

## **An Analysis of Challenges in Learning English Encountered by Medical Students at Mili Institute of Higher Education, Kabul, Afghanistan**

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**Abstract:** English forms a premier place in the academic success of people in Afghanistan. Due to its growing significance, a number of attempts have been made to facilitate learning English; yet, it has remained an indomitable task to deal with. Hence, this study was aimed at discovering the leading challenges/causes that impede the process of learning on the part of students at Mili institute of higher education, Kabul, Afghanistan. The methodology employed in gathering data was a questionnaire based survey. The statements embedded in the questionnaire were some major obstacles students have been grappling with. Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 15 statements was used as an instrument to collect the data. Out of 200 male and female students equal in number, 80 students of both genders were selected randomly using systematic sampling. The findings of the study indicate that students negligence and overcrowded classes were the leading causes. The study also revealed that boys faced more problems than girls. Some other difficulties range from students dependency on teachers, lack of constructive feedback instantly after the home work is submitted, large number of students to overuse of mother tongue and undue focus being placed on grammar. Hence, on the basis of the findings of the study, prospective resolutions and recommendations were offered to address the hindrances being encountered.

**Keywords:** English; Teachers; Tongue; Mother tongue; Students

### **Introduction**

The central position English holds in global communication is unquestionable. English, with its magisterial rank, is a pre requisite for success in almost all disciplines. Due to its increasing influence and growth, teaching English has been deemed integral and has been given exclusive attention in the education sector of Afghanistan. Therefore, teaching English has a long story in the history of Afghanistan. Though English was a part of school curriculum before the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, it gained much popularity as a means of unlocking plenty of job opportunities, earning free of cost scholarships to pursue further education abroad, staying connected to the world, and being used as a lingua franca since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2001. Therefore, what triggered this research to be carried out in this discipline is its invaluable nature and central significance in the realm of education for

the people of Afghanistan. Over the course of the last 21 years, English learning centers started to come into existence in a wide variety of places in Afghanistan and a huge number of people from roughly everywhere turned to learning English as a foreign language. However, in spite of taking measures to an extent, the quality of teaching/learning English has remained relatively unyielding. Educators and teachers at private institutions have made timeless endeavors to adopt the best approaches in teaching English and they have been successful partly too; conversely, no satisfactory findings can be seen to address the challenges students have been encountering in learning English, at a general level. In Afghanistan, traditional and nonviable approaches are still exercised in learning English which have turned the process into a nightmare. For instance, approaches such as Grammar Translation Method (GTM), a traditional approach in learning English as a foreign language with the main focus of translating the target language grammar into to the source language, were widely used across the country leading to no progress on students part.

Gorski, et al. states that GTM focuses on sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary and direct translations of the native language to English. GTM is in thorough contradiction with communicative approaches and is more teacher centered. Students are not adequately motivated which leads to unfruitful outcomes at the end of the day. Because lessons using GTM are not interactive and engaging for students, they become more likely to lose interest in their subject and less motivated to learn [1]. Though a shift from using traditional approaches to contemporary ones has occurred in the last five to seven years and language teaching became comparatively standardized, a number of obstacles exist on the way to becoming proficient users of the target language.

Consequently, this research is aimed at digging up the challenges students at Mili institute of higher education encounter and presenting the potential solutions, recommendations and suggestions to address these obstacles.

## **Literature Review**

With regards to the challenges students have been encountering in the process of learning English, plenty of studies have been carried out and spotlighted a number of problems in this respect. The ambiguous educational policies, the bias attitude towards English, the behavior of parents and teachers, the adverse policies of the government, the unavailability of modern teaching technology to the public sector, the shortage of English teachers especially in the remotest located colleges, the flawed syllabi and examination system, the lack of teaching training and the deprived position of teachers are the major factors that are arising obstacles in learning English [2].

