The Impact of Diversity in Education on Tertiary Students' Academic Decisions

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Abstract

This paper highlights the findings of a study conducted on a sample of tertiary- level students who study English as a foreign language in a Foundation-Level in an Arabic context. The aim of the study was to explore how diversity of college-provided options influence students' academic decisions and making them reluctant to join the college-English track where the medium of instruction is English, which has consequently led to a noticeable dramatic decline of the number of students registering in the English track and to a remarkable increase in the number of students in the Arabic Track where all the college courses in all majors are taught in Arabic.

The sample of the study consisted of 303 female and male students enrolling in Foundation Level 2 in the Community College of Qatar. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher specifically created a four-Likert questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 65 items distributed to four main domains:

1. *Factors related to the students' themselves: their goals, peer-influence, their parents….etc (items from 1-17).*
2. *Factors related to English Language Center, the Foundation Program: textbooks, teachers, environment, policies and rules, etc.(Items from 18-50).*
3. *Factors related to logistic issues (Items from 51-57).*
4. *Factors related to the Arabic track in Lusail (Items from 58-65).*

The statistical analysis conducted on the data obtained from students' responses to the questionnaire revealed some factors that make students join the Arabic track, such as feeling relaxed in a classroom where the mode of instruction is Arabic, studying in Arabic independently is easier than studying subjects in English independently, getting bored and stressed because of the intensity of the courses in the English track, feeling that they are not well-prepared in Levels 1 and 2 to help them study Level 3 and 4 successfully, and studying very few study skills in the foundation level. They do not study note-taking, problem solving strategies, critical thinking, academic English, and English for specific purposes that can help them to study interdisciplinary subjects in the English track.

Key words: diversity in education, academic decisions, ESL foundation program, mode of instruction in tertiary level courses

Introduction

Research, common sense, and observation have revealed the fact that Arabic- native speaking inevitably face some challenges in their endeavors to learn English as a second language. These difficulties are attributed to many factors; some of which are related to students and their families, others are related to teachers and school administration, while some others are related to the target language and cultural and linguistic considerations. Teachers' lack of awareness of how to address these challenges might lead students to be reluctant to learn the target language (Aubrey, 2009; Burt & Peyton, 2003).

In the Qatari context, the problem has apparently been confronted in the Community College of Qatar. CCQ has launched a foundation level whose purpose is to prepare the freshmen students to join the college level by teaching them four levels of English as a Second Language. Students are placed into the levels based on the grades they attain in the college placement test. The college adopted the Accuplacer Test. The Accuplacer Test composite score is students' results in listening, reading and grammar.

On the other hand, the post-foundation level in the Community College of Qatar has two academic tracks: the Arabic Track and the English track. In the English track, all specializations and courses are taught in English, whereas in the Arabic Track , all specializations are taught in Arabic. CCQ policy is that students who want to join the English track should pass the foundation levels 1,2,3,and 4. However, the prerequisite for students who prefer to join the college Arabic track is only passing the foundation level 1 and 2. CCQ has been experiencing a great challenge in the last two years. It is considered as a serious phenomenon that has impacted the English track negatively as the majority of foundation male and female students have joined the Arabic track after graduating from Level 2. The problem has expanded when a great number of level 3 and 4 students have also joined the Arabic track, which led to a dramatic decrease in the number of students enrolling in the English track specializations.

As an instructor in CCQ Foundation Level, a member in ESL Students' Affairs Committee, , and a students' academic advisor, the researcher of the current study has noticed Level 2 students' conflict to take a final decision whether to join the Arabic Track or the English Track. B2 level graduates, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages-CEFR, are expected to be able to handle the main structures of the language with some confidence, demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and use appropriate communicative strategies in a variety of social situations. What may have made the problem more complicated in the Community College of Qatar is that B2 level graduates are not equipped with terminologies that help them in their college field specializations. Consequently, the researcher conducted this study to investigate the factors that make a great number of students register in the Arabic Track in spite of the different awareness and counselling programs held by the Foundation administration to motivate students to join the English track ,as well.

Literature Review

Literature review conducted by the researcher shows that students' academic decisions are always influenced by many factors. James, Baldwin, & McInnis (1999)have identified a range of factors influencing students' course preferences. These include graduate's satisfaction with the course; benefits graduates get for future employment, the quality of teaching, approaches to teaching, learning and assessment used in the course, including opportunities for flexible study. Jackson (1982) and Hossler & Gallagher(1987), stressed the fact that students' background characteristics, their aspirations, educational achievement, and institutional climate affect their choices (cited in Lee, and Chatfield, (n.d.).

Other researchers highlight other factors that affect students' choices. Harlech-Jones (2001: 108-120) considered the medium of Instruction as a factor that may correlates with other aspects to lead students to reluctance of learning the courses in a language else than their native tongue. Their ego-centralism, cultural identity, and level of proficiency are some of these factors. On the other hand, Harlech-Jones (2001) emphasized the effect of stress for both teachers and learners when English has to be used despite their low English proficiency level and consequently the failure to maintain a learner-centered and participative curriculum. Similarly, Brown (2000:151) discussed the affective domains when studying English. Self-esteem and anxiety are two affective factors that make students unwilling to learn English. Brown (2000:152) used the term "foreign language anxiety", which might have a   debilitative or a facilitative effect on the learning process. Brown also discussed how motivation with its two types: integrative or instrumental can be a factor that influences students' choice to learn English or to learn interdisciplinary courses in English. Students who have instrumental motivation may choose English as a medium of Instruction, especially as they strongly believe that English is useful for their future job. Others who are integratively-motivated like to learn more English, while some others may refuse English as a medium of instruction because of decisive factors related to their attachment to their native identity. In a study on school students using English as a medium of instruction in a Namibian school, Cantoni (2007) concluded the following:

> *"Together with other factors such as the teachers' authority and their methods, the use of English*
> *as a medium of instruction hinders the full participation of the pupils because it does not seem to*
> *provide comprehensible input, it does not seem to work as a tool for constructing knowledge in the*
> *content subjects and it is an obstacle for the learner centeredness." (P 26)*

Researchers pinpointed some other reasons to justify students' reluctance to learn English or use it to learn other interdisciplinary subjects. One of these factors is that students' non-participation in their English foundation classes develops their future reluctance to use English in their specialization areas, whereas students, who are actively involved, reported higher satisfaction and higher persistence rates (Tsui 1996: 146). In his study on Saudi Arabian students, Hamouda (2013: 19) found out that Non-English major students in Saudi Arabia, similar to learners in foreign language contexts (Jackson, 2002; Howritz et al, 1986), have been observed to be either quiet or to speak English with a trembling voice, make numerous unnecessary stops, or having shaking hands or legs, etc. during English lessons or oral English tests

