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Academic Impediments of EFL Learners

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نَصْرَفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

صدق الله العظيم

[الأنعام: 105]

In the Name of Allah, The Most Gracious the Most Merciful

{ Thus We explain variously the Verses so that they (the disbelievers) may say: "You have studied (the Books of the people of the Scripture and brought this Quran from that)" and that We may make the matter clear for the people who have Knowledge....}

True are the words of Allah

Al-An‘ām: verse (105)

DEDICATION

This research is wholeheartedly dedicated to:

Our beloved parents...

Our brothers & sisters...

With love , respect and gratitude.

The researchers

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The Researchers

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Abstract

For all EFL learners, the process of English language learning can be fraught with difficulties brought on by a variety of causes. Neglecting the aforementioned criteria may have a negative impact on the language acquisition process. Lack of learning environments, teacher understanding of the process of language acquisition, and students' comprehension of language processes, learners' dependency on professors, inappropriate material for the level of proficiency, and the issue of cultural identity are some of the most critical factors that EFL students face in the process of language acquisition.

This research aims at highlighting the most common impediments in teaching and learning a foreign language . the first chapter highlights learning impediments (Misunderstanding of language learning process, culture identity, lack of learning environment and inappropriate learning materials). On the other hand, the second chapter highlights the teaching impediments (Methodology, Unqualified teachers, students lack interest in studies and difficulties in comprehension).

Finally, the researchers has ended their research with conclusions and the bibliography of the research.

CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING IMPEDIMENTS

1.1 Introduction

In the journey of human development, early education is an important milestone. Early childhood education and primary education lays the foundation for basic, secondary, and higher education for human capital required for national development (Bar-On, 2004:13-25). For this reason, teachers of young learners must know the different ways of giving instructions for them, taking into consideration their needs. Many teachers, parents, health experts, and other people are not well aware of the nature of learning impediments and how to plan interventions or treatments to mitigate their effects on learner's learning. In the classroom, learners who consistently fail to score high marks on tests are considered not intelligent or not good enough (Karunanayake , 2020: 32-39).

This perception of learner's learning ability can negatively affect their progression through education particularly in the early stages of learning. Failure to consider learning impediments to the different factors, such as learning impediments and teaching impediments in the early education curriculum for schools can make it difficult to achieve the goal of developing

quality human resource capital for national development.

1.2 Misunderstanding of Language Acquisition Process

Teachers must keep this in mind while designing and conducting sessions for EFL students because the process of learning a second language differs from that of enhancing one's degree of proficiency in the first on many sociolinguistic levels. In general, the majority of EFL teachers are unprepared for and unfamiliar with the complexities of teaching English to non-native speakers. The core of the problem is intimately tied to the rarity of the requirement to deliver English to such students in general (Sayer, 2013: 738- 748).

However, There are several areas where professors' knowledge is critical. One part of the issue of instructors' unfamiliarity with the details of the procedure is that they frequently have high expectations for pupils who are new to the Intermediate schools. Teachers are frequently unable to organize academics according to the students' learning ability since they are not trained on the distinctive aspects of the language acquisition process. As a result, the problem of teachers not understanding the fundamentals of the process may have a detrimental

impact on teacher-student relationships. the latter's willingness to participate in class discussions and academics in general, as well as disturb the potentially successful outcomes of a well-planned and organized curriculum that is tailored to the students' abilities (Bostad, Cwikla, & Kienzle, 2015: 221-255)

1.3 Cultural Identity

Because the issue of a lack of learning environments is a societal issue, it is also linked to another key issue. Many EFL students may struggle with cultural and personal identification issues. This truth can be explained if you consider the typical circumstance that EFL students face as they begin to develop their language skills. Students may be perceived as unable to properly articulate their thoughts in English while learning in a school classroom; however, when communicating with non-native English speakers in their native contexts, they may be perceived as abandoning their cultural identity (Bell & Bogan, 2013: 102).

