


The Influence of Study Location on English Language Learning: A Comparative Study of Arabic-Speaking Students


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تأثير مكان الدراسة على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية: دراسة مقارنة للطلاب الناطقين باللغة العربية

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	DOI https://doi.org/10.63908/rnn7f558	RECEIVED الاستلام 2024/12/01	Edit التعديل 2025/04/07	ACCEPTED القبول 2025/04/08
	NO. OF PAGES عدد الصفحات 13	YEAR سنة العدد 2025	VOLUME رقم المجلد 3	ISSUE رقم العدد 13

Abstract:

This research examined if Arabic-speaking students of English language achieve higher proficiency when studying in a country where English is spoken as a primary language compared to those who study in a non-English-speaking country. Also, it explored how age and gender impact English language learning. A comparative cross-sectional design was run to analyze data from 184 Arabic-speaking students of English. Participants' English learning was assessed using standardized tests that measured listening, reading, writing, speaking, and overall proficiency. The results showed slightly higher proficiency scores for students who studied abroad, especially in speaking and listening proficiency, but the Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant difference between study countries across most language skills. Spearman's correlation analysis revealed weak relationships between study location and proficiency scores, with the strongest correlation found in listening proficiency. Although Kruskal-Wallis tests identified minor variations in proficiency across age groups, no clear pattern was established. Ordinal logistic regression confirmed that study location, gender, and age had limited impact on overall proficiency, which suggests that other unexamined factors may play a role in learning. Hence, while studying abroad offered marginal advantages in listening and speaking, the overall language proficiency differences between study locations were not statistically significant. This challenges the common assumption that immersion in an English-speaking environment guarantees superior language learning. There is a need for a balanced approach that integrates immersive exposure and structured learning. Future research should explore variables like teaching strategies, motivation, and individual learning styles to better understand the complexities of language learning.

Keywords: Second Language Acquisition, Study Abroad, Study at Home, English Proficiency, Language Learning, Arabic Learners.

الملخص:

هدف هذا البحث إلى معرفة ما إذا كان الطلاب الناطقون باللغة العربية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية يحققون كفاءة أعلى عند الدراسة في بلد يتحدث اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أساسية مقارنة بأولئك الذين يدرسون في بلد لا يتحدث الإنجليزية. كما استكشف كيف يؤثر العمر والجنس على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تم إجراء تصميم مقطعي مقارن لتحليل البيانات من 184 طالبًا ناطقًا باللغة العربية يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية. تم تقييم تعلم المشاركين للغة الإنجليزية باستخدام اختبارات موحدة تقيس الاستماع والقراءة والكتابة والتحدث والكفاءة العامة. أظهرت النتائج درجات أعلى قليلاً للطلاب الذين درسوا في الخارج، وخاصة في إتقان التحدث والاستماع، لكن اختبار مان ويتني يو لم يظهر أي فرق كبير بين دول الدراسة في معظم مهارات اللغة. كشف تحليل ارتباط سبيرمان عن علاقات ضعيفة بين موقع الدراسة والدرجات، مع وجود أقوى ارتباط في إتقان الاستماع بالرغم من أن اختبارات كروسكال واليس حددت اختلافات طفيفة في الكفاءة عبر الفئات العمرية، إلا أنه لم يتم تحديد نمط واضح. وقد أكد الانحدار اللوجستي الترتيبي أن موقع الدراسة والجنس والعمر كان لها تأثير محدود على الكفاءة العامة، مما يشير إلى أن عوامل أخرى غير مدروسة قد تلعب دورًا في التعلم. وبالتالي، في حين قدمت الدراسة في الخارج مزايا هامشية في الاستماع والتحدث، فإن الاختلافات الإجمالية في الكفاءة اللغوية بين مواقع الدراسة لم تكن ذات دلالة إحصائية. وهذا يتحدى الافتراض الشائع بأن الانغماس في بيئة ناطقة باللغة الإنجليزية يضمن تعلمًا متفوقًا للغة. هناك حاجة إلى نهج متوازن للتعرض للغة. يجب أن تستكشف الأبحاث المستقبلية متغيرات مثل استراتيجيات التدريس والدافع وأنماط التعلم الفردية لفهم تعقيدات تعلم اللغة بشكل أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعلم اللغة الثانية، الدراسة في الخارج، الدراسة في الوطن، كفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية، تعلم اللغة.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that English has displaced other languages as the most widely spoken language around the world today, and it seems like everyone lives in a tiny village because so many people communicate in the English language. As a result of it being today's lingua franca, many people around the world would like to develop their English language skills. One profound way of developing communication efficiency and improving language skills is for English students to immerse themselves in an English-speaking community. This interaction is needed to gain cultural insights and get accurate understandings of the English language skills. Moreover, for generations to come, being able to communicate in English will be a critical skill as it opens doors to the future of education, careers, and personal prospects. However, a recurring question seems to be: "Is it better for English language learners to improve their English at home or abroad?"