Observation and research also highlight the issue that transitional stages are usually challenging to human beings in general and to learners in particular. Students transferring from foundation level where courses are usually not as complicated as those of the college levels, and where subject content is merely English grammar, reading, and writing may feel anxious when moving to the college where they have to learn subject contents in English. Learning mathematics, biology, physics, computer science, engineering, and other subjects in English needs additional study skills which might not exist in some foundation levels. This will, in turn, influence students' educational decisions. Students who prefer to join the English track should study some English for Specific Courses in their foundation levels. In other words, they need to be taught some terminologies that help them understand their instructors in the college levels. They also need to be taught some study skills and preliminary basics of research work. Unfortunately, this is not the case in the Foundation Level in the Community College of Qatar. Hoi (2017:2) pinpointed that "English for General Purposes (EGP) is beneficial to cultivate the students' language ability, but cannot cultivate the students' practicability and professional ability." Researchers indicated that English for General Purposes are mostly examination-oriented education (Hoi,2017). Students who study the language knowledge system in schools and college foundation levels may feel it very difficult to adapt to the academic and professional English courses at colleges. Hoi added that the most common learning problems of college students are reflected in their lack of solid foundation of general English, lack of learning strategies, and excessive dependence on the teacher. To Hoi (2017:3), "ESP teaching pays attention to the cultivation of students' pragmatic competence." As Orr (1998) stated, "English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is research and instruction that build on General English and is designed to prepare students or working adults for the English used in specific disciplines, vocations, or professions to accomplish a specific purpose" (p.1). Based on literature review, it can be concluded that a foundation program that depends on EGP is unable to prepare students to a college level education. In contrast, ESP foundation programs focus on contents for different majors according to students' needs and emphasize on cultivating students' language application ability. This, in turn, may positively influence students' enthusiasm and abilities needed for college education. "English should not be taught as a separate subject exiled from the learner's real needs; rather it should be a part and a parcel of the subject matter area based on its importance to the learner." (Elyes and Fadel,2015:14). This is exactly what has happened and is still happening in CCQ Foundation level. Unfortunately, the learners' needs of academic English is ignored or under-emphasized.

Students' needs constitute another factor in their academic decisions. Al-Busaidi (2003) conducted a needs analysis study to investigate the EFL learners' needs in Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman. The study focus was mainly to reveal the academic needs of those students. The three tools used in that study were interviews, email dialogues and questionnaires. The study also aimed to identify the program practices that were effective in bringing about the students' needs. Based on the findings, the study suggested the implementation of a hybrid content-based curriculum model to be used to integrate language and college courses. The researcher also emphasized that more cooperation is required between the language center and subject teachers to develop awareness about learners' needs.

College Freshmen are often intimidated by the "rarified atmosphere of intellectual life"(Reynolds, 2017). Many factors usually affect their first impression about their college life. For example, their teachers' classroom pedagogy, their peer influence, the college policies and rules, their achievement gaps, their parents' interference, and their personal future goals work together to definitely influence the crystallization of the ideas and choices they had before starting the college life, which will, in turn, affects their choices in their college life. Sometimes, the freshmen may change their future goals and choices of tracks or academic majors to join. Once students are put in an actual situation to choose their tracks after their foundation level, questions start to circulate among students: who is the instructor of the college course? (in CCQ case: is he/she a foreigner? Is he/she a bilingual? Is he an Arab? How many credential hours do we need to study? Will the courses be taught in English or Arabic?

Do you think we can pass easily? Is the course difficult or hard? Does the teacher ask for many requirements? Will I find better facilities if I move to a new campus? Do I actually need English in my future job? In fact, All these questions may lead students to a kind of conflict or confusion. It is the responsibility of the college administrators and councilors to help students overcome this conflict by individual or group conferences leading them to the best choice according to their potentials. If the college lacks this counseling or the counseling is ineffective, students will recourse to the college sophomores to ask them about their experiences. Sometimes they listen to their relatives or friends in the higher courses. This might be helpful or harmful to the freshmen and might affect their academic choices negatively, sometimes. It was found that associating with students, who have a positive affect toward their school, enhanced students own satisfaction with their school, whereas associating with friends who have a negative affect toward school decreased it (Ryan, 2000). In CCQ context and because all students belong to Qatari tribes, most freshmen have friends or relatives as sophomores. They inevitably hear stories about those who may be struggling to pass in the English Track or those who have transferred from the English track to the Arabic track as they couldn't meet the track requirements.

College environment also influences students' academic decisions and achievements. According to Crosnoe, Monica, and Glen. (2004), academic institutions climate is the general atmosphere of school. It includes the rules, policies, students-teachers interrelationship, facilities, and logistics. Teacher's experience is another indicator of student academic performance and academic decisions. Students who attend schools with a higher number of teachers with full credential tend to perform better and vice versa (Bali & Alverez, 2003). This means that students will build an attitude by generalizing what they experienced with their teachers. If they are not satisfied with their teachers in one level they may transfer this attitude when moving to another level, or another campus.

Definitions of Terms

Foundation level: It is the stage of education that precedes the college field-specialization. It aims at preparing students academically to the second stage which is the college life. In the Community College of Qatar, the Foundation program consists of four levels: 1,2,3, and 4. Students are enrolled in a particular level based on their score on an Accuplacer test**.** The Accuplacer Test composite score is students' results in listening, reading and grammar.

English as a Specific Purpose: Wright (1992) defines the concept as, "ESP is basically language learning which has its focus on all aspects of language pertaining a particular field of human activity, while taking into account the time constraints imposed by learners" (p.2012).

Arabic Track: It is the educational track where the medium of instruction is Arabic, the students' native language. To graduate from the Arabic Track, students should pass 60 credential hours. There are three main majors in the Arabic track: Associate of Art, Child Management, and Bachelor of Business Administration.

English Track: It is the educational track where the medium of instruction is English. All Associate of Science belong to the English Track.

