

# Practical Analysis Of Learning English In Higher Schools Of Kazakhstan

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## Abstract

English is taught at all stages of education in Kazakhstan and focuses on developing and improving reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. The objectives of higher schools are not in phase with the students' purposes for learning English. Students are not taught the rules and techniques to pass international exams on English or enter to universities to get master or doctorate degree. This paper presents the practical analysis of learning English in higher schools of Kazakhstan. The analysis was developed by scaling techniques for measuring data gathered from respondents based on Likert, the constant comparative, one-way variant analysis. The validity and the confidence is measured through the data obtained from 218 first-year students of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. The aim of the article is to determine the main problems of learning English in higher schools and present teachers' recommendations for students to improve and master English.

**Index Terms**— agreement, English, frequency, importance, problems, quality, recommendations

## I. INTRODUCTION

After gaining independence in 1991, Kazakhstan took a strong position on the international scene. Kazakhstan is an active participant of important activities of UN organizations (UNESCO, UNICEF, ECOSOC, UNHCR). Moreover, Kazakhstan cooperates with major international organizations, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Central Asian Economic Union (CAPS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Kazakhstan is the first Asian country to chair the OSCE and one of the initiators to assemble and organize the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). Since this time, English proficiency has been considered as a way to enter into the world community and upward economic mobility in

Kazakhstan. There is enormous amount of foreign companies in Kazakhstan which motivate youth to be employed in jobs with high levels of proficiency in English (Chevron, Exxon Mobil, General Electric, Halliburton, etc.).

Kazakhstani higher educational institutions cooperates with foreign institutions launching new scientific projects and participating in international events conferences, seminars, workshops). There are 10 national (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian national university, T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh national academy of arts, Abai K. Kazakh national pedagogical university, Al-Farabi Kazakh national university), 4 international (A. Yassavi International Kazakh-Turkish university, International university of Information technology, Nazarbayev university, Kazakhstan-Germany university), 30 state (S. Toraiyrov Pavlodar state university, Korkyt-Ata Kyzylorda state university, A. Buketov Karaganda state university, Atyrau institute of oil and gas), 15 national securities (Military

institute of the national guard, national defense university, Military institute of the land forces, Military institute of the air defense, Military engineering institute of radio electronics and communications), 15 incorporated (Kazakhstan University of Peoples' friendship, S.Seifullin Kazakh agriculture university, Kazakh academy of sport and tourism, A.Myrzakhmetov Kokshetau university), 75 private (University Turan-Astana, S.Demirel University, "Bolashak" University, Kazakh-Chinese university), 6 affiliate higher schools (Moscow state University, Russian economical university, Moscow financial-industrial university) in Kazakhstan.

Eurasian National University is in the list of QS as the top university in Kazakhstan. It is a member of the Eurasian Association of Universities, Association of Asian Universities, STARNET, Turkic Universities Union, Network University of CIS countries, University of Shanghai Organization, ICRA-Net. In 1999, it actively promotes the Bologna principles of academic mobility among universities, faculties and students of Europe, Asia, and North America.

The education policy of the University is directed for training experts to develop necessary knowledge and skills to be competitive in the world market. It encompasses a major accent on teaching and educating a significant number of future teachers in various disciplines (English, Kazakh, Russian, Mathematics, Biologists, Physics, History, Pedagogics etc.).

## II. TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER SCHOOLS OF KAZAKHSTAN

The national program "The 100 concrete steps to implement the five institutional reforms" became the hit to learn English in all spheres of life. This program determined the importance of knowing English in order to study abroad and attract students and teachers from foreign countries to work in Kazakhstan [1].

The program runs on searching new innovative approaches and methods to improve teaching English, update the content of education in

accordance with new standards, find out new forms and techniques to implement modern concepts of education. On the way of the rising status of learning English and the change of educational priorities, education is considered to be a leading factor of social and economic progress.