For non-native speakers of English, mastering English is a gateway to heightened academic, professional, and social opportunities. One of the key considerations in second language acquisition (SLA) is whether studying English in a country where English is spoken as primary language offers a significant advantage over studying English at home. While many studies have investigated the role of immersion in SLA, the question of whether studying abroad helps in obtaining better language learning outcomes remains a subject of empirical exploration (Mitchell et al., 2017). Some researchers suggest that immersion into an English-speaking culture promotes greater gains in speaking proficiency and listening comprehension (Saito & Hanzawa, 2018) whereas other researchers argue that structured teaching in non-native environments could be equally effective especially for academic skills of reading and writing (Taguchi, 2011).

Studies on SLA suggest that immersive learning supports communicative competence

because of increased exposure to faithful language interactions (Yan et al., 2024). However, structured learning in home countries give systematic instruction, explicit grammar teaching, and controlled input. This has been significantly improving structured speaking output (Mori & Gobel, 2021). In fact, this research study aims to determine whether Arabic-speaking students obtain significantly higher English proficiency when they study abroad compared to studying at home. Also, it identifies which language core skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are most affected by study location. In addition, it explores how age and gender impact English language learning within this context.

Still, there are drawbacks to studying abroad; for instance, one might not be able to study abroad because of their financial circumstances, they feel homesick, or a number of other situations. Thus, they avoid traveling overseas. Nevertheless, whether at home or abroad, no matter where English language students choose to study, they all have stories to tell about their English language proficiency and whether it has been significantly affected by their decision. In today's digital era known for international communication, students are greatly urged to find the most effective method of enhancing their English language skills. They must find their own ways to deal with factors like interaction with native speakers and cultural awareness. In an ever-increasing, interconnected, international community, making an educated decision in regard to how to improve English proficiency is crucial for academic and professional success. Thus, the study helps English language learners discover the most effective approach to increasing English language proficiency in all four core language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in terms of studying at home or seeking educational opportunities abroad.

The ways in which English language students learn a second language is described by a strong theoretical framework that can offer insights

into the feasible advantages and challenges of studying English language abroad versus at home. There are several SLA theories that explain the contextual and social factors that shape English learning outcomes. For example, Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis examined the comprehensible input in language acquisition. He believed that learners acquire language most effectively when receiving input somewhat beyond their current proficiency. When students learn English in the latter's native country, exposure to authentic linguistic input including conversations with native speakers aligns with the description of comprehensible input. Reinforcing Krashen's argument, Saito and Hanzawa (2018) found that students who studied abroad showed more significant developments in oral proficiency and phonological accuracy than others who studied English in formal classrooms. However, English language students might struggle with lack of explicit feedback because exposure alone is insufficient (Kang, 2014).

In contrast, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory shifted the focus from individual cognitive processes to social interaction as the main driver of language learning (Thorne, 2007). His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that students progress faster when receiving guidance from proficient speakers. This matches with the notion that studying abroad is advantageous because it facilitates language learning through immersion and social engagement (Hou, 2018). However, structured instruction at home has been able to replicate this social element through peer interactions and collaborative learning (Al-Ghamdi, 2021). Moreover, recent research suggested that digital platforms could simulate immersive environments and enable students to engage in meaningful social interactions (Zammit, 2023).

Although there are many research studies examined studying English language abroad, there are few research studies that focused on Arabic-

speaking English language students and their comparative performance affected by the study location (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). Also, limited research examined the age and gender interacting with study location to impact language learning outcomes. This research study investigated these factors to contribute to the wider discourse on English language learning and help in improving learning efficiency.