Problem of the Study

In the Community College of Qatar- CCQ- , the number of students who prefer to join the Arabic Track for their College field specialization has exceeded the number of those who have enrolled in the college English track where all the field specializations are taught in English. This imbalance in the number of students in both tracks has negatively impacted CCQ general strategic plans, putting the stakeholders in a dilemma of reconsidering the college policies such as teacher recruitment policies, specializations, provision of books, and students' orientation sessions and making them think thoroughly to find ways to encourage students to join the English track, as well.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will hopefully contribute to solving a serious academic phenomenon in many higher-education institutions: students reluctance to . Based on the results, the researcher will recommend some solutions that may help colleges Foundation-level instructors and college-level instructors will also benefit from the study findings as some recommendations will be highlighted to direct them on what to focus on in their teaching. The third group who will benefit from the study findings are the students themselves as they will be advised on how to improve their English to meet the college-level demands.

Questions of the Study

The current study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that make level 2 foundation students join the Arabic track, not the English Track?
2. Are there significant differences at level of (0.05) in the factors that make foundation Level 2 students join the Arabic track due to gender?

Methods and Procedures

Study Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all the foundation level (2) male and female students enrolling in the Community College of Qatar in quarter 2 of the academic year 2017-2018. The total of the population was (307) students. Table (9) shows the distribution of the study population across gender and study shifts: morning and evening.

Level	Male		Female	
	AM	PM	AM	PM
2	65	32	133	73

Table (9): The distribution of the study population across gender and shifts

The data were collected from the population by convenient sampling. This means that the sample was chosen based on their availability to the researcher. Thus, a total of (219) in foundation level 2 male and female students in CCQ constituted the sample. Table (10) Shows the distribution of the sample across gender in all shifts.

Variable: gender	Frequency	% of the sample
Male	52	23.7%
Female	167	76.3%
Total	219	100.0%

Table (10) : Demographic Information of the sample

Data Collection Methods

Instrument of the study

To achieve the aim of the study, namely exploring the factors that make Level 2 Foundation level students choose to join the Arabic Track where all fields specialization are taught in Arabic, the researcher specifically created a four-Likert questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Section One: Demographic Variables
The demographic information was collected with closed-ended questions, through (**Gender**).

Section Two: students' conflict: Arabic or English track factors that make the choice, and it contains:
The questionnaire consisted of 65 items distributed to four main domains:

5. Factors related to the students' themselves: their goals, peer-influence, their parents….etc (items from 1-17).
6. Factors related to English Language Center, the Foundation Program: textbooks, teachers, environment, policies and rules, etc.(Items from 18-50).
7. Factors related to logistic issues (Items from 51-57).
8. Factors related to the Arabic track in Lusail (Items from 58-65).

The questionnaire was written in English but was translated into Arabic to guarantee the students' full comprehension of the items included. To create the questionnaire items, the researcher depended on the non-structured informal interviews conducted with some level 2 students and students of college transitional courses. The foundation levels instructors' ideas were also taken into consideration. Finally, literature review conducted by the current research was also an integral resource. As the current study is an action research, its questionnaire was totally created by the researcher. Literature review did not reveal a complete questionnaire on this topic. Likert scales were used for all measurements, from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1).As shown in table (11)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

Table (11) Likert-Scale (4) scale implemented in the questionnaire.
Source: prepared by the researcher

Validity of the study instrument

To test the questionnaire for clarity and to provide a coherent research questionnaire, a macro review that covers all the research constructs was accurately performed by ESL academic experts in CCQ, to verify the sincerity of its items, and to take their opinions, and make the required modifications.

Reliability of the study instrument

To calculate the stability of the study instrument, the researcher used the equation of internal consistency using test Cronbach's alpha as shown in ***Table (4)*** the test results where the values of Cronbach alpha for all variables of the study and identification of generally is higher than (60%), which is acceptable in the research and studies as the Cronbach's alpha ranged from (0.74-94%). This gives the questionnaire as a whole an acceptable reliability coefficient as shown in ***Table (12)***

Variables	*Cronbach Alpha*
Reasons related to students	**0.87**
Reasons related to English language Center	**0.94**
Logistic factors	**0.74**
Reasons related to the Arabic Track	**0.92**
All Questions	*0.96*

Table(12) Cronbach'salpha For the study fields

Statistical processing

To answer the study questions and hypothesis, a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the collected data and the subjects' answers of the questions. The following statistical techniques and tests were used in data analysis:

1. Cronbach's Alpha reliability (a) to measure the strength of the correlation and coherence between questionnaire items and highlights the stability of consistency with which the instrument is measuring the concept and helps to assess the quality of the measurement.
2. Frequencies and percentages to describe demographical variable.
3. Descriptive Statistical Techniques: these included means and standard deviations. These techniques were used to illustrate respondents to study fields.
4. Relative importance, assigned due to:

Class interval = $\frac{\text{Maximum Class} - \text{Minimum Class}}{\text{Number of level}}$

$\frac{4-1}{3} = \frac{3}{3} = 1.00$

- *The Low degree from 1.00 – 2.00*
- *The Medium degree from 2.01 –3.01*
- *The High degree from 3.02 and above.*

Analysis Results & Hypotheses Test
Introduction

According to the purpose of the research and the research framework presented in the previous chapter, this chapter describes the results of the statistical analysis for the data collected according to the research questions and research hypotheses. The data analysis includes a description of the Means and Standard Deviations to answer the questions of the study.

Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

The results of question (1), What are the factors that make level 2 foundation students join the Arabic track, not the English Track?

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level to show the analysis of reason level of Arabic or English track for the students in CCQ as shown in *Table (13)*

No	Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
4	Reasons related to the Arabic Track	3.12	0.76	1	High
2	Reasons related to English Language Center	2.58	0.59	2	Medium
3	Logistic Factors	2.53	0.66	3	Medium
1	Reasons related to students	2.45	0.56	4	Medium
Total		2.67	0.54		Medium

Table (13) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance Level of reasons level of Arabic or English track descending order

It's clear from *Table (5)* that the mean of the answers to all the items related to all the dimensions in the questionnaire of the Arabic English track conflict ranged between (3.12 – 2.45), where the whole axis earned a total mean of (2.67), which is a level of medium. Dimension **(4)** which relates to (Reasons related to the Arabic Track) came in the first place and it earned the highest mean reaching (3.12), with standard deviation (0.76), which is a level of High, and dimension **(2)** (Reason related to English language Center) came in second place. It earned a mean of (2.58), and a standard deviation (0.59), which is a level of Medium. The third reason, namely the (Logistic Factors) it earned a mean of (2.53) with a standard deviation (0.66) which is a level of Medium. The reasons related to the dimension of students came in the last place, it earned a mean of (2.45) with a standard deviation (0.56) which is a level of Medium.

