

The Appropriate Age to Launch Teaching a Foreign Language in the Public Education

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Abstract

Since determination of an appropriate age to launch teaching a foreign language into the national education system is one of the sensitive hard issues that faces most ministries of education across the globe, this study contributes to shed lights on the decision-makers' choice to choose the class most appropriate to embark on teaching English language in the governmental Saudi schools. The current study aims to look over the regional experiences and to examine the views of the four study-population that directly related to teaching English language in the primary schools, namely: pupils who were taught English in the public primary schools, their parents, teachers and English language supervisors from both sexes in the Saudi primary schools. The study used four instruments to collect data and the results found prove a very positive attitude towards teaching English at an early stage of the educational system. Three-quarters of the primary school pupils would like English to be presented in the primary school; while just (12%) wish to be postponed to the first grade of middle schools. Their parents expressed even a greater positive desire to teach English to their sons and daughters at an early age in public education, as only (4%) wish it to be postponed to the first grade of middle schools. Half of the parents would like English to be taught to their children in first grade of the public primary schools. The teachers possess more positive attitude than the pupils and their parents towards teaching the foreign language at an early stage of public

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education, especially in the first grade, as only (1%) from the teachers think it is more appropriate to teach English language in the first grade of middle schools, while close to half of teachers believe that it should be started in first grade. As for the educational supervisors, more than 80% of them think that the primary level is more appropriate to start teaching English, while less than 2% of them that it is more appropriate at the first grade of middle schools. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant tendency for females more than males towards introducing English language at an early age in public schools. The study recommends launching teaching English in the public elementary schools from grade two.