

Teacher-centered Approach and its Ramifications on the Performance of would-be professors/teachers: Two Case Studies of NNSs

Dr. Abdulkhaleq Al-Gahtani
Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics
College of Languages & Translation
King Khalid University

Abstract:

This study examines the possible impact of teacher-centered approach that is widely practiced in EFL situations, as suggested by Braine (2003), Norman (2004) and others, on the performance of would-be professors/teachers who teach their courses in English in EFL context. The study presents two cases of two nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English. One had learned English in the USA in an English as a Second Language (ESL) situation and the other learned his language in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situation in Saudi Arabia. The task that was given to the two participants was largely communicative; each one was to present a topic of their choice to an unspecialized audience. The resultant observations show that the person who learned English in an EFL situation did not do well on the presentation, while the other one who learned English in an ESL situation did better, despite the fact that their levels of English proficiency were comparably similar. The study concludes that the EFL participant's weak performance was perhaps due to the teacher-centered approach that is widely practiced in his country. The ESL participant did better because he learned in a student-centered environment and practiced presenting as part of his training. Though the observations were drawn from only two cases, it seems that they could apply to larger samples of ESL/EFL learners.

Keywords: EFL/ESL, Learner-centered approach, Teacher-centered approach, discourse analysis.

**مدخل التعليم المتمحور حول المعلم وأثره على أداء الطلاب المعلمين / المعلمين : دراسة حالتين
لطلابين غير متحدثين للغة الإنجليزية كلفة أمر**

إعداد

عبد الخالق القحطاني

الأستاذ المساعد بكلية اللغات والترجمة بابها

جامعة الملك خالد

ملخص :

تتناول هذه الدراسة الأثر المحتمل لمدخل التعليم المتمركز على المعلم الذي يمارس على نطاق واسع في حالات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية (EFL)، على النحو الذي اقترحه برين (2003)، نورمان (2004) وغيرهما، على أداء الطلاب المعلمين / المعلمين الذين يقومون بتدريس موادهم العلمية باللغة الإنجليزية في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية EFL. وتقدم الدراسة حالتين اثنتين لطلابين من غير الناطقين (NNSs) للغة الإنجليزية، وإحدى الحالتين لطلاب تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية كلفة ثانية (ESL)، والحالة الأخرى لطلاب تعلم لغته الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية (EFL) في المملكة العربية السعودية. وكانت المهمة التي أعطيت للمشاركين مهمة تواصلية إلى حد كبير. كان على كل واحد منهما تقديم موضوع من اختيارهم لجمهور من غير المتخصصين في مجالها. وتشير الملاحظات الناتجة أن الشخص الذي تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في بيئة تعلمها كلفة أجنبية EFL في المملكة العربية السعودية لم يؤد بشكل جيد في هذا العرض، في حين أن الآخر الذين تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في بيئة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة ثانية ESL كان أفضل، على الرغم من أن مستويات الكفاءة في اللغة الانكليزية كانت متشابهة نسبيا. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن ضعف أداء المشارك من بيئة التعلم للإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية EFL ربما يرجع إلى المدخل المتمحور حول

المعلم، وهو مدخل تعليمي يمارس على نطاق واسع في المملكة العربية السعودية. أما دراسة الحالة الأخرى المشاركة من بيئة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية ESL أدى تقديمه لموضوع العرض بشكل أفضل؛ لأنه تعلم في بيئة تعليم متمحورة حول الطالب، يمارس مهمة التقديم الشفهي للعروض كجزء من تدريبيه. وعلى الرغم من أن الملاحظات الناتجة من هذه الدراسة تعتمد على حالتين فقط، إلا انه فيما يبدو ان هذه الملاحظات يمكن أن تنطبق على عينات أكبر من المتعلمين ESL / EFL.

1. Introduction

One of the most crucial uses of English for future nonnative English speaking professors/teachers in Saudi Arabia and other universities outside the English speaking countries is to be able to deliver lectures in their respective fields in English. The fact that English is the dominating language in academia all over the world (Swales, 1990) makes the mastery of lecturing in English a necessity rather than a luxury. This state stresses the need to assess and prepare future lecturers/teachers to perform teaching tasks in English (Rounds, 1987; Halleck & Moder, 1995; Myers, 1994). To achieve this goal, one needs to review the types of preparations those future teachers had before they actually enter the classroom and start delivering their content areas. This study seeks to examine the instruction methods used, and how effective these methods are for them as they attempt to teach in English-medium institutions.

1.1 EFL context

Students in EFL situations usually learn English in teacher-centered classrooms. In those teaching environments, students become passive participants/learners (Huba and Freed 2000; Allan, 2004). Braine (2003) argues that Chinese students' performance suffered as they were turned to passive learners because of this teacher-centered approach. Their role is to just sit in classrooms and understand whatever is said (Norman, 2004). Shafie & Nayan (2010) found that experienced (10-15 years of teaching experience) English teachers in Malaysia perceive their most important role to be information providers in the classroom. Though the communicative approach and the learner-centered mode have already been there in the profession since the 1960s (Canale and Swain, 1980), they were not effectively practiced in EFL contexts.