Hossain, et al. stated that many students don't receive standard education of English due to knowledgeable teachers, financial constraints, lack of multimedia project teaching and learning system, and lack of English language club [3]. In addition,

Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, et al. argued that through the statistical analysis of the results, numerous problems regarding the teachers, the learners, the textbooks and the methods were revealed, such as: Teachers do not use teaching aids during teaching, school libraries are not well equipped to be of service for the learners of English, classrooms are poor in terms of facilities and physical conditions, the teachers do not teach in English, the English textbooks are not suitable for the students' level of proficiency, and the ministry of education does not honor the hard working teachers, and many more [4]. Tippabhotla, et al. indicated that some of specific challenges can be unfamiliar vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and unfamiliarity with connotative and denotative meanings of words [5]. English language teacher can create lot of activities for improving the listening, reading and comprehension skills in class every day for student language development and overcome the challenges faced in learning English. It is clearly stated in the literature review that learners' attitudes and associated sources of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) are driving factors towards successful language learning and have been widely discovered by a vast amount of studies globally [6].

Ganaprakasam and Karunaharan, et al. further argued that along with this, it is clearly articulated that very little use of the English language from teachers of other subjects when communicating with students in and outside of classroom activities contributes to less successful learning. Morrison and Perez, et al. stated that ELLs experience distinctive challenges that prove to be burdensome, such as challenges related to academics, socioeconomic status, immigration status, parental involvement and socio-emotional strains [7]. In another study, a researcher author explored the experience of one adult female immigrant to the United States and her difficulties in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and identified several compounding reasons for her lack of expected progress [8]. Wold, et al. stated that primarily, the data showed that the learner, whose first and second 83 languages were nonalphabetical, had never been taught the sound/letter rules system of English, and this fundamental deficit played a major role in the learner's English learning experience. This basic weakness, in turn, affected her classroom attendance, motivation to learn and practice English, social interaction, and ultimately, her lack of progress in the target language. The result of this study indicated that the environment was the leading cause for the problems in learning ESL. Comparing to girls, boys perceived more problems. Another major finding was that rural students perceived more problems than urban students. Lack of reading habit and listening tends to confront several problems in learning ESL [9]. Khan, et al. stated that the findings indicate that the obstacles confronted by the learners are of different kinds such as learning habits, information retention abilities, linguistic issues, and attitude towards learning. Other barriers are concerned with the nature of learning styles, methods, pedagogies etc. Bilingualism is another problem affecting the learning process negatively [10]. Khan, et al. argues that the background of Arabic (L1) affects the learning of English for the target learners. Oluwole, et al. stated that the findings reveal that mother tongue influences the students poor performance in English

language in junior school certificate examination and that there are other factors contributing to students' poor performance in English language. These other factors are poor method of teaching, lack of textbooks, language background and lack of professional growth and development of teachers. Some of these obstacles are put in plain subsequently.

**Unqualified teachers:** Teachers play vital roles in improving students' abilities and performance. According to Ezeh, et al. A qualified teacher is, therefore, a teacher who is equipped with all necessary teaching qualifications, training, and experience required to pass knowledge to pupils [11]. Ezeh, et al. stated that the effects of unqualified teachers can lead to unprecedented disruption in the academic performance of students, persistent and critical low self-esteem and decreased motivation for self-development. In addition, students motivation and demotivation is predominately reliant on their teachers. At worst, a bad teacher can damage a student's confidence and self-perception [12]. It is pertinent to mention here that ineffective and poor teaching in schools in Kaduna state and in Nigeria as a whole has continued to cause some havoc by shattering the hope and aspirations of some students, especially the ambitious one, ("unqualified teacher", n.d.). There is an inseparable link between teachers' qualifications and students performance. Provided that teachers are qualified, students' performance gets impacted positively. Shyiramunda and Bavugirije, et al. argue that in any education system, the teacher will always be the foundation to quality education which in turn indicated by students' academic performance. Amidst the challenges encountered by students in the learning process of a language, teachers qualification is one of the severest obstacles adversely affecting students' performance. Based on the research finding the 70.796% of the respondents agree that unqualified teachers affect their students performance negatively. Furthermore, research has also indicated schools have been blamed over the course of history predominately due to unqualified teachers.

**Lack of motivation:** Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, et al. argue that the English programs at high schools do not create motivation in students and seldom arouse their interest. Therefore, one can claim that the objectives of teaching and learning English have not even been approximated, and there are many problems in this area in Iran. Based on their findings, they conclude that the mental status of the L2 learners will have an effect on their learning. In other words, the students who had motivations for learning English, continuing education, and going abroad had higher amount and level of learning. Khan, et al. stated that motivation plays a highly significant role in encouraging the learners to come up to the desired level. Basically, there are two types of motivation extrinsic and Intrinsic. In order for a teacher to make the teaching process fruitful, he or she must motivate the students both extrinsically and intrinsically. Both kinds of motivation are important in a given context of education. He further argues that, sometimes, external motivation affects the internal motivation of the teachers as well as the students. In relation to intrinsic motivation, Khan, et al. says that intrinsic

(internal) motivation is highly important which creates a basis for other forms of motivation.

