

# The Difficulties Faced by Yemeni Humanitarian Staff in Using English Language<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Yemeni employees working in humanitarian organizations often face difficulties using English. This paper examines the main difficulties that Yemeni employees face in using English in humanitarian work, with a focus on the skills of writing, speaking, reading, listening, grammar, and specialized terminology. The paper uses a descriptive approach and a quantitative research design. The survey was administered to a randomly selected sample of Yemeni employees working in humanitarian organizations in Yemen. The results of the study show that the most common difficulties that Yemeni employees face in using English in humanitarian work are writing reports and emails, understanding the foreign speakers in meetings with donors and understanding the specialized terminology specific to the humanitarian field. The study also found that the respondents prioritized improving their written skills and grammar. The findings of this study have implications for the design of an English for Specific Purposes curriculum to be delivered in a training and development program for Yemeni employees working in humanitarian organizations. The results suggest that such a program should focus on improving the written skills and grammar of Yemeni employees, as well as their understanding of specialized terminology.

**Keywords:** *English for Specific Purposes; Curriculum Design; Yemen; Difficulties; Training; Development*

## INTRODUCTION

Yemen has been struck by war since 2015, creating the worst human-made crisis in a century. The conflict has displaced more than four million people and given rise to cholera outbreaks, medicine shortages, and threats of famine. The country's humanitarian crisis is said to be among the worst in the world, due to widespread hunger, disease, and attacks on civilians.

In response to this crisis, international organizations and aid agencies have increased their presence in Yemen to provide humanitarian relief and development aid. English is the most commonly used language in these INGOs, and staffing advertisements often state that applicants should have a strong command of written and spoken English. However, a considerable number of staff face difficulties with the English language in all aspects, including vocabulary, writing, grammar, reading, listening, and comprehension. These difficulties vary from person to person. For example, some staff may struggle with grammar and sentence structure while others may have difficulty with listening comprehension or vocabulary while others may have difficulties in all aspects of the language.

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This paper aims to investigate and characterize the difficulties that the Yemeni humanitarian staff in using English at the humanitarian fields. This study was limited to the Yemeni staff who are working in the humanitarian field. The review of the related studies focused primarily on the Yemeni context, with a few studies in the broader Arabic context such as gulf countries.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the difficulties which face the Yemeni humanitarian workers in communicating in English?
- How can these difficulties be overcome or mitigated?
- What implications for EFL and ESP can be suggested?

The remaining of the paper is divided into four sections. Section (1) provides a review of the related studies. Section (2) describes the research methods, population, sample and the data analysis tools. Section (3) provides analysis of the data and a brief discussion of the findings.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Whereas a few studies were conducted on the in-service staff, e.g. (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016), there is an abundance of literature on the problems faced by school learners and undergraduate students, e.g., (Al-Hamzi et al., 2021; Almuslimi, 2020; Ezzy, 2020; Omer Al-Tamimi et al., 2020), to mention only a few.

To begin with reading and vocabulary, Ahmed (2019) found that WhatsApp is an effective MALL application for developing the motivational levels of Yemeni EFL learners to improve their reading and writing skills. Al-mahbashi et al. (2015) suggested using Data-Driven Learning (DDL) for enhancing vocabulary learning and retention. The study found that the DDL instructional method is effective for both short-term and long-term vocabulary learning. The study found that DDL is particularly effective in a Yemeni context, where corpus use is still a novel method for learning. Al-Shuga'a et al. (2020) investigated the Impact of Cooperative Learning Method on Yemeni Adult Students' Knowledge of Global Issues Vocabulary. The study used a sample of 25 students and found that cooperative learning can improve Yemeni adult students' knowledge of global issues vocabulary. They also found that those who used cooperative learning performed significantly better than those who did not. Cooperative learning also had positive effects on students' confidence, language skills, and social skills.