1.2 EFL context in Saudi Arabia

The situation in Saudi Arabia is not any better than it is in the Chinese context. EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia are teacher-centered for the most part (Fareh, 2010; Al-Zu'be, 2013). Consequently, students are not given the chance to use their English in a communicative way; and, therefore, their communicative competence would suffer greatly and so would their performance as future teachers/lecturers, given that the ability to lecture in the TL is communicative in the first place.

Thus, Saudi Students do not have sufficient, if any, training in using their newly learned language in meaningful ways, such as, presenting a topic to an audience. To make the situation even worse, most of the instruction in the medium of English is focused on teaching form rather than content, such as teaching simple English sentence structure particularly the tenses, subject-verb agreement, etc. For example, by reviewing the content of three courses developed to cover the whole range of English requirement in one of the technical colleges where English is supposed to be the medium of instruction, it was found that most of the content is directed to teaching about the local structures at the sentence level. The structure of the passive voice and the conditional sentences were only taught at the advanced level. Alam Khan (2011) admits that local error corrections used by English teachers in Saudi Arabia is crucial. Such a position capitalizes on the form rather than the wider message of discourse.

Teaching form is undoubtedly beneficial and effective (Lightbown and Spada, 1990; Yang & Lyster, 2010), but there are other important aspects of language that need to be addressed. In Saudi Arabian English education, little is taught about English text beyond the sentence level except in a limited way when some teachers ask students to rehearse dialogues. Even in such cases, the focus is usually to reinforce a grammatical point rather than to promote students' competence above the

sentence level. In other technical terms, the focus is on the lexical and grammatical competences rather than on communicative and pragmatic competences. Thus, in the most part, teaching practices in Saudi Arabia do not help EFL students develop their linguistic knowledge in the target language at the discourse level. Al Asmari, A. (2013) found that students' autonomy, as a byproduct of student-centered approaches, is not promoted in the Saudi EFL education at the present. Thus, in the Saudi context students neither receive training in communicating their thoughts orally to an audience, nor do they learn sufficient language at the discourse level, which is a precondition to lecturing in English.

When such students become teachers themselves. They are faced with a huge challenge: namely, they have to teach in English as required by university policies; King Fahd University (KFUPM) is a case in point. Further, some of these teachers/students aspire to earn graduate degrees in their respective fields and become professors in Saudi universities where English is usually the medium of instruction. The English proficiency of these graduate students is usually assessed by international proficiency in English tests, such as the TOFEL. Regrettably, these tests do not measure the speaking skills, which are indispensable to teaching their content areas in the target language.

The majority of Saudi graduate students are sent to study abroad. Many of them have difficulties in coping with their graduate degrees requirements, particularly when asked to present to audiences. Unfortunately, many of these students (would-be professors) do not teach in their host universities. This makes them in a disadvantageous situation in two ways. First, they did not receive training in lecturing in English in their country; and second, they did not have the chance to develop such a skill while studying in the target language context.

Need and purpose of the present study

In their exposition of the challenges of teaching English in Saudi

Arabia, Mahib ur Rahman & Alhaisoni (2013) listed teacher-centered approach to be a hurdle to language learning in Saudi Arabia. Thus, there is a need to investigate such complications of EFL practices. The performance of future Arabian teachers/professors in Saudi English medium institutions is critical to their students' academic success. This study attempts to tackle some of the issues pertinent to this situation. Particularly, this study will investigate the consequences of learning English in Saudi Arabia through a teacher-centered approach with no training of lecturing or presenting, which are communicative tasks that are not supported by the prevalent teacher-centered method. It is hoped that the conclusion would help the targeted population find practical solutions to enhance their performance in their English medium instruction practice.

2. Method

This study utilizes the case study method of research to delve deeper into the contextual features of EFL programs offered in Saudi Arabia. Particularly to find out how pre-service professors/teachers learn English in Saudi Arabia before they become teachers themselves. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine if the teacher-centered method would have any impact on the performance of prospective teachers/lecturers as they lecture in English. In addition, the present study seeks to compare these would-be professors with their colleagues who had acquired their English in an ESL context where the rival approach is practiced (the student-centered approach).

Eight Saudi Arabian doctoral students in a major US university were recruited to participate in the study. All of them, at the time of study attained the minimum TOFEL score of 550 as required for admission to the graduate school. The researcher devoted a whole semester to observe and investigate the appropriateness of the potential participants.

Seven of the eight students were found to be sharing the same educational

backgrounds. They all went to the United States without much proficiency in English. They acquired much of their English by attending ESL intensive language program in their American university. Only one of them, a doctoral student of chemistry, did not have to attend the ESL program because his English was good enough to attain the required TOFEL score for admission. This doctoral candidate of chemistry reported that he learned much of his English in Saudi Arabia.