In fact, all educational programs are compiled on the basis of regulatory documents approved by the Ministry of the science and education of the republic of Kazakhstan. The main documents are the Law on Education (1999), the State Program on Education (2002), the national project "Trinity of Languages" (2007), the State Program Development of Education for 2020-2025 (2019). The State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011 – 2020 is an organizational basis for implementation learning English. Since 2005, the Republic of Kazakhstan has adopted The State Program of Education Development for 2005-2010, the State Program of Technical and Vocational Education Development for 2008-2012, "Children of Kazakhstan" Program for 2007 – 2011 and "Balapan" Preschool Education Program for 2010-2014, "Bolashak" International Scholarship Program. Owing to these programs, the number of English speaking teachers has increased noticeably. More than 20,000 Kazakhstani citizens are studying abroad in different countries to get bachelor, master and doctorate degree. Around 3000 recipients of the Bolashak International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan are studying in 27 countries of the world (State Education Development Program 2011).

The students' competence in English skills development is measured by the following abilities:

- to read and understand written academic language;
- to do assignments in an appropriate style for university study;
- to listen and comprehend the spoken language in formal and informal style;

- to speak to colleagues and lecturers on general and special topics.  
At the same time teachers provide opportunities for students:
- to present materials in order to revise, consolidate and extend students' command of English grammar and vocabulary;
- to learn and develop reading skills on the basis of skimming, scanning, selective and critical types of reading;
- to develop writing skills to respond to input applying information and summarize information in a range of writing activities;
- to develop speaking skills to summarize and participate in different types of discussion [2].

The concept of foreign language education in the Republic of Kazakhstan defines the new methodological approaches in accordance with the requirements of the educational standard: the study of the English language is recognized as socially significant, as a guarantee of ensuring the practical and professional life of a person in modern multilingual globalized world; the place of the English language as the language of International communication; the difference between learning the (LSP) language for specific purposes and (LAP) language for academic purposes [3].

These transformations in the methodological content, technological basis of education prompted to create a unified national system of foreign language education. Moreover, the level of English acquisition meets modern requirements. These requirements are based on the (CEFR) Common European framework of Reference for languages [4].

### III. RESEARCH STUDY

English has long been highly regarded among undergraduates and postgraduates of Kazakhstani society. Except for university studies, students attend private educational centers to be proficient in English, to prepare for passing international exams IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English examinations.

*This research centers on determination the main problems of learning English in higher schools (students) and presentation of recommendations for improving English (teachers).*

Data collection was conducted at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, philological faculty, foreign languages department. Eurasian national university has a major emphasis on English teaching and trains future English teachers at the philological faculty. There are 13 departments which trains future teachers on languages (Russian, Kazakh, English, French, German). Department of foreign philology implements educational programs of different levels in the following areas: 5B021000 – “Foreign philology (English)”, 5B011923 - "Foreign language: two foreign languages (German, French)”, 6M021000 – “Foreign philology”, 6D021000 – “Foreign philology”, 8D01719 – “Foreign language: two foreign languages”. The Foreign Languages Theory and Practice department provides teaching of linguodidactic and linguistic disciplines and gives students the opportunity to acquire practical skills of teaching English in schools and universities for their high competitiveness in the Kazakhstani labor market in the implementation of their professional activities: teaching, educational, research, etc. in two educational programs: 5B011900 “Foreign language: two foreign languages (main English)”, 6M011900 “Foreign language: two foreign languages (main English)”.

### *The main problems of learning English*

The research is based on a written survey, an interview in order to analyze students and English teachers' views about learning and teaching English. Survey technique is a research approach that aims to describe a real situation of the researching and a tool to gather data [5]. The survey consists of 20 questions and includes comments of students to analyze the problems. These comments are the main sources for teachers to provide recommendations to overcome problems. The

questionnaire was passed on Likert scale which is used to analyze participants' agreements (agree, disagree, can't decide, strongly agree, strongly disagree); frequency (always, often, rarely, sometimes, never); importance (important, very important, moderate important, slightly important, unimportant); quality (excellent, good, fair, poor, very poor).

Moreover, participants were asked to rate their own English language proficiency in listening, reading, speaking and writing skills using the Common European framework of reference for languages (Picture 1).

