Dogan (2013) and Saeed (2015). Jessner (2008), too, claimed that the teaching strategies affect the learning process. Saeed (2015) argued that teaching English in the Arab world did not go further than using the traditional methods in the teaching process like Grammar-Translation Method instead of CLT. Dogan (2013) found that teaching methods used by teachers to teach English were sometimes not stimulating.

Furthermore, this result supports the findings of Lysgaard (1996), Fan (2010) and Dogan (2013). Lysgaard (1996) found that cultural factors and intercultural differences among countries were factors affected immigrant students and their ability to learn a third language. Fan (2010) stressed that culture shock was one of the most important factors affecting an

individual's ability to learn a third language. Dogan (2013) argued that students' language abilities were not the only challenge to learn a third language, but the exposure of students to cultural shock also had a significant impact. Consequently, the results of previous studies confirm the current study's finding that the difference between cultures and the consequent gap between educational methods are factors affecting the ability of Arab immigrant students to learn English as L3.

Five of the six participants claimed that the degree of learner motivation to learn a language was related to how much learner effort is required to learn the language. This result supports the findings of Lightbown and Spada (2006), Du (2009), Dogan (2013) and Pedersen (2016). Lightbown and Spada (2006) found that motivating the students and enhancing their self-confidence led to more successful language learning. Dogan (2013) found that increasing student motivation stimulated them to learn languages faster. Pedersen (2016) argued that L3 learners might have greater motivation to learn compared to L2 learners. This can be explained by the fact that L3 learners know that learning a third language will increase their cognitive abilities and help them advance in society, which is what they had experienced when learning their second language. Thus, they already know the benefit of learning a third language in addition to the first and second language.

Four of the six participants claimed that the teachers' experience and competence in teaching English affected the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. This result is in line with Surkalovic (2014), Dahl and Krulatz (2016), as well as Pedersen (2016). Surkalovic (2014) found that Swedish language teachers in Sweden lacked the necessary language skills to teach English as L3. Dahl and Krulatz (2016) found that a high proportion of the teachers in Norwegian schools were not ready to teach English as L3 and they did not receive sufficient language training. Pedersen (2016) found that some English teachers lacked the language skills required to teach English as L3 for students. This can be explained by the fact that English teachers in adult education in Sweden had not receive sufficient training on how to teach English to e.g. Arab immigrants.

Three of the respondents claimed that the students' ability and desire to learn English as L3 constituted a basic factor for success. Other factors were mentioned as well, however, including the number of lessons to practice English speaking, the use of L1 to translate the

meaning of words into their strongest language, and the effort spent by the teacher on teaching the English language.

4.3. Suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English

The students and teachers were asked to propose suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English. While Table 4 summarises the students' suggestions, Table 5 summarises the teachers' suggestions.

4.3.1. Students' perspectives

All participating students claimed that schools should increase the number of English lessons and activities in English, that the English teachers should communicate only in English with their students, and that the teachers should use different exercises corresponding to more modern methods. S3 and S4 claimed that teachers should use simple English words to explain difficult words and expressions and teachers should motivate the students in a better way. S1 suggested improving the communication and relationships between the students and teachers by removing the barriers between them and to encourage students' interaction and practice.

S2 added that students have different language skills and abilities, and so the educational system should differentiate between them with the help of a suitable placement test that would group the students into categories. S3 suggested giving teachers more courses and training programs to improve their abilities in teaching English as L3.

Table 4: Students' suggestions

schools should increase the number of English lessons and activities
English teachers should communicate only in English with their students
teachers should use simple English words to explain difficult words and expressions
teachers should motivate the students
improve the communication and relationships between the students and teachers

the educational system should differentiate between students' skills to work effectively on improving them
training the teachers to improve their abilities in teaching English as L3

4.3.2. Teachers' perspectives

T1 and T2 stressed the necessity to increase the number of English lessons at school. T1 stated that English lessons should be more than twice a week to improve students' skills. T2 suggested that the students should try to avoid the use of translation to improve the understanding of whole concepts. T1 added that students should listen to music and watch English programs and movies, as well as record the lessons and listen to them more than once.

