Arab Students' Attitudes toward English for Islamic Da'wa purposes

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Abstract—Of late much debate has risen as regards the ethical and religious use of English for Islamic Da'wa purposes (EIDP), yet little is known about English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' attitudes towards EIDP. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to discover and describe Arabian EFL students' perceptions of English courses offered for Islamic propagation purposes and the role of culture therein. Data were collected using semi-structured qualitative interviews with participants currently attending EIDP classes in the Abha city of Asir Province, KSA, in foreign communities Da'wa Centres. The researcher concluded that students perceived EIDP courses as a potentially attractive alternative to traditional ESP courses, especially for students enrolled in Islamic colleges or institutions related to Da'wa. The findings of this study will contribute to a greater understanding of students' perspectives, which will help ESP educators in better meeting EFL students' needs.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A LLAH gave all Muslims including Muhammad (PBUH) the command to spread Islam to all people. As a result, Muhammad (PBUH) had a responsibility to proclaim the truth and became the first missionary of Islam. According to Sura 16:125, Allah says: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious; for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance".

English for Da'awa Purposes (EDP) not only makes people more receptive to Islam, but it gives the missionary work in Islam a sense of legitimacy in the English-speaking community and also helps those who have a desire to learn English. As for Islam, it allows the opportunity for many to share the teachings of Islam and the Qur'an with a sizeable percentage of the population who might never have crossed the church threshold otherwise. It is this particular aspect of practical linguistics that has stimulated debate within the professional community of people working in ELT.

Upon that, propagators of Islam need to learn foreign languages to proceed with their da'wa efforts. Further, one primary goal of teaching English in public schools is to educate a generation capable of defending Islam and refuting the misconceptions about it in the West.

In the Qur'an, the word "da'wa" and its derivatives are used in different contexts more than a hundred times (2:186, 3:104, 10:106, 12:108, and so forth). Some Muslim scholars insist that not only does the frequency of this word in the Qur'an prove the significance of da'wa, but also the Qur'an is a complete da'wa book, in which we find all its scope,

directions and general aims. In other words, there is da'wa in the center of the holy book, the Qur'an. In its usage, the word da'wa means addressing, calling, appealing, inviting, requesting, demanding and worshiping. Paul Walker provides an even more inclusive array of meanings for "da'wa" describing it as "concepts of summoning, calling on, appealing to, invocation, prayer (for and against something or someone), propaganda, missionary activity, and finally legal proceedings and claims." Moreover, Toren Janson argues that the word has three different meanings: worshiping God or idols; addressing, asking, and calling God, idols, or people; and inviting to religion. Based on those interpretations of da'wa, most scholars consider Islam to be a missionary religion which invites people to join Islam.

In the same vein, inviting non-Muslims to Islam is an important agenda in Islamic theology. Paul Walker said, "This da'wah is the declaration that there is no god other than the True God (Allah). The da'wah is Islam, and Islam is the da'wah."

According to Walker, da'wa as the most important value in Islamic theology. Therefore, it is significant to learn and understand the term, da'wa, in order to clarify the reasons why Islam has been classified as a missionary religion and why Muslims have sought to expand their religious boundaries to the entire world.

Since English is the most globally spoken foreign language, using it for propagating Islam is essential for the spread of Islam; this is also a primary goal of English in Saudi public education.

In addition, several researchers in ESL/EFL speak to the need for more research to be conducted within this area of

using English for missionary and religious proselytization purposes across the major religions of the Heaven (Edge, 2003; Varghese and Johnston, 2007; Wong & Canagarajah, 2009).

On the other hand, those examining the influence of the English language as it was introduced to non-English-speaking populations draw an admission of its cultural dominance. Snow, a strong proponent of using English for religious proselytization, conceded that

> English is the quintessential language of power. Its rise as a global language has been driven by power of the rawest kinds-military, economic, political, and cultural-and in today's world command of English offers its users more utility value than any other language. (2009, p. 173)

Setting & Purpose

Today, English has become the de facto choice of those seeking foreign or second language training. John Algeo points to its popularity, "British English and American English, the two major varieties of the language, are spoken by 400 million persons. The total number of English speakers worldwide may exceed one billion" (2010, pp. 182-187).

In this vein, too, English is being taught throughout the Arab World as a foreign language in schools and universities. Arabic-speaking students represent a variety of sociocultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Their educational expectations and attitudes reflect these numerous differences.

Of late much debate has risen as regards the ethical and religious use of English for Islamic Da'wa purposes (EIDP), yet little is known about English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) students' attitudes towards EIDP.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to discover and describe Arabian EFL students' perceptions of English courses offered for Islamic propagation purposes and the role of culture therein.

Research Question

This study sought to answer one main question; i.e., what are the attitudes of EFL college students towards learning English for Da'wa purposes?