<b>The A Levels: Basic User</b>	
<b>A 1 Beginners</b>	<b>A 2 Elementary</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand and use very basic expressions to satisfy concrete needs;</b></li> <li>– introduce themselves and others;</li> <li>– ask and answer questions about personal details;</li> <li>– interact simply as long as the other person;</li> <li>– speak slowly and clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand sentences and frequently used expressions</b> related to the most intermediate areas (shopping, family, employment, etc.);</li> <li>– communicate in simple tasks requiring a direct exchange of information on familiar matters;</li> <li>– describe aspects of their background in simple terms.</li> </ul>
<b>The B Levels: Independent User</b>	
<b>B 1 Intermediate</b>	<b>B 2 Upper-Intermediate</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand the main points of familiar topics;</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– deal with the situations while traveling in English speaking countries;</li> </ul> </li> <li>– produce simple connected texts on familiar topics or of personal interest;</li> <li>– describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes or plans in brief.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand the main ideas of a complex text</b> including technical discussions in their field of specialization; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– interact with native speakers without strain;</li> </ul> </li> <li>– produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects;</li> <li>- explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</li> </ul>
<b>The C Levels: Proficient User</b>	
<b>C 1 Advanced</b>	<b>C 2 Proficiency</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand a wide range of demanding, longer clauses,</b> and recognize implicit meaning;</li> <li>– express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions;</li> <li>– use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes;</li> <li>– produce clear, well- structured, detailed text on complex subjects using patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>understand with ease virtually everything heard or read;</b></li> <li>– summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation;</li> <li>– express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.</li> </ul>

*Picture 1 - Common European framework of reference for languages*

During the research teachers and students self-rated their reading, writing, listening and writing skills in English. CEFR levels help to measure the participants' ability in language. Each of these levels describe the ability of four language competencies (language skills). Using this grid in this research means to self-rate and analyze the level of participants in this study. The interview was organized on the base of constant comparative method where each question is compared with existing findings as it emerges from the data analysis. The constant

comparative research consists of four elements *agreement, frequency, important, quality* (AFIQ). Each element in this method provides continuous development to the following stage [6].

Table 1 shows the number of students participated in this research from different faculties. There are 218 students (25.5% students studying English for specific purposes (LSP) and 74.5% students studying English for academic purposes (LAP)).

**Table 1 - Students' background information**

NO	Faculties	Number of participants	% of participants
1	Natural sciences	37	16.9
2	Information technology	17	7.8
3	Economics	20	9.2
4	Philology	10	4.5
5	Law	14	6.4
6	Mechanics and mathematics	14	6.4
7	Transport and energy	27	12.4
8	Architecture and construction	44	20.2
9	Physics and technical sciences	35	16.1

In carrying out the survey, these participants are required to give response to 20 questions which were divided into four AFIQ elements. Moreover, participants were asked to rate their

own English language proficiency in listening, reading, speaking and writing skills using the Common European framework of reference for languages (Table 2).

**Table 2 – Participants' English language proficiency (%)**

Levels	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
%	6,9%	30,7%	<b>49,5%</b>	9,6%	2,8%	0,5%

This analysis demonstrates that 49.5% of participants have intermediate level. These students can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school or leisure-related topics; deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken; produce simple connected texts on topics that are familiar or of personal interest; describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions, as well as opinions or plans in brief. There were no any problems to answer the survey questions and express their ideas about learning English and indicate the problems they face. Although 62.4% studied English at school in urban areas, and 37.6% of students were from rural areas.

The stages of the constant comparative research define the existing problems to learn English in higher schools to allow teachers to present recommendations for improving English AFIQ elements were evaluated by one-way variant analysis with the following ranges: 4.20 - 5.00 (strongly agree, always, very important, excellent - 5); 3.40 - 4.19 (agree, often, important, good - 4); 2.60 - 3.39 (can't decide, sometimes, moderate important, fair - 3); 1.80 - 2.59 (disagree, rarely, slightly important, poor - 2); 1.00-1.79 (strongly disagree, never, unimportant, very poor - 1). One-way variant analysis was applied to determine whether there was a meaningful difference between AFIQ elements (Table 3).