Table 5: Teachers' suggestions

increase the number of English lessons at school
students should try avoiding the use of the translation method
students should listen to music and watch English programs and movies
record the lessons and listen to them more than once

4.3.3. Discussion - Suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English

Two students (S3, S4) emphasised that teachers should motivate and encourage their students to help improving their speaking skills. These suggestions are in line with Dogan's (2013) claim that increasing students' motivation stimulated them to learn languages faster. However, Pedersen (2016) pointed out that L3 learners might have greater motivation to learn when compared to L2 learners because they had previous experience and knowledge.

One of the participant teachers (T1) highlighted the importance of external factors to improve students' skills. T1 suggested listening to music, watching English programs, and recording the lessons to listen to them more than once. This is in line with Pedersen's "learner external factors", in particular the frequent use of the new language in different aspects of life to develop the skills effectively (Pedersen, 2016).

Training the teachers to improve their abilities in teaching English as L3 is considered important and would influence students' skills. Dahl & Krulatz (2016) emphasised that teachers needed more courses and training programs to support their language proficiency in teaching English as L3. Also, Pedersen (2016) found that teachers should have training programs that focus on the subject of multilingualism and learning English as a third language to improve students' skills.

One of the most dominant suggestions, made by all of the participants (students and teachers), is that schools should increase the number of English lessons and activities. Thus, the utilization of the CLT method (Karlsson, 2010) while having more lessons and activities was thought to improve students' skills.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to identify the problems faced by Arab immigrant students as they learn English as L3 in Sweden. This study explored the perspectives of non-native English speaking students and teachers, in adult education, about the speaking issues of Arab immigrant students in particular. Also, it identified some of the factors that affect the emergence and development of these problems. Furthermore, a set of recommendations to improve non-native English students' speaking skills were extracted.

Regarding the problems of speaking English as L3, both students and teachers mentioned several problems. The majority of the participants claimed that the pronunciation difficulties that the students experienced because of similarities between Swedish and English words, weak linguistic skills, and weak speaking and writing skills due to inadequate practice were prominent problems. Other problems include the difference in teaching methods used in the students' home countries (in particular the Grammar-Translation Method) and Sweden

(CLT), culture shock, the use of Arabic sentence structure when trying to communicate in English, and the use of Swedish to translate and understand difficult English words.

The findings of the current study, therefore, are in line with previous findings, despite the difference in the study context, and should be possible to apply to other Nordic contexts too. Interestingly, this study concluded that the students turned back to the translation method and the use of Arabic sentence structure since they did not have proper teaching practices and sufficient time for learning. This situation put the students under pressure and affected their self-confidence negatively.

Regarding the factors that affect learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden, the participants claimed that the methods used in teaching students and the cultural differences between the countries were important factors. The majority of the participants claimed that both the amount of motivation, either from the students themselves or/and by teachers, and the amount of the teachers' experience and competence in teaching English were the main factors when it comes to learning English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden. Other factors that were mentioned include the students' ability and desire to learn English as L3, insufficient English lessons, and the use of L1 to translate the meaning of words into the students' stronger language.

The students and teachers proposed some suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English: schools should provide more English lessons and activities in English; English teachers should have proper training and communicate everything in English with their students; the teachers should use different exercises using modern methods and should explain difficult English words and expressions in simple words; the teachers should motivate the students in a better way; and the students should listen to music and watch English programs and movies.

Since Sweden provides courses to immigrants such as SFI and Swedish as a second language, I suggest that the Swedish system should provide similar courses for the English language as well, since all of the participants claimed the necessity of having more English lessons with proper materials and activities in English. Also, since some teachers did not have the required level of proficiency to teach English and to cope with immigrant students learning English as L3, there is an increasing need to have proper training for the teachers. Another way that

could be beneficial, I believe, is performing an evaluation test for the immigrant students to measure students' skills before getting admitted to the targeted course level, as a complement to the school certificates that the students are holding from their homelands. This way, the student skills can be developed within the current Swedish system.

