

Saudi EFL Learners' Perceptions of the Role of Face-to-face Intercultural Communication in Enhancing their English

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Abstract

In the present global society, face-to-face intercultural communication has become inescapable and English has played a prominent role as a tool for this communication. This study aims to: (1) investigate the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing learners' levels in English, and (2) identify the role of other elements on the participants' perceptions of face-to-face communication and language learning. Using a questionnaire, 288 Saudi EFL learners from University of Bisha, Al-Namas Campus participated in this study. The results showed that the students positively perceived the influential role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their English. This included motivating them to learn English, develop their speaking and listening skills, and build more vocabulary. Furthermore, they became more confident and less worried while communicating with others. They also showed respect and got more knowledge about others and their cultures. In addition, the results revealed that there were statistically significant and positive differences in the face-to-face intercultural communication scores for the variables of gender and university level. However, there were no statistically significant and positive differences in the face-to-face intercultural communication scores for the other variables of age, foreign friendship, using English, and visiting English-speaking countries. It is hoped that students should be sensitized to grasp every intercultural opportunity for developing their English.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, learning English, Saudi context.

Introduction

Language is the primary medium for human communication through which social relations are constructed and maintained in daily life. Human beings do not have the choice either to communicate or not. Rather, for us as 'social' beings, communication is inescapable as we are in a crucial need to convey messages, express our feelings and attitudes, build relationships, understand and share with others their values, norms, and behaviors, etc. Hence, one of the supposed benefits of face-to-face intercultural communication is that it can enhance students' learning of English. Bearing this in mind, it is believed that this supposition needs to be examined and tested as it is an up-to-date issue. Furthermore, up to now and to the very best of the researcher's knowledge no empirical study has been conducted to investigate this issue in this specific context, Al-Namas Campus, Saudi Arabia and within this specific time and participants. It is believed that filling this gap constitutes a valuable addition to the available literature.

The present study aims to: (1) investigate the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing learners' levels in English, and (2) identify the role of some other variables (gender, age, university level, foreign friendship, the frequent use of English, and visiting English-speaking countries) on the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing language learning. In order to achieve the aims of this study, the researcher concentrates on the direct intercultural contact (i.e., personal face-to-face contact that occurs directly between people from different cultures at the same time and in the same place) and its role in developing English learning. Furthermore, the researcher explores with whom and how frequently Saudi EFL learners communicate, what kind of attitudes and respect they display towards others and their cultures and their level of confidence and anxiety while communicating.

The researcher is motivated to conduct this study as the purpose of learning English language goes beyond passing exams, getting high grades, and receiving certificates; it is about using it successfully for communicating with others who are linguistically and culturally different especially those people who have immigrated to work in different countries. In addition, Saudi Arabia is a big and rich country in which there is a plenty of job vacancies for foreigners who have come from different countries. It is observed that many students experience daily intercultural contact with others who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Intercultural contact seems to work as one of the forces that motivate them to learn English as they are enforced to communicate with them using English, especially those who work in different governmental and non-governmental sectors like universities, banks, hospitals, companies, institutions, etc. This opens the scope for them to develop their language levels and hence become competent intercultural communicators. Moreover and despite the fact that Al-Namas Campus has three departments: Computer Science Department, Business Administration Department and English Department, most of the students join English Department in increasing numbers. They study English not only because they are motivated to learn it, but also because it is "an obvious and self-evident component of education in the 21st century" (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 89). Students are aware that mastering English can meet their immediate needs and the needs of the society as a whole.

Samovar and Porter (2001) clarify that "[e]ach human being is unique and shaped by countless factors, culture being but one of them" (p. 17). Therefore, in addition to the linguistic dimension, the researcher takes into account the socio-cultural dimension of language use in

which many people are interested in the lifestyle, art and artifacts of the target culture, as it is clear in their lifestyles of dressing, eating, haircut, and consuming cultural products in general.

It should be referred that the two terms of intercultural communication and intercultural contact are used interchangeably as they designate the same form of interaction. Moreover, the present study is limited to the personal intercultural communication that occurs face-to-face between communicators (not online communication).