Altaj (2014) investigated the main strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners to reduce memorization and beliefs about the role of rote learning in English vocabulary learning. The study found that learners use a variety of strategies to reduce memorization, including reading the material before class, focusing on the meaning of words, and using mnemonic devices. The study also found that learners believe that rote learning can be helpful for learning vocabulary, but that it can also have drawbacks, such as leading to shallow learning and making it difficult to remember words in context. Ayashezzi (2018) found that students have difficulties with word collocations, both lexical and grammatical. This is especially true for advanced students, who should be able to use collocations effectively. The study also found that there is an inverse relationship between students' achievement and their use of collocations. This suggests that students who are more successful in school may not be as familiar with collocations as students who are less successful. Zhang et al. (2000) concluded that it is realistic to provide learners with new words in high-context settings to trigger vocabulary acquisition and retention. This is because high-context settings provide learners with more information about the meaning of the new words, which can help them to learn the words more effectively.

With respect to writing, Haron & Rahmat (2020) evaluated the use of WhatsApp to support teaching and learning in higher education. A total of 66 students in Penang were assigned into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was supported by teacher-student interaction via WhatsApp outside school hours, while the

control group used WhatsApp only for scholarly communication. The results showed that the experimental group performed better on post-test scores than the control group. A questionnaire administered at the end of the study revealed positive perception and acceptance of the use of WhatsApp for teaching and learning.

Alsubaie & Ashuraidah (2017) analyzed the effectiveness of implementing online learning tools, specifically Google Docs, within EFL contexts to address the difficulty in academic writing faced by students. The study was conducted with a class of Arabic major students from a college in Saudi Arabia and compared the students' individual and collaborative work using Google Docs. The results showed a significant increase in the students' scores using Google Docs, and the students perceived it as a useful tool for both individual and group work. The study suggests that integrating online learning tools with students' learning can help better address the multitude of teaching and learning styles.

Several studies examined the difficulties faced in grammar. For instance, Al-Hamzi (2020) investigated the effect of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) on Yemeni advanced students' English production in communicative situations. The study found that GTM does not necessarily allow Yemeni students to use the English language communicatively. Instead, it allows them to learn about English as a subject. Other studies such as (Bin-Hady & Al-Tamimi, 2021) explored the use of technology-based strategies by Yemeni undergraduate students to develop their EFL skills in informal learning settings. The study used a mixed methods research design and collected data from 110 undergraduate students. The findings revealed that students developed four technology-based strategies, including using social media, being inspired by someone, accessing social networks and websites. These strategies helped students develop their listening, speaking, and reading skills, and enhance their vocabulary over grammar and pronunciation.

The challenges faced by Yemeni EFL learners in oral skills and acquiring correct English pronunciation have been investigated by several studies. For instance, Masroor et al. (2022) found that first-year undergraduates at the Department of English, Faculty of Education - Shabwah, University of Aden had difficulties pronouncing English consonants that do not exist in their mother tongue. Al-Hassaani & Qaid (2021) found that Yemeni EFL learners at Aden University faced challenges in learning speaking skills due to teacher-centered English classes and a lack of practice in real-life situations. Al-Hamzi et al. (2021) found that Yemeni EFL learners mispronounce English front vowel sounds because they are different from Arabic and do not exist in their native language. Hamzah et al. (2020) found that two male Yemeni EFL learners of English at Universiti Utara Malaysia faced difficulties in producing the English affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. Mafalees (2020) found that the majority of Yemeni EFL learners at secondary schools have difficulty acquiring correct English pronunciation due to traditional teaching methods and a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper implemented a quantitative method and a descriptive approach. The population of the study was all the Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field, irrespective of whether it is for International Non-government Organizations (INGOs) or Local Non-government Organizations (LNGOs) or service providers to the humanitarian organizations, e.g., monitoring and evaluation companies. A survey questionnaire was administered and distributed randomly to the respondents using WhatsApp groups of the NGOs staff. The questionnaire collected demographic data of the respondents such as age, gender, name and type (INGOs or LNGOs) of organization in which the respondents are working/have worked, and the academic qualifications as well as the duration of his/her exposure to English language.

The questionnaire was administered using Google forms because they are simple to use, mobile friendly and accessible by all respondents. The data was monitored for quality check. A couple of responses were eliminated because they

provided vague and similar answers to all the questions (e.g., “I don’t know them”), which were deemed irrelevant to the study. The questionnaire was administered in Arabic language to ensure full understanding by those respondents whose English language level was not fluent. Once data was cleaned, it was manually translated into English.