**Table 3 – The results of the AFIQ elements (agreement, frequency, importance, quality)**

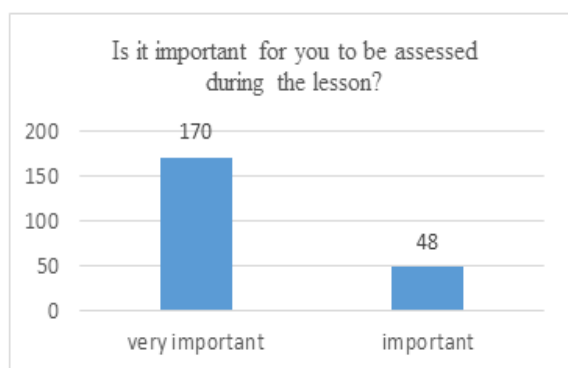
Questions	strongly agree - 5	agree - 4	can't decide - 3	disagree - 2	strongly disagree - 1	X	result
<b>Agreement</b>							
1 Studying English is very important in your life	86 (39.4%)	121 (55.5%)	8 (3.6%)	3 (1.3%)	- (0%)	4.3	SA
2 All English teaching materials during the lesson are understandable	33 (15.1%)	158 (72.4%)	3 (1.3%)	21 (9.6%)	3 (1.3%)	3.91	A
3 Studying grammar is more important than practicing conversation skills	120 (55%)	11 (5.04%)	6 (2.75%)	70 (32.1%)	11 (5.04%)	3.8	A
4 You feel afraid of making mistakes while speaking	109 (50%)	67 (30.7%)	4 (1.83%)	67 (30.7%)	12 (5.5%)	4.5	A
5 It is difficult for you to learn and use the new material (vocabulary, grammar) in learning or home assignments	101 (46.03%)	10 (4.58%)	12 (5.5%)	83 (38%)	12 (5.5%)	3.4	A
<b>Frequency</b>							
Questions	always - 5	often - 4	sometimes - 3	rarely - 2	never - 1	X	result
6 How often do you revise the new materials on English at home?	40 (18.3%)	53 (24.3%)	101 (46.3%)	18 (8.3%)	6 (2.8%)	3.7	O
7 How often do you do reading, listening, writing and speaking activities during the lesson?	86 (39.4%)	77 (35.3%)	43 (19.7%)	11 (5%)	1 (0.5%)	4.08	O
8 How often do you read English news, magazines, journals, newspapers?	15 (6.9%)	33 (15.1%)	77 (35.3%)	66 (30.3%)	27 (12.4%)	2.7	S

9 How often do you speak English during the lesson?	65 (29.8%)	75 (34.4%)	59 (27.1%)	14 (6.4%)	5 (2.3%)	3.8	S
10 How often do you look the syllabus of the course?	47 (21.5%)	43 (19.7%)	60 (27.5%)	20 (9.17%)	48 (22%)	3.9	S
<b>Importance</b>							
Questions	very important -5	important -4	moderate important -3	slightly important -2	unimportant -1	X	result
11 Is it important to have an environment that makes you familiar with the original language?	71 (32.6%)	104 (47.7%)	25 (11.5%)	16 (7.3%)	2 (0.9%)	4.03	I
12 Is it important for you to be assessed during the lesson?	170 (77.9%)	48 (22.01%)	-	-	-	4.8	VI
13 Is it important for you to make note during the lesson?	65 (29.8%)	91 (41.7%)	34 (15.5%)	7 (3.2%)	21 (9.63%)	3.6	MI
14 Writing all grammar exercises in your copybook	71 (32.5%)	58 (26.6%)	25 (11.4%)	22 (10.09%)	42 (19.2%)	3.4	I
15 Reading paper books in English and make analysis	24 (11.09%)	34 (15.5%)	43 (19.7%)	26 (11.9%)	91 (41.7%)	2.5	SI
<b>Quality</b>							
Questions	excellent -5	good -4	fair -3	poor -2	very poor -1	X	result
16 How would you appreciate the quality of teaching methods that the English teacher applied during this course?	139 (63.8%)	70 (32.1%)	6 (2.8%)	3 (1.4%)	- (0%)	4.6	E
17 How would you appreciate your overall learning results at the end of this course?	57 (26.1%)	133 (61%)	22 (10.1%)	4 (1.8%)	2 (0.9%)	4.9	E