As a result, social pressure from both sides of the EFL students' social milieu has a significant impact on their willingness and motivation to learn the language. The topic is significant and must be addressed by both EFL teachers and society as a whole because the process

of language learning is intimately tied to the phenomenon of culture and his or her self-identity. Teachers' evaluation and comprehension of the issue, as well as their focus on its prevention, are two potential strategies to positively influence the cultural aspect of language acquisition. They should be able to support children who are struggling with the problem during the learning process in school by keeping their identity beyond academic accomplishment and language acquisition (Bell & Bogan, 2013: 113). Despite the fact that language and culture are often intertwined on several levels, a student's history should not be ignored when studying a second or foreign language. One could argue that language acquisition allows a person to expand his or her knowledge and proficiency while maintaining the original language. As a result, EFL teachers must anticipate the emergence of such a problem among their pupils and address it ahead of time by emphasizing the abovementioned qualities to enrich one's culture without reducing it (ibid:115)

1.4 Lack of Learning Environments

The lack of learning environments is clearly one of the most influential elements negatively affecting the English language acquisition process among EFL

students. Naturally, the social context in which a learner resides and with whom he or she speaks shapes the language acquisition process (Sayeh, 2015:371). Despite the fact that EFL students are required to speak English in their courses, they frequently do not do so at home. Furthermore, such learners frequently encounter social pressure from both their native community and native English speakers during the language acquisition process.

Because such learners do not have enough opportunities to practice their language outside of the classroom, Because they are in a classroom, the rate at which kids can enhance their language skills is limited. Students are obliged to acquire English from native speakers in this manner, but they are not provided enough academic opportunity. This problem can sometimes result in several instances of psychological conflict between the learner and his or her home community as well as the native speakers with whom they are surrounded (ibid:372).

Because such a problem is so intertwined with society, it needs to be addressed and changed as a whole in order to ameliorate the situation. Providing pupils with opportunity to practice the English language outside of their school classes is one of the potential methods to

improve the issue by discussing it from the standpoint of a lack of learning environments. In towns with a disproportionately large population of non-native English speakers, organizing speaking clubs, book readings, or movie nights would be a natural option (Cummins, 1979: 222-251).

Furthermore, schools that offer the opportunity to learn English as a second or foreign language should be encouraged to inform students about these opportunities; additionally, such initiatives could be organized within schools so that students are familiar with and comfortable in their surroundings. Given that such a problem is linked to kids disregarding English in their homes, public measures to enhance English proficiency among adults may be suggested, so that students are able to incorporate language into their day-to-day communication. If the above proposals are implemented in areas with non-native English speakers, the problem of EFL students being unable to acquire language due to a lack of learning contexts should be addressed (Sayeh, 2015: 373).

1.5 Inappropriate Learning Material

Another issue that is closely related to the one discussed above is that EFL teachers who are not particularly skilled in planning curriculum according to

students' needs and abilities may frequently require students to work on assignments that are too difficult and do not correspond to their level of language proficiency. If the duties that the students are currently obliged to complete are overbearing, the pupils may experience several challenges in the learning process. First and foremost, if professors do not use potentially effective techniques of explaining the linguistic process to pupils, the latter may be unable to accomplish the work owing to a lack of knowledge. As a result, there will be a noticeable decline in academic performance overall.

Naturally, when confronted with misunderstandings from teachers, classmates, and their primary cultural environment, students may find it difficult to maintain their motivation to continue their education. One of the most visible results of such a problem might be a lack of formal education among non-native English speakers, as well as the development of social and psychological problems within their society and with others. (Bell & Bogan, 2013: 117).

Teachers should consider the methods offered above in order to improve the situation and solve the problem stated. Because the learning process involves a complex of communication, explanations, and comprehension between a learner and a teacher, the

introduction of specialized training in the way of preparing the latter for the curriculum will be critical to its success. Another strategy to mitigate the problem is to divide the students into groups based on their degree of proficiency; dividing students based on their abilities contributes to the EFL course's success (Bell & Bogan, 2013: 122).

Overall, teachers should be provided the opportunity to expand their topic expertise and structure the learning process according to the students' knowledge levels and language learning capacities. As a result, EFL teachers will be able to evaluate which projects are most suited for each set of students, avoiding the potentially negative consequences of pupils not being able to complete assignments correctly (Cummins, 1977:3-12).