Since only one of the possible candidates fit the selection criterion, only one of the other seven was to be selected for the sake of comparison. The choice fell on one who shared similar scientific background; and like his colleague was about to graduate at the end of that semester when the study was launched. Then, the researcher started his observations. The observations included attendance with them in their group discussions at their departments.

It was observed that much of their departments' weekly meetings were held in a relaxed environment that do not put them before a real audience and require them to perform as instructors, in which case their language competence would be more apparent. The meetings were highly collegial and informal. Since the purpose was to analyze their language skills as they perform, the researcher, in the light of these observations, decided to put them to a real test where they had to lecture an audience on a real topic of their respective fields, a task that very much simulates their future performance in their classrooms.

In the following section, the two participants are introduced, and the tasks and the procedures are outlined.

2.1 Participants

Two pre-service assistant professors from Saudi Arabia were chosen from a pool of eight. The educational backgrounds of the two participants were different. The first person, henceforth S1, is a 43 years old who had just finished his PhD in agricultural virology. He had come to the United

States eight years earlier without much English. He received his language training at the university English language institute for almost two whole years. The type of English language training he received was communicative in most part; he also practiced presenting his assignments to his classmates as a part of his language training.

The second participant, henceforth S2, is a 32 years old. At the time of this study, he was finalizing his dissertation in Chemistry. He was planning to start his job as an assistant professor of chemistry in Saudi Arabia in the following semester. S2 received his language training entirely in an intensive language institution in Saudi Arabia. He managed to attain the required TOFEL score before he came to the United States; and therefore, he did not attend the English language institute. Because of common practice of teacher-centered approach subscribed to in Saudi Arabia, this person did not have the chance to practice presenting to his classmates during his EFL training. Consequently, he reported difficulties and reluctance to participate when asked to present for this study.

2.2 Procedure

The study consists of three parts: first, an interview for each subject. The interview comprises three groups of questions. The first group was designed to elicit information about their English language proficiency and past experiences. The second group was designed to elicit information about their experiences as students and how they would define good teaching and good teachers. The last group was designed to evoke some future concerns and their forthcoming plans as professors/instructors who are required to teach entirely in English to students in Saudi Arabia. Despite the fact that their main role is to deliver subject matter information, their English must be at a reasonable level so their students' comprehension would not suffer. Table 1 presents the interview questions.

Table 1: the interview questions for the two participants

The background questions
1: What was your English proficiency level when you first came to the US?
2: Can you describe your English classes back in Saudi Arabia?
Information about good lecturing
1: Can you describe your best teacher practices?
2: Were you asked to present to your classmates?
3: What are the characteristics of a good lecture?
Future plans as assistant professors
1: How do you feel about having to teach in English at your school in Saudi Arabia?
2: How are you going to deal with students' fears and reluctance when using English?
3: Do you expect other difficulties related to teaching in English?

Second, a presentation of a specialized topic from their respective fields to an unspecialized audience was delivered. The presentations were recorded on a video and then transcribed. The International Teaching Assistant Test (the ITA test) was used to assess the quality of their presentations. The test was evaluated under three major categories: language skills, compensatory strategies, and evaluator's overall impression. Three experienced evaluators (three professors in TESL/linguistics) took part in the assessment process. The evaluation was only done on the language skills section, which is divided into five subsections: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehensibility, and comprehension. The scores of the five subsections were added up and scored out of 30.

Third, a discourse analysis of the structure of their presentations was conducted. Each participant is presented separately in the following two sections.

2.3 CASE 1: S1

The interview: The first group of questions, as shown in table 1 above, consisted of two queries:

- 1: what was your English proficiency level when you first came to the US?

For this question, he answered by saying that he did not have much English and he was at the early beginner level, as judged by a placement test.

- 2: can you describe your English classes back in Saudi Arabia?

He said that they were very few and were complete waste of time. When asked to elaborate, he said that his teachers did not know much English themselves and he was not interested in the language, “I did not know that I would come to the States for PhD studies!” he said.

The second group of questions consisted of three questions:

- 1: can you describe your best teacher's practices?

He answered by saying that he learned English in the English language institute of his American university. He remembered vividly how he watched himself acquiring the language and how he felt himself as an active participant in that effort. “All of the teachers were very friendly and encouraging. Making mistakes was not as bad as I had thought,” he said. He added that he was very engaged in many social events in the institute where he felt welcomed.

- 2: were you asked to present to your classmates?

He confirmed that he was asked to present about Saudi Arabia, and so did everybody in the class about their respective countries. He added that almost every week there was some type of presentations going on. He said that he learnt presenting using PowerPoint and overhead projectors for the first time in the English institute.

3: what are the characteristics of a good lecture?

He reflected for a short while and said, “Good organization of information and clear definitions of concepts”. He added, “Good usage of educational technology.” He also suggested that good lecture should be directed by students’ needs, “it should be interactive.” He said.