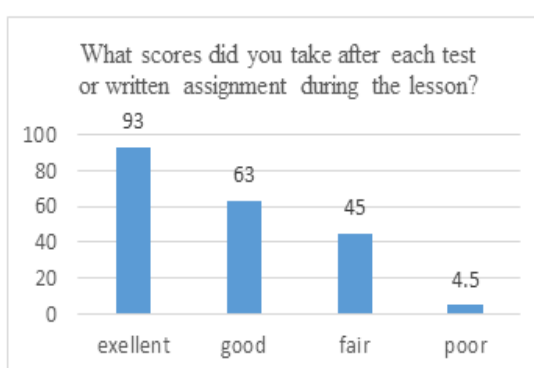
18 How well were the assessment scores of the course correlated?	113 (51.8%)	82 (37.6%)	23 (10.5%)	-	-	4.4	E
19 What scores did you take after each test or written assignment during the lesson?	93 (42.6%)	63 (28.8%)	45 (20.6%)	17 (8.25%)	-	4.6	E
20 How do you appreciate your working to pass individual assignments online?	96 (44%)	109 (50%)	13 (5.96%)	-	-	4.3	E

This analysis determines the main problems of students in learning English. AFIQ elements shows the importance of learning English and students do not have any problems in understanding the lexical and grammatical materials during the lesson. 55% of students *strongly agree* with statement that learning English grammar more important than practicing conversational skills. Grammar is associated with the sounds, structure, sentences, tenses, forms and system of language. Moreover, grammar is the structural foundation to express ideas and communicate [7]. In 2018-2019, professor Debra Myhill (Exeter University, England) held a seminar in L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian University on teaching grammar for students of non-languages specialties. She noted about the importance of grammar in learning languages in order to

speak and use the language correctly. Myhill determines the place of grammar in learning and teaching English [8]. There no progress in communication without grammar whether it is a native language or a foreign language. People should know the essential grammatical rules and principles in order to speak and communicate orally and in written form. The problems students face in learning English is the lack of practice and barriers to speak. 50% of students are afraid of making mistakes while speaking and have troubles in using learned materials in their home assignments (Figure 1). These problems were ascertained in the frequency element of this research. Only 18.3% of students attempt to revise the learning materials at home and 12.4% never read additional materials in English (Figure 2).



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



Moreover, students do not follow the educational programs and syllabus. 27.5% work with the syllabus of the English discipline and 22% never look at it. This analysis shows the weak sides of students in learning English. The result and an indicator of importance element denotes that students are only interested in their scores and teacher's assessment (Figure 3).

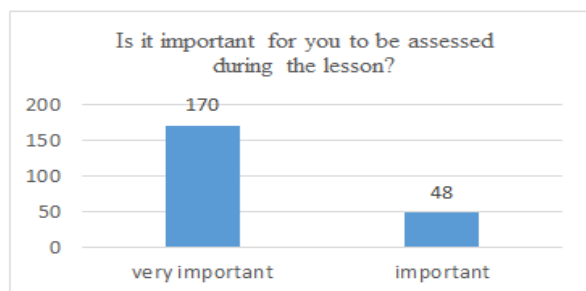


Figure 3

The questionnaire on the base of Likert scale, the constant comparative research of AFIQ elements, one-way variant analysis (Anova) defined the main problems to learn English in higher schools: *a fear of mistakes while speaking; failure to use using learned materials in assignments; absence of motivation to repeat the learned materials.*

Thirty-six teachers of the department of foreign languages were invited to discuss these problems and give recommendations. The majority of teachers (83%) graduated from higher schools in Kazakhstan. 70% of teachers had opportunities to visit English speaking countries to develop their language proficiency. The USA and UK were the most popular destinations. Teachers have an average of 15 years of teaching experience and were teaching at higher schools and universities in Kazakhstan.

Teachers discussed the views of students regarding the problems during the academic year on English course. Students wrote their problems in written form: "I didn't have any problems"; "a lot of information, sometimes I do not have time to master all the material"; "It was difficult to speak English"; "It's was so hard for me to learn English"; "spelt is difficult to overcome yourself when talking in English. I'm getting lost"; "If you are absent, there is no

77.9% of students are interested to be assessed during the lesson and 51.8% satisfy with the correlation of their assessment scores. Furthermore, 50% of students like to do and pass individual assignments online and 42.6% have high scores at the end of the English course (Figure 4). The middle average of AFIQ elements equals to equivalent 4.40 out of 5.00.

