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I. Introduction

JUC strives for excellence when it comes to its graduates. To achieve that, it regularly reviews and updates its teaching practices and assessment strategies to ensure the fulfillment of its vision and mission to provide quality education. To address concerns regarding some students writing proficiency, especially when it comes to common language errors made by EFL students, it had introduced the language deduction policy in 2015. 20% of the total grade for every formal written exam (Midterm, final examination, and some quizzes) is deducted; resulting in 20 marks deduction out of the overall score of the course-100. This policy applies to all areas of the degree: linguistics, TEFL, Writing, Literature, Translation, and Language Skills. Some advocates of the deduction believe that it is the best way to encourage students to improve their English language proficiency (spoken and written). On the other hand, some teachers think of it as discouraging and impeding students rather than a motivation for change while others believe that the best way is to reduce the deduction percentage in order to boost students' confidence and provide non-punitive alternatives for improving student's language.

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a) *Problem Statement*

Students' high proficiency in English as a foreign language is the main goal that the English Language Department at JUC is trying to achieve. The mission to produce graduates who meet the demands of the job market and community has inspired the language deduction policy. However, students' attitude towards this policy may cause them to actually refrain from expressing themselves freely. As a result, this study is conducted to help understand the learners' attitude and problems with the language deduction policy as well as provide recommendations to improve students attitude and motivation, which are vital to students improved performance.

b) *Significance of the Study*

Understanding students' motivation to be expressive in the foreign language is vital to fulfill the objectives of every language course. Thus, this research is carried out to help identify the issues with the language deduction policy. The findings of this research should help improve students' performance at Jubail University College in terms of written communicative competence and learners' attitude, which in turn improve students overall performance.

c) *Aims and Objectives*

The research focuses on achieving the following aims and objectives:

- To investigate students' attitude toward the language deduction policy
- To identify the problems encountered by the students when it comes to deducting marks for language errors
- To provide recommendations to improve students' performance in exams

d) *Methodology*

The primary data was collected through a survey distributed electronically among the students. A total of 32 female students from various levels at Jubail University College responded to the survey. Scholarly work, journal articles, and other online sources were used to collect the secondary data. The information gathered from the secondary data was essential in creating the foundation of this research.

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e) Limitations

The research has the following limitations:

- The research will be limited to Jubail University College's students only.
- The research results will be limited since only 32 students will be subjected.
- The study will focus on female students only.

II. Literature Review

According to Krashen (1992), for EFL\ESL students to acquire the language, it is important to take into consideration the affective factors, such as self-confidence and motivation (qtd. in Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018. P.435). Students attitude toward learning is crucial as demotivated students perform poorly and their linguistic competence tends to be lacking as a result of their demotivation. In fact, affective factors are very significant that they are juxtaposed with cognitive skills (Brown, 2014, P.143). They are very important for learning to take place. Brown (2014) comments:

It can easily be claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of self, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity.

Affective barriers will only hinder students' development. In fact, focusing on rewarding rather than intimidation proved to be more effective. In a study to measure the impact of a positive attitude towards reading conducted by Cunningham & Stanovich (2001), children who read for enjoyment performed better (qtd. in Žolgar-Jerković, Jenko & Lipec-Stopar, 2018,p.202). Their interest in reading maximized their learning experience. Moreover, students who have a positive attitude towards learning seem to be more receptive and responsive than those who do not. The question remains whether language deduction is really as effective as it was intended to be; taking into consideration students' attitude and its effectiveness in preventing language errors.

According to James (2013), the recognition of errors in students' language may vary form one teacher to another. He refers to a study which took place in Germany by Lenghnhaun (1975) where over 30 error types went undetected by 57% of teachers. This clarifies that some teacher's ability to detect errors might be limited, and some measures have to be taken to address this point. It is assumed that some teachers are more tolerant than others when it comes to detecting language errors. As a result, students' attitude and proficiency might be affected. However, teachers training and courses have come a long way since then, and many EFL teachers undergo extensive training to meet the standards of modern education. This does not mean that the issue is completely solved, but at least the negative effects of it are minimized.

Kiparsky (1972) categorizes foreign language learners' errors into two categories. First, errors which appear in the structure of the sentence and could impede understanding, which he refers to as global errors. Second, localized errors, which occur in the secondary structure of a sentence. These errors do not affect the understanding nor hinders communication even if the structure of the sentence is not completely accurate (qtd. in Cheng, 2015). The type of errors that is tackled in this research falls under the second category. Students tend to make the same common language errors among EFL students; namely grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, and subject-verb-agreement. The question is no longer whether these errors should be tolerated or not as the students are already treated as English major students. The focus is on whether the deduction percentage actually improves learner's attitude and improve the overall academic performance of the students or not.

III. Research Results

The majority of the respondents (50%) were junior students, which makes it safe to say that their feedback reflects their understanding and perception of the issue and its effect on student performance as well as satisfaction. The students' evaluation of their own performance was taken into consideration. 68.8 % of the students evaluated their level of proficiency as intermediate; 21.9% as advanced and 9.4% as lower-intermediate while none opted for beginner. It is quite clear that the advanced students are far less in number than the intermediate students, which could mean that the majority of the students have gaps in their knowledge of the language. This is evident in the teacher's observation of their answers in exams.

The majority of students lose many marks for language errors despite providing accurate content, which demonstrates student's weak evaluation of their proficiency earlier in the survey. However, many of the students could be placed as lower-intermediate in a standardized proficiency test, at least based on their performance in written exams, despite being senior and junior students, due to their poor grammar and skills. Based on the survey, students seem to fail to realize the level of performance that is expected from them.