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING IMPEDIMENTS

2.1 Introduction

Teaching, a noble profession is a daunting and challenging task. In the present era, with the advent of new methodologies in teaching and the way digital and smart learning has made inroads into the field of education, the role of teachers has also greatly evolved over a period of time. Today, a teacher is faced with the arduous task of keeping him/herself abreast with the latest inventions and strides in the field of medicine, education, science, art and etc. Upgrading their skills and knowledge from time to time is thus necessary and is an utmost priority today.

English is widely spoken as a second language English. In Iraq is more likely to be taught any learnt only as a foreign language. This means that learning and teaching English occurs mostly in classroom, rather than during daily communication. English learners in Iraq don't have ready access to using English as a tool of communication during their daily lives outside the classroom. In terms of teaching English, several factors appear to impede the success of teaching which strongly influence EFL teaching success.

2.2 Methodology

Teaching and learning are the two sides of a coin. The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. There are consistently high correlations between students' ratings of

the “amount learned” in the course and their overall ratings of the teacher and the course. Those who learned more gave their teachers higher ratings “Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand” (Theal and Franklin, 2001: 22).

Methodologies refer to a set of practices and principles used by teachers to make the process of teaching and learning highly effective for their students. Teaching methodologies, also known as teaching methods, are usually also based on various beliefs regarding the nature of the language used, and how it is learned. In a classroom, teachers usually apply a combination of different teaching methods to better fit the needs of that particular batch of students. These methods can be customised to solve problems that are faced specifically by the students in reference. Apart from that, teaching methodologies are also based on different goals that learners may have from that particular course. (Adas & Bakir, 2013: 254).

For example, if the goal of an arts and crafts class is to provide refreshment to students, the teaching methodologies will be based on such a goal. Alternately, if the goal of an arts and crafts class is to help students master that particular art/craft form, then the teaching method will change drastically.

Apart from the different aims of taking a course, there are other factors that help teachers decide which methodologies to use while conducting their class. Some factors include the age group of the students attending the class, the gender of students, the experience in the said lesson or coursework of the students, as well as their expectations and interests. However, Direct instructions, differentiated instruction, personalized learning, flipped classroom, project-based learning, cooperative learning, gamification, etc. are some of the types of teaching methodologies. Adas & Bakir (2013:266) state that there are different types of teaching methods that can be categorized into four broad type:

1. Teacher-centered methods,
2. Learner-centered methods,
3. Content-focused methods; and
4. Interactive/participative methods.

1. Instructor/Teacher Centered Methods

Here the teacher casts himself/herself in the role of being a master of the subject matter. The teacher is looked upon by the learners as an expert or an authority. Learners, on the other hand, are presumed to be passive and copious recipients of knowledge from the teacher.

Examples of such methods are expository or lecture methods – which require little or no involvement of learners in the teaching process. It is also for this lack of involvement of the learners in what they are taught, that such methods are called “closed-ended.” (Cohen, 1981: 44)

2. Learner-Centered Methods

In learner-centered methods, the teacher/instructor is both a teacher and a learner at the same time. In the words of Lawrence Stenhouse, the teacher plays a dual role as a learner as well “so that in his classroom extends rather than constricts his intellectual horizons.”

The teacher also learns new things every day which he/she didn't know in the process of teaching. The teacher “becomes a resource rather than an authority”. Examples of learner-centered methods are the discussion method, the discovery or inquiry-based approach, and Hill's model of learning through discussion (<https://www.witcritic.com/2020/10/teaching-methodology.html>).

3. Content-Focused Methods

In this category of methods, both the teacher and the learners have to fit into the content that is taught.

Generally, this means the information and skills to be taught are regarded as sacrosanct or very important.

A lot of emphasis is laid on the clarity and careful analyses of content. Both the teacher and the learners cannot alter or become critical of anything to do with the content. An example of a method that subordinates the interests of the teacher and learners to the content is the programmed learning approach (<https://hdl.org/what-are-the-different-methods-of-teaching/>).