Research Significance

The role of attitudes in second and foreign language acquisition has been emphasized by many researchers. The learner's attitudes can affect the outcome of second/foreign language learning. In EFL situations, affective predispositions (i.e. the learner's beliefs, feelings, and intentions) towards the target language community are likely to explain a proportion of language achievement (Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp, & Chatow, 1990).

Research on attitudes towards EFL learning is available in galore; however, little is known about EFL students' attitudes towards English for Islamic Da'wa purposes (EIDP).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Attitudes towards Foreign Language Learning

Arab university students' attitudes and motivations are reflected in their subjective evaluations of English in terms of its advantage or disadvantage in their success (Tucker & Sarofim, 1979; Sadiqi, 1991).

There seems to be a variety of factors that affect Arab students' motivations and attitudes toward English and its speakers. Apart from the general linguistic and

sociolinguistic difficulties in the teaching of English as a foreign language to Arab students, one of the most important factors has to do with the Arab society; it is diverse in nature despite the common cultural and linguistic traits that are found in various Arab societies. This diversity constitutes a bridge to understand different cultures and learn about them. This diversity stems from geographic, ethnic, religious, political and socio-economic factors that are found throughout the Arab world.

Another significant factor that has a positive impact in EFL learning deals with Arab attitudes about their own language and other languages.

In addition, affective characteristics of the learner, such as attitudes and motivation, have a marked effect on second language learning (Hammerly, 1986; Raphan & Gertner, 1990). The learner's attitudes and motivation toward second language study can affect the outcome of second language learning. In EFL situations, affective predispositions (i.e. the learner's beliefs, feelings, and intentions) towards the target language community are likely to explain a proportion of language achievement (Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp, & Chatow, 1990).These affective variables deal with the social/political contexts from which attitudes and motivation are derived (Gardner, 1982b).

Furthermore, studies on the relationship between attitudes and foreign language attainment have been conducted by several authors (Oiler, Hudson, and Iiu, 1977; Chihara and Oiler, 1978). These studies involved Chinese (Oiler, Hudson, and Iiu, 1977), Japanese (Chihara and Oiler, 1978), Spanish (Gilsan, 1987), Puerto Rican (Fayer et al, 1984), Malaysian and Indonesian (Rocha-Erkaya, 1989) students' achievement in English as a second language and the related attitudinal

factors. Although the researchers found mixed results on their relative benefits, they generally concluded that positive attitudes towards foreign language speech community can help in improving their achievement in English.

The different arguments and findings with regard to the motivational and attitudinal components vary as a function of the environment in which language learning takes place. More recently, in an overview of his theory, Gardner (1988) stated the view "that the role of attitudes and motivation should be consistent in many different contexts, and thus a universal in language learning, is just too simplistic" (p. 112), thus calling for more research in this area.

Attitudes towards ESP

Attitude formation, according to Brown (1987, p. 126), develops in the early stages of one's life and is the result of parents' and peers' attitudes, and "contact with people who are 'different' in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience". Students whose experiences are unpleasant with English or its speakers tend to have unfavorable attitudes towards the host country and its language (DuBois, 1956).

Gardner & Lysynchuk (1990) attempted to investigate the impact of attitudes on language learning. Their research indicated that positive attitudes towards language learning result in in a high "integrative motivation" to learn the FL.

In any case, positive attitudes have always constituted a strong impetus for language competence (Boshier, 1977; Dornyei, 1990; Gardner, 1982a,b, 1988; Sadiqi, 1991).

Overall, researchers generally concluded that positive attitudes toward self, native language group, and second language speech community augmented their proficiency in English.

One of the language teachers' roles is to observe the learners' motivational development through their changed attitudes and beliefs about learning (i.e., beliefs about self and the learning situation). Motivation itself is an entity that changes over time. It is "a featured temporal dimension that accounts for systematic patterns of transformation and evolution in time" (Dornyei, 2001, pp. 41-42).

ESP instructors and language teachers also need to know "not only what their learners believe about language learning, but also whether their beliefs are functional or dysfunctional and how dysfunctional beliefs can be modified" (Benson & Lor, 1999, p.471). If some learners fail to rectify their dysfunctional beliefs, the instructor needs to help them notice the problems and find out possible solutions through critical reflection.

Benson and Lor (1999) argued that students' beliefs about language learning, beliefs about self, and beliefs about the learning situation are important in successful language learning. Likewise, motivation and strategic learning process have become important (El-Hindi, 1996) for improving attitudes toward learning. Motivation generated by facts and realities in the sociocultural context may positively affect students' personal attitudes, values, and aspirations, as well as students' ethnolinguistic behaviors (Dornyei, 2000).

III. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative and quantitative methodology was used in data collection and analysis utilizing attitudes towards EDP questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to provide further evidence on the learners' attitudes towards learning English for Da'wa purposes.

For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire using Likert-format scales was prepared to be administered and analyzed

in terms of basic statistical procedures to reinforce qualitative data which was collected from interviews.