The last group of questions was as follows:

1: how do you feel about having to teach in English at your school in Saudi Arabia?

He said that he still feels uncomfortable about this matter. Nevertheless, he asserted that he must do it and have his students getting used to it. By doing so, they could deal with their subject matter in English especially that most of the terms and references are written in English in his field.

2: how are you going to deal with students’ fears and reluctance when using English?

He said that he learned a valuable lesson from being here, in the US, which is to get students take charge of their learning. “I will help them acquire knowledge, I will not give them knowledge except for early beginnings,” he said.

3: do you expect other difficulties related to teaching in English?

“Not really”, he answered, “when you get involved in the subject you forget about the language,” he added. He asserted that language is just a means to an end not an end in itself.

From the interview, we have three major observations. First, S1 acquired his language after arriving to the United States. This means that the characteristics of his presentation could be ascribed in part to his language training in the US not to the one in Saudi Arabia. Second, we learned that presenting is a common activity as part of English teaching in the US, while it is almost nonexistent in Saudi Arabia. He also provides information about stark differences between the teaching methods of

English in Saudi and its US counterpart. The third observation helps to understand the type of positive behavior change that S1 acquired as a result of studying in a student-centered environment.

The ITA Test: S1 took the ITA test, S1 was asked to present a topic in his major field to the evaluators and to seven other fellow Saudi students who were waiting for their turns to present themselves.

S1 presented his topic for about six minutes and then allowed questions from the audience. The questions and answers went on for about three more minutes and the presentation was over. The topic was an introduction to plant virology, he first provided definitions of the main concepts and then presented historical figures in the field and their contributions. S1 used the blackboard to create a space for his topic; each one of those historical figures was assigned a particular space on the board. By doing so, he offered an advance organizer, which allowed the audience a visual track of his presentation.

The evaluators offered him the scores outlined in table 2. The scores were added and then divided by three to get the average score of the three evaluators.

Table 2: ITA Test Scores for S1

Lang. Skills	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3
Pronunciation					1.83		
Grammar					1.83		
Fluency						2.16	
Comprehensibility						2.16	
Comprehension							3
						10.98* 2	=21.96/30

In the ITA descriptors, his pronunciation score could be read as follows when rounded to 2 from 1.83, “minor problems with stress and intonation. General accuracy in pronunciation of most individual sounds. Some difficulty with enunciation, but is generally intelligible” (ITA descriptors handout). As for grammar, after rounding the score back to 2, the descriptor would read, “occasional difficulty with accurate grammatical form and appropriate use of structures. Minor errors that do not interfere with meaning” (ITA descriptors). The fluency score was rounded to 2 and the descriptor reads, “some nonnative pauses. Some difficulty with smooth and native like rhythmic patterns, which causes occasional interference with intelligibility” (ITA descriptors).

The comprehensibility score was also rounded back to 2, and its descriptor reads, “generally comprehensible. Some errors in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, or vocabulary that occasionally interfere with intelligibility” (ITA Des.). As for the last subsection of the language skills, S1 scored the full mark, which was related to his comprehension of the questions and comments from the audience.

The ITA presentation shows that S1 had attained reasonable score. The general impression of the three evaluators was that he did well. However, the researcher decided to make further analysis to account for his performance. The presentation was transcribed and then analyzed for three main points: the general discourse rhetorical structure, use of boundary markers and conjunctions, and use of repetition.

General discourse structure: S1 presentation was highly organized using the advanced-organizer technique by moving from the general to the specific. The presentation could be divided into two main groups of blocks: the first group of blocks was devoted to define basic terms in the field (I dubbed it as definition-blocks group), and the second was assigned to present the core of the presentation (I call this part the core-blocks group). Each group of the presentation was organized in single blocks format; the block was about one and only one topic. The sum of

the blocks communicates a coherent presentation where each block plays a complementary role in the structure of the overall presentation. The following examples exhibit S1's strategy:

Example 1:

S1: to give presentation about plant virology.

And first plant virology is a part or branch of virology which is the definition of virology is the science that studying the viruses.

Plant virology is the science of studying viruses that infects plants.

And also as plant pathologist we are looking at plant viruses is a part of plant pathology.

In example 1, S1 presented one definition in one block. But he had to use another concept, pathology, in order to define the first. This made him define the new embedded concept in a new block located right after this one:

Example 2:

S1: Plant pathology it is the science of studying the whole pathogens that infects plants which is consist of the mycology and also the bacteriology which is the bacteria that infect the plant and cause diseases to these plants..

In example 2, he presented the new concept to prepare for his new block, which is the definition of the virus (from an agricultural perspective) of which the whole presentation is about. Then he signaled the beginnings of the next two blocks by two different rhetorical questions, as shown in example 3.

Example 3:

S1: What is the virus? before going to the much details.. the virus is a microorganism...

And

S1: So.. why we are studying plant viruses? There is two major reason we are studying plant viruses...