Having no experimental/control research design, this questionnaire allowed the users to enter answers in the form of short narrative. This ensured allowing the respondents to freely express the difficulties and problems they faced. This also allowed collecting information on maximum number of difficulties and to avoid enforcing categories upon the respondents.

Once the data was cleaned, it was translated into English by the researchers. Since the data was mostly in the form of text, it was manually categorized by the researchers using OpenRefine which is, according to their homepage, “a powerful free, open-source tool for working with messy data: cleaning it; transforming it from one format into another; and extending it with web services and external data.”<sup>2</sup> Once the data was categorized, it was analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the results of the data analysis and provides explanations of the results. It is divided into two main subsections: subsection (4.1) provides an analysis of the data and subsection (4.2) provides discussion of the results and findings.

### Results

#### Difficulties in vocabulary and terms

Figure (1) shows the difficulties faced by Yemeni staff working in the humanitarian field in terms of vocabulary and terminology in English. The results show that the most common difficulties are related to using terms in context, the lack of specialized word lists, memorization and recalling, and the presence of new terms and abbreviations unknown to the staff.

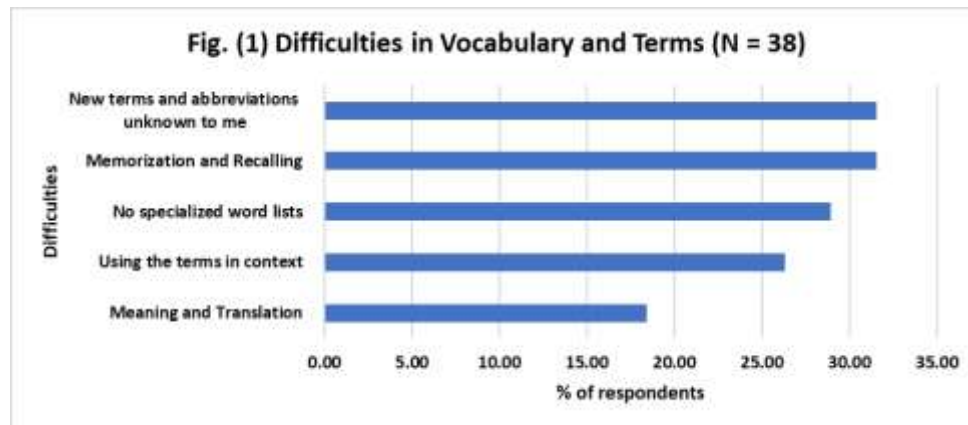


Figure 1: Difficulties in vocabulary and terms

<sup>2</sup> <https://openrefine.org/>

- **New terms and abbreviations:** 31.58% of respondents reported difficulties with new terms and abbreviations unknown to them. This may be attributed to the fact that the genre and register of the humanitarian field is new to the staff, on the one hand, and to the rapidly evolving nature of the humanitarian field, which requires staff members to constantly update their knowledge and vocabulary, on the other. For instance, “climate-smart agriculture”, “SMART Objectives, i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound objective”, “AAP, i.e., accountability to affected people”, “DRR, i.e., disaster risk reduction”, “standard of procedures” among others.
- **Memorization and recalling:** Memorization and recalling were also reported as difficulties by 31.58% of respondents. The factors reported by the respondents included a lack of practice and exposure to the language, as well as the inherent difficulty of memorizing and retaining long or compound terms e.g., long vocabulary or compound term and the failure to recall the term when he/she needs to use it.
- **No word lists:** The lack of specialized word lists and courses for English in the humanitarian field was also reported as a difficulty by 28.95% of respondents. This may be due to the fact that the genre and register of the humanitarian field is new to many staff members, and there is a need for specialized resources to support their language learning.
- **Using the terms in context:** Another difficulty reported by 26.32% of respondents is related to using terms in context, whether in writing or speaking. This difficulty may be due to a lack of exposure to authentic language use in context, as well as a lack of practice in using the language.
- **Meaning and translation:** One of the main difficulties reported is related to meaning and translation, with 18.42% of respondents reporting difficulties with multiple meanings (polysemy), the unavailability of specialized dictionaries, and slow dictionary lookup. For instance, “map” is commonly known as a diagram of a geographical areas, but in the humanitarian field it is mostly used with the sense of “planning”.