Literature Review

Due to the trend towards globalization, English has emerged as a tool of communication and interaction with people worldwide. 'Intercultural speakers' use English as a shared language for interacting with others in daily life. Samovar and Porter (2001) emphasize that "shifting demographics and changes in transportation, information systems, political dynamics, and economics have brought people from diverse backgrounds into contact with each other with a regularity that is unique to this period of history" (p. 262). In the same way, Byram (1997) clarifies that English in general and intercultural competence in particular can be developed "through independent vacations or periods of residence, through exchanges whose main purpose is not pedagogical, for example in town-twinning. The learner who has acquired autonomy in learning can use and improve their intercultural competence through performance" (p. 65). People across the world experience increasing opportunities of intercultural contacts, which need to be as effective and successful as possible in order to meet the needs of the two communication parties. In other words, communicators need to understand and being understood by others. People in general and students in particular can exploit the enormous intercultural encounters for developing their learning of English.

As an unquestionable fact in the 21st century, there has been an unprecedented increase of intercultural contact between people who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Recently, intercultural contact has been the focus of many scholars and researchers among them Dörnyei and others (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005; Dörnyei, Csizér & Németh, 2006; Kormos & Csizér, 2005).

Dörnyei and Csizér (2005), for example, demonstrate that:

intercultural contact is also a key issue in second language (L2) acquisition for at least two reasons: On the one hand, one of the main aims of learning second languages has traditionally been seen to establish meaningful contact across cultures, because L2 proficiency, by definition, creates the medium of communication between members of different ethno-linguistic communities. On the other hand, interethnic contact also creates opportunities for developing language skills and acts as a powerful influence shaping the learners' attitudinal/motivational disposition, thereby promoting motivated learning behavior. Thus, intercultural contact is both a means and an end in L2 studies (p. 327)

From a cultural perspective, Byram and Fleming (1998) find that such a contact with a member of another cultural group can enhance developing learners' cultural awareness, when they compare and appreciate similarities and differences, which help them to perceive cultural differences and they can have an objective view of their own native culture. Additionally, Kourova and Modianos (2013) highlight that the main objective of foreign language learning

"now expanded to include promoting and fostering the understanding and acceptance of other cultures" (p. 61). In the same vein of thought, Szaszko (n.d.) points out that intercultural contact has "a more significant effect on communicative competence than on language learning motivation". Bearing the same point of view, Csizér and Kormos (2008) confirm that "intercultural contact, even if not frequently experienced, plays a far more important and complex role in language learning than previously assumed in studies of L2 motivation" (p. 4).

Similarly, Canale and Swain (1980) indicate that encounters with native speakers were not only seen as opportunities to develop linguistic competence, but also as a means to learn about the target language culture (socio-linguistic competence). Csizér and Kormos (2008) also mention two important reasons why intercultural contact is an important issue in second language acquisition: To be able to communicate with members of other cultures and to create good opportunities for developing L2 learners' language competence.

As a previous study, Kormos and Csizér (2005) conducted a study composed of 40 13-14 year-old Hungarian children learning English or German from various parts of Hungary. They found that intercultural contact could be rewarding due to a number of reasons. Their study also revealed that exposure to other cultures contributed to improving the students' linguistic and socio-linguistic competence, the increase of their motivation and the decrease of their anxiety in language use. Moreover, the participants noted that their attitude towards the target language speakers was positively influenced by experiencing inter-ethnic contact.

Concerning the role of intercultural contact in decreasing anxiety, it is proved that intercultural contact plays a great role in decreasing it. Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994), for example, reveal that all aspects of inter-ethnic contact correlated negatively with English use anxiety, English class anxiety, and positively with self-evaluation of proficiency and self-confidence. Similarly, Noels, Pon, and Clément (1996) examined the relationship between contact and self-confidence in terms of identity and psychological adjustment. The results revealed that the students' interethnic contact with Canadians was positively related to their self-confidence in English.

Having a different opinion, Dörnyei, Csizér, and Németh (2006) clarified that "the increased contact with foreign visitors and foreign cultural products . . . did not result in the improvement of the participants' language and intercultural attitudes but, to the contrary, most attitudinal variables, including the attitudes towards meeting foreign visitors, showed a significant decrease" (p. 118). With regard to the attitudes and motivation for learning the language, Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that language learning is strongly affected by motivations and attitudes towards other people and their cultures. Similarly, Tsai (2011) stated that "intercultural learning could affect participants' motivation to learn English which indeed facilitated their foreign language learning" (p. 164).

It is apparent that the frequent intercultural contact has an influential role on people's learning and a positive and encouraging role for being confident while communicating with others. Supporting this idea, Labrie and Clément (1986) investigated a bicultural milieu and concluded that negatively seen contact if frequent enough had positive impact on self-confidence, probably due to the fact that "experience in aversive contacts develops the

individual's expectations regarding the capacity to face successfully second language usage in such situations" (p. 279).