Furthermore, Ganaprakasam and Karunaharan, et al. state that encourage students to set their own goal: Teachers should encourage their students to set their target of learning and assist them to establish fruitful ways to achieve their desired targets. Hossain, et al. argued that the major problems of teaching and learning English at the secondary level are lack of teacher's training course, appropriate teaching materials, proper infrastructure, lack of efficient teachers, teachers' motivation, lack of proper experience of teaching, lack of scientific teaching method, and lack of ELT research.

**Overuse of mother tongue:** Mirvan, et al. states that the idea of ceasing the usage of mother tongue in the language classroom was brought by the odd phenomenon where after studying a Foreign Language (FL) for a long time through grammar translation; students were still unable to fluently speak in the language [13]. Tabatabaei and Pourakbari, et al. based on the findings of their research, argued that 90% of the English teachers use Farsi to a great extent (more than two thirds). Bilingual scenario though not always an adverse factor, affects negatively in most cases because one's mother-tongue overpowers the target language for many socio-cultural and linguistic reasons. Zhao, et al. states that the majority of high school students are still in the early stages of learning English, there are many disadvantages such as the environment of English learning is poor, limited vocabulary, lack of knowledge and ability to use English, so is vulnerable to mother tongue. Negative transfer refers to the interference of mother tongue, sometimes mother tongue cannot promote to learn a foreign language, to some extent even impede the learner to master some new language knowledge; this transfer is named negative transfer) [14]. The author further argues that negative transfer occurs when the learning task of the two languages is relative but different, the learner of foreign language use the expression and understanding way of mother tongue to replace the way of foreign language. Oluwole, et al. stated in his research paper that the findings reveal that mother tongue influences the students poor performance in English language in junior school certificate examination and that there are other factors contributing to students' poor performance in English language. Iqbal, et al. argues that it has been observed more influence on mother tongue could reduce the efficient and accurate level of learning language [15]. The researcher further argues that students observed and answered realistically, that prohibition against mother tongue in the classroom, are most important.

**Lack of feedback:** Feedback plays an essential role in developing the knowledge development and skills needed in learning and teaching [16]. Mashaan, et al. argues that feedback can be divided into different types and each have various contribution in learning and teaching cycles that is; formative feedback, summative feedback, negative feedback and positive feedback. Feedback needs to be direct and understood by students so that can be consider as effective feedback. Klimova, et al. states that

providing constructive feedback can contribute to student's motivation to work on the development of his language skills regularly [17]. Vollmeyer and Rheinberg, et al. that the findings of their research give hints that announcing feedback improves learning strategies. They also argued that feedback improved performance. Maybe learners work more carefully, once they know that teachers check their learning outcomes [18]. Hattie and Timperley, et al. state that giving feedback is an important skill for lecturers in higher education and has a major influence on the quality of the students' learning process [19]. Al-Bashir, Kabir and Rahman, et al. argues that there is a great importance of feedback in improving learning experience for the students. This has also significant effect in professionalizing teaching in the higher education level.

**Overcrowded classes:** Number of students per teacher is generally associated with class size and it is mainly believed that smaller classes provide a better teaching and learning [20]. Celik and Koc, et al. suggested more teachers should be hired in order to decrease the number of students per teacher so that students' achievement can enhance. In small classes, students can actively participate, and the teacher can provide feedback individually. Shah, et al. argued that student in smaller classes develop more positive attitudes, perceptions and human relationships. They can think more creatively and divergently and can achieve higher attention and lower absence rates [21]. If students keep studying in large classes for a long time, their learning process may impede and start to become ineffective. It has been observed that if normal children are kept in crowded conditions, it can cause behavior disruption, conflict, punishment, diseases, lack one to one learning, less advantage and sub-standard academic achievement. Yelkperci, Namale, Esia-Donkoh and Ofosu-Dwamena, et al. argues that large class size is one of the problems in the educational sector that developing nations have been grappling with. On the grounds of this study, one of the striking revelations was that weaker students were not attended to in large classes. Therefore, students who may have difficulty in understanding lessons have to see lecturers and colleagues in their spare time or have to make extra effort on their own to understand it [22].