This is consistent with other studies such as (Al-Hassaani & Qaid, 2021) and (Al-Hamzi, 2020) on Yemeni learners of English, which have found that vocabulary acquisition is a major challenge for these learners.

### Difficulties in reading comprehension

Figure (2) shows that the most common problems that Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field face in reading comprehension of English are reading fluency difficulties (44.12%), vocabulary related difficulties (29.41%), and pronunciation difficulties (20.59%).

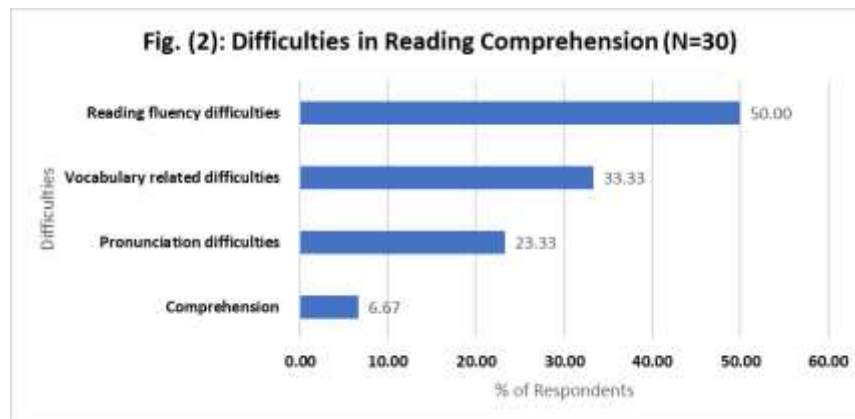


Figure 2: Difficulties in reading comprehension

**Reading fluency difficulties:** Reading fluency difficulties include inability to read and reading slowly. Factors reported by the respondents include long and complex sentences.

**Vocabulary related difficulties:** Vocabulary was a major factor which increased the reading difficulties reported by the respondents. These factors include new words which are unknown either in terms of meaning or pronunciation. Long words were found difficult to pronounce and homographs and homophones were reported as confusing. Homographs are words that have the same spelling but different meanings, such as "lead" (the metal) and "lead" (to guide). On the other hand, homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but have different meanings, such as "bear" and "bare".

**Pronunciation difficulties:** Pronunciation difficulties were caused by several factors reported by the respondents, and these factors include the silent letters (e.g., *h* in *hour*, *b* in *debt*, and *k* in *know*) and the two letters which make one sound (e.g., letters "*sh*" are pronounced /ʃ/ as in the word "*ship*", "*ch*" as /tʃ/ in "*church*" and "*th*" as /θ/ in "*thin*" or /ð/ "*that*"). In addition, there are some sounds in English which do not exist in Arabic, e.g., [v, p].

### Difficulties in grammar

Figure (3) shows that the most common problems that Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field face in grammar of English are the difficulty to understand grammar (37.84%), tenses (21.62%), sentence structure (18.92%), grammatical categories (10.81%), forgetting (5.41%), passive voice (2.70%), and the fact that some of the respondents did not like grammar (2.70%).

