

Current challenges in language Learning and teaching EFL

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Abstract

English language is widely used all over the world .Today, it works as connecting languages with others .It is considered the best medium to communicate with people in any human society .Thus, English language is better to be taught to learners in an effective way in order to interact by using this language.Teaching English language is a continuous process which needs many changes from time to time due to the rapid developments and changes in needs of societies.

English language has become a basic part of any educational program in many schools and institutions concerning language learning .Many studies state that there is an urgent need to present new trends dealing with language learning and teaching.

This study is an attempt to examine the existing reasons that emphasized on the problems of language learning and teaching and look for the new trends that play a positive role in TEFL.

The new methods insist that the learner is the center of learning while the teacher is in the background as a facilitator or helper .To change the view of English language teachers towards the new trends in language learning and teaching, different strategies and styles of learning are presented in EFL classroom for different levels and subject areas.

This study aims at:-

- 1.Exploring the main challenges in language learning and teaching related to teachers and learners.
- 2.Presenting the new trends , ready to use-techniques and activities in language learning.

The study is limited to the new trends in language learning at the primary stage as it is the basic level of language learning .Certain suggestions and recommendations are presented according to the results of the study.

تحديات معاصرة في تعلم وتدرّيس اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية

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المستخلص

تستخدم اللغة الانكليزية بشكل واسع على مستوى العالم واليوم تعمل كلغة اتصال مع الاخرين حيث تعتبر افضل وسيلة اتصال مع الناس لذلك يجب ان تدرس اللغة الانكليزية بطريقة مؤثرة لكي نستطيع التفاعل مع الاخرين باستخدام هذه اللغة حيث تعتبر تدرّيس اللغة الانكليزية عملية متواصلة تحتاج الى الكثير من التغييرات من وقت لأخر.

تؤكد الطرق الحديثة الان بان المتعلم هو مركز عملية التعلم بينما المعلم هو الخلفية الساندة و الموجه له .ومن اجل تغيير وجهة نظر التربويين قدمت استراتيجيات

واساليب مختلفة للتعلم لصف اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية لمستويات ومواضيع مختلفة

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى:-

- 1-تزويد التربويين بمعرفة عملية وادوات لخلق مناخ ايجابي يستمر لفترة طويلة في مجال تعليم التلاميذ للحصول على نوعية جيدة من المعلمين.
 - 2.تقديم اتجاهات حديثة وتقنيات جاهزة في مجال تعلم اللغة.
- تحددت هذه الدراسة بالاتجاهات الحديثة في تعليم اللغة للمرحلة الابتدائية كونها المرحلة الاساسية في تعلم اللغة وقد قدمت اقتراحات و توصيات طبقا الى نتائج البحث.

Chapter One Challenges in Language Learning and Teaching

1.Introduction

The term language learning is often used to describe the more formal approaches in language teaching. It refers to the teaching process that takes place in a classroom. It can be defined as a challenging and fascinating job with many rewards (lindsay P. 2000 : 3).Thus, teachers may be flexible and sensitive helper in order to be a good language teacher.

Actually ,English language has controlled the situation concerning language learning or teaching in many countries. It is regarded as the worldwide language for human communication .There is an urgent need for learning EFL which gives a chance for travelling,employment , higher education ,and even better life.

Teaching is not an easy job, but it is considered a necessary one. Teachers can be very rewarding when they see their pupils' progress . Thus, teachers are still effective in lives of pupils .The way teachers behave and react inside the classroom is necessary in language learning..

In spite of the great number of research concerning language learning, teachers still need to know how pupils learn a second language .The materials presented to pupils can help the diverse needs of learners as individual and as members of a learning group. This research provide insightful, practical and comprehensive materials on the topics that matter to teachers

concerning ideas from the most experienced and repeated experts in the field of language learning and teaching.

1.1 Challenging Task

Teaching EFL is a challenging task that needs an interest from the factors that impact on language learning for the following reasons :-

A. Most of the current scientific and technological information largely found in English language which calls for proficiency in this language.

B. Learning of English helps national exchange concerning culture ,intecact and communicate among these countries including the dialogue among civilizations.

Due to to the importance of English as a foreign language,many programs at schools require accomplish the essential needs of learners,and the necessity for learning English to modify these communicative needs ,in addition to the growing number of institutes developed all over the world concerning language learning.

1.2 Learners

It is important to identify the main factors related to language learning and teaching as a foreign language .Learners find difficulty in language learning for the following reasons:-

A. The central difficulty for language learning is that there is no situations that help learners to be familiar with the original language(English) . Outside the classroom, there is a weak role for this language,so pupils do not feel the immediate need for learning. The educational system may implement such needs ,a limited number of pupils move to English speaking countries or have a touch with English speakers .We can see only a few foreign vistors .The outcomes explain that Indian pupils are the best in contact to English audio-visual utilities . The number of circulation and publications of English magazines in India is greaterr than other countries.