The researchers also indicated that it was pointed out by lecturers that large class size makes it difficult to organize quizzes and class tests regularly.

### *Statement of the problem*

In Afghanistan, now, it is evident that no viable approaches are being employed to wipe out the obstacles to learning English effectively. Almost all the mechanisms put to use in this regard have been failed in achieving their objectives [23]. Additionally, whatsoever the reason, the process of learning English has always been an intricate topic for most of the people, and no decent solutions have been offered to alleviate the problems or put an end to them.

### *Research objectives*

- To point out the challenges encountered by medical students in learning English at Mili institute of higher education, Kabul, Afghanistan.
- To analyze the barriers faced by medical students in learning English at Mili institute of higher education, Kabul, Afghanistan
- To present potential recommendations and suggestions based on the findings of the study.

### *Research questions*

This research deals with the subsequent questions:

- What are the specific areas in learning English the medical students find difficult?
- What is the leading challenge the medical students are struggling with while learning English in the first place?
- What are the possible solutions to address the problems encountered by the medical students?

### *Method*

**Participants:** The subjects of the study were 80 male and female students at medical faculty who were randomly selected out of 200 students. Out of 80, 40 students were male while the remaining 40 were female. The 80 participants were students at first, second, third, fourth and fifth semesters at Medical Faculty with diverse proficiency levels in English. Furthermore, there were cultural, ethnic, language and intellectual diversities among these students. Their ages ranged from 20 to 30.

**Materials:** The main tool the researcher has used for gathering data in this research is a questionnaire containing 15 Likert Scale statements. In order to obtain the data, the researcher administered the imprinted questionnaire among the participants. Later on, the researcher clarified the questions and made sure that all the questions were perceivable enough so that all the participants could provide valid data. The questionnaire disseminated by the researcher was completed during a scheduled appointment. Also, the time allotment was not set beforehand by the researcher, and the questionnaires were collected upon completion.

**Procedure:** In order to conduct the research, the researcher developed a questionnaire consisted of 15 Likert scale questions. After all the subjects of the study made their presence at the allocated place, the researcher disseminated the questionnaire among the participants. As soon as the questionnaires were administered, the researcher walked the students through the questionnaire to eradicate ambiguity and maintain transparency. At the time of answering questionnaire questions, the vice chancellor and Dean of Medical Faculty were present. During the process of answering questions, all the questions posed by students were answered by the researcher and anonymously

were simplified. Upon completing the questionnaires, the researcher gathered the data and acknowledged the participants.

*Data analysis*

**Table 1** illustrates that 22 (55%) of the respondents agreed and 10 (25%) of them strongly agreed with statement that “Students are not taking the classes seriously.” According to the data presented by Table 1 (boys), this is the leading challenge the students have been encountering. Second, Table 1 demonstrates that 26 (65%) of the respondents agreed and 4 (10%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that “Students are too dependent on teachers.” Based on this data, we can conclude that this is the second main problem. Third, the data in Table 1 depicts that 16 (40%) of the respondents disagreed and 12 (30%) of them strongly disagreed with the statement that “teachers give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted.” On the basis of the data presented, this is the third major problem they have been struggling with. Fourth, **Table 1** reveals that 14 (35%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 14 (35%) of the them agreed with the statement that “Slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging.” This becomes the fourth major obstacle. Fifth, Table 1 manifests that 16 (40%) of the respondents disagreed and 12 (30%) strongly disagreed with the statement that “There are a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes.”

Therefore, in a row, this is the fifth radical problem. Sixth, Table 1 depicts that 20 (50%) of the respondents agreed and 6 (15%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that “Grammar is focused while speaking is not.” Hence, as the data in Table 1 suggests, too much focus being placed on grammar is the sixth major obstacle students have been struggling with in learning English. Finally, as Table 1 shows, 20 (50%) of the respondents agreed and 2 (5%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that “The teachers overuse mother tongue in English language classrooms.” This is the last main problem they have been facing in learning English.