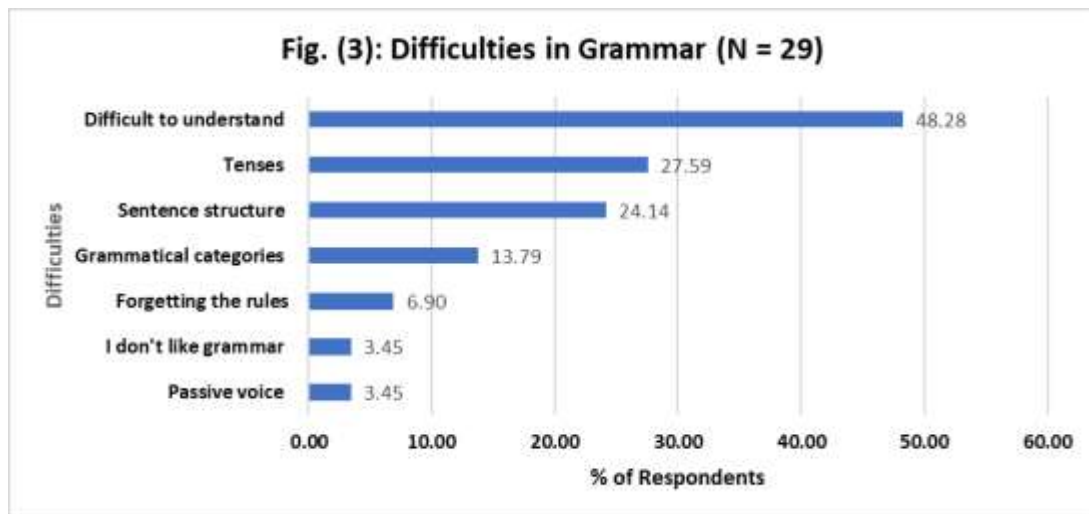


Figure 3: Difficulties in grammar

Almost half the respondents who indicated they faced difficulties in grammar reported that grammar was difficult to understand. This difficulty is likely due to the fact that English grammar is different from Arabic grammar. Another factor might be attributed to the way that English grammar is taught in the schools and universities in Yemen. For instance, a study by (Al-Hamzi, 2020) found out that the current practices in teaching English grammar help the students to learn about grammar as a subject, while in fact it is supposed that such practices should help students learn the grammar and use it.

**Tenses:** This difficulty is also likely due to the fact that English has a much more complex system of tenses than Arabic. English has 12 tenses, while Arabic only has 3 (past, present and future) which are formed in a less difficult way than those of the English language. Difficulties in learning tenses manifest in two facets: the tense formation and using the right tense in the right situation.

**Sentence structure:** This difficulty is also likely due to the fact that English sentence structure can be very different from Arabic sentence structure. For example, English sentences typically have a subject-verb-object structure, while Arabic sentences typically have a verb-subject-object structure. Arabic also do not have verb to be, and many a time, learners make an English sentence without verb to be, e.g., “He good” for “He is good”.

**Grammatical categories:** This difficulty is likely due to the fact that English has a much more complex system of grammatical categories than Arabic. For example, English has 8 parts of speech, while Arabic only has 3.

### Difficulties in writing

Figure (4) shows that the most common problems that Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field face in writing English are grammar and sentence structure (50%), spelling and punctuation marks (43.75%), lack of or forgetting vocabulary (37.5%), composition such as emails and reports (21.88%), and less practice (3.13%).