The participants were asked to respond to a Likert-format Scale questionnaire for measuring their attitudes using Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The researcher also conducted interviews to collect qualitative data on the attitudes of the learners to further the quantitative data from the questionnaire.

For the purpose of this study a sample of 22 Arab undergraduate and graduate full-time students at KKU in the English department and the Applied Linguistics department respectively were recruited to undergo this introspective study. One criterion proposed was that the participants should "not have a special knowledge (or ignorance) of the topic under study" (McCracken, 1988, p. 37). The participants varied in their proficiency levels and educational backgrounds.

The participants in the study were engaged in learning a specifically tailored course in English for Da'wa purposes as an extra-curricular activity; the course is a type of ESP geared towards teaching Islamic terminology and missiological topics about Islam. First, all participants were asked to fill out the Background Survey to obtain background information.

Second, participants were asked to respond to a Likert-format Scale questionnaire for measuring motivations and attitudes using Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery; only the items tapping into attitudes were applied, while motivation items were ruled out for purpose of the study. The questionnaire, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was prepared and adapted from (Gardner, 1985, pp. 177-181) and administered to the participants after the course was taught.

Third, the participants were interviewed in English using the interview guide approach adapted from (Meloni,1990; Rocha-Erkaya, 1989). Both interviews and questionnaires focused on the issue of examining attitudes.

Questionnaire results were used to validate data collected from the interview method.

Responses were coded and categorized for analysis in terms of qualitatively and quantitatively derived findings. Statistical procedures such as mean analysis was used to present the findings of the questionnaire.

IV. FINDINGS

Qualitative results

The semi-structured interviews were coded using NVivo 10, and the codings resulted in three major themes which emerged from critical analysis: (a) Students' Choice of EDP Classes, (b) Students' Perception of Quality, and (c) Students' Perception of Religiosity.

Students' choices of EDP, as well as their perception of quality and religiosity, reveal they feel neither duped into enrolling nor by and large pressured to convert once enrolled. Further, they perceive their EDP classes as different from, but not inferior to other EFL/ESP courses.

Students' Choice of EDP Courses

Saudi EFL students enrolled in and continued to frequent EDP classes for a variety of reasons. These reasons fall under one of three rubrics: (a) Positive Learning Experience, (b) Translated Qur'an Study, and (c) Practical Considerations. What I did not anticipate going into this study was that participants would frame their choice of EDP courses largely in contradistinction to conventional EFL/ESL courses.

Students' perceptions were highly influenced by one or both of two prior categories: (a) Experiences with conventional EFL/ESL courses and (b) Experiences with EDP classes. One student shared concerning his previous EFL experience:

The main reason for me to continue to study English right now is to do well in my classes and just to go on with the school and continue my graduate study in the future. I especially like that. It is not like I want to miss or anything.

Another stated a complementary attitude: "I have to be fluent to be able to get a job and everything is done in English internationally basically." He added, "It is good to learn English to propagate Islam to foreigners who speak only English.

Students brought their positive biases of previous EGP/ESP experiences as well: I did attend an ESP class once a month. That was many years ago. It was very fun and interesting. These students' experiences influenced them in various ways. The subsequent paragraphs reflect students' perceptions concerning their positive impressions of their class experience before discussing Qur'an study in English and practical considerations.

Positive Learning Experience

Study participants chose EDP over EFL/ESP classes in part because of the strictness experienced in past classes. Many students complained of the rules and regulations that characterized the conventional EFL/ESP classroom, and, by comparison, their current EDP classes seemed much more open and free. One student commented, "There are rules [in EDP classes] but they are not very strict rules like at other regular courses in the English programme I attended, I don't think. You have to do this or you can't do that. If you have

too many rules there is not conversation going on because we are too worried about the rules. Too many rules make speaking more difficult for me. The homework, attendance, and testing requirements of the conventional EFL classes made them less attractive than the relaxed atmosphere of Islam-based EDP classes. Although students used different terminology to express this observation, they commonly compared EDP classes to studying in a home-like atmosphere where they had "the freedom to discuss various subjects" in a "family atmosphere" and "friendly environment." Students felt this open atmosphere enhanced learning:

If you have too many rules, if there are too many things you have to obey, then it no longer becomes fun, and your ability to learn conversational English can end. I really want to learn English and become good at it but I don't like being strict and I don't like to be strict. So I've got to work and I want to study English so if there are too many rules, I won't be able to learn English.

Like many students, this individual chose EDP classes in part because of past negative experiences in conventional EFL classes.