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the differences between the English proficiency level of those English language learners who study English at home and those who study English abroad. While it is true that the impact of traveling and living in a country where English is spoken as a primary language has been investigated in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing language skills, it is critical to mention that this research study focused on native Arabic-speaking English language learners from different fields, generations, regions, qualifications, and so on, some of whom had to travel abroad to study English while others completed studying English at their Arabic home.

B. Research Question

Based on the purpose of the research study, the following research question was addressed: "Is there a significant difference in English proficiency level between studying English at home or studying abroad, in terms of the overall language and each core language skill of listening, speaking, reading, and writing?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

People have been traveling to study since Greek and Roman times, when they moved from one place to another to learn different cultures. During the Middle Ages, educational travel was largely limited to wealthy people. Then, this changed during the Renaissance period, when travel itself became more accessible. A long time

after that, and in the modern era after World War II, studying abroad became very popular. Many universities were established in many different countries to host students from all around the world. Obviously, the development of transportation made it easier for students and all travelers. Today, the number of student exchange programs constantly increases (Pippin, 2021).

There are different types of studying English abroad programs. Each of which has its own unique benefits. There are semester-long or year-long programs that last for one semester or one academic year and aim to offer a more in-depth experience of different cultures and usually include some coursework to be counted towards students' degrees back home. There are also work and study programs that combine work and study, giving students the opportunity to obtain different work experiences while studying abroad. No matter what type of program is chosen, studying abroad has been seen as an amazing experience that helps students to grow both personally and academically.

When it comes to English language learning, traveling to study English in a country where English is spoken as a primary language is common for many English language learners from around the world. As sociolinguistic competence is the potential to use language in different societies and cultures, traveling to live among native English language speakers benefits students and helps them become more aware of English language cultural norms and fully comprehend how to use English within contexts. Being aware of the appropriate speech in the situation and understanding the purposes of exchanges are really crucial when communicating in English (Schroeder, 2010).

Considering both the domestic and international environmental surroundings when helping English language learners is critical, especially when it comes to improving communicative competence in English. Travel experiences help them to experience real language utilization as well as cultural immersion into

English-speaking populations. If done appropriately, such a social interaction plays a magnificent role in leveraging communicative competence. Interacting with native English speakers fosters the skill to communicate with others in both the social and career contexts. Interaction in the target language with native speakers is very helpful to understand different language patterns that lead to better communication efficiency. It should concentrate on effective listening, non-verbal awareness, and group teamwork since developing social communication is crucial for professional growth (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Richards and Rodgers (2014) referred to well-designed curricula and the need to be communicative and task-based to allow more students' proficiency levels and have them focus more on real-life meaningful interaction using the language. For instance, using authentic materials like newspapers and news channels could enhance learning quality (Tomlinson, 2012).

Also, there are two other critical factors that impact the development of communicative competence: personal motivation and self-efficacy. English language learners who have a distinctive desire to develop their English actually dedicate more time and effort to language learning activities. The self-confidence gained by the learner helps them to effectively use the language, which is critical to improving communicative competence (Dörnyei, 2005). This process of such coherent strategies and organizational patterns should be used to connect the dots, which is exactly known as a process of discourse analysis. This is related to where words are placed, phrases are used, and sentences are constructed (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

Some English language learners study abroad to immerse themselves in a new culture. They find it helpful for them to build social networks, develop career prospects, and get a global perspective. However, others might travel abroad believing in the quality of education provided in the countries they are heading to.

Whatever the reason, the experience of studying English in a country where it is the primary spoken language is a great experience. Nevertheless, such a claim does not ignore the fact that there are also drawbacks to studying English abroad. For instance, it can be expensive, and homesickness and culture shock can lead to acculturation challenges that English language learners studying abroad might face. Also, language barriers could hinder making new friends and easily getting around, which could result in losing communicative competence that is important for clear communication when it comes to English language competency (Canale & Swain, 1980). Indeed, dealing with native English speakers really helps English language learners to significantly build language. By traveling abroad, English language learners are given bigger opportunities to directly experience cultural practices and develop deeper understandings of cultural norms associated with the target language (Shelf, 2007).