4. Interactive/Participative Methods

This fourth category borrows a bit from the three other methods without necessarily laying emphasis unduly on either the learner, content, or teacher. These methods are driven by the situational analysis of what is the most appropriate thing for us to learn/do now given the situation of learners and the teacher (Cohen, 1981: 66).

2.3 Unqualified Teachers

Teachers play an important role in teaching language process. The role of the teacher is to create the suitable learning environment that help the learners develop their language skills perfectly. The teacher is also an evaluator because he or she evaluates the learner's work in order to see how well they are performing. Furthermore,

the teacher is an organizer because he needs to be so. He should be a good organizer in teaching the foreign language, and should know exactly what leads to success. He should not give useless information or confusing instructions to the learners in order not to waste a lot of time. The other role that the teacher carries is being a prompter because he acts as a prompter (Wang, 2010: 233-244).

The use of inexperienced and unqualified teachers in teaching various subjects causes great harm to the students and greatly affects students' subject choices. There are teachers without the appropriate teaching certificates. The academic background of these teachers is feeble, some of the educators teach mathematics and many are untrained, these teachers use poor teaching techniques and they lack assistance in form of constant professional development through seminars, workshops, and refresher courses. These teachers go ahead to teach students at young ages knowing that there are some subjects that require experts in the field for a better understanding of those technical subjects. For example, mathematics, if those teachers without the appropriate knowledge of teaching teach mathematics, there would a high tendency of students having very poor foundation at such a technical subject like mathematics. Such students can end up having a phobia for mathematics and end up dropping the subject after the completion of the secondary education. Therefore, the solution to these is by getting teachers with the appropriate teaching certificates to these subjects and these will improve the general performance of students

at Ordinary level examinations particularly on subjects like mathematics and English.

Non-student friendly teachers also cause great harm to some students by putting fear in the students' mind. Lack of motivation by teachers also falls under examples of poor teaching methods. There are certain teachers who don't care about the intellectual feelings of students, they just teach reluctantly and leave the class meanwhile there are certain students who already have a phobia for the subject and what is just needed is motivation which they don't get really from their tutors. Teachers should be of help at motivating students, encouraging and inspiring the students to make them get up and move on. There are also cases whereby students get frustrated at the subjects been taught, instances like that are also resolved by the assistance of these motivational and inspiring teachers. The use of jokes during teaching also aids learning, this makes the students really like the teacher and makes the class lively, and there is this belief that if a student likes a teacher, he will definitely love his subject. (Kember and Wong, 2000:69).

The absence of study groups also affects the attitude of students towards the understanding of several topics. Students will not be able to interact among themselves and share different opinions but if the teachers put the students into study groups mixing both the weak and smart students together. There will be interaction and discussion between students in a group about their different weak points and the

ones who understand a particular topic very well will help those that are still weak in those topics (Ibid, 2000:74)

2.4 Students Lack Interest in Studies

It is true that most students wish to please the teacher, so it is the job of the teacher to encourage all students to be proud of their own achievements and to raise their self-esteem. So, the student continues to give maximum effort and increases personal success. Teachers should engage them to group work or other strategies to cultivate students' critical thinking skills. Some children are highly motivated and the others are highly competitive and enjoy gaining greater success than their classmates (UKEssays, 2018)

Teaching is one of the greatest ways to develop students' linguistic skills that they can more effectively communicate. Furthermore, nowadays teaching is getting hard because of new generation. They want to know more and more and it makes you work harder and find other new ways of teaching. It is very important for the teacher to organize different out of class activities to improve students' speaking skills and to make learning English joyful and more interesting. Below, there are some characteristics for the teacher to have a good lesson. A good teacher should do (ibid, 2018) :

1. respect his/her students;
2. come to class prepared, and with a solid direction;
3. be a team player with students;
4. be creative and can present the same idea in many different ways;
5. fair with all students and treat all students equally;
6. be available to his/her students, not aloof; make learning fun and clearly has fun as well;
7. passionate about teaching and it clearly shows;
8. be enthusiastic about being in the classroom and have a positive attitude.
9. be patient, not all students are perfect, but most truly want to succeed.