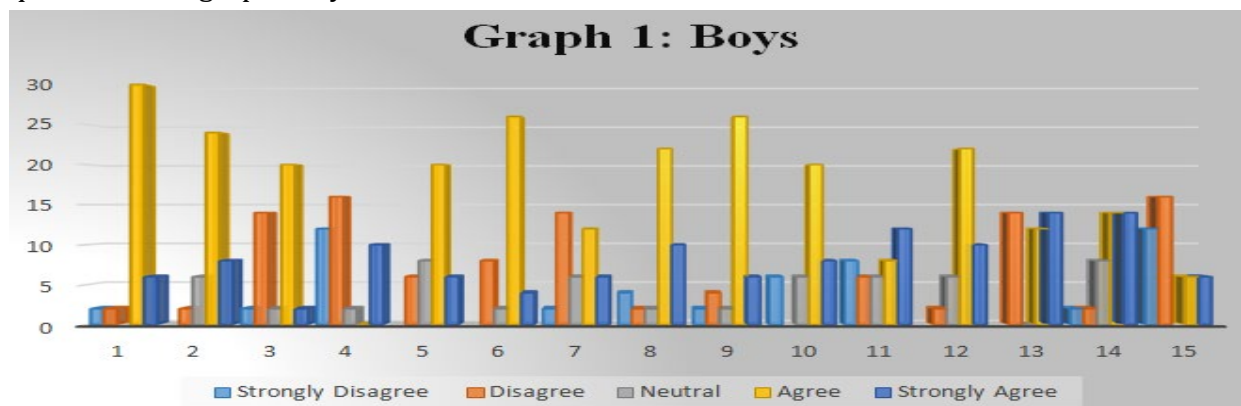
**Table 1:** Boys findings of the problems

<b>English is taught as a language, not as a subject</b> With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 30 (75%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 2 (5%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>English teachers are qualified enough</b> With this statement, 8 (20%) students strongly agreed, 24 (60%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 2 (15%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.
<b>The teachers overuse mother tongue in English language classrooms</b> With this statement, 2 (5%) students strongly agreed, 20 (50%) students strongly agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 14 (35%) students disagreed, and 2 (5%) strongly disagreed.
<b>There are a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes</b> With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 16 (40%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 16 (40%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Grammar is focused while speaking is not</b> With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 20 (50%) students agreed, 8 (20%) remained neutral, 6 (15%) disagreed, and 0 (0%) strongly disagreed.



<p><b>Students are too dependent on teachers</b></p> <p>With this statement, 4 (10%) students strongly agreed, 26 (65%) students agreed, 12 (30%) students, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 8 (20%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Relatively competent/strong students dominate the class</b></p> <p>With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 12 (30%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 14 (35%) students disagreed, and 2 (5%) strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Students are not taking the classes seriously</b></p> <p>With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 22 (55%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Teachers use professional teaching methodology and different useful activities to engage students</b></p> <p>With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 26 (65%) students agreed, 2 (5%) remained neutral, 4 (10%) students disagreed, and 2 (5%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Textbooks are being chosen based on the needs of the students</b></p> <p>With this statement, 8 (20%) students strongly agreed, 20 (50%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 0 (0%) students disagreed, and 6 (15%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Before the textbook is chosen, a pre-test is given to students to determine their level of proficiency in English</b></p> <p>With this statement, 12 (30%) students strongly agreed, 8 (20%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 6 (15%) students disagreed, and 8 (20%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>English Language classrooms are friendly and students feel free to actively participate in the class</b></p> <p>With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 22 (55%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Students are motivated by teachers</b></p> <p>With this statement, 14 (35%) students strongly agreed, 12 (30%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 14 (35%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging</b></p> <p>With this statement, 14 (35%) students strongly agreed, 14 (35%) students agreed, 8 (20%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) student disagreed, and 2 (5%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Teachers give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted</b></p> <p>With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 6 (15%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 16 (40%) students disagreed, and 12 (30%) students strongly disagreed.</p>

The following Figure 1 illustrates how many subjects (boys) strongly agreed, disagreed, remained neutral, agreed and strongly disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire graphically.