Based on the literature reviewed, it is clear that face-to-face intercultural communication plays an influential role in helping learners to develop and enhance their linguistic and nonlinguistic skills. In other words, the frequent face-to-face intercultural contact creates excellent opportunities for learners to increase their motivation, have positive attitudes towards others and their cultures, be self-confident, and decrease the anxiety in language use.

The Study

It is hypothesized that the frequent face-to-face intercultural contact with others creates good opportunities for learners to enhance and develop their English levels, increase their fluency and cultural knowledge, show respect towards others and their cultures, be self-confident, and decrease the language anxiety. This study mainly aims at investigating how the Saudi EFL learners perceive the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing and developing their English. In other words, it intends to highlight the expected interrelatedness of intercultural contact and students' levels in English. The present study addresses the following two questions:

1. How Saudi EFL learners perceive the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their levels in English language?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the role of face-to-face communication scores on language learning depending on the participants' age, gender, university level, foreign friendship, using English for communicating with others, and visiting English-speaking countries?

Methodology

The Characteristics of the Participants

This study is conducted at University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia among different-level students who are enrolled in English Department, Al-Namas Campus. To put it simply, the participants were homogenous in terms of their cultural background, major, and aim as all of them are Saudis and they are enrolled in English Department for receiving BA in English. Two-hundred ninety-three copies of the questionnaire were administered to the participants. Five cases were excluded due to incomplete and random answers. The valid cases were 288 from both College of Sciences and Arts - Boys and College of Sciences and Arts - Girls.

Table (1) shows the general information (gender, age, university level, foreign friendship) of the participants in frequency and percentage. With regard to the participants' university level, it should be mentioned that the Saudi university system considers each semester as a level (eight levels during the four-year university study).

Table 1. The general information of the participants

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	171	59.4
	Female	117	40.6
Age	18-20 years	130	45.1
	21-23 years	152	52.8

	24-26 years	6	2.1
University level	Level 1	30	10.4
	Level 2	70	24.3
	Level 3	19	6.6
	Level 4	38	13.2
	Level 5	20	6.9
	Level 6	52	18.1
	Level 7	10	3.5
	Level 8	49	17.0
Foreign friendship	Yes	134	46.5
	No	154	53.5

Table (2) summarizes the participants' intercultural communication background (frequency of using English for communication, visiting English-speaking countries, and the period of staying there).

Table 2. The intercultural communication background of the participants

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of using English for communication in their country	Always	23	8.0
	Usually	61	21.2
	Sometimes	174	60.4
	Never	29	10.1
Visiting English-speaking countries	Yes	22	7.6
	No	264	91.7
The period of staying in the English-speaking countries	less than one year	14	4.9
	1-2 year (s)	5	1.7
	3-4 years	1	.3
The frequent use of English in the English-speaking countries	always	8	2.8
	usually	9	3.1
	sometimes	4	1.4
	Never	0	0

Instruments of the Study

A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study from the assigned participants. It consisted of three sections: Personal information with three categorical items, intercultural background information with five categorical items, and the main third section of face-to-face intercultural communication scale included nine items with a 5-point scale Likert scoring from *strongly agree* (5 as the highest score of the item), *agree* (4), *not sure/neutral* (3), *disagree* (2), to *strongly disagree* (1 as the lowest score of the item).

These items obtained data regarding the participants' perceptions of the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their English levels (the main objective of the study under investigation). The questionnaire also included one open-ended question at the end in which the participants were requested to feel free to provide their own ideas, suggestions or

comments regarding face-to-face communication and its role in English learning. Furthermore, the direct observation and experience were used as instruments in this study.

As the questionnaire was designed by the researcher, reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested. For the reliability of the instrument (checking the internal consistency of the questionnaire items), Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be very reliable ($\alpha = .847$) with the sample of this study, compared with the minimum Cronbach's .7 (see Table 3). This ensures high reliability of the items of face-to-face intercultural communication scale. For validity, on the other hand, prior to the actual distribution, the questionnaire was revised and reviewed by some experts and statistical analysts.

Table 3. Reliability statistics using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.847	9

With regard to the data collection procedure, the researcher first got official permissions from the deans of both colleges for collecting the data from the students (boys and girls). The data were collected in May during the second semester of the academic year 2014-2015. The researcher, with the help of his colleagues in College of Arts and Sciences (boys) and College of Arts and Sciences (girls), Al-Namas Campus, administered the printed questionnaire to the different-level students during the usual class time. The students were provided with information about the purpose of the study and were told that their answers would be kept confidential and had no relationship with their grades in any way. They were given sufficient time to fill in the questionnaire and to return it in class.