This explains that the main reason was related to the Arabic track, and figure (2) shows that
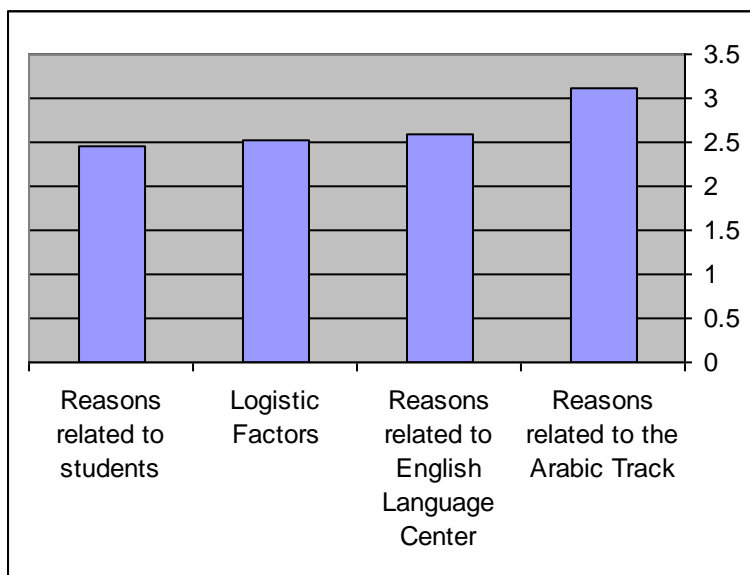

Figure (2) reasons level of Arabic or English track
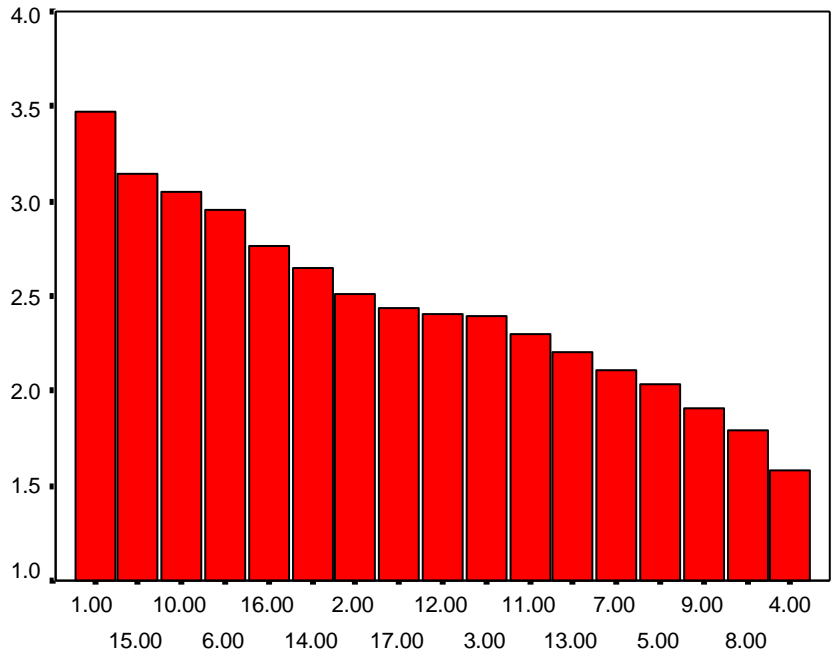
1- Level of Reason related to Students

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level as shown in Table (14).

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
1	I want to finish my college education as fast as possible to join a University	3.47	0.77	1	High
15	I can get more credits (Marks) in the Arabic track sooner than in the English track.	3.14	0.90	2	High
10	I want to take high grades in the Arabic track which I can't get in the English track.	3.05	0.97	3	high
6	All the subjects in the college I want to join at the university are taught in Arabic.	2.95	0.97	4	Medium
16	I want to study with Arab teachers	2.76	1.03	5	Medium
14	I was influenced by the positive attitudes of some students who are studying in the Arabic track	2.65	0.94	6	Medium
2	I feel English is very difficult to learn.	2.51	1.02	7	Medium
17	I heard stories about students who changed to the Arabic track after studying in the English track for a semester or a year.	2.44	1.10	8	Medium
12	I think Arabs should study in Arabic to preserve their identity.	2.40	1.04	9	Medium
3	I feel I do not have adequate basics to learn English	2.39	0.96	10	Medium
11	I was influenced by the negative attitudes of some students who are studying in the English track.	2.30	1.01	11	Medium
13	I value only the Arabic Language.	2.20	1.06	12	Medium
7	I think I will not need English in my career in the future	2.11	1.08	13	Medium
5	I want to follow my friends' steps who joined the Arabic track before me.	2.04	1.04	14	Medium
9	I don't want to be influenced by European cultures if I learn English.	1.91	1.01	15	Low
8	I hate learning English.	1.79	0.97	16	Low
4	My family (parents or husband) encourages me to join the Arabic track.	1.58	0.84	17	Low
Total		2.45	0.56		**Medium**

Table (14) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance Level of Reason related to students

It's clear from ***Table (6)*** that the mean of the (reason related to Students), ranged between (3.47– 1.58), where the whole dimension earned a total mean of (2.45), which is a level of medium. Paragraph (**1**) (I want to finish my college education as fast as possible to join a University) earned the highest mean reaching (3.47), with a standard deviation (0.77), which is a level of high, and paragraph (**4**) (My family (parents or husband) encourage me to join the Arabic track) came in the last place. It earned a mean of (1.58), and a standard deviation of (0.84), which is a level of Low.

This explains that the reason of Arabic or English track related to students was in the medium level, and figure (3) show that:

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2- Level of Reason related to English Language Center