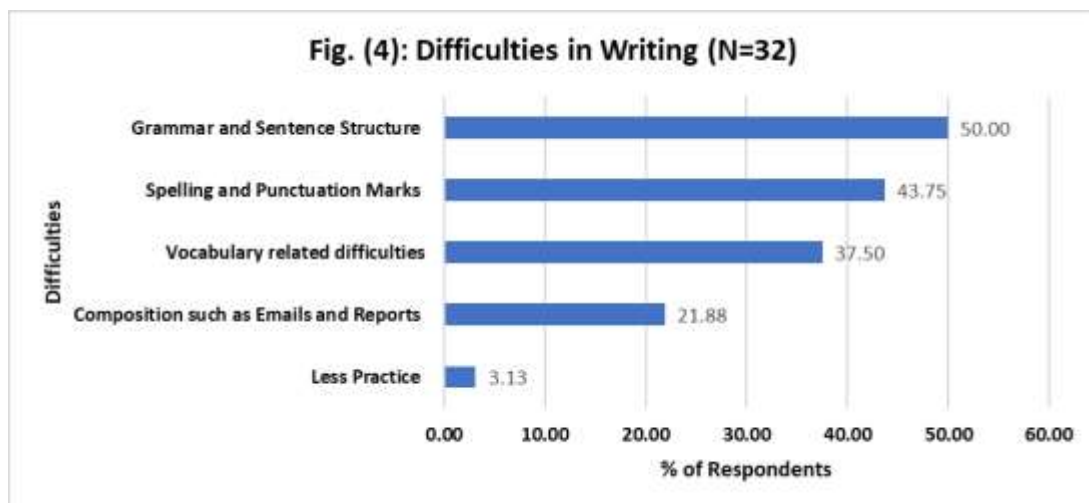


Figure 4: Difficulties in writing

**Grammar and sentence structure** were reported problematic by half of the respondents. There are several factors causing these difficulties including sentence structure, sentence joining, writing grammatically correct sentences, subject-verb agreement, long sentences are difficult to compose, pronouns and anaphora, adverbs and parts of speech and tense and number inflection.

**Spelling and punctuation marks** were reported by 44% of the respondents. They expressed several factors causing these difficulties including confusion caused by homophones and homographs, the mismatch between spelling and pronunciation as well as the correct use of punctuation marks.

Another major difficulty of writing reported by 38% of the respondents is the related to the **vocabulary and terms**, and such difficulty is caused by several factors including lack of terms/vocabulary, forgetting vocabulary/terms at the

time of writing, long and compound terms are difficult to remember at the time of writing, less knowledge of the genre or register and phrasal verbs (selecting the right preposition as a verb argument).

Around 22% of the respondents reported they faced difficulties in **composing emails and reports**, and these difficulties were caused by several factors including the formats of emails and reports, joining sentences, supporting the main idea with details and difficulty in writing the right word in the right context.

### Difficulties in listening, speaking and pronunciation

Figure (xx) shows that the most common difficulties faced by Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field when speaking and listening in English are fluency problems (68.75%), articulation problems (40.625%), vocabulary-related difficulties (34.375%), grammatical problems (28.125%), and discourse-related difficulties (25%).

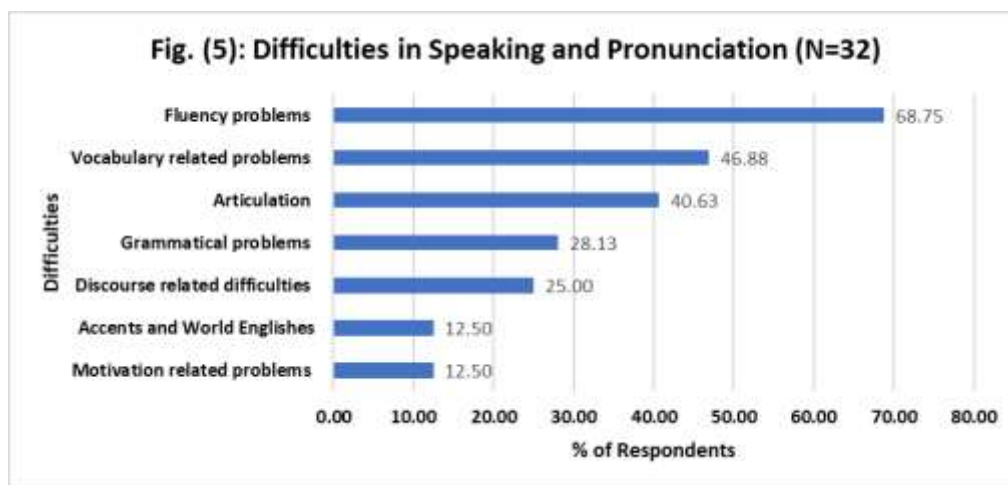


Figure 5: Difficulties in speaking and pronunciation

**Fluency problems:** Fluency problems are the most common difficulty reported by Yemeni staff. The most commonly reported causing factor was connected and fast speech. This is likely due to the fact that they may not have had much exposure to the English language in humanitarian settings. Fluency problems can manifest in a number of ways, including speaking slowly, being unable to speak quickly, and being unable to pronounce words correctly during speaking.