Immersive environments provide rich opportunities for English language learners to communicate with native speakers and experience cultural contexts. This should enhance language skills by having deeper and meaningful interactions. When English language learners interact with those who belong to other cultures, they are exposed to constraints that happen because of cultural differences between two members of different cultures. This experience could drive the students to acquire skills and help them to share their perspective. Cultural exposure is critical to developing communication competence in English, as it is not only language acquisition but also social, cultural, and pragmatic acquisition. All contribute to truthful and inclusive understanding and real use of English (Hou, 2018).

On the other hand, regardless of some challenges in learning English at home, many efforts have been recently made throughout the Arab world to improve the domestic learning experience. For example, Al-Mansour (2020) noted

that Saudi Arabia has adopted more effective approaches to teaching English that focus on improving some skills like speaking and listening, which has showed a shift towards student-centered learning approaches. Also, the utilization of technology and online resources helped English language learners to enhance the learning effectiveness (Al-Ghamdi, 2021).

Additionally, the home learning environment could offer unique opportunities for national citizens to practice their English language skills. These opportunities contribute to developing communication competence. Moreover, such an interaction could also help in improving speaking and listening skills besides that acculturation process that occurs during efficient communication. An important advantage of learning English at home is the continuous exposure to the English language through media channels like television, movies, the internet, and podcasts. Also, family members and friends could work as cooperative partners in language practice and provide great opportunities for informal conversations in English, which should include English language learners' learned vocabulary (Al-Hazmi, 2015).

In fact, there are some factors that impact the development of communicative competence for speakers of English who decide to learn the language at home. For example, when Arabic is the primary language of daily communication and is well-known by every single surrounding person, it really hinders English fluency and pronunciation. Thus, the English language learner might end their day with no real English language practice. Besides the limited language exposure, another struggle for those who study English at home is missing the cultural context and the pragmatic linguistic aspects. English language learners need to understand the shades of cultural language use, which is necessary for effective communication (Qahtani, 2015).

Students who learn English at home are also exposed to fewer cultural contexts, affecting their

ability to use English in culturally better ways and, as a result, affecting their communication competence (Al Hasmy, 2015). Students who reach high communication proficiency levels in the English language are expected to have the ability to excel in foreign academic contexts. They should overcome challenges in intercultural communication. This emphasizes the necessity for improving communication skills besides only language fluency (Al-Hazmi, 2015). According to Byram (1997), being familiar with cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices linked to the English language assists English language learners in navigating cross-cultural interactions better and helps them understand more vocabulary. Moreover, the home environment might not offer the same level of language practice. It is not a normal place of interaction, so English language learners might have difficulties increasing fluency and confidence using their English (Al-Hazmi, 2015).

Therefore, there are many interconnected factors that impact English language learners' learning, including language exposure, motivation, cultural awareness, social interaction, self-efficacy, and so on. Through a comprehensive approach, English language learners might improve their ability to navigate confidently in different language contexts. Developing such communicative competence really depends on different aspects. Certainly, exposure to the language reading, writing, speaking, and listening helps English language learners to acquire these abilities and then succeed (Bachman, 1990).

Indeed, it is true that learning English at home might present obstacles, including limited exposure to authentic language use, but it still offers opportunities to practice language, especially in this era of globalization when the whole world has become like a small village. Quality education has been considered all around the world, especially when it comes to a very common subject like the English language. As Al-Mansour (2019) noted, for example, in Saudi Arabia, as a native Arabic-

speaking country, recent research studies have showed interest in the quality of education. Teacher training and curriculum design are key factors influencing the quality of English language education. It is really the methods and materials used by English language teachers that make the difference and determine the quality of education.

To sum up, research studies suggest that the immersive environment eases language learning by bringing a context in which English is naturally and meaningfully used (Kormos & Csizér, 2016). While current research studies provide valuable results related to factors impacting the communication competence of English language learners by studying at home or abroad, the research gaps still exist. One such gap is the lack of exploration of the cultural factors impacting Arab native-speaking English language learners. There are some research studies that address the influence of cultural exposure, but there is still a lack of in-depth examination of how local and international cultural differences impact language learning (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

A. Study Design

This research study utilized a comparative cross-sectional design to investigate differences in English language proficiency among Arabic-speaking students studying English either at home in a non-English-speaking country or abroad in an English-speaking country. Such a design allowed for comparison of English language proficiency across different study locations giving insights into the influence of immersion on language learning and proficiency.