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level as shown in Table (15).
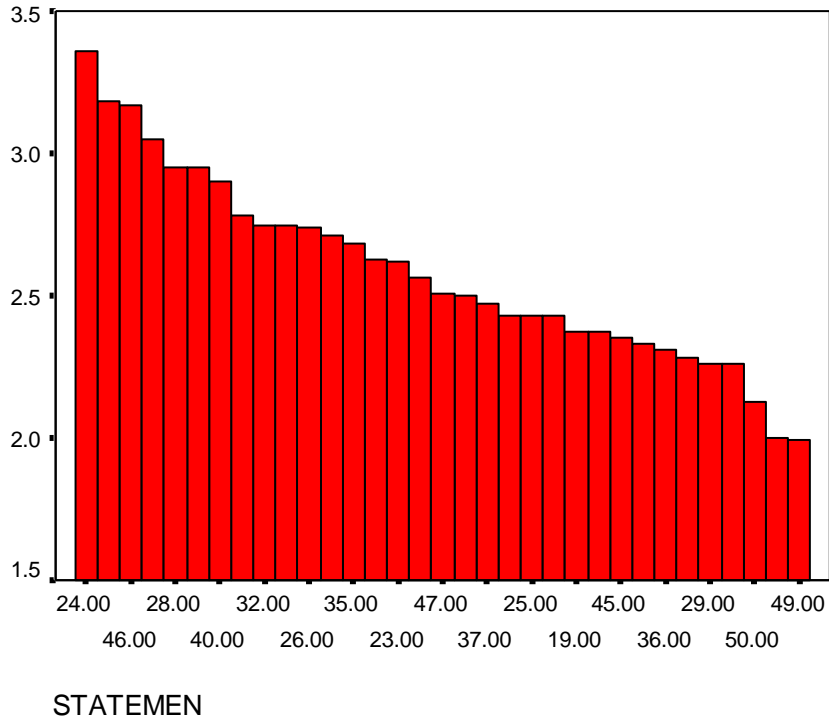
No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
24	The attendance rules in ELC are too strict.	3.36	1.01	1	High
38	I believe that in the Arabic track, I can understand all the educational resources in the library because they will be in Arabic.	3.18	0.86	2	High
46	In ELC, I am not allowed to choose my teacher or my sections.	3.17	1.03	3	High
41	I believe the timings of the classes in the Arabic class might be more flexible and convenient to me	3.05	0.94	4	High
28	I do not think five levels are enough to study English basics	2.95	0.90	5	Medium
39	I may not understand the library or internet resources I I go to the English track because all will be in English.	2.95	0.97	5	Medium
40	I do not like the timings of the ELC courses	2.90	1.04	7	Medium
27	The foundation program is too intensive that makes me bored and stressed.	2.78	1.03	8	Medium
32	I feel I may fail level 3 and 4 because I am still not well prepared in level 1 and 2	2.75	0.99	9	Medium
44	ELC evening schedule makes it difficult for me to take level 3 and 4	2.75	1.09	9	Medium
26	I hate studying for more two terms in ELC	2.74	0.95	11	Medium

43	I want to start working in a job as soon as possible	2.71	1.07	12	Medium
35	I learnt very few study skills, such as note-taking, problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, that can help in the English track.	2.68	0.93	13	Medium
22	I am afraid I won't understand the accent of some teachers in the English track.	2.63	1.02	14	Medium
23	I think I may join the English track if all the college instructors are bilingual.	2.62	1.04	15	Medium
48	I feel it is boring to study only English the whole day	2.56	1.04	16	Medium
47	I can improve my English alone without spending my time in two more level.	2.51	1.06	17	Medium
42	I feel that studying in the foundation level is similar to studying in a secondary school	2.50	0.96	18	Medium
37	I think that books I study in ELC are too hard to study	2.47	0.98	19	Medium
21	I can't understand the accent of some ELC instructors	2.43	0.99	20	Medium
25	I feel I haven't been prepared well in the ELC for the English track.	2.43	0.97	20	Medium
34	I feel that the textbook I am studying in ELC are too easy to prepare me for college English track.	2.43	0.89	20	Medium
19	I was not advised about which track to choose during my foundation level	2.37	1.07	23	Medium
31	I know that my friends who studied level 3 and 4 did not learn any useful study skills that may help them in the English track.	2.37	0.92	23	Medium
45	I have experienced a bad attitude from an ELC teacher that made me want to leave ELC as soon as possible	2.35	1.13	25	Medium
33	I don't know my actual level of my English proficiency because my teachers are teaching me only to pass the exams	2.33	1.01	26	Medium
36	Level 3 and 4 students persuade me not to continue in the foundation level after level 2	2.31	1.03	27	Medium
20	Some of my current teachers make me hate English because they are teaching me in a very boring way.	2.28	1.13	28	Medium
29	My friends who studied level 3 and 4 can't speak or write English very well	2.26	0.85	29	Medium
30	My friends who studied level 3 and 4 regret for wasting their time in these two levels.	2.26	0.97	29	Medium
50	I am a special – needs student and my needs weren't accommodated in ELC	2.13	1.13	31	Medium
18	I have a bad impression about English teachers because of my experience in ELC	2.00	1.00	32	Low
49	I feel 8 weeks is too short time to improve my English skills.	1.99	1.00	33	Low
Total		2.58	0.59		**Medium**

Table (15) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance Level of Reason relation to English language Center

It's clear from **Table (15)** that the mean of the (reason related to English language Center), ranged between (3.36– 1.99), where the whole dimension earned a total mean of (3.36), which is a level of medium. Paragraph **(24)** (The attendance rules in ELC are too strict) earned the highest mean reaching (3.36), with standard deviation (1.01), which is a level of High, and paragraph **(49)** (I feel 8 weeks is too short time to improve my English skills) came in last Place. It earned a mean of (1.99), and a standard deviation (1.00), which is a level of Low.

This explains that the reason of Arabic or English track related to English language Center was in the medium level, and figure (4) show that:
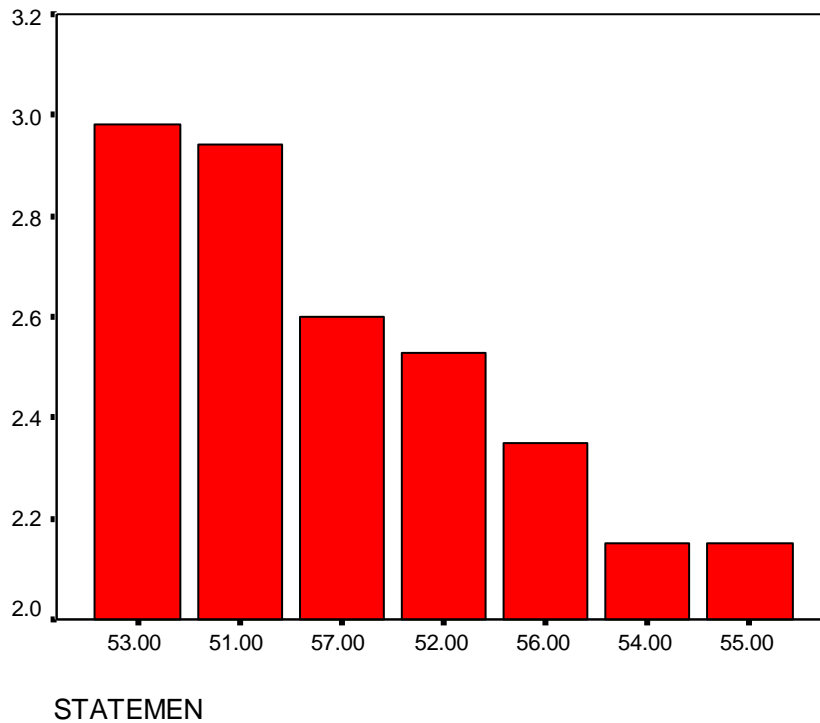

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3- Level of Reason related to Logistic factors

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level as shown in Table (8).

		Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
53		I will have more options to get scholarships to attend courses or seminars in many Qatari educational institutions.	2.98	0.98	1	Medium
51		I like to enjoy the facilities: the cafeteria, the library, the labs, the space, the cars parks, the bathrooms provided to students in Lusail as soon as possible	2.94	1.05	2	Medium
57		In college level, I have the chance to join more extra-curricular activities arranged by the college.	2.60	1.01	3	Medium
52		I will not be late to my college because my house is nearer to Lusail campus than to CR-Campus.	2.53	1.17	4	Medium
56		I need to get sponsorship from my work, which I do not get during the ELC level	2.35	1.07	4	Medium
54		I don't need English for my future job	2.15	1.07	6	Medium
55		I am sponsored my job organization which wants to fund me only for two years.	2.15	1.06	6	Medium
		Total	2.53	0.66		Medium

Table (16) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance Level of Reason related to Logistic factors
It's clear from *Table (16)* that the mean of the (reason related to Logistic factors), ranged between (2.98 – 2.15), where the whole dimension earned a total mean of (2.53), which is a level of medium. Paragraph **(53)** (I will have more options to get scholarships to attend courses or seminars in many Qatari educational institutions) earned the highest mean reaching (2.98), with standard deviation (0.98), which is a level of Medium, and paragraph **(55)** (I am sponsored by my job organization which wants to fund me only for two years) came in last Place. It earned a mean of (2.15), and a standard deviation (1.06), which is a level of Medium .

This explains that the reason of Arabic or English track related to Logistic factors was in the medium level, and figure (5) show that:

STATEMEN

4- Level of Reason related to the Arabic Track

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level as shown in Table (17).

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
59	I can feel relaxed in a classroom where the mode of instruction is Arabic	3.22	0.90	1	High
62	I will find more time to study Arabic than to study English at home.	3.20	0.95	2	High
63	I will do my homework in Arabic faster than doing it in English	3.16	0.97	3	High
64	I can find more of my family members to help me in my Arabic projects and tasks	3.15	0.93	4	High
65	I think I can register more credential hours in the Arabic track because it will be easier for me	3.15	1.00	4	High
58	I like the Arabic track because all the teachers in the Arabic track are Arabs	3.13	0.91	6	High
61	All the books and references will be in Arabic	3.05	0.98	7	High
60	I will find all my friends in the Arabic track and this makes me happier.	2.89	1.02	8	Medium
Total		3.12	0.76		High

Table (17) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance Level of Reasons related to the Arabic Track

It's clear from *Table (17)* that the mean of the (reason related to the Arabic Track), ranged between (3.22– 2.89), where the whole dimension earned a total mean of (3.12), which is a level of medium. Paragraph **(59)** (I can feel relaxed in a classroom where the mode of instruction is Arabic) earned the highest mean reaching (3.22), with standard deviation (0.90), which is a level of High, and paragraph **(60)** (I will find all my friends in the Arabic track and this makes me happier) came in last Place. It earned a mean of (2.89), and a standard deviation (1.02), which is a level of Medium .
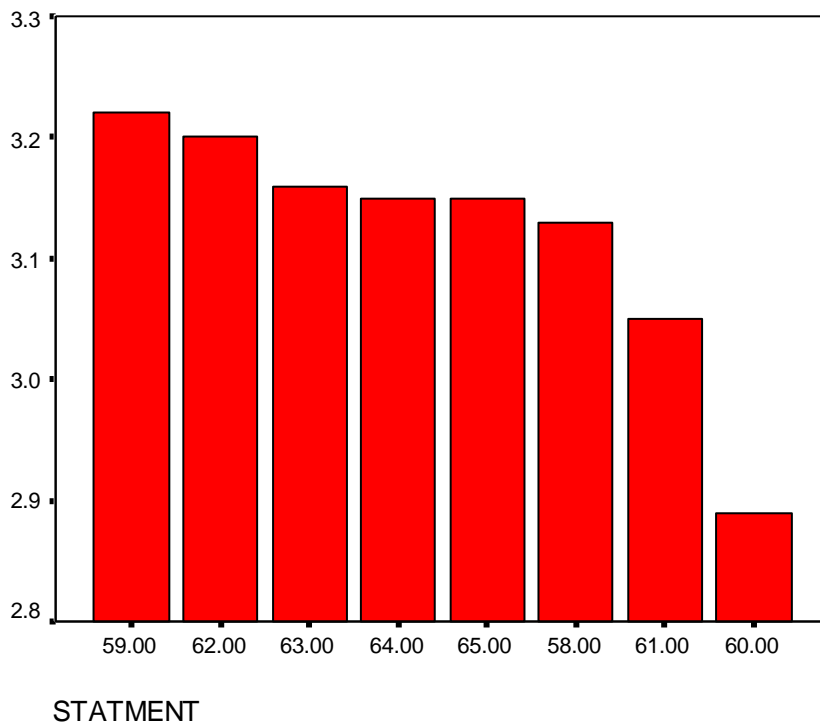
Figure (9)

The result of question (2) : Are there significant differences at level of (0.05) in the factors that make foundation Level 2 students join the Arabic track due to gender?