While students' definition of fun differed greatly, fun emerged as an important theme underscoring the perceived difference in atmosphere between EDP and conventional EFL. No less than sixteen of the twenty-two students whose data was coded shared in this category. One student felt that typical class activities, like watching videos, were fun, while another liked that "the teacher brings his family with him to class." Other students related the idea of fun to the general class atmosphere; the less strict and more home-like atmosphere was important to them: "The atmosphere is like

studying at home instead of being in a classroom. It makes it more fun." Others mentioned teachers allowing them to discuss freely unplanned topics. For example, "The teacher is very good at choosing interesting topics and is constantly allowing us to 'chase rabbits' and explore areas that she had not intended." Another saw the relationship with the teacher as key to having an enjoyable class: "The teacher was a young lady who was very fun to be around. That makes it more fun." Another felt that despite early reservations the class had become enjoyable:

"Yeah, I've been saying initially that I don't really have any interest in studying per se but for me, despite that, I really have had fun and really enjoyed the class and what the teacher has to say is very interesting."

Many students put fun in academic terms, relating the learning process to their sense of enjoyment. One said, "By learning more about something, you discover something or learn about the way somebody else thinks differently than you do. That's really exciting for me and I enjoy doing it." Another asserted, "For me it is introducing a brand-new way of thinking, even a lifestyle, and so for me to learn about it is really a fun thing. I'm really enjoying that." Finally, another student shared: "For me it's something that's fun to do. It is fun to expand my knowledge about other people." These and others were persuaded to join their EDP class due to perceptions of the class being fun for different reasons.

Students' perception of EDP as a positive learning experience, often described as fun, in comparison with the stricter atmosphere of conventional EFL courses, clearly influenced study participants' choices. One summed it up:

"Because it is not like going to a school that is much stricter like before but rather it is very relaxed and fun to

attend. It is refreshing not tiring. That was one of the main reasons I chose this class.

Qur'an Translated Study

Interestingly, the study of translated excerpts from the Qur'an also emerged as the next most important reason for choosing an EDP course. This sub-theme discusses that exclusive feature of EDP. One participant stated, "The main reason I chose this class was I knew nothing, absolutely nothing, about the Translated Qur'an and what it meant and wanted to know about it." While students' number one reason for joining an EDP course was learning English, they also frequently mentioned Translated Qur'an study as a reason for choosing EDP over conventional EFL. Seventeen out of twenty-two coded interviews contained references to a desire for religious studies. In some few participants' minds, Translated Qur'an and English study were by no means antithetical. For example, one participant mentioned, "Of course I wanted to study English and learn to be a better speaker; unfortunately I am still not very good with the language, and of course that is my main objective, but nonetheless I would also like to know more about the Translated Qur'an in English." Another shared: "I like to study the Translated Qur'an and Islam in English together." Students seemed to recognize and accept the balance between the two goals: "I just kind of expected to have a Translated Qur'an study with an English class that is sponsored by the Muslim Community Da'wa authority or King Fahad Complex of the Qur'an. I don't want to be rude to anyone but the Muslim Community Da'awa Authority has a desire or the people in the mosques want to teach the Translated Qur'an to foreign Muslims and I want to learn English, but I also have an interest in the Translated Qur'an

and religion."

Some participants viewed Translated Qur'an study as a means of enhancing their communication skills. They felt that studying the Translated Qur'an along with their EFL coursework would better equip them in human understanding. For example, one participant explained, "I thought to myself maybe studying the Translated Qur'an will help me to understand people better, especially English speakers and their Christianity. The flyer clearly stated the understanding of the Translated Qur'an would help to understand other cultures." Another stated similarly, "I wanted to study English along with learning more about Qur'an, Islam and religion and the cultures they represent." While the religion-centric study was of interest to many, practical factors more often contributed to students' choice of an EDP.

Practical Considerations

In addition to positive learning experiences and Translated Qur'an study, several practical considerations also emerged as influential choice factors. While among the practical considerations, affordability emerged as the most import choice factor, other factors to emerge included altruism, personal recommendations, and proximity.

Affordability.

Students frequently reported that cost was a crucial factor in programme choice, using words like "cheap," "economical," and "affordable" to describe their perceptions. Many compared the cost of EDP classes to their former experiences with expensive and inflexible EFL classes, noting that conventional EFL classes offered off-campus required both initial fees and relatively high monthly fees. "I first began going to a regular language school…. I attended

for about six months there. First of all, they had entry fees and other fees that cost a whole lot of money and it was very expensive... Because of that I quit that school [Wall Street English Institute in Abha]."

Altruism.

Somewhat related to affordability was students' perception of Jaliyyat-based, EDP programmes as having more altruistic motives for teaching English than conventional EFL programmes. One stated, "The class fee was given to the Muslim Community Authority (Jaliyyat Da'awa) to use. They don't seem to be doing it to make money." While perfectly aware most EDP teachers were motivated by a desire to share the gospel, students felt that in most cases this motivation freed teachers from concerns of making a financial profit. One student commented, "They don't seem to be after the money but want to talk about their religion. That's good they want to help us." Another shared, "I figured that because it is a charity they probably aren't in it for the money. I mean that making a lot of money is not their main concern."

Personal recommendations.

Many students noted the importance of acquaintances' recommendations in their decision to attend EDP classes. These recommendations came from a variety of sources with the most common being friends, family and upperclassmen. The most frequently cited recommendations came from upperclassmen. This was especially true in the university setting.