Then, he reintroduced/repeated the objective of his presentation as a signal to leave for his next five blocks. In each following block, he presented one scholar's contributions to the field. After the fifth scholar, the presentation was called to an end.

Conjunctions and discourse markers: the presentation blocks were joined by conjunctions and other discourse markers. For example, in the definition- blocks group he used the following markers (in underlined boldface) to signal movement from one block to another:

S1: **And first..** plant virology is a part or branch...

What is the virus? before going to the much details...

So.. why we are studying plant viruses? There is two major

In the first line of the example, he used the conjunction and numeration. Then, he used rhetorical questioning as a marker of a new topic. Lastly he used both the conjunction so and the rhetorical questioning.

As for the core-blocks group, S1 used numeration as well as conjunctions to signal movements through blocks. The following are the markers used in the five blocks in this section:

S1: **the first scientist** his name is...

The second one it was in 1992 or 1892 his name Ievanofesky he is form Russia...

And after that, the guy his name or the scientist his name

Then after that, there 's a scientist from Japan his name is Hashemoto...

And also there is a scientist his name...

As can be seen, S1 used conjunctions and numeration to signal the beginning of each block.

The use of repetition: S1 used repetition to consolidate the unity of the blocks. Within some of the blocks, he repeated some of the earlier concepts to make the connection between these concepts and the present block. This technique has contributed to further clarity of the presentation (Tyler, 1994). The following examples illustrates this point.

S1: I am going just to give a brief history about the discovery of this science **which is plant virology** ...

The second **one**...

Plant virology has already been defined in the definition-blocks group. Here, the repetition is to help the listener stay on track and not to get confused by the shift from definition-blocks group to the core-blocks group. In addition, *one* is an indefinite anaphoric pronoun functioning as a repetition device to keep the audience on track and to help them understand that the topic is still the same, which is introducing more scientists.

2.4 CASE 2: S2

The interview: S2 was asked the same questions as S1. The following is a report of his answers.

1: what was your English proficiency level when you first came to the US?

For this question, he answered by saying that he was proficient enough because he met the language proficiency requirement of the graduate school and did not need to enroll in the ESL program at the American university.

2: can you describe your English classes back in Saudi Arabia?

He answered by saying that they usually consisted of lectures and exercises. He thought that his experience was good, and the proof is his score on the TOFEL. When asked to elaborate on the amount of speaking done in the classes and by whom. He replied that his teachers did most of the speaking inside the class.

His answers for the second group of questions were as follows:

1: can you describe your best teacher practices?

He said that he was interested in learning the language in the first place and that made him enrolled in a number of private EFL schools in Riyadh. He said that he gained a lot of knowledge from dedicated teachers who were very knowledgeable. He added that he benefited from solving activity books' exercises. When asked if he had a course on the TOFEL he said, "Yes". He explained that he enrolled in a TOFEL preparation course before he took the test couple of months earlier.

2: were you asked to present to your classmates?

He said, "No". He actually found this business of presenting to classes very scary. I wondered if he were asked to tell any of his language classes a story or report to them a series of events. He said, "yes, but it was in Arabic not in English". I wondered about the amount of Arabic allowed in his EFL classes, and he said that sometimes teachers explained some of their points in Arabic.

3: what are the characteristics of a good lecture?

He said, "If you understand it easily, then it is a good lecture". He explained that teachers need to be good at their subject matter. He asked rhetorically, "What is the advantage of being in a class with a teacher who does not know his subject matter?" I asked S2 about the things that could make a lecture more understandable, and he replied by saying that the teacher must be good, he asserted, "if they are good at their craft they would find ways to get their message across".

S2 responded to the last group of questions, which asked about his plans as a professor of chemistry who is required to teach in English. The answers were as follows:

1: how do you feel about having to teach in English at your school in Saudi Arabia?

He said that he would resist it if he could because he wants to arabize his knowledge rather than making his students proficient in English. "I am not an English teacher", he said. He added that he liked and wanted to learn English to gain access to the huge chemistry literature written in English, but he thought that he finds it difficult to keep teaching people English instead of translating chemistry literature to Arabic. I asked if he would mind to lecture in English if it is still required by his school, and he said, "I would if I have to".

2: how are you going to deal with students' fears and reluctance when using English?

He provided the following answer, "I do not know. I would tell them that we must do it because we are required to do so. I will also translate everything I teach to Arabic".

3: do you expect other difficulties related to teaching in English?

He said, "The problem is not with English or French; we need to build our literature in our own language. This is going to be my battle". I asked him if he would deny his students the same access of the literature he read in English, or if he would deny them to aspire the same ambitions that he made for himself, and he said, "of course, not. What I am saying is that we need to arabize chemistry. The teaching of English is not my business it is yours [teachers of English]".