To answer this question, the researcher used Independent Sample T-test to show the significant differences in the factors that make foundation Level 2 students join the Arabic track due to gender, as following:

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
REASONS RELATED TO STUDENTS	Male	52	2.57	0.62	
	Female	167	2.42	0.54	
REASONS RELATED TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER	Male	52	2.62	0.63	
	Female	167	2.57	0.57	
REASONS RELATED TO LOGISTIC FACTORS	Male	52	2.61	0.68	
	Female	167	2.50	0.66	
REASONS RELATED TO THE ARABIC TRACK	Male	52	3.21	0.69	
	Female	167	3.09	0.78	
TOTAL	Male	52	2.75	0.55	
	Female	167	2.64	0.53	

		t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
REASONS RELATED TO STUDENTS	Equal variances assumed	1.739	217	.084	.1549	8.911E-02	
REASONS RELATED TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER	Equal variances assumed	.519	217	.604	4.835E-02	9.314E-02	
REASONS RELATED TO LOGISTIC FACTORS	Equal variances assumed	1.042	217	.299	.1095	.1051	
REASONS RELATED TO THE ARABIC TRACK	Equal variances assumed	.999	217	.319	.1208	.1209	
TOTAL	Equal variances assumed	1.266	217	.207	.1084	8.563E-02	

Table (18) Independent Sample T-test to show the significant differences in the factors that make foundation Level 2 students join the Arabic track due to gender

It's clear from **Table (18)** that there is no significant differences in the factors that make foundation level 2 students join the Arabic track due to gender, (t) values were (1.739, 0.519, 1.042, 0.999, 1.266) and it's not significant at level of (0.05), taking into consideration that **If (t) value tabulated = (1.96) and more significant at level of (0.05)**

 (t) value tabulated less than (1.96) it's not significant at level of (0.05)

To have a general idea of the most important factors that influence students' decisions and make them join the Arabic track, the researcher ordered the factors in a decending form according to the means of the subjects' answers. Table (19) shows that.

Table (19) The factors affecting students' academic decisions descending according to their importance

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item Importance	Importance Level
1	I want to finish my college education as fast as possible to join a University	3.47	0.77	1	High
24	The attendance rules in ELC are too strict.	3.36	1.01	2	High
59	I can feel relaxed in a classroom where the mode of instruction is Arabic	3.22	0.90	3	High
62	I will find more time to study Arabic than to study English at home.	3.20	0.95	4	High
38	I believe that in the Arabic track, I can understand all the educational resources in the library because they will be in Arabic.	3.18	0.86	5	High
46	In ELC, I am not allowed to choose my teacher or my sections.	3.17	1.03	6	High
63	I will do my homework in Arabic faster than doing it in English	3.16	0.97	7	High
64	I can find more of my family members to help me in my Arabic projects and tasks	3.15	0.93	8	High
65	I think I can register more credential hours in the Arabic track because it will be easier for me	3.15	1.00	8	High
15	I can get more credits (Marks) in the Arabic track sooner than in the English track.	3.14	0.90	10	High
58	I like the Arabic track because all the teachers in the Arabic track are Arabs	3.13	0.91	11	High
10	I want to take high grades in the Arabic track which I can't get in the English track.	3.05	0.97	12	high

41	I believe the timings of the classes in the Arabic class might be more flexible and convenient to me	3.05	0.94	12	High
61	All the books and references will be in Arabic	3.05	0.98	12	High
53	I will have more options to get scholarships to attend courses or seminars in many Qatari educational institutions.	2.98	0.98	15	Medium
6	All the subjects in the college I want to join at the university are taught in Arabic.	2.95	0.97	16	Medium
28	I do not think five levels are enough to study English basics	2.95	0.90	16	Medium
39	I may not understand the library or internet resources I I go to the English track because all will be in English.	2.95	0.97	16	Medium
51	I like to enjoy the facilities: the cafeteria, the library, the labs, the space, the cars parks, the bathrooms provided to students in Lusail as soon as possible	2.94	1.05	19	Medium
40	I do not like the timings of the ELC courses	2.90	1.04	20	Medium
60	I will find all my friends in the Arabic track and this makes me happier.	2.89	1.02	21	Medium
27	The foundation program is too intensive that makes me bored and stressed.	2.78	1.03	22	Medium
16	I want to study with Arab teachers	2.76	1.03	23	Medium
32	I feel I may fail level 3 and 4 because I am still not well prepared in level 1 and 2	2.75	0.99	24	Medium
44	ELC evening schedule makes it difficult for me to take level 3 and 4	2.75	1.09	24	Medium
26	I hate studying for more two terms in ELC	2.74	0.95	26	Medium
43	I want to start working in a job as soon as possible	2.71	1.07	27	Medium
35	I learnt very few study skills, such as note-taking, problem-solving strategies, critical thinking, that can help in the English track.	2.68	0.93	28	Medium
14	I was influenced by the positive attitudes of some students who are studying in the Arabic track	2.65	0.94	29	Medium
22	I am afraid I won't understand the accent of some teachers in the English track.	2.63	1.02	30	Medium
23	I think I may join the English track if all the college instructors are bilingual.	2.62	1.04	31	Medium
57	In college level, I have the chance to join more extra-curricular activities arranged by the college.	2.60	1.01	32	Medium
48	I feel it is boring to study only English the whole day	2.56	1.04	33	Medium
52	I will not be late to my college because my house is nearer to lausail campus than to CR-Campus.	2.53	1.17	34	Medium
2	I feel English is very difficult to learn.	2.51	1.02	35	Medium
47	I can improve my English alone without spending my time in two more level.	2.51	1.06	35	Medium
42	I feel that studying in the foundation level is similar to studying in a secondary school	2.50	0.96	37	Medium
37	I think that books I study in ELC are too hard to study	2.47	0.98	38	Medium
17	I heard stories about students who changed to the Arabic track after studying in the English track for a semester or a year.	2.44	1.10	39	Medium

21	I can't understand the accent of some ELC instructors	2.43	0.99	40	Medium
25	I feel I haven't been prepared well in the ELC for the English track.	2.43	0.97	40	Medium
34	I feel that the textbook I am studying in ELC are too easy to prepare me for college English track.	2.43	0.89	40	Medium
12	I think Arabs should study in Arabic to preserve their identity.	2.40	1.04	43	Medium
3	I feel I do not have adequate basics to learn English	2.39	0.96	44	Medium
19	I was not advised about which track to choose during my foundation level	2.37	1.07	45	Medium
31	I know that my friends who studied level 3 and 4 did not learn any useful study skills that may help them in the English track.	2.37	0.92	45	Medium
45	I have experienced a bad attitude from an ELC teacher that made me want to leave ELC as soon as possible	2.35	1.13	47	Medium
56	I need to get sponsorship from my work, which I do not get during the ELC level	2.35	1.07	47	Medium
33	I don't know my actual level of my English proficiency because my teachers are teaching me only to pass the exams	2.33	1.01	49	Medium
36	Level 3 and 4 students persuade me not to continue in the foundation level after level 2	2.31	1.03	50	Medium
11	I was influenced by the negative attitudes of some students who are studying in the English track.	2.30	1.01	51	Medium
20	Some of my current teachers make me hate English because they are teaching me in a very boring way.	2.28	1.13	52	Medium
29	My friends who studied level 3 and 4 can't speak or write English very well	2.26	0.85	53	Medium
30	My friends who studied level 3 and 4 regret for wasting their time in these two levels.	2.26	0.97	53	Medium
13	I value only the Arabic Language.	2.20	1.06	55	Medium
54	I don't need English for my future job	2.15	1.07	56	Medium
55	I am sponsored by my job organization which wants to fund me only for two years.	2.15	1.06	56	Medium
50	I am a special – needs student and my needs weren't accommodated in ELC	2.13	1.13	58	Medium
7	I think I will not need English in my career in the future	2.11	1.08	59	Medium
5	I want to follow my friends' steps who joined the Arabic track before me.	2.04	1.04	60	Medium
18	I have a bad impression about English teachers because of my experience in ELC	2.00	1.00	61	Low
49	I feel 8 weeks is too short time to improve my English skills.	1.99	1.00	62	Low
9	I don't want to be influenced by European cultures if I learn English.	1.91	1.01	63	Low
8	I hate learning English.	1.79	0.97	64	Low
4	My family (parents or husband) encourages me to join the Arabic track.	1.58	0.84	65	Low
	Total	2.67	0.54		