Concerning the data analysis procedures, the data were coded, entered and statistically analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 16.0 version. On the one hand, the descriptive statistics were run for preliminary analysis of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. They were performed first in order to get an idea about the participants' general characteristics. On the other hand, Pallant (2005) declares that the non-parametric techniques are "ideal for use when you have data that are measured on nominal (categorical) and ordinal (ranked) scales" (p. 286). Thus, two inferential techniques of non-parametric statistics of Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test were run. Specifically, as there are two different groups of participants in this study (males and females), the Mann-Whitney U Test was used to test the differences between the two categorical independent variables of (gender, foreign friendship, and visiting English-speaking countries) on a continuous measure of face-to-face intercultural communication. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to identify the differences between the categorical independent variables with three or more options (age, university level, and using English for communicating with others) on a continuous measure of face-to-face intercultural communication. The responses to the open-ended question were subjected to content analysis method. In particular, the researcher went through the responses of each case, categorized and coded them, and integrated the data for supporting and/or making comparisons with the close-ended results. They were categorized based on general themes such as words, phrases, sentences or even whole paragraphs.

Results and Discussion

The role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing English

As mentioned before, the scale of face-to-face intercultural communication is composed of nine items. Table (4) shows the mean and standard deviation of each item and the total mean and standard deviation of all items as well. As the total mean of the nine items is (4.36), it was found that there is a high agreement to the statements of the questionnaire. This denotes that the participants have a highly positive perception of the influential and critical role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing and developing their English. This includes motivating them to learn English more efficiently, developing their speaking and listening skills, building more vocabulary, being confident and less worried while communicating with others, showing respect and getting more knowledge about others and their cultures. In this sense, the first study question was clearly answered and the hypothesis was accepted. This result goes in line with and supports the results of the previous studies conducted in this field (Dörnyei and others). Moreover, it was clear that the responses of the participants were clustered around 'strongly agree' and 'agree' options. Hence, students should do their best in order to get the benefits of intercultural communication for mastering the English language and being aware of the 'stumbling blocks' such as disrespect of others and their cultures, anxiety, and less confidence that may stand in the way of mastering the language efficiently.

Table 4. The mean and standard deviation of the items of face-to-face intercultural communication scale

I think that face-to-face communication:	Mean	Std. Deviation
- motivates me to learn more English.	4.59	.708
- encourages me to show respect towards them.	4.15	.799
- lets me know more about their cultures.	4.33	.788
- lets me know more about their personality, behaviors, values, etc.	4.24	.796
- encourages me to show respect for their cultures.	4.07	.949
- helps me to develop my English speaking and listening skills.	4.59	.726
- helps me to build up more English vocabulary.	4.53	.791
- helps me to be more self-confident when communicating in English.	4.43	.896
- helps me to be less worried when communicating in English.	4.31	.928
Total	4.36	.820

Identifying the role of other elements on the participants' perceptions of face-to-face communication and language learning

As previously noted, the Mann-Whitney U Test and the Kruskal-Wallis Test were employed to find the differences between the responses of the two groups of participants. As shown in Table (5), there were statistically significant differences on the role of face-to-face communication scores in enhancing language learning for the variables of gender ($p = .002$) and university level ($p = .003$) as ($p < .05$).

Table 5: The significant differences between the participants in terms of the role of face-to-face intercultural communication.

Variables	Sig.
Gender	.002
Age	.437
University level	.003
Foreign friendship	.381
Using English for communication	.103
Visiting other countries	.752

In particular, the Mann-Whitney U Test proved that there was a statistically significant difference between the male and female students in the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their English levels. Based on the mean ranks of the two groups, it was found that males have higher perception of the effective role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their English levels than females (see Table 6). Accordingly, it can be confirmed that the gender variable does make sense in this study with these participants. The two groups of males and females positively but differently perceive the prominent role of face-to-face communication scores in enhancing their language learning. More specifically, the male students perceive more that face-to-face intercultural communication plays a significant role in enhancing their English levels than female students do. This might be because male students have more intercultural opportunities to use English for communication with others than female students do, as they are free to meet and communicate with people from other cultures in different governmental and non-governmental sectors in Saudi Arabia. Conversely and due to religious and cultural restrictions, females in the context of the study are not allowed to build relationship and/or communicate with others out of their immediate small family.