When asked about the language deduction policy, 34.4% agreed with it while 59.4% disagreed. It is safe to assume that the higher achieving students do not mind it and may even view it as a welcomed challenge while the weaker students fear its effects on their already low marks.

Many teachers constantly encourage students to work on their language; especially in EFL settings where the classroom seems to be the best option to practice the language in an authentic or semi-authentic environment. Strategies and methods of improvement

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vary, and a good point to start is to understand that it is not a teacher's job only but a shared task between both the student and the teacher. In fact, the students' responses support this claim as 53.1% of the respondents seem to agree that improving students spelling and grammar is a shared responsibility between the student and the teacher. Reading seems to be the most common practice among students to improve their language (43.8%). 28.1% relied on online exercises to improve their language while 15.6% did not try to address this issue outside of the class. A small percentage opted for watching movies, writing paragraphs, or joined the English Department's Writing Center. The majority of the students seems to be eager to improver; nonetheless, they seem to be lost as what to do. It appears that some students might have problems with being independent learners and do not know how to improve without guidance. Even if that is the case, some appear to fail to approach their advisors or ask for help despite having available resources and assistance in the college campus.

When asked about the most common type of language errors, a towering 71.9% selected spelling. This could be traced to a number of reasons, some of which are dependence on technology when writing paragraphs or essays, not taking notes during classes, and not practicing outside of the classroom. The second type of mistakes is grammar, which is expected in any EFL environment; however, students should work hard to try to improve their grammar by the available means. According to the survey, students seem to believe that they make grammatical and spelling mistakes in exams due to lack of knowledge and practice, pressure in exams, not revising before submitting their exam paper, lack of reading, and focus on memorizing the subject.

The vast majority of the students believe that the policy for deducting marks for language errors- especially in non-writing exams was ineffective in improving students' performance nor encouraged them to do well. On the other hand, 25% agree with the policy and experienced its effectiveness. Few express that it has helped a little, but they got discouraged when they saw their perfect score before the deduction. Few have express that marks should be deducted for grammar only and not for minor spelling or word choice errors.

For the students who opted for its ineffectiveness, they claimed that it discourages them from studying as they know that the effort they put into studying might not be fully reflected in their performance. Others think that it only demotivates them without seeing actual improvement while some fail to see the point behind deducting marks. Others thought that deducting marks for language errors is actually beneficial and students should try to improve their proficiency level rather than criticize the language deduction policy.

As alternatives for deducting marks for language errors, students suggested offering classes for weaker students, allowing students to use the language more in the class by doing presentation and activities in the class, reducing the deduction percentage, writing workshops were students write freely and receive feedback without worrying about losing marks, assign weekly readings and letting students write reviews, and mandatory classes for struggling students.

Generally speaking, students seem to worry about their marks more than their language when it comes to language errors deduction. The need for a solution for language errors in students' exams is undisputed. However, according to the students' responses, a revision of the policy and more practical solutions are needed.

IV. Discussion

To provide a cultivating environment for the students, the ELP has already taken a step this semester by proposing a revision of the language deduction policy. The ELP also provided a Writing Center as well as an Exam Help center to help the weaker students as of this academic year. Students' responses reflected that the majority of them are not well- informed when it comes to the available sources. Many struggle with language errors yet very few students actually show up to the writing center sessions. This issue needs serious consideration.

Student's attitude towards learning is very important as any noticeable progress is linked to their motivation and satisfaction. Although deducting errors might be discouraging, students' main concern seems to stem form the percentage of deduction rather than the policy itself.

While the majority of the respondents claim to read as a way of improving their communicative competence, it is not always guaranteed that it will have a positive outcome. Gass (1988) asserts that acquisition of language requires input, which reading could provide, but she questions the type of input that is needed. Reading is vital for English major students both as a skill and as learning tool; however, not all students respond to reading in the same way. That could be traced to the fact that individual learners have different learning styles and preferences. Nevertheless, For EFL English major students, it is paramount that they read as many texts as possible, or at least the assigned readings. Some students fail to read their assigned novels or articles.

One important issue with the language deduction policy is that it does not provide direct solutions to students' knowledge gaps. While it definitely makes the students aware of their areas of weakness, it does not directly address students' individual weaknesses. The reason could be because it was not designed to do so, but the value of such a step must be

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clear to the students. Students need to understand that it is not put in place merely to reduce their marks but to encourage them to work harder to identify their limitations and take action. The Writing Center could be a good place to start, but students must be more aware of its services and actually dedicate the time and effort to attend and participate in its sessions.

V. Recommendations

- The Writing Center and the Exam Help Center must collect feedback from the students to address the issue of poor students' attendance and devise a plan to attract more students.
- There should be an entrance exam after the prep year program for students who wish to major in English. For the department to produce highly qualified graduates, only students with a certain proficiency level should be admitted, and those who fail to meet the required proficiency level to enroll in the program should be offered other options to meet the admission requirements.
- More reading based assignments should be provided for students to practice critical thinking and interacting with texts.

VI. Conclusion

The department of English Language takes care of students' needs and aspirations as well as tries to meet the demands of the job market. Although the majority of the graduates are highly qualified, there are always areas to be improved. Society is growing and the globalized market's demands are going by the minute. This is mostly the cause to continually assess teaching and assessment practices and review them.

Students today are more conscious of their goals. They are more involved as classes become more learner-centered. The engagement of the student ensure a fulfilled objective and a qualified graduate. The study has concluded that while this policy is a step in the right direction, it needs to be assisted by other tools to achieve the desired goals.

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