From this interview with S2, I had few observations. First, he learnt most of his language in Saudi Arabia where the method of teaching is teacher-centered as he described it. Second, the teachers use grammar translation as a common practice in their classrooms. Third, the students were not allowed to practice their English in a communicative way; S2 used to listen and understand but not to debate and negotiate meaning. In addition, the students do not receive training on presenting lectures in the target language. In addition, a major purpose of teaching is to score well on tests (the TOFEL). Lastly, S2 ascribed good lecture to the mastery of

the subject matter by the teacher and no credit to teaching methodologies and coherent lecturing.

The ITA Test: S2 took the ITA Test like S1. Actually, S2 was among the audience when S1 was presenting, so he knew the expectations and the mode of the test. S2 presented a topic in chemistry for about seven minutes and two minutes for discussion. The same audience were present except for S1 replaced S2. The topic was about a chemical element called Arson. He first defined the element and its importance. Then he moved to discuss its presence in nature and in industry, and how that element could endanger human lives.

The three experienced evaluators provided their scores on the test-scoring sheet. Table 3 outlines the average of the three scores. According to the descriptors of the test,

Table 3: ITA Test Scores for S2

Lang. Skills	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3
Pronunciation				1.16			
Grammar					1.83		
Fluency						2.16	
Comprehensibility				1.5			
Comprehension						2	
					8.65	* 2	=17.3/30

S2’s pronunciation suffers from, “major problems with stress and intonations. Difficulty with pronunciation of some individual sounds. Poor enunciation. Occasionally unintelligible” (ITA Descriptors). As for the grammar, after rounding the score back to 2, the descriptor would

read, “occasional difficulty with accurate grammatical form and appropriate use of structures. Minor errors that do not interfere with meaning” (ITA descriptors). The fluency score was rounded to 2 and the descriptor reads, “some nonnative pauses. Some difficulty with smooth and native like rhythmic patterns, which causes occasional interference with intelligibility” (ITA descriptors).

The comprehensibility for S2 was low, 1.5. The descriptor of comprehensibility describes him as somewhat comprehensible with considerable number of errors, “in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, or vocabulary that occasionally interfere with intelligibility” (ITA descriptors). His comprehension was judged as, “able to understand most audience utterances in context. May not immediately understand rapidly spoken and rambling discourse, but uses listening strategies to identify main ideas and clarifies misunderstandings through negotiation with speakers” (ITA descriptors).

The scores and the comments of the evaluators on S2 performance were not as favorable as S1. The researcher transcribed the presentation and analyzed it for the three major elements discussed in S1, namely general discourse structure, use of conjunctions and discourse markers, and the use of repetition. This analysis was intended to account for possible reasons for such a low score on the ITA test.

General discourse structure: the global structure of the presentation conforms to the general acceptable structure of any presentation. The presentation consisted of two expected parts: introduction and body. It lacked a conclusion. For the introduction, the presenter announced his topic, the Arson element, and the reason for the presentation right from the beginning. Then he introduced the topic by defining it in details: and how that element was a health hazard. The second part, the body part, started by moving to explain the places and sources of that harmful element. He mentioned two sources: natural and human made (industrial products.). Then he explained each source separately and provided examples. The following examples are from the two major parts:

Example 1

S2: My talk today is about arsenic and it has the symbol of As and it is an element of the group 15 in the periodic table of elements.. this is a metallo or a semimetal .. it means that it have a characters of both metals and nonmetals .. Arsenic is the most twentieth abundant element in the earth crust and also it is the most plentiful twelfth element in the biosphere .. arsenic also is very harmful element to human, plants, animals, and it cause a lot of cancer like bladder and kidney and other cancers types .. and it is also rated as ..among the top twenty most toxic material ...

Example 1 shows a portion of the introduction. S2 stated his intention and introduced his topic and explained its importance. In example 2 below, S2 got to the body of his presentation, which was to give information about the places where that harmful element exists.

Example 2

S2: The contamination of Arsenic in the environment is caused by two major reasons either natural or by anthropogenic or made- human activities .. so the nature I mean a lot of Arsenic ore ... and deposits are found in the nature .. and also volcano eruption is another contribution to the Arsenic contamination in the environment.

Conjunctions and discourse markers: from the global structure perspective, S2's presentation conformed to the hierarchical expectations of the audience: moving from general to specific. Yet, S2's score on the ITA test does not support this notion. So, what happened? By close analysis of the text, one could see that S2 did not use conjunctions and discourse markers properly. In other words, the boundaries between the constituent parts of the presentation lacked proper discourse markers that usually function to guide the audience through any given presentation. Also, he did not use repetition in a target-like manner so that the audience could keep track of his line of thought. For example in the following

excerpt of the presentation, S2 joined every thought with a conjunction particularly *and*. The audience had a real problem in recognizing the movements between the constituent parts of the presentation.

Example 3:

S2: **and** it is also rated as ..among the top twenty most toxic material ..
and arsenic is .. now is a very important topic in chemistry
especially environmental chemistry because as we see it is harmful
so it contaminates a lot of ground water and service water ..