In consistent with this idea and when analyzing the responses to the open-ended question, a great number of female participants were not interested in literature courses. Instead, they want speaking courses that help them to practice the language. In fact, literary works are of great significance to foreign language learners in order to get a better understanding of other cultures as they expose various cultural backgrounds. For developing their English levels, participants should read authentic materials such as foreign newspapers and journals, short stories, novels, plays and other types of literature works. They can apply what they have learned from these literary works to real intercultural settings.

Table 6. The sum of ranks of the gender and university-level items

Item	Options	Sum of Ranks
The gender variable	Male	163.18
	Female	131.72
The university level	Level 1	194.92
	Level 2	131.31
	Level 3	124.87
	Level 4	144.79
	Level 5	123.78

	Level 6	136.97
	Level 7	97.95
	Level 8	165.81

Concerning the university level, the results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing English levels of the participants. As shown in Table (6) and based on the mean ranks of the eight different levels, it was found that level one participants have the highest perception of the effective role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing their English levels, while the level seven participants reported the lowest perception. Fortunately, the university-level variable does make sense in this study with these participants regarding their perceptions of the role of face-to-face communication in helping them to develop their English. In this sense, the Saudi students have the chance to pursue their university education directly after getting high school certificate. They can also select any course from any level except the courses that need prerequisite courses. This may be due to the knowledge they acquired from the university courses especially the advanced ones that include literature, translation and applied linguistics (rather than the language skills courses that are taught in the preliminary levels).

On the other hand, it was indicated that there were no statistically significant differences on the role of face-to-face communication scores in enhancing language learning for each of the groups of the variables of age ($p = .437$), foreign friendship ($p = .381$), using English for communication ($p = .103$), and visiting English-speaking countries ($p = .752$) as ($p > .05$). This refers that the different options of these variables do not make sense and are more or less the same for the participants of the study. With regard to the age of the participants, it is ensured that the four age groups do not differ significantly from each other when compared with the face-to-face intercultural communication scores. This might be because that more than half of the participants ($n = 152$, i.e. 52.8 %) fell in the second group (21-23 years). Moreover, the participants are homogeneous in terms of their cultural backgrounds, aim and possibility of joining the university directly after high school. Concerning the participants' foreign friendship, it was found that more than half of the participants ($n = 154$, 53.5%) do not have friends from other cultures. This might be because the students who have foreign friendship do not exploit this relationship for communicating and developing their language or that this relationship is with those who do not speak English (non-English speakers).

Regarding the use of English for communicating with others, people have a good chance to practice English face-to-face in their daily life as there are many people from different cultures who work in different places. People are supposed to exploit this opportunity for developing their language level, but unfortunately, they miss it. In accordance with this, most of the responses to the open-ended question revolved around the importance of practicing English in- and out-side the classroom through communicating with others who are different linguistically and culturally. In this case, some students suggested that there should be native English teachers to teach at the Saudi universities. They also recommended that the teachers should encourage and motivate them to use the language. Others, unfortunately, proposed that there should be Arabic-speaking teachers for helping them to understand the course content.

Moreover, a group of participants stressed on the importance of organizing English activities in the campus. These extracurricular English activities include conferences, meetings, theaters, open forums, and clubs even if they are out of the usual university time. What is understood is that they are aware of the importance of English language for communicating successfully with others who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Others said that English is the second language in the Saudi context but it should be activated and taught starting from the preliminary stage. Other respondents shed light on the importance and helpfulness of technology integration in language teaching and learning as in the UAE. They stated that the traditional education is no longer sufficient for acquiring the language. Another participant demonstrated that in order to live together peacefully, it is important to respect others and their cultures.

Visiting English-speaking countries plays no significant role in participants' perceptions of the role of face-to-face communication in helping them to develop their English levels. This might be because they did not get benefit of being there, lived with Arabic speakers, or the purpose of that visit was not educational. It also depends on the period of being there. Another point that should be mentioned is that only 22 (out of 288) participants visited English-speaking countries. Despite that and in the open-ended responses, some participants were willing to pursue their higher studies abroad and assumed that the language can be acquired well in its context. They believed that whatever they learn is still insufficient for acquiring the language, so being in the context of the language is better for developing the language and knowing about the target culture. Another participant suggested that studying abroad and living with English families should be an essential part of the university study. However, the question that should be raised is that if one cannot go where the language is spoken, can the online communication bridge this gap?

To conclude, it can be highlighted that many participants praised the importance of the 'up-to-date' topic of the study especially in this age of frequent intercultural contact between people from different cultures. As negative findings, some participants unfortunately misinterpreted the term 'study' in the open-ended question and wrote some comments related to their university study and teachers, instead of commenting on the study under investigation.