**Figure 1:** Illustrates how many subjects (Boys) Strongly Agreed, Disagreed, Remained Neutral, Agreed and Strongly Disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire graphically

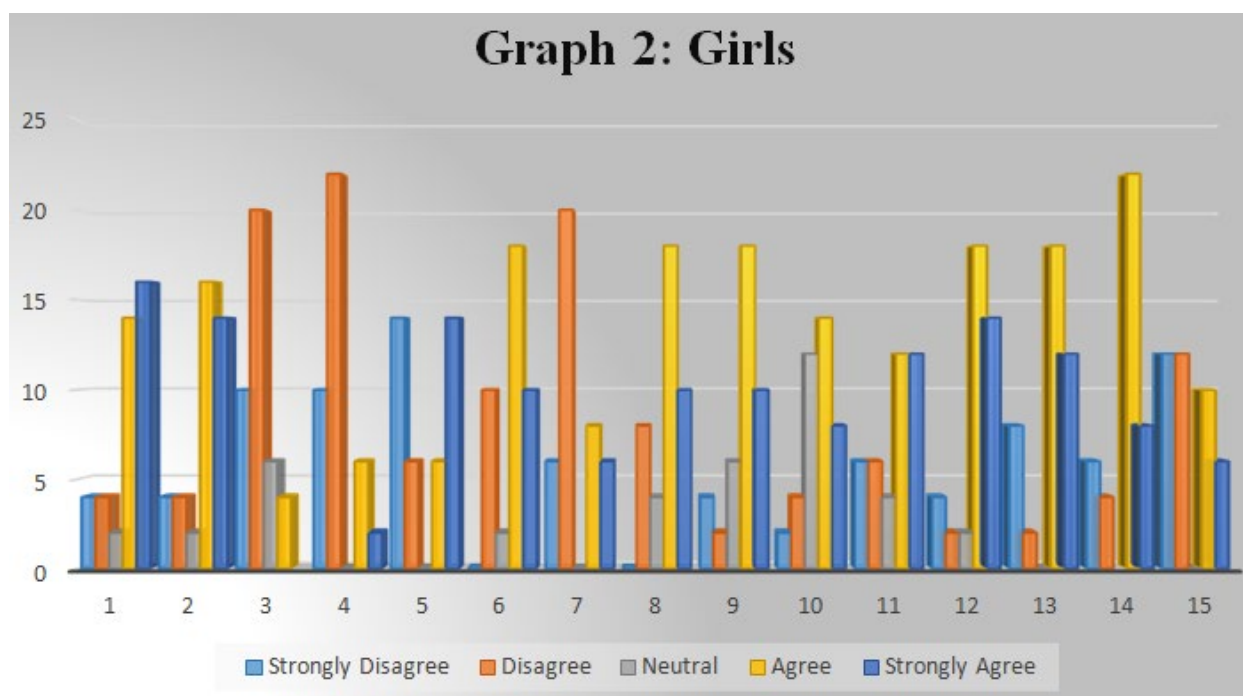
**Table 2** illustrates that 22 (55%) of the respondents disagreed and 10 (25%) of the them strongly disagreed with the statement that “there are a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes.” This is the leading problem based on the data provided by Table 2. Second, Table 2 depicts that 22 (55%) of the respondents agreed and of 8 (20%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that “slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging.” Based on the percentage and number of participants, this is second major problem. Third, as Table 2 demonstrates, 18 (45%) of the respondents agreed and 10 (25%) of them strongly agreed with the statement that “Students are not taking the classes seriously.” This is the third major problem based on the data present in Table 2. Finally, as Table 2 indicates, 12 (30%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and 12 (30%) of them disagreed with the statement that “teachers give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted.” This is the last major problem the students have been facing.