Overall, the content of personal recommendations mirrors the other themes emerging from the data. Recommenders commented, "The teacher is very kind," "EDP is taught at no fees as an extracurricular course," "what you learn is very

practical," "the teacher is native-like" and "you don't have to lose anything if you can't attend." The recommenders' language reinforces emotional and pious desirability of EDP courses.

Proximity.

Students' choice also was governed by perceptions of convenience and location. One stated, "At that time the class was done on campus at conventional times."

Miscellaneous reasons.

EDP classes attracted students for a handful of miscellaneous reasons. One student desired to study philosophy and felt that the Translated Qur'an would complement that work: "I like to study philosophy and chose the class as a way to help understand how people think." Others had more mundane reasons, such as scheduling conflicts that made EDP the only feasible choice: "I guess it was a matter of scheduling, you know that the day of the week that it falls on, the time that it falls, and does that fit into my schedule, so I didn't really look up the course; I just needed to have a course and it fit my schedule."

Other students liked the idea of a risk free enrollment, that is, being able to drop the course at no financial penalty within the first two weeks. Sixteen of the students cited the presence of a native-like English-speaking teacher as having influenced them to choose EDP: "It is very fun and the teacher is a native-like speaker. I really think it is important that we are learning from a native-like English speaker." Some students enrolled because they had a good first impression of the EDP course from a flyer placed at the entrance of the college or posted over to their announcement platforms over Blackboard or in their emails. One student

chose the class because he could work in Da'awa in Saudi Arabia or abroad by the assistance of the Jaliyyat. In addition, most students liked that they were able to listen and learn English along with the regular classes of the English programme in the College of Languages & Translation.

Conclusion on Students' Choice of EDP Courses

The data show that participating EFL students, fully aware of the religious nature of EDP classes, preferred nontraditional church-based programs to more conventional classes because of their positive learning experiences, Translated Qur'an study, and certain practical considerations. These three factors were filtered by students' previous EFL and/or EDP experiences. Chief among the practical considerations is the relatively affordability of EDP courses. In fact, the restrictions of conventional EFL classes was participants' major criticism of them. The next paragraphs examine students' perspectives as they relate to the quality of their classroom experience.

Perceptions of Quality

The second major theme to emerge from the data was participants' perception of the quality of their EDP courses. While most students were pleased with their classes, a few had less favorable impressions. The data with regard to this theme fall under three main rubrics: (a) classes' shortcomings, (b) classes' effectiveness, and (c) teaching methods.

EDP Classes' Shortcomings

The three prominent shortcomings to emerge from the data had to do with class structure, languages used in class, and texts used in teaching English.

Class structure.

A number of participants were troubled because their

classes were not level graded and the students' abilities varied greatly. They felt these unequal levels impeded learning. One participant shared, "I do think that one of the weaknesses of this class or English classes in general is the fact that many of them have language learners on many different levels. It would probably be better if there were more classes specifically for each level. Another student echoed this opinion, "I think maybe if I did have anything to say, it would be that some of the levels are mixed too much - the students are on different levels in the class. I just think if the levels of the classes were divided and everyone was studying more on their own level it would make it much easier; then they would progress further I think."

Languages used in class.

Others students were frustrated by instructor's use of English language in class. Some felt their teacher spoke too much religious English, which they perceived as detrimental to the development of hearing and pronunciation skills. One student commented, "We in Saudi Arabia have learned English and we learned a lot of grammar and how to take tests but the important part is that we need more communication. Some really wish there were more opportunities to speak English. The key for me would be that we would need better ways of improving our communication. Communication needs to be the focal point, not grammar and taking tests."

Because their goal was better English language communication skills, these students believed more opportunities to speak and listen to English would be helpful. Another student felt, "The important thing is that we need communication opportunities in English. Arabs have studied English as an academic subject to do well on tests but we

really need more chances to speak and hear English." However, other students had a very different view of what was helpful regarding classroom language use."

Texts used in class.

Students also voiced concerns about the teacher's choice of texts for classroom use. Here the issue largely concerned the use of religious texts. Some participants were opposed to the integration EFL and religious topics. For example, one stated, "I would not mind if the religious and the EFL teaching were separated. It would be more helpful. I think I would enjoy both more." The combination of the two for them turned the EFL class into more of a religious study. Another spoke in regard to using the Translated Qur'an, "The reason I go to English class is to brush up on my skills and if all we do is talk about religion the class loses its meaning for me."

They felt separating the two would facilitate using English more within the classroom. This in turn would give them more opportunity to speak and further their practical English skills.

EDP Classes' Effectiveness

Fully half of study participants commented on the effectiveness of their classes. Their perceptions were diverse, and some aspects of effectiveness generated more discussion than others. Three aspects of effectiveness merit mention here: (a) cultural competence, (b) oral expression, and (c) vocational skills.