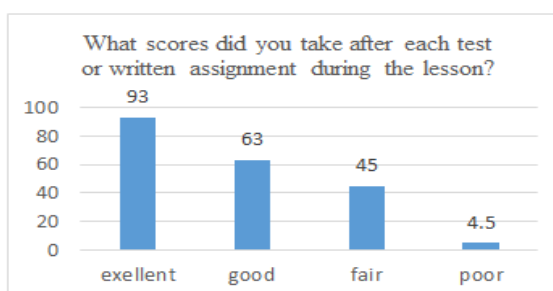


Figure 4

explanation and no understanding"; "I got a lot of information"; "I have a weak level of English, because of this it is very difficult to learn the language at the level of other students"; "It would be better if groups were made by level of English skills. The biggest problem is the difference between students, who doesn't have choice and just have to learn terms they've already known or doesn't even ready to know about"; "I have some difficulty on listening and speaking tasks"; "Listening was difficult for me, but after many practices it is easier for me now"; "I am very ashamed that I can't understand the language in class, I'm ashamed to ask where I can't understand"; "Afraid to ask questions so as not to look stupid and ask for preparation material"; "no motivation from my side".

The most common suggestion of teachers to decide these problems focused on the student-initiated learning strategies. Student-initiated learning enables students to explore their interests and learn within and beyond the curriculum. As teachers note students should be in charge of their own learning and catch opportunities to improve their English. The first problem of students was a fear to speak. Roy H. Williams said "a smart man makes a mistake, learns from it, and never makes that mistake again" [9]. The teachers' recommendations how

to conquer your fear of doing mistakes during speaking and communication:

- to change your mindset because it plays a significant role to see mistakes and react on them;
- try to speak English with your friends, relatives, groupmates;
- practice your spoken English with yourself;
- remember that making mistakes is normal, learning from mistakes is an essential skill to move forward;
- don't avoid the conversation and simply jump into it.

The problem of failure to use using learned materials in assignments means to practice at home and using writing as a learning tool. As learning tool, writing and oral assignments develop critical thinking and critical writing skills. These skills convert students from passive to active learners. Teachers should give students different interesting tasks each lesson. These tasks shouldn't be repeated each lesson. The main goal of writing assignments is to clarify thinking, explore ideas, ask questions, reflect on learning, and search for connections between theory and practice.

It is known, that lack of interest limits the progress in acquiring the language. In this research students note the absence of motivation to repeat the learned materials as the existing problem in learning English. There are different types of motivation as integrative, instrumental, intrinsic, and extrinsic. Integrative motivation refers to language learning for personal growth in order to work and live in language society. Instrumental motivation concentrates on the aim of learning (learning the themes, passing exams and take final rewards) and follow the requirements [10]. Using each type of motivation depends on situations and assignments. Intrinsic motivation leads to engage students in activities during the lesson. Extrinsic motivation provides for doing actions [11]. These types of motivation have close relationship between each other [12]. Despite of the different type of motivation, learners are intrinsically motivated to develop four skills of activities through their knowledge

and achievement. In order to motivate students, teachers should select materials arranged to students' level (elementary, intermediate or advanced), indicate goals in their classroom activities, present new and interesting materials. Intrinsic motivation needs a class to be communicative. As teachers encourage students to communicate more in class (1), they will be motivated more. Teachers should try to use real materials (2) and sources to motivate students to learn English. At last, teachers should give feedback (3) for students' work. These types of motivation set students up for success as in and out of class.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This study aims to determine the main problems to learn English (students) and present recommendations for improving English (teachers). Based on the theoretical and practical analysis of this research, it is concluded that the 1-year students have faced with the problems during learning English in higher schools. The result of the research has provided teachers' recommendations. Teachers should take account students' interest before preparing classroom activities and conducting the lesson. Using scaling techniques as the Likert scale, the constant comparative research of AFIQ elements, one-way variant analysis (Anova) help to measure the internal and external attitude of students objectively. Likert scale is useful and effective to measure qualitative responses of students of four elements (AFIQ). These elements are the main instruments to determine the students' agreement with the educational process, frequency part of using learning materials in classes, importance element expresses the importance of learning English, quality element defines the evaluation of students and teachers work. The total summing of AFIQ scores highlight the problems that students face. Likert scale only enables the attitude between researched elements, not the difference between them. The attitude between these elements were done with the help of constant comparative research and one-way variant analysis.

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