**Table 2:** Girls findings of the problems

<b>English is taught as a language, not as a subject</b> With this statement, 16 (40%) students strongly agreed, 14 (35%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 4 (10%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>English teachers are qualified enough</b> With this statement, 14 (35%) students strongly agreed, 16 (40%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 4 (10%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>The teachers overuse mother tongue in English language classrooms</b> With this statement, 0 (0%) students strongly agreed, 4 (10%) agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 20 (50%) students disagreed, and 10 (25%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>There are a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes</b> With this statement, 2 (5%) students strongly agreed, 0 (0%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 22 (55%) students disagreed, and 12 (30%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Grammar is focused while speaking is not</b> With this statement, 14 (35%) students strongly agreed, 6 (15%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 6 (15%) students disagreed, and 14 (35%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Students are too dependent on teachers</b> With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 18 (45%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 10 (25%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Relatively competent/strong students dominate the class</b> With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 8 (20%) agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 20 (50%) students disagreed, and 6 (15%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Students are not taking the classes seriously</b> With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 18 (45%) students agreed, 4 (10%) students remained neutral, 8 (20%) students disagreed, and 0 (0%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Teachers use professional teaching methodology and different useful activities to engage students</b> With this statement, 10 (25%) students strongly agreed, 18 (45%) students agreed, 6 (15%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) students strongly disagreed.
<b>Textbooks are being chosen based on the needs of the students</b> With this statement, 8 (20%) students strongly agreed, 14 (35%) students agreed, 12 (30%) students remained neutral, 4 (10%) students disagreed, and 2 (5%) students strongly disagreed.

<p><b>Before the textbook is chosen, a pre-test is given to students to determine their level of proficiency in English</b></p> <p>With this statement, 12 (30%) students strongly agreed, 12 (30%) students agreed, 4 (10%) students remained neutral, 6 (15%) students disagreed, 6 (15%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>English Language classrooms are friendly and students feel free to actively participate in the class</b></p> <p>with this statement, 14 (35%) students strongly agreed, 18 (45%) students agreed, 2 (5%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 4 (10%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Students are motivated by teachers</b></p> <p>With this statement, 12 (30%) students strongly agreed, 18 (45%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 2 (5%) students disagreed, and 8 (20%) strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging</b></p> <p>With this statement, 8 (20%) students strongly agreed, 22 (55%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 4 (10%) students disagreed, and 6 (15%) students strongly disagreed.</p>
<p><b>Teachers give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted</b></p> <p>With this statement, 6 (15%) students strongly agreed, 10 (25%) students agreed, 0 (0%) students remained neutral, 12 (30%) students disagreed, and 12 (30%) students strongly disagreed.</p>

The following Figure 2 illustrates how many subjects (girls) strongly agreed, disagreed, remained neutral, agreed and strongly disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire graphically.



**Figure 2:** Illustrates how many subjects (girls) strongly agreed, disagreed, remained neutral, agreed and strongly disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire graphically

## Discussion

Based on the challenges presented in literature review and findings of the study, the sample students encounter problems of diverse nature. These problems stretch from students' negligence, students dependency on teachers, lack of constructive feedback,

slangs and idioms, overcrowded classes, to excessive focus being placed on grammar, and overuse of the mother tongue. Most of the obstacles being discussed in the literature review are in line with the findings of the study. However, one of the additional findings of the study which is the leading challenge too “Students are not taking the classes seriously.” has been found through this study. These challenges are predominately attributed to the teachers and partly to the curriculum. To suggest solutions, one of the primary sources of working these problems out is the teachers. In the first place, teachers should be fully-prepared and well-equipped while attending the classes. They should be well-trained and fully competent in the subject they teach.

Secondly, some adjustments are required to be made in the prevailing curriculum to address these problems.

## **Findings**

The highlights of the challenges encountered by students based on the findings of the research are presented in a specific order from major challenges to minor ones:

Boys:

- Students are not taking the classes seriously.
- Students are too dependent on teachers.
- Teachers do not give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted.
- Slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging.
- There are not a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes. The classes are overcrowded.
- Grammar is focused while speaking is not.
- The teachers overuse mother tongue in English language classrooms.

Girls:

- There are not a minimum of 25 and a maximum of 30 students in English classes. The classes are overcrowded.
- Slangs and idioms have made learning English challenging.
- Students are not taking the classes seriously.
- Teachers do not give constructive feedback immediately after the H.W is submitted.