Cultural competence:

Often students felt their EDP course experience had equipped them to better understand other people. Though reasons for this varied, many related it to the EDP's broader approach to not only study language but focus on cultural

differences as well.

They felt that knowing what others believed would be beneficial in understanding others' cultures. One student shared, I think overall it's a really good approach to use the Translated Qur'an in an English conversation class and I guess mainly because whenever you learn more about people's culture and the way that they do things, you bring a greater communication or greater understanding of one another.

They perceived this as enabling them to become more effective communicators. Another student stated, "I really like the idea of understanding other peoples' religions and understanding how people think and about how they are affected."

Oral expression.

As stated earlier, students' choice of their EDP course was related to a perception that the class created a good general atmosphere. One student stated, "I am so excited that the teachers and the other students have had great interaction and that's what makes it so good. It makes it easier to concentrate on communicating better." Participants related this "good atmosphere" to facilitating language learning. Due to their relaxed, safe, and friendly environment, the EDP courses enhanced interaction between students and teachers and among students within the classroom. "We can discuss anything without worry about being slammed by the teacher or other class members."

Vocational skills.

Some participants saw EDP courses equipping them for their chosen vocation as Da'iaas, callers for Islam in English speaking communities. For example, one student shared, "This is quite different in that we're learning to communicate

and we're trying to understand how English speakers think, so it has merits in my field of social service. I think that religious discourse really has meaning and has a way of instructing us how to be better in my particular field." This student expressed a similar opinion, "I think that for this type of college where we are social workers that it's very important to learn these principles as well as communicating in English." Another felt, "There are things about Islam, like some of the stories that are in the Translated Qur'an that teach morals and these teach us and those who are involved in social work to be better social workers and to have a heart and compassion for those around us." Another said in this line that, "We can defend Islam against misconceptions and malpractices using EDP."

Others spoke about more immediate practical benefits. For example, "I teach about Islam in English to foreign communities in Abha and use what I learn here. It helps me to teach the English-speaking foreigners when they want to know why Muslims do things, like hajj, bairams and stuff."

EDP Classes' Teaching Methods

Participants' assessment of teaching methods overlaps their perceptions of text selection and language use. As seen earlier, participants' opinions were divided on text usage. As it relates to teaching methods, one student shared, "It's not just religion he teaches, he also teaches grammar. He teaches words and so we are learning conversational skills as well. We are learning new vocabulary of those kinds of things so it really works well from that perspective as well." However, other students found use of religious materials made the class more difficult because the texts were difficult to understand and the vocabulary seemed antiquated, sepulchral, or literal." One shared, "I don't think I hear some

of this used in movies and songs and stuff. It seems old or outdated maybe."

Conclusion on Perceptions of Quality

If the discussion of shortcomings were the whole of this part, it would seem that students were largely dissatisfied with their overall EDP experience. However, this part contains more that is positive than negative. First, most participants shared their EDP courses had met their goals and expectations of quality despite their shortcomings. They obviously were adequately satisfied and they remained enrolled in their classes. Second, many of participants' complaints were of a generic nature and applicable to a variety of EFL courses. Further, some students complained of things others found attractive. In the end, their overall perception of EDP courses' quality confirmed them as an attractive alternative.

There is one further area that deserves mention as it addresses a point of criticism leveled at EDP courses. Participants' positive and negative remarks belie the assumption that EDP teachers may dominate their students or engage them in additional Da'awa social work. Despite a cultural bent that Westerners might call overly polite, students with apparent honesty openly critiqued their EDP courses. At the same time, they compared them positively to conventional EFL courses. This observation introduces the next section, which discusses participants' perceptions of religiosity.

Perceptions of Religiosity

Over half of study participants commented on the religiosity of their EDP courses, generating nearly 100 separate references. To better represent the students' perceptions, I have grouped these data into three

subcategories: (a) perceptions of the Translated Qur'an, (b) perceptions of the instructor, and (c) religiosity in the classroom.

Perceptions of the Translated Qur'an

More than half of study participants perceived Translated Qur'an study as helpful, albeit fordifferent reasons. Half of those who found Translated Qur'an study helpful thought it enhanced cultural understanding. One student commented, "The professor is teaching about an aspect of culture that many English speakers have in common. This gives us a better basis for communication." They felt religious beliefs influenced the way people communicated and viewed cultural understanding as facilitating communication. The vast majority of participants favored EDP courses over other EFL courses (for various reasons), but these students specifically mentioned Translated Qur'an study in EDP as an advantage over conventional EFL. One stated, "The school has an entire programme in EFL, but not one in ESP or EDP, and so I wanted to try this course in EDP as part of ESP because of the religious connection, and I heard the teacher is a committed member of the Jaliyyat and wanted to know more about it."