### Articulation problems

Articulation problems are also a common difficulty for the Yemeni humanitarian staff. Several factors were reported by the respondents and these include:

- **Exceptional rules:** for instance, "th" sound in English is pronounced differently in different words, such as "thin" and "this" (Baagbah et al., 2016); "r" sound in English can be pronounced in different ways, depending on the region, e.g., American vs. British English.
- **Silent letters:** English has many words that contain silent letters, such as "k" "know" and "knife".
- **Forgetting rules:** English pronunciation rules can be complex and difficult to remember.
- **Difficult articulation of some letters and sounds:** Some English letters are difficult to pronounce for Yemeni speakers. For example, the /v/ sound is not present in Arabic, so Yemeni speakers may pronounce it



as /f/ in several cases (Baagbah et al., 2016). Another example is /ŋ/ which is a nasal sound, and the Yemeni speakers of English tend to pronounce it as alveolar /g/.

- **Wrong pronunciation:** Yemeni speakers may sometimes pronounce English words incorrectly. This can be due to a number of factors, such as not being familiar with the pronunciation rules, or being influenced by Arabic or other languages, e.g., learning French then English results in pronouncing English with French pronunciation rules.

### **Vocabulary-related difficulties**

Vocabulary-related difficulties are another common problem reported by the respondents. This is likely due to the fact that the register used by the humanitarian sector is different than the general-purpose English as it has many specialized vocabulary and terms which are unknown to the respondents in terms of meaning and/or pronunciation. Other factors included long words, multisyllabic words, lack of vocabulary, and recalling vocabulary at the time of speaking.

### **Grammatical problems**

Grammatical problems are also a common problem reported by the respondents when they speak English. This is likely due to the fact that English grammar is different from the grammar of the Arabic language. Other factors include sentence structure, word order, and difficulty in formulating sentence where a speaker may speak in kernel phrases or just words. For example, “*starvation, people no food*” for “*The target community have less food and they run the risk of starvation*”.

### **Discourse-related difficulties**

Discourse-related difficulties are less common than the other difficulties listed above, but they can still be a problem for the respondents. Discourse-related difficulties include problems with speaking style, ideas ordering, maintaining flow of the ideas, and turn taking. These difficulties can be caused by a number of factors, including lack of practice, and anxiety.

### **World Englishes accents**

Accents related difficulties were reported by 13% of the respondents. The respondents reported that they faced difficulties to understand listening when the speakers changed, e.g., from a native speaker of English to a speaker from Europe, Asia or Africa. Speaking with a native-like accent was another difficulty. On the other hand, the differences between the British and American accents were problematic.

### **Motivational related difficulties**

Motivational related difficulties are a less common problem reported by the respondents. In this case, a speaker may have the necessary skills and fluency to speak, but they may feel shy or afraid to speak, and sometimes they get confused.

### **Discussion of the results**

The results of the reported problems in writing English by Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field show that the most common difficulties are related to grammar and sentence structure, spelling and punctuation marks, and lack of or forgetting vocabulary. These difficulties are consistent with the findings of other studies on Yemeni learners of English. (Muthanna, 2016) found that found that Yemeni learners of English face challenges in mastering academic

writing, which involves ongoing efforts with deep thinking and several stages of editing. (Nassi, 2019) found that writing instruction for Yemeni learners of English involves different challenges related to the linguistic and cultural background, the learner, the teacher, and the teaching context. The results also show that some Yemeni staff have difficulties with composition, such as writing emails and reports. This may be due to a lack of practice or knowledge of the genre or register. (Algama et al., 2021) found that Yemeni EFL learners encounter difficulty in constructing well-formed sentences in all paragraph component parts. Finally, a study by (Ahmed, 2022) found that Yemeni EFL learners at Aden University depend heavily on memory strategies and do not make a balance among their language learning strategies.

The results of the reported problems in grammar of English by Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field lend support to other studies. For instance, a study by (Mudsh & Laskar, 2021) examined the learning and comprehension of English aspect categories by Yemeni EFL students and found that the role of Arabic influences has been noticed to be negatively affecting the process of learning and comprehension of aspect categories in the initial years.