## **Conclusion**

This study is an exploration into the challenges medical students have been struggling with at Mili Institute of Higher Education. The research has discovered that a number of obstacles exist on the way to learning English, the most rigorous of which is students negligence toward their classes. This is the leading cause of hindering students from learning English effectively. Other barriers such as students dependency on teachers, lack of constructive feedback, slangs and idioms, overcrowded class, extortionate focus

being placed on grammar, and the overuse of mother tongue were also faced by the students based on the findings of the study. Therefore, students sluggish and substandard progress in learning English gave rise to this research. This research was aimed at identifying the challenges students have been facing at Mili Institute of Higher Education and presenting prospective resolutions to address the raised problems. In addition, monotransitive verbs like have cannot be used in passive voice and the property of the verb buy limits the scope of its passive construction. In the case of ergative verbs, the use of passive voice will depend on their transitive properties. The lexical approach will provide a simple and effective method of introducing English verbs and acquiring their syntactic structures without directly applying the deep analysis of syntax. The teaching, testing, and correcting processes will form a circular method that will improve the means of second language teaching and acquisition.

### **Recommendations**

- In order for students to draw their exclusive attention to their classes and get most out of them, they must realize the significance of the subject being taught. Basically, it is the teacher's job to adequately put in plain the significance of the subject first thing at the commencement of the class and talk about its implications and the impact the students will make after taking that specific course. Teachers can adopt a wide variety of activities to make their classroom settings interesting enough depending on what works well in their classrooms.
- To avoid students dependency on teachers, the teacher is supposed to build on students confidence. Lack of confidence hinders students from participative learning leading to students dependency on teachers. Additionally, I consider teachers positive attitude toward their students a primary source of confidence. By doing so, students start expressing themselves which can improve their confidence simultaneously. One more activity a teacher can use to maximize students confidence is to promote collaborative learning. Cadiz-Gabejan argued that there was a direct association between confidence and groupwork activities.
- Giving constructive feedback regularly can help students learn effectively and be motivated.

Mckimm argued that feedback is a vital part of education and training which, if carried out well, helps motivate and develop learners' knowledge, skills and behaviours. It helps learners to maximize their potential and professional development at different stages of training, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for improvement, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance. A rather important issue is how to give corrective feedback effectively. I believe that feedback should be meant for improvement. Mckimm suggested the following tips while giving feedback:

- Feedback needs to be given privately wherever possible, especially more

- negative feedback and in doing so, try to stay in the 'here and now'.
- Don't bring up old concerns or previous mistakes, unless this is to highlight a pattern of behaviours but focus on specific behaviours that can be changed, not personality traits, giving examples where possible and do not evaluate or assume motives.
  - Use 'I' (*i.e.* own the feedback yourself) and give your experience of the behaviour (When you said..., I thought that you were...). When giving negative feedback, it is essential to suggest alternative behaviours.
  - Unquestionably, slangs and idiom cause a number of problems in learning English particularly in the first place. However, by employing some strategies, we can tackle this problem. For example, guessing the meaning of the idiom based on the context it is used in can be helpful in understanding it. Anjarini and Hatmanto stated that the findings revealed that one of the strategies carried out by students to understand English idioms was through the context. Teachers should introduce idioms more often in the learning process so that students become more familiar with idiomatic expression terms.
  - In overcrowded classes, students can be easily distracted and cause distraction on other students part. In order to teach overcrowded classes effectively, a teacher needs to adopt creative teaching strategies. In addition to this, he or she needs to be exceedingly methodical and prepared for the classes. One way is to engage students in diverse activities. Assigning different activities to students will keep them concentrated and on track. To keep the students engaged and concentrated, forming groups might be of help. I believe flexible groups work well since there are students with different intellectual abilities, cultural diversities and lifestyle.
  - In relation to the grammar, a point should be clearly made. We do not overlook the importance of grammar. What we mean by grammar as a challenge is its exceeding focus in EFL classes. To handle the problem of grammar being too much focused, we can use a variety of classroom activities such as making the class communicative. The underlying principal of communicative classes is to make students confident communicators. I think students should be encouraged to use the language to express themselves and participate in the class even if they are making grammar mistakes.
  - Finally, using mother tongue in EFL classes does not result in failure on the part of students when it comes to learning a foreign language. However, overuse of the mother tongue, and failing to know when and how to use it can create problems. To tackle this problem, Ramadan suggest the following tips:

You shouldn't use the mother tongue when you:

- Are giving instructions.
- Use classroom language, e.g. Good morning, sit down, etc.
- Teach new vocabulary.
- Teach speaking practice activities.
- Allow the learners to do grammar exercises in pairs.

- Do a translation activity with students from the mother tongue to English.

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