While very few of study participants self-identified as committed Muslims, eighteen participants nonetheless felt they were becoming "better human beings" through EDP Translated Qur'an study. This observation was linked to gaining a greater understanding of what the example of Prophet Muhammad's biography meant for them as every Muslim should propagate Islam in his own way. One shared, "Prophet Muhammad was an example in the Translated Qur'an… and a big percentage of us think it's a plus." This participant felt that Prophet Muhammad was "a very

sympathetic person" and that what he taught "speaks to social work and charity which lies at the core of Da'awa today." Others also believed that Prophet Muhammad's teaching would assist in their pursuit of their "life's work."

Opinions and perceptions were overall positive, however three participants, two of whom studied under the same instructor, felt pressured to answer questions concerning faith in a way contrary to their viewpoint. This practice elicited a negative image of the instructor as being "pushy." However, one of them shared, "I know what the teacher might want me to answer and I may feel a little pressure, but I don't really feel enough to answer that way." This observation will be explored further in the next section, religiosity in the classroom.

V. CONCLUSION ON FINDINGS

Study participants, who all were EDP students, viewed EDP as an attractive alternative to conventional EFL courses, with which most had prior experience. They chose this EDP course for their positive learning experience, their Translated Qur'an study component, and for various practical considerations, of which affordability emerged as significant. They deemed EDP courses to be of good quality, despite certain shortcomings, largely because of their effectiveness.

Participants' perceptions of religiosity within the classroom were central to answering this study's central research question. In summarizing this category, several conclusions can be drawn. First, students were more inclined to view the study of religion within the EDP as beneficial rather than to view it negatively, because they found it enhanced cultural and linguistic understanding. Second, students' perception of their teachers' religiosity was overall positive. Third, the vast

majority of participants felt no inappropriate pressure to conform to religious views.

The dissenting voices in regard to undue pressure are of particular importance to this study's research. While not condoning EDP teaching methods that pressure students to go and ask foreigners to convert to Islam, it is worth noting that the few participants who did experience undue pressure remained sympathetic of their instructor. Further, those who experienced pressure in one EDP classroom still found it advantageous to quit this EDP class. Finally, participants' personal resolve proved more than a match for inappropriate religious pressure experienced in an EDP setting; none of them were strong-armed into going out to use English for urging non-Muslims speaking English to revert to Islam.

Quantitative Results

The participants' realization of the importance of studying English for Da'wa purposes for their future work was influenced by many factors. Some of these students were self-motivated and others were encouraged by their families, their teachers, and friends. Some students spoke of parental encouragement and took their advice to meet their expectations. Most of the participants have maintained an instrumental orientation toward studying English.

The change in student attitudes toward language learning in the EDP course was analyzed with t-tests and descriptive statistics. The analytical goal was to identify the differentiated salient features between the control and treatment groups at the end of the study. T-tests were used for both groups in comparison in order to clarify the change of attitudes towards learning before and after the intervention.

T-tests were run to explore the overall change in terms of

attitudes toward learning for the control group and the treatment group. Tables 1 and 2 show the results:

Table 1: T-test for the Change of Attitudes toward Learning: Control and Treatment Groups on pretesting (N = 58):

	N	M	SD	df	M	Std Error	t	p
Ctrl	36	296.05	36.99	56	5.82	4.84	1.20	.231
Exp	22	290.23	32.09					
Ctrl-Exp								

Note: p <.05 (two-tailed).

Table 2: T-test for the Change of Attitudes towards Learning: Control and Treatment Groups on post-testing (n = 58)

	N	M	SD	df	M	Std Error	t	p
Ctrl	36	294.78	32.09	56	4.55	23.66	- 2.12	.036
Exp	22	296.39	30.04					
Ctrl-Exp								

Note: p <.05 (two-tailed).

As seen from Table 1, no significant change appeared between the two groups in pre-administration of the attitudes towards EDP questionnaire. Table 2, however, shows a positive change in attitudes toward learning in the treatment group (p = .036).

The participants' attitudes toward English as identified in the attitudes' questionnaire fall within nine categories ranging from amusement and interest in English to resentment for having to study it. However, 86% participants have found English for da'wa purposes to be an interesting language to study, thus having a favorable attitude towards

it; while others (14%) have had difficulties and bad experiences studying it.

Questionnaire findings illustrated that there are many attitudes of the participants that were shaped before they studied the EIDP course. The participants revealed many factors that influence their attitude development in foreign language study. These attitudes are the outcome of the students' personal experiences, parental influence, social ingredients, and the mass media, all of which help to shape the attitudes of the individual.

VI. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Students who are receptive to the idea that English is part of the school curriculum because of the benefits one gets out of knowing another language such as English tend to be more enthusiastic, amused, interested, and satisfied with studying English as a foreign language. However, students who have different attitudes tend to be dissatisfied, and uninterested in studying English language, thus leading to difficulty, and boredom in English classes. The perception of English as an important language in today's world helped shape some of the students' attitudes. The participants cited several reasons why English was important to their education. Their view of English helped shape their attitudes and guided their motivation. Some of these factors deal with the status of English among world languages as it has become the language of international communication, diplomacy, and trade.