B. Participants

A total of 184 Arabic-speaking English language learners participated in this study. Among them, 99 studied English abroad where English is spoken as a primary language, while 85 studied English in a country where English is not spoken as

a primary language. Participants were grouped based on gender (126 males and 58 females) and age groups (ranging from 15 years old to 55 years old). They were recruited through convenience sampling, selecting individuals who had recently completed standardized English language proficiency tests. They were further grouped into 15 to 20 years (26 participants), 20 to 25 years (40 participants), 25 to 30 years (61 participants), 30 to 35 years (31 participants), 35 to 40 years (16 participants), 40 to 45 years (7 participants), 45 to 50 years (1 participant), and 50 to 55 years (2 participants).

C. Data Collection

Data were collected through standardized English language proficiency tests, obtaining scores in the following language skills: Listening, reading, writing, speaking, and overall proficiency. Participants were asked to provide their age, gender, and study location at the time of taking the tests. All of them were native speakers of Arabic, the data were collected from multiple cities and countries to ensure a diverse representation of English language students.

D. Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 27. A series of statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between study location, gender, age, and proficiency scores. Descriptive Statistics were calculated to summarize the data, including the mean, median, standard deviation, and range for each language skill and overall proficiency. Normality Testing was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and kurtosis analysis to assess whether the data followed a normal distribution. The results indicated that the data was non-normally distributed, necessitating the use of non-parametric tests. Spearman's Rank Correlation was applied to examine relationships between proficiency scores and categorical variables (study

location, gender, and age) due to the non-normal data distribution. Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to compare proficiency scores between participants who studied at home vs. abroad and determine whether study location had a significant impact on any language skill. Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to analyze proficiency differences across multiple age groups, serving as a non-parametric alternative to ANOVA. Ordinal Logistic Regression was performed to evaluate the combined effect of study location, gender, and age on overall proficiency scores. This approach allowed for an integrated understanding of how demographic and environmental factors influenced language learning outcomes. No missing values were identified in the dataset. If missing data had been present, a listwise deletion approach would have been applied to maintain consistency in analysis and prevent bias.

RESULTS

Table 1 presented a summary of the proficiency scores for all participants. On average, speaking had the highest mean score ($M = 6.073$, $SD = 1.389$) while writing had the lowest score ($M = 5.546$, $SD = 1.283$). Also, listening and reading scores were similar with the means of 5.813 ($SD = 1.395$) and 5.630 ($SD = 1.294$), respectively. The overall proficiency score had a mean of 5.856 ($SD = 1.198$). Scores varied across participants with some achieving the highest possible score (9.0) while others scored as low as 0.5 in some skills. Notably, speaking had a minimum score of 0 suggesting that at least one participant had significant difficulties with verbal communication. The standard deviations indicated moderate variation in performance across all skills, meaning that while some students performed well, others struggled in different areas.

Table 1: Summary of Proficiency Scores				
Proficiency Skill	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Listening	5.813	1.395	0.5	9.0
Reading	5.630	1.294	0.5	9.0

Writing	5.546	1.283	0.5	9.0
Speaking	6.073	1.389	0.0	9.0
Overall Score	5.856	1.198	0.5	9.0

The Spearman's correlation coefficients (ρ) and p-values from the output were extracted to determine the strength and significance of relationships between study location, gender, age, and proficiency scores.

Table 2: Spearman's Correlation		
Variables	ρ (Correlation Coefficient)	p-value (Sig.)
Study Location & Listening	0.155	0.035
Study Location & Reading	0.171	0.020
Study Location & Writing	0.060	0.418
Study Location & Speaking	0.108	0.144
Study Location & Overall Proficiency	0.151	0.041
Gender & Listening	-0.023	0.752
Gender & Reading	-0.045	0.544
Gender & Writing	-0.110	0.138
Gender & Speaking	-0.028	0.705
Gender & Overall Proficiency	-0.064	0.387
Age & Listening	-0.090	0.225
Age & Reading	-0.093	0.210
Age & Writing	0.018	0.809
Age & Speaking	-0.151	0.041
Age & Overall Proficiency	-0.085	0.254

The Spearman's correlation analysis (Table 2) indicated a weak positive relationship between study location and listening proficiency ($\rho = 0.155$, $p = 0.035$), as well as reading proficiency ($\rho =$