Discussion on the study findings

The study data analysis revealed the following findings:

1.The item that got the highest mean in all the 65 items in the questionnaire shows that students want to finish their college education as fast as possible so that they can join the university.

2.The reasons related to the college Arabic track influence students' decisions and make them join the Arabic track more than any other reasons related to logistics, English Language Center, or reasons relating to students' themselves. Some of these factors are: feeling relaxed in a classroom where the mode of instruction is Arabic, studying in Arabic independently is easier than studying subjects in English independently. This is consistent with Cantoni (2007:26), who conducted his study in a Namibian school, pinpointed that the use of English as a medium of instruction in a non-English speaking country "hinders the full participation of the pupils because it does not seem to provide comprehensible input and it does not seem to work as a tool for constructing knowledge in the content subjects and it is obstacle to the learners' centeredness."

This current study subjects also claim that doing homework in Arabic is faster than doing it in English and that they will find more family members' help in Arabic than in English. Other factors that seem to influence current study subjects' decisions to join the Arabic track are: having more Arab teachers in the Arabic track than in the English track, being able to register more hours in the Arabic track than in the English track, getting better grades in Arabic track than in English track, so they will pass the courses easily and consequently can join university earlier, studying all the books in Arabic not English, preferring to be taught by Arab teachers, understanding Arabic library and internet resources in the Arabic track better than English resources of the English track, having more freedom in choosing their teachers in the Arabic track than in the English track, especially as they have experienced strict rules in this issue in ELC, being able to participate in the cocurricular college activities more easily and properly   in the Arabic track than in the English track and finally finding a greater number of their friends in the Arabic track than in the English track.

3.The findings of the current study were in consistent with the previous theoretical and empirical studies. As James, Baldwin and Maclinnis (1999) stated that students' academic decisions are influenced by their satisfaction with their current courses, the quality of teaching , approached to teaching, and assessment strategies used. This can explain the study subjects' beliefs of the reasons relating to the English Foundation Center that have greater influence on their ' decisions to join the Arabic track, such as having strict attendance rules in ELC, getting bored and stressed because of the intensity of the courses in the English track, feeling that they are not well-prepared in Levels 1 and 2 to help them study Level 3 and 4 successfully, studying very few study skills such a note-taking, problem solving strategies, critical thinking, that can help them to study in the English track. Besides, A great number of students stated that, in the foundation level, they are not taught any information or terminologies that are related to other educational disciplines that they may study at the post-foundation College, and that they only study General English, not Academic English or English for specific purposes. This finding is compatible with what Hoi (2017:3) stated "ESP teaching pays attention to the cultivation of students' pragmatic competence." Orr (1998: 1)) also emphasized that English for Specific Purposes, ESP, is "designed to prepare students or working adults for the English used in specific disciplines, vocations, and professions to accomplish a specific purpose."

A number of the current study subjects also claimed that they are unable to understand the accent of many foreign instructors in the English Language Center and that makes them think that they will face the same problem in the English track. This feeling made them reluctant to listen to English all the day. A few study subjects complained that they did not know their level of proficiency in English because they are taught only to pass the exams: exam-based teaching, with no focus on communication skills.

4. Surprisingly, the study subjects did not express any hatred to English. However, a great number of them expressed that they prefer to have bilingual teachers in the English track who can speak Arabic and English. To the researcher's amazement, there was no significant difference between male and female students in the reasons that cause them to choose to join the Arabic track.

Recommendations

In light with the study findings and with the insights inspired from the previous literature review relating to the problem of the study, namely CCQ foundation level students' choice to join the college Arabic track rather than the English track, causing a noticeable imbalance in the number of students joining the two tracks, the current researcher suggested some recommendations that can help solve this dilemma.

1. A students' needs-analysis should be conducted when the students' register in any community college so that students' academic needs and specializations can be identified before students start studying.
2. Needs-analysis results will help guide the college stakeholders to decide on the content of the foundation program. It is recommended to include English for Specific purposes in the program courses. The curriculum in the foundation level should include study skills that help students in the college level. These include note-taking, research work, time management skills, reading strategies, test preparation skills, writing skills, mnemonics (memory-activating strategies), and retention-activating strategies,
3. Awareness programs should be held periodically to provide students with anxiety-coping strategies, motivation- provoking strategies, self-reflection strategies and communication skills.
4. Finally, to quote Brown's opinion in his book (2000)"The elements of language curriculum: A systematic approach to program development."

   "It is important to Pay attention to promote teacher faculty; it is important to pay   attention to the improvement of teachers, strengthen the training of teachers, and improve teacher's professional level, especially as ESP teaching puts forward higher demand on teachers. It not only requires the teacher with solid knowledge of the English language and professional knowledge, also requires the teacher to understand the needs of the students."

5. As for the college English track, it is recommended that teachers should use different strategies to motivate students, speak slowly, orientate for their topics properly, reinforce students' good achievement, and build their teaching on students' schemata.
6. It would be better if the Foundation level teach courses as an introduction to science in general. For example, students need to learn basics of Math, biology, physics so that they can have preliminary knowledge and schemata before joining the College level.

Conclusion

Students' difficulty in making academic decisions is an absolute consequence of many factors. Parents, teachers, academic decision makers contribute to this problem. They may influence students' positively or negatively based on the extent they involve their students in decision making. Students' needs will inevitably be the decisive factor to guide the decision makers. In tertiary education, it is important to analyze students' academic needs and future work expectations in order to offer them courses that meet their needs.

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Biography

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