The contamination of Arsenic in the environment is caused by two major reasons either natural or by anthropogenic or made- human activities.. **so** the nature I mean a lot of Arsenic ore ... and deposits are found in the nature .. **and** also volcano eruption is another contribution to the Arsenic contamination in the environment.

In example 3, S2 has moved from the introduction part to the body part of his presentation without signaling such important movement by a visible discourse marker. In fact, the exact boundary could not be located easily; one may argue that the body of the presentation started with *the contamination of Arsenic* because the introduction of the body is actually announced in this sentence *caused by two major reasons either natural or by anthropogenic or made- human activities*. One could argue that the body started a little earlier roughly around the underlined *and* in the first line of the example because it started with a conjunction *and*; the thought does not fit in the context of the previous sentences in the introduction as much as it does with the following ones where the body is actually presented. The major source of the confusion is the almost nonexistent signals of boundaries between the parts, and the excessive use of the conjunction *and* which makes its function very unpredictable for the listener.

The use of repetition: S2 used repetition in a very limited way. The instances where he used repetition added more clarity to this presentation

because the listener could follow a single thought by the help of the repetition function. The following examples exhibit this function.

Example 4

S2: and also volcano eruption is another contribution to the Arsenic contamination in the environment.

And this natural causes are very important because for the arsenic

And

Example 5

S2: because as we see it is harmful so it contaminates a lot of ground water and service water ...

The contamination of Arsenic in the environment is caused by two major reasons either natural or by anthropogenic or made- human activities ..

In the two examples above, by virtue of repetition, one could maintain the line of thought for a while and see the connection between the sentences involved before and after the repetition. The fact that S2 did not use this function enough in his presentation made its benefits very limited.

3. Discussion of the Two Cases

The two cases exhibit a considerable disparity in performance. There are different aspects of performance across the three different venues of this study namely, the interviews, the ITA test results, and the discourse analysis investigation. Those three approaches would help to reach a sound conclusion that is comparable to other cases going through similar circumstances.

The interviews: In the interviews, one can observe that the two subjects, S1 and S2, operated from two different backgrounds. The three

groups of questions were designed to elicit information about their background knowledge, how they define lecturing as a genre, and what kind of roles they assume for themselves in the future as professors in English-medium institutions in Saudi Arabia.

For the first group of questions, S1 provided that he learned his English in the USA as an ESL student. He also provided insights of what is considered valuable to him as a student. On the other hand, S2 learned his English in Saudi Arabia as an EFL student. Therefore, the main difference learned from this group is that S1 and S2 learned English from two different schools of thought, two different situations, and all the rest of the factors that differentiate between learning in an ESL versus EFL situations. This difference is an important variable that might account for the differences in the two performances.

The second group of questions was asked to elicit how the subjects define lecturing as a genre. S1 believes that organization, use of technology, and student empowerments are keys for successful lecturing. The goal to him is to let students be active participants in the lecture rather than passive observers. S1 subscribes to a student-centered approach to lecturing. On the other hand, S2 sees that the major aspect of good lecturing is for the teacher to have a mastery of his topic. How the lecture is delivered is not important. The students' role is mainly to listen and understand what knowledgeable lecturers have to say. S2 clearly operates from a teacher-centered approach to teaching.

We can conclude that S2 was not very concerned about how he presented his topic. What was important to him was to show that he knows his subject matter well. This observation was evident when he shifted around the end of the presentation back to add more sophisticated knowledge about the chemical element. He acknowledged that he should have said that new information in the introduction. Nevertheless, he chose not to because that would have been too advanced for the level of the presentation and not appropriate for the audience.

The third group of questions was asked to shed light on the participants' future plans, and how would they project themselves delivering lectures in English to their students. Here again, we found that S1 and S2 were not in congruence with each other at any level. S1 adhered to student-centered approach and to the interactive mode of teaching while S2 decided that he would teach his students pure knowledge and in their native language if permissible. S2 saw his task as a source of information and S1 saw himself as a resource person where he would facilitate learning. Possible explanation for this disparity is that S1 and S2 learned in two different environments. However, they both had their graduate studies in the USA. Why did S2 not have the students-centered approach down? The reason, as S2 and another student from the chemistry department explained, is that most of the lectures in the chemistry department are conducted through the teacher-centered approach. Lab lectures, however, differ a little bit because there is usually some one-on-one tutoring as they conduct their experiments.

The ITA Test: the performance of the two subjects yielded two different scores on the language skills part of the test. The difference was remarkable to the advantage of S1 in comprehensibility, pronunciation, and comprehension subsections. However, the two acquired the same score in grammar and fluency. Possible explanation for this disparity is that S2 did not organize his presentation as well as S1. In fact, his local grammatical mistakes were far less than those detected in S1 presentation, for example, from 42 verbs counted on a raw from his presentation he only missed 4 in which he provided either the wrong tense or erroneous subject-verb agreement. While on the other hand and on a similar measure, S1 failed to provide correct forms in more than 15 verbs out of the first 42 verbs in a raw. In addition, S2 provided target like use of the passive structure while S1 did not. Yet, they acquired the same score on grammar.