0.171, $p = 0.020$). Additionally, study location was weakly correlated with overall proficiency ($\rho = 0.151$, $p = 0.041$). These results suggested that studying abroad provides a slight advantage in listening, reading, and overall English proficiency, although the effect is small. On the other hand, writing ($\rho = 0.060$, $p = 0.418$) and speaking ($\rho = 0.108$, $p = 0.144$) showed no statistically significant correlation with study location, meaning that learning English abroad or at home did not make a meaningful difference for these skills. Gender did not significantly correlate with any of the proficiency measures, with all p-values above 0.05, indicating that males and females performed similarly in all aspects of English proficiency. For age, a weak negative correlation was found between age and speaking proficiency ($\rho = -0.151$, $p = 0.041$), suggesting that younger learners may have a slight advantage in speaking skills. However, age did not show any significant relationship with listening, reading, writing, or overall proficiency.

Table 3: Home vs. Abroad Comparison					
Proficiency Skill	Home Mean Rank	Abroad Mean Rank	U-Value	Z-Score	p-Value (Sig.)
Listening	83.68	100.07	3458.000	-2.099	0.036
Reading	82.76	100.86	3380.000	-2.317	0.021
Writing	89.11	95.41	3919.500	-0.812	0.417
Speaking	86.38	97.75	3687.500	-1.461	0.144
Overall Score	83.98	99.82	3483.000	-2.038	0.042

The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare English proficiency scores between students who studied at home vs. abroad (Table 3) showed that students who studied abroad had significantly higher scores in listening ($p = 0.036$), reading ($p = 0.021$), and overall proficiency ($p = 0.042$). This suggested that immersion in an English-speaking country may provide a small but

meaningful advantage in these areas. However, writing ($p = 0.417$) and speaking ($p = 0.144$) did not show significant differences between the two groups. This indicated that learning English abroad does not necessarily lead to better writing or speaking skills compared to studying at home.

Table 4: Age Group Differences

Proficiency Skill	H-Statistic (χ^2)	df	p-Value (Sig.)
Listening	13.175	7	0.068
Reading	6.489	7	0.484
Writing	8.731	7	0.273
Speaking	16.597	7	0.020
Overall Score	9.888	7	0.195

The Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 4) was used to compare proficiency scores across different age groups indicated that age does not significantly affect most proficiency skills, as the p-values for listening ($p = 0.068$), reading ($p = 0.484$), writing ($p = 0.273$), and overall proficiency ($p = 0.195$) were all above 0.05, meaning that proficiency levels in these areas are relatively similar across different age groups. However, speaking proficiency showed a significant difference between age groups ($H = 16.597$, $p = 0.020$). This suggested that certain age groups may have an advantage or disadvantage in speaking skills compared to others, though further post-hoc analysis (e.g., pairwise comparisons) would be needed to identify which groups differ.

Table 5: Overall English Proficiency

Predictor Variable	Estimate (β)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	df	p-Value (Sig.)	95% Confidence Interval
Study Location (Home vs. Abroad)	-0.552	0.268	4.232	1	0.040	-1.078 to -0.026
Gender (Male vs. Female)	0.250	0.286	0.766	1	0.381	-0.310 to 0.811

Age 15-20	-1.743	1.306	1.782	1	0.182	-4.303 to 0.816
Age 20-25	-1.694	1.293	1.716	1	0.190	-4.228 to 0.840
Age 25-30	-1.396	1.279	1.193	1	0.275	-3.902 to 1.109
Age 30-35	-1.996	1.299	2.363	1	0.124	-4.542 to 0.549
Age 35-40	-2.225	1.337	2.770	1	0.096	-4.846 to 0.395
Age 40-45	-2.886	1.428	4.086	1	0.043	-5.685 to -0.088
Age 45-50	1.524	2.229	0.467	1	0.494	-2.845 to 5.892

Ordinal logistic regression was conducted to examine whether study location, gender, and age predict overall English proficiency (Table 5). Study location significantly affected proficiency ($p = 0.040$), with students who studied at home scoring slightly lower than those who studied abroad ($\beta = -0.552$, 95% CI: -1.078 to -0.026). This suggested that studying abroad provides a small but statistically significant advantage in overall English proficiency. Gender was not a significant predictor ($p = 0.381$), indicating that male and female learners had similar proficiency levels. Age group 40-45 showed a significant negative effect ($p = 0.043$), meaning that learners in this age range had notably lower proficiency scores compared to younger age groups. Other age groups did not show significant effects ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that age differences do not strongly influence English proficiency overall.