It is obvious that the findings of this study are not transferable to the whole population of English students and teachers in adult schools in Sweden, but they still provide valuable insights into understanding this specific context. Decision-makers in Swedish educational institutions can take advantage of the results of the present study in an attempt to adopt the proposed solutions to overcome the problems faced by Arab immigrant students in Sweden. Future studies can use questionnaires in addition to interviews to gather additional information from immigrant students who have difficulties learning English. It is possible, in other words, to rely on a more quantitative approach in future studies to gather information from a broader set of informants. Furthermore, the views of Swedish school principals can also be used as they may have the experience to provide useful information on administrative challenges and opportunities.

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Appendix A: Students' interview

A qualitative study on problems in speaking English as L3: The case of Arab immigrants in Sweden

The primary aim of this paper is to highlight and analyse the problems that adult Arab immigrant face, based on students and teachers perspectives when speaking English in Sweden as L3. The study will also identify the factors that affect the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden based on students' and teachers' perspectives. The study proposes, also, a set of recommendations to improve the speaking skills for non-native English speaking students and teachers.

In order to achieve the desired goals, I am conducting interviews with Arab immigrants in Sweden (students and teachers) who can provide us with important information related to the subject of the present study. We would like to invite you to be part of this study. We would appreciate your cooperation in this research, which will help me in achieving the research objectives. I guarantee you that all responses will be treated confidentially. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the attached following Consent Form. I assure you again that all responses will be confidential. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and you can decide not to participate at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation

Background

1. What is your name?
2. Determine your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Where are you from?
4. What are the languages that you can speak?
 - Which one is your strongest language?
 - Which language you feel is closer to the English one?
5. When did you start learning English as a third language (L3)?
 - Why are you learning it?
6. Do you have problems in speaking English as a third language?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - Why? Please clarify and elaborate?

Problems

7. As an Arab immigrant and based on your perspective, what are the problems that you face when speaking English as L3 in Sweden?
 - Why do you think you have these problems?
 - How do you describe your pronunciation skills?
 - o What accent do you follow?
 - o If you have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?
 - How do you describe your English grammar skills?
 - o If you have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?
 - How do you describe your English writing skills?
 - o If you have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?

Factors

8. What are the factors that affect the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden?
 - What are the factors related to the school/teacher that affect the learning of speaking skills? Please clarify
 - What are the factors related to the student/you that affect the learning of speaking skills? Please clarify
 -

Suggestions

9. Please, give some suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English as L3?

Appendix B: Teachers' interview

A qualitative study on problems in speaking English as L3: The case of Arab immigrants in Sweden

The primary aim of this paper is to highlight and analyse the problems that adult Arab immigrant face, based on students and teachers perspectives when speaking English in Sweden as L3. The study also will identify the factors that influence the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden based on students' and teachers' perspectives. The study will, also, propose a set of recommendations to improve the speaking skills for non-native English speaking students and teachers.

In order to achieve the desired goals, I will conduct interviews with Arab immigrants in Sweden (students and teachers) who can provide us with important information related to the subject of the present study. We would like to invite you to be part of this study. We would appreciate your cooperation in this research, which will help me in achieving the research objectives. I guarantee you that all responses will be treated confidentially. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the attached following Consent Form. I assure you again that all responses will be confidential. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and you can decide not to participate at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation

Background

1. What is your name?
2. Determine your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Where are you from?
4. Describe your work experience in teaching?
5. What are the languages that you can speak?
 - What accent do you use when teaching?
6. Describe your English teaching skills?

Problems

7. Do some of your students have problems with speaking?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. As a teacher and based on your perspective, what are the problems that the students face when speaking English as L3 in Sweden?
 - Why do you think they have these problems?
 - How do you describe your pronunciation skills?
 - o What accent do you follow?
 - How do you describe their pronunciation skills?
 - o If they have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?
 - How do you describe their English grammar skills?
 - o If they have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?
 - How do you describe their English writing skills?
 - o If they have problems, what are the reasons behind these problems?

Factors

9. What are the factors that influence the learning of English as L3 for Arab immigrants in Sweden?
 - What are the factors related to the school/teacher that affect the learning of speaking skills? Please clarify
 - What are the factors related to the student/you that affect the learning of speaking skills? Please clarify

Suggestions

10. Please, give some suggestions for improving the Arab immigrants' speaking skills in English as L3?