Findings

Face-to-face intercultural contact in Saudi Arabia is promising and encouraging in which students were found aware of its usefulness for developing their English levels and communicating successfully with others. The following findings were consistent with those of some studies (Dörnyei's and others'). Moreover, many of the open-ended responses were in line with the close-ended responses with regard to the crucial role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing English learning. They also acknowledged the importance of practicing English for mastering and using it proficiently. In the light of the results discussed throughout this study, the findings can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Face-to-face intercultural communication has an influential role in enhancing students' levels in English. This includes motivating them to learn English efficiently, developing their speaking and listening skills, building more vocabulary, being confident and less

worried while communicating with others, showing respect and getting more knowledge about others and their cultures. This implies that face-to-face intercultural contact creates many learning opportunities for English learners in this particular foreign language setting. It is the most frequent means for enhancing their English levels and gaining information about target language speakers and their cultures as well. In other words, out-of-class situations have more or less the same value as the in-class lectures and activities with regard to using the language and understanding the cultures of others.

- 2) The gender and university level positively affected and did make sense when measuring the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing the participants' English levels.
- 3) The factors of age, foreign friendship, the frequent use of English for communication, and visiting English-speaking countries were not significant and did not make sense with regard to the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing the participants' English levels.
- 4)

Conclusion

Face-to-face intercultural communication is of considerable importance as it creates a learning environment for people to practice the language. The current study mainly aimed to investigate how the Saudi EFL learners perceive the role of face-to-face intercultural communication in enhancing and developing their levels in English. Based on the above-mentioned results, it is recommended that this study could be replicated with a larger sample from different branches at University of Bisha and other Saudi universities, if possible, in order to get more details and elaborate conclusions. Moreover, further studies could be carried out on the role of online communication in developing students' English levels in order to compare its results with the results of this study (face-to-face intercultural communication).

This study is significant as it concentrates on the out-of-class activities for developing English levels. More specifically, it gives more attention to the importance of face-to-face intercultural communication for developing students' English levels and achieving greater success in their life. Hence, it is hoped that this study and its results contribute to the field of intercultural communication and its role in English learning in particular. In order to compete in the global society where English language is necessary in the job market, it is a joint responsibility of policy makers, English teachers and educational institutions to take the results of this study into consideration and sensitize students to the importance of gaining the maximum benefits from these attainable out-of-class activities for developing their English levels. Furthermore, there should be extracurricular English activities such as regular conferences, meetings, open forums, and clubs at universities in order to encourage the students to practice and then master the language. Since the true and fruitful investment is in human resources, the students should exploit such intercultural situations for developing their English levels.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Dear respondents,

You are kindly requested to fill in this questionnaire. It is part of a study entitled "**Saudi EFL Learners' Perceptions of the Role of Face-to-face Intercultural Communication in Enhancing their English**". The aim of the study is to investigate the role of face-to-face intercultural communication on the Saudi students' learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). Your answers will be kept confidential and used for academic purpose only. Please put a tick (✓) next to the appropriate response and feel free to add your comments in the assigned place.

SECTION I: General information

1. Age: 18-20 years 21-23 years 24-26 years more than 26 years
2. Gender: Male Female
3. University level: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

SECTION II: Intercultural communication background

1. I have friends from other cultures. Yes No
2. I use English to communicate with foreigners in my country.
always usually often sometimes never
3. Have you ever visited foreign countries where people speak English?
Yes No

If **YES**, please answer items 4 and 5 and if **NO**, skip them.

4. I stayed there for
less than 1 year 1-2 year(s) 3-4 years more than 4 years.
5. I used English during my visit to that country.
always usually often sometimes rarely

SECTION III: Face to face communication with others

NOTE: "others" refers to those who have a different linguistic and cultural background (i.e., foreigners such as friends, teachers, workers in your country, or else).

	<p>I think that face to face communication with others:</p>	
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		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	motivates me to learn more English.					
2.	encourages me to show respect towards them.					
3.	lets me know more about their cultures.					
4.	lets me know more about their personality, behaviors, values, etc.					
5.	encourages me to show respect for their cultures.					
6.	helps me to develop my English speaking and listening skills.					
7.	helps me to build up more English vocabulary.					
8.	helps me to be more self-confident when communicating in English.					
9.	helps me to be less worried when communicating in English.					

If you want to add any idea, suggestion or comment related to the study, feel free to add it here.

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**Thank you for your help
The researcher**