The results of the reported problems in speaking are consistent with other studies on speaking and pronunciation of Yemeni learners of English. For example, a study by (Hwaider, 2017) found that Yemeni learners of English encounter many difficulties when attempting to communicate in English, with fast or connected speech being one of the main problems. Further, (Modhish, 2012) found that some Arab EFL instructors at Jazan University had difficulty articulating English consonant clusters, particularly those that do not exist in Modern Standard Arabic. Monophthongization was employed by some instructors to articulate English diphthongs, and defective pronunciation of certain English vowels and consonants was also identified among non-Arab EFL instructors speaking South Asian languages.

The results of the reported problems in listening are consistent with other studies on listening comprehension. For example, a study by (Alrefae et al., 2019) found that Yemeni EFL learners have low listening proficiency, which affects their performance in integrated tasks such as writing. Further, a study by (Jung, 2010) found out that world Englishes comprehensibility to non-native speakers of English was influenced by several factors including the varieties of English, intercultural competence, sociolinguistic competence, and it also found that pronunciation can be a barrier to communicate with other cultures. Another study by (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016) also reported that Omani in-service employees struggled with dealing with customers and colleagues from different sociocultural backgrounds in English. Further, the findings are consistent with a study by (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) which listed several difficulties in listening including cultural differences, accents, unknown vocabulary and the speed of the speaker.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL TEACHING

This study revealed that the Yemeni staff working in the humanitarian field faced several difficulties in all components of the language. These can be thematically grouped as follows:

- **Vocabulary and terminology:** Yemeni staff working in the humanitarian field face several difficulties with vocabulary and terminology in English, including new terms and abbreviations, memorization and recalling, the lack of specialized word lists, and using terms in context.
- **Reading comprehension:** Yemeni staff also face difficulties in reading comprehension of English, including reading fluency difficulties, vocabulary related difficulties, and pronunciation difficulties.

- **Grammar:** Yemeni staff working in the humanitarian field face several difficulties in terms of grammar of English, including difficulty to understand grammar, tenses, sentence structure, grammatical categories, forgetting, passive voice, and dislike of grammar.
- **Writing:** Yemeni staff also face difficulties in writing English, including grammar and sentence structure, spelling and punctuation marks, lack of or forgetting vocabulary, composition such as emails and reports, and less practice.
- **Speaking and listening:** Yemeni staff working in the humanitarian field face several difficulties when speaking and listening in English, including fluency problems, articulation problems, vocabulary-related difficulties, grammatical problems, and discourse-related difficulties.

There are a number of things that can be done to help Yemeni staff who work in the humanitarian field to overcome difficulties in vocabulary and terms. These include:

- **Providing specialized dictionaries and word lists:** This would make it easier for learners to find the words they need, and it would also help them to memorize the words.
- **Developing specialized courses for English in the humanitarian action:** This would provide learners with the opportunity to learn the terms and jargon of the humanitarian field in a systematic way.
- **Giving learners more opportunities to practice using the terms:** This could be done through role-playing, simulations, and other activities.
- **Helping learners to understand the genre and register of the humanitarian field:** This would make it easier for learners to use the terms in the right context.

It may be helpful to stress on the cooperative approach in learning as cooperation is one of key values of the international non-government organization. It is expected that the cooperative learning approach will be more helpful to the learners. For example, Al-Shuga'a et al., (2020) found that students who used a cooperative learning method performed significantly better on tasks related to global issues vocabulary knowledge than students who did not use this method. The study also found that cooperative learning had positive effects on students' vocabulary knowledge, confidence, language skills, and social skills. The study concluded that cooperative learning contributes to cognitive growth, increased autonomy, and productivity in adult learners.

In each language component, the respondents faced several difficulties. These difficulties are mostly overlapping. For instance, problems in vocabulary manifest in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Difficulties in grammar also manifest in writing and speaking. This suggests that there is a need to adopt an integrative course design where all these skills are covered. Difficulties in learning vocabulary or grammar suggest that the Yemeni humanitarian staff are in need for a course which takes several factors such as the target learners are adult and it may be optimal to offer explicit instruction, the specificity of Arabic language and the genre and register of the humanitarian field. A considerable number of respondents indicated that they faced difficulties in memorization, retention and recalling. This suggests that it may be helpful to consider a spiral syllabus design which ensures revisiting the skills being taught repeatedly throughout the course.

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