The possible explanation for this is that S2 was good at what he had

been learning in his classes: simple sentence structure. Moreover, S2 did not do as well because he failed to acquire the target structure of English beyond the sentence level. He lacked that ability because he simply did not practice it. Therefore, he possibly used his native language rhetorical structure to present his topic. He did not have second language schemata for a lecture format, as judged by the raters and the discourse analysis procedure. Conversely, S1 did much better and rated much higher on the test because he acquired the expected rhetorical structure of the target language beyond the sentence level due to his training.

Discourse analysis: S1 and S2 showed a degree of similarities at the overall structure of their presentations. Both presentations consisted of introductions, bodies, and lacked conclusions. However, the differences were obvious as to how they connected the different parts of their presentations. S1 employed very careful technique of presenting each constituent part of his speech under one single topic. He also managed to connect each part with the one before it and the one after it by using myriad of discourse markers, repetition, and conjunctions. This careful planning of his presentation explained why his presentation was clearer and easier to follow than that of S2. S2, on the other hand, did not use discourse markers and conjunctions in a target like manner. On the contrary, he used the conjunction *and* to connect everything at the sentence and the discourse levels. Thus, S2 presentation was confusing and hard to follow. S2 apparently transferred the use of *and* from his native language (Arabic) to work for him in his second language because he lacked the schemata of the expected lecture format in the target language.

4. Conclusions, pedagogical implications, and further research

This study yielded a number of conclusions. First, teacher-centered approach had its ramifications on the performance of students in EFL situations as manifested in the performance of S2, which conforms to the

findings and suggestions in the field (Braine,2003; Deen, 1991; Huba & Freed, 2000; Allan, 2004). Students under this approach would have difficulties learning language for their communicative needs. As Fareh (2010) asserts, they simply become passive learners. They learn to pass tests and meet some school requirements, and they usually achieve those goals. Consequently, future teachers who learn their English in such teacher-centered environments might not be able to deliver their lectures in English effectively; they are not prepared to execute such a communicative task. This of course does not necessarily entail that their receptive English proficiency would be low as the TOFEL scores attest to the opposite in the case of the eight doctoral students initially screened for this study. It is just their productive proficiency that was scrutinized and found lacking.

The current situation implies that would-be teachers/professors may be in a better situation if they undertake a pre-service training or an in-service program that polish their presenting/teaching skills in Saudi Arabia, which confirms Alam Kahn's (2011) remark in his description of effective EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia.

The second conclusion of this study is that the student (S1) who had learned English in a learner-centered environment managed to perform better on the communicative task required by the ITA Test. That was due to his awareness of the macrostructure of an acceptable presentation in English as well as his effective use of discourse techniques that match recipients' expectations, a skill that he acquired from his learner-centered training.

Thus, pedagogically, the teaching/learning paradigm has to shift to the learner-centered mode. In so doing, learners will acquire the autonomy and responsibility of their learning. Jacobs and Farrell (2003) argue that the shift to communicative language teaching (CLT) would result in learners' autonomy, which is one of the benefits of abandoning the teacher-centered approach. By doing so, their students will have

ample opportunities to use their newly learned language communicatively (Ellis, 2008).

The third conclusion is that the use of discourse markers only in their expected places adds more clarity to a discourse as exhibited by S1 in this study. Excessive use of these markers, however, in unexpected places would only confuse the listener and make the task of following the flow of discourse more difficult, as we have seen in the case of S2. He used *and* and *so* in many places in a non-target-like manner. The listeners got confused when he used *and* to connect almost all the ideas major and minor.

It is my position, therefore; that a considerable amount of transfer observed in native Arabic speakers presenting in English is due to lack of training in the target language discourse structure rather than lack of local linguistic abilities. A situation that is apparently responsible for most comprehensibility problems on the part of the future students of those teachers. A case in point would be S2 outperformance at the local structure level. His grammatical mistakes were far less than S1's. This did not help much at the overall comprehensibility of the presentation.

The pedagogical implication for the third conclusion would encompass that pre-service teachers should receive special training in the acceptable discourse structure of the target language particularly in discourse markers in the expected places of the discourse, for example, the correct use of transition to mark beginnings and ends of points, repetition to keep the audience on track, etc.

Though the conclusions are made on only two cases, the body of literature and research elsewhere, for example. China in Braine's (2003) study, outside the Saudi Arabian context, conform to the main observations of this study. Further research is definitely needed to investigate the possible ways of implementing the learner-centered approach in the light of present challenges in the Saudi context as

described by Al Asmari (2013) and Al-Hazmi (2003), namely the overt use of Arabic in EFL classrooms, the inadequate teacher preparation curriculum, the lack of intrinsic motivation on the learners' part, etc. Further, quantitative research is needed to consolidate the findings of these two cases.

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