Other reasons involve the advantages of knowing English. However, the participants are cognizant of the importance of English in today's world as an international language. The participants have emphasized the importance of English for

Da'wa purposes, whether they liked the language or not.

Thus, according to the participants knowing English puts the individual at an advantage of being an active participant in today's world in terms of defending Islam and propagating it.

VII. CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that students perceived EIDP courses as a potentially attractive alternative to traditional ESP courses, especially for students enrolled in Islamic colleges or institutions related to Da'wa

In conclusion, Arab students' attitudes toward studying English for Da'wa purposes range from positive to negative. These attitudes are influenced by the students' experiences and the context in which the studying of English takes place. It has been found that when studying English takes place in an environment where students can make sense of the language, they tend to have favorable attitudes toward the studying of English.

Conversely, when students are forced to study English, and the curriculum is devised without any consideration of their needs' assessment, students tend to have resentment toward the English language and the learning of it.

Attitudes toward the study of English for Da'wa purposes are shaped in terms of the socio-cultural characteristics of each group. These attitudes were governed by different sources of determiners. These determiners are presented in this study in terms of the general predispositions which emerged from the participants' responses as they relate to (1) the students' perception of English as a foreign language; (2) the students' previous, and present experiences with the English language; (3) the students' future expectations about the study of English; (4) the students' previous and current

perceptions about the native speakers of the language in the major English-speaking countries; and (5) students' experiences with speakers of English who are non-native Arabs living in KSA.

Although the cultural values of the Arabic-speaking students are similar (Lusting, 1988), the social conditions are different. Some of these cultural values are conservatism, family devotion, fatalism, nationalism, patience, piety, pride, self-respect, status, and traditionalism (Lusting, 1988).

The students' exposure to modem political and social trends drive attitudes to continue to be tempered by the cultural values most relevant to them. That is, the sociocultural conditions under which a particular group of students was exposed tend to influence their attitudes to ESP.

For instance, the Saudi participants' "traditionalism" is expected to justify either negative or neutral attitudes toward such other cultures as the Western ones.

This study's findings are far from exhaustive in understanding the perspectives and opinions of Japanese students participating in EDP courses. It is acknowledged that further study in this area would advance the understanding of such EFL courses. Study participants were drawn entirely from King Khalid University and generalization to the greater EDP class population in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere should not be assumed. Further, while some findings might be transferable to other EDP contexts, the study was limited to Saudi EFL learners.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Hence, I recommend further study be undertaken in the following areas:

1) Investigating further strategies that increase the student's sense of satisfaction with their EDP

experience.

2) Replicating this study with a larger and more diverse population of EDP participants to validate its findings.
3) Undertaking a study focusing on those who have frequented but are no longer attending an EDP class
4) Examining the role of using religious vocabulary in EFL courses
5) Replicating this study in creative access contexts
6) Exploring further the effectiveness of EDP as a church planting strategy.

The brevity of these recommendations does not suggest a lack of possibilities for further studies. This investigator defers to those who follow to not simply augment the list but also to persevere in seeking the answers that will help all become more effective language teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAUDI COLLEGE STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS DA'WA-BASED EFL COURSES

1. How do the students feel about the course as a whole?
2. What influenced students' choice of a da'wa-based EFL class (EDP Courses)?
3. What are students' perceptions of the class' missionary/da'wa (or Qur'an-teaching in English) efforts?
4. How do classes affect students' perception of Islam?

ATTITUDES QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please respond to the following questions using the scale provided: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree.

Attitudes toward studying English

1. In my college, persons who speak English are more respected than the one who does not.
2. I believe English for da'wa purposes courses should be taught in my college to all students.
3. I believe that English for da'wa purposes classes should be increased in the schools of my university, no matter what school or specialty one belongs to.
4. When I graduate, I shall continue the study of English for da'wa purposes because I am interested in it.
5. English for da'wa purposes has always been my favourite class.

Attitudes toward English instruction

1. English instruction in the EDP classes is much better than the English programme in my college.
2. I would prefer to study English for da'wa purposes rather than the English programme in my college.
3. Attitudes toward native speakers of English.
4. Native speakers are friendly and polite.
5. Native speakers are intelligent and hard working people.
6. Native speakers are sincere and honest.
7. Native speakers are sociable, warm hearted and creative people.
8. The more I get to know native speakers of English, the more I want to be fluent in their language.
9. I have a favorable attitude towards native speakers of

English.

10. I think native speaking countries of English are better place to live in and practice da'wa there.

Future expectations

1. English for da'wa purposes will play a significant role in my personal development.
2. English for da'wa purposes will play a significant role in the future development of my college.
3. I will make every effort to continue studying English for da'wa purposes.
4. If given the opportunity, I would like to live abroad and practice da'wa permanently.
5. I will encourage my children to study English for da'wa purposes.