The question for all teachers is how to interest their students in the lessons. The answer is to use critical thinking activities as it helps the students to be involved in lessons. At lesson one tries to use different activities which encourage his/her students. These activities help them think, imagine and work creatively. Some of them; If one remembers Bloom's taxonomy Evaluating is the second-most complex activity, and Creating is at the top. It means teachers should pay more attention to students' creativity and analyzing. Typically, this is through observable behaviors, using the knowledge to accomplish a task. provide opportunities for students to reflect on and

share their personal experiences and their feelings about the topic being studied (Bostad, Cwikla, & Kienzle, 2015: 245).

- draw on what students already know and can do to stimulate their interest and imagination;
- select tasks that are challenging and achievable.

2.5 Difficulties in Comprehension

Comprehension relies on mastery of decoding; learners who struggle to decode find it difficult to understand and remember what has been read. Because their efforts to grasp individual words are so exhausting, they have no resources left for understanding. Signs of comprehension difficulty: (a) confusion about the meaning of words and sentences. (b) inability to connect ideas in a passage. (c) omission of, or glossing over detail. (d) difficulty distinguishing significant information from minor details of lack. (e) concentration during reading (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/reading_diffs.html).

2.5.1 Causes of Comprehension Difficulties

When a learner is a good reader, yet still struggles with comprehension, there are mainly three causes as is stated by Plessis (2021: 1), which are :

1. The learner's vocabulary is poor.

Decades of research have confirmed the important role that vocabulary plays in reading comprehension and in students' overall academic success. Naturally, being able to pronounce a word correctly does not guarantee that one understands its meaning.

2. The learner's memory is poor.

Neuro-imaging of learners showed that, while reading, the brain function of those with reading comprehension problems is quite different and distinct from those with reading disabilities. Those with reading disabilities exhibited abnormalities in a specific region in the occipital-temporal cortex, a part of the brain that is associated with successfully recognizing words on a page. Those with reading comprehension difficulties, on the other hand, did not show abnormalities in this region, instead showing specific abnormalities in regions typically associated with memory.

Short-term memory holds information in the mind for only a few seconds while it is being processed. Long-term memory is where such processed information is permanently stored. Working memory is an intermediary and active memory system in the information processing

area of the brain. It is an important memory system and one that most of us use every day.

3. The learner cannot think logically.

Logical thinking is the process in which one uses reasoning consistently to come to a conclusion. Problems or situations that involve logical thinking call for structure, for relationships between facts, and for chains of reasoning that “make sense”.

The relationship between logical thinking and reading is well established in the literature. It has been said that “there is no reading without reasoning,” and even that reading is reasoning.

To overcome comprehension difficulties, the good news is that weaknesses in cognitive skills can be attacked head-on; it is possible to strengthen these mental skills through training and practice. Edublox’s Development Tutor aims at strengthening underlying cognitive skills including short-term memory, working memory and logical thinking. In addition, a learner’s vocabulary will need to be improved, and they will also need application in the form of comprehension exercises. The old saying ‘practice makes perfect’ still applies. Edublox’s live tutoring services include a comprehension curriculum, aimed at improving vocabulary and at

teaching students to identify the main idea, sequence events, make inferences, etc. (Plessis, 2021: 3)

Conclusions

Teaching and learning English is not easy, teachers need to find appropriate methods and strategies to teach students based on the problem. Teachers should be patient to grow up the students confidence and practice to talk English. It is also need to the teacher to make the classroom atmosphere enjoyable. Teachers can play some games to make the students enthusiasm in learning English. They also implement the other technique that is interesting and also use the other media. Teachers as educators, They have the opportunity of making a huge impact on the students, through applying different procedures, such as:

1. Knowing their students well.
2. Understanding the different learning abilities and capacities of the students.
3. Motivating and encouraging them when the students underperform and have to deal with parental and peer pressure.
4. Building an effective communication channel between the Management-Parents- Students.

The school can facilitate the teachers in developing material and strategies. So the teachers can improve their strategies includes using the technique, methods and media that will be implemented to the students.

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