

English in Jordan: Attitudes and Prestige

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to discuss the attitudes of a number of Jordanian university students towards English as a foreign language and the place it occupies in Jordan. Although research of a similar nature has been done, this study complements others by following 420 students in their university studies, and it provides another avenue for examining the English language situation in Jordan. This research aims at surveying the following issues (1) students' attitudes towards learning English, (2) students' attitudes towards English language, and (3) the place of English language in Jordan. The results show that the dominant attitude is one of favourability towards learning English. There is a definite degree of positiveness towards English language in Jordan. English is seen as useful, enjoyable, and important and has no harm to Arabic language or to the Islamic religion. It occupies a prestigious status in Jordan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, English language is the leading foreign language enjoying a prestigious position in many countries. Jordan is no exception where English is neither a national nor an official language, but it is the most widely taught foreign language in the country. Most Jordanian learners start learning English as early as primary school, yet the problem is that most of them are far from attaining the desired level of proficiency either in comprehensive or productive skills or in both. Despite being exposed to English instruction for a long time at different levels, the reasons for the poor performance have long been a matter of discussion among researchers. Many researchers have analyzed learners' performance to pinpoint the sources of such difficulties, for instance, Al-Haq 1982; Mukattash 1981, 1983; Zughoul & Taminian 1984; Kharma & Hajjaj 1989; Bataineh 1997, 2005, Rababah 2000 and Zughoul 2002. Although a huge amount of time and effort are spent,