DISCUSSION

This research study examined how study location, gender, and age influence English language proficiency among Arabic-speaking students. The findings showed that students who studied abroad had significantly higher scores in listening, reading, and overall proficiency than others who studied at home. In contrast, no

significant differences were found in writing and speaking skills, which suggests that immersion might be more effective for receptive skills than productive skills. Also, the results indicated that age played a role in speaking proficiency with older students especially those aged 40 to 45, which showed significantly lower speaking scores. In the interim, gender had no significant impact on English language proficiency, which means that male and female students performed similarly across all skills.

The results aligned with research studies (e.g., Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Yan et al., 2024) suggesting that immersion in an English-speaking country develops listening and reading skills because consistent exposure to authentic language use. The findings supported Krashen's Input Hypothesis on learners acquiring language skills best when they are exposed to meaningful input slightly beyond their current level (Krashen, 1982). However, the lack of improvement in writing and speaking skills challenged the assumption that studying abroad automatically enhances all language abilities. Taguchi (2011) found that writing usually benefits from structured instruction, which might be the reason why students studying at home performed equally well. Similarly, conversational fluency requires intentional practice, which might not happen naturally in immersion settings unless students actively engage in structured conversations.

The results pointed out that immersion is highly beneficial for listening and reading skills, but speaking and writing might require structured learning. This could be because listening and reading involve passive language absorption whereas speaking and writing require active production and reinforcement. The age-related decline in speaking skills might be linked to the Critical Period Hypothesis (Johnson & Newport, 1989) that conjectures that younger students are more likely to improve near-native pronunciation and fluency than older students. Because speech

patterns are harder to modify later in life, older English language students may struggle more with speaking even if having strong listening and reading aptitudes. Meanwhile, the limit of gender differences showed that men and women in general improve language skills at similar rates when they are exposed to the same learning conditions (Mori & Gobel, 2021). While some research studies suggest that female students could have a slight advantage in verbal skills, the findings indicated that both male and female students performed equally well in English language proficiency tests.

A. Limitations

While this research study provided useful insights, it had some limitations. First, the sample consisted mainly of students from similar academic and financial backgrounds. This might limit how broadly the results apply to other English language students. Also, English language proficiency was measured using standardized test scores. This focuses on formal skills without capturing real-world language use. Another limitation was that the research study did not account for individual differences like motivation, acculturation, and teaching quality. These factors could play a critical role in English language learning outcomes but were not directly measured.

B. Implications

The findings offered practical takeaways for students, teachers, and English language program designers. Because studying abroad mainly develops listening and reading skills, students in immersion settings might need to actively seek structured practice for speaking and writing. This should include formal conversation classes and structured writing exercises. At the same time, English language programs in non-English-speaking countries could enhance listening and reading instruction through integrating more real-life exposure including films, podcasts, and native-speaker interactions). By balancing exposure with

structured learning, both study locations could provide optimal conditions for language learning.

C. Future Research

Future studies might focus on the role of motivation, teaching approaches, and acculturation in shaping language proficiency. Also, qualitative research utilizing interviews and observations might give a deeper understanding of how students interact with language in different study settings. Another important aspect is long-term proficiency retention that explores the benefits of studying abroad endure overtime or fade once students return home. A follow-up research study tracking students after many years would offer helpful insights into the lasting effect of immersion and structured learning.

CONCLUSION

This research study explored how study location, gender, and age influence English proficiency among Arabic-speaking learners. The findings revealed that studying abroad significantly improves listening and reading skills due to greater exposure to natural language use, but writing and speaking skills did not show a clear advantage for English language students studying abroad, suggesting that structured instruction plays an important role in productive language skills. Also, age was a significant factor with older students, especially those aged 40 to 45, showing lower speaking proficiency. In the meantime, gender had no significant impact indicating that both male and female students performed similarly under comparable conditions. These results highlighted the importance of balancing immersion with structured learning. Students studying abroad are expected to practice speaking and writing, while those studying at home could benefit from exposure to authentic language through media and interaction.

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