B. A lot of people try to find out for ways of improving their English language ,but they don't know to deal with this issue ,little care is given to most of English classes about improving a foreign language efficiency .Some pupils find difficulty or

pay not enough attention to interact with a foreign language learning even they are studying English for years., few pupils only are who able to succeed in learning the language effectively .Teachers can play a positive role in this situation by serving pupils to learn how to practice the techniques of active learning and to accomplish autonomy in their education.

C.The motivation or purpose for learning is not equal among pupils. Some of pupils opinion is that learning English is a course and they have to pass this course successfully without understanding the deep importance of this language in their life in future .Some other pupils lack the desire in learning English due to the weak stimulus to participate in class activities.

1.3 Self- directed Learning

Self-directed learning means learning how to learn.It is considered one of the basic issues for language learning because of the following reasons:-

A.One of the major difficulties is the availability of time for learning.Time helps learners to confirm the efficiency of pupils .Thus, if the learner has not been prepared within the classroom to take responsibility to learn autonomously outside ,it is unlikely that any learning will take place(carver& Dickson : 1982).

B. There is a positive relationship between language learning and the general learning of pupils.Language learning encourages pupils to succeed in other fields of learning. Stern(1983)suggests that well-organized learners consciously monitor the performance ,analyse them, and develop efficient learning strategies.

C. In self –directed learning ,the distance between the teacher and the learner may be reduced concerning the feeling of worry or defeat and alienation decrease, , the learner becomes more receptive to the learning process(Brown : 1973).

1.4 Pupils' belief

The pupils' opinion about the nature of learning English is regarded one of the essential principles of learning. As a subject containing a list of words and a set of grammatical guidelines which are to be learned and certain skills to be acquired rather than a set of integrated skills and sub skills(Oxford : 2001). In

addition, pupils in English classes do not have similar backgrounds in information about the language. Due to these circumstances, the situation of language learning becomes difficult especially for weak pupils.

1.5 Classrooms

Most of the time, classes are busy with pupils, so the time for practicing the language is limited. Pupils are not skillful enough to communicate in the foreign language and use the language skills effectively. Group work discussion is limited because of the limited hours for learning the language. To acquire the target language efficiently, pupils need to engage actively in participating in class activities. Group work in the educational context generally involves a small number of students working together to achieve a task (Dooly : 2008).

1.6 Teachers

It is often said that "good teachers are born, not made" (Renner P. 1993 :23). Thus, teachers are considered the corner stone in learning process. The way teachers behave and react inside the classroom is necessary in language learning. Teachers are considered basic factors in language learning and teaching. They are considered positive models to their pupils. What they are expected to do or produce especially for new skills or activities. They may explain and demonstrate the materials related to language learning and share the lesson with their pupils. This help of teachers to pupils will motivate pupils and develop pupils self-confidence. The positive model of teachers in front of their pupils help them in language learning. It helps pupils to believe that by teachers, they will succeed if they follow the instructions that are practiced by teachers. Modeling is considered as new and modern aspect for teachers in their style to provide their pupils with "critical input" so that they can help pupils process content more deeply and comprehensively. The new trends of language learning intend to provide teachers with high quality features in language learning. It presents some of the selected instructional strategies that have been used successfully in the classroom for teaching all levels. Practical knowledge is used to create a positive and lifelong impact on

pupils' learning .The role of teachers has changed in the new trends of language learning and teaching by using new and interested techniques to learners. Teachers may facilitate learning and give alot of time to pupils in practicing the basic language skills..The positive role for teachers is known to everyone, but there are certain negative points which can be discussed as follows :-

A. Some teachers' aim of teaching is to (prepare) pupils for the examination only and not to develop learners skills .

B. Some teachers shame, fear, and embaress of weak in public examinations. Therefore, they teach for testing purposes only. In fact, the exact role of teaching is completely different according to the recent methods of language learning.

C. Most of teachers do not give equal importance to the four skills of learning ;reading, writing, listening and speaking. Unfortunately, speaking skill is the most neglected aspect of the four skills in foreign language instruction (Birjandi & etal :2006). Most of teachers emphasises on reading skill at the primary stage of learning.

.7 Textbook and Curriculum 1

Language textbooks have an important role in learning a foreign language. It seems to play a essential role in educational system for any educational system. The difficulties that are found in most of these textbooks may be clarified as follows :-

A. One of the difficulties of the textbooks is that the tasks included in their textbooks do not give them eaqual interest for sufficient practice in developing learners' language skills.

B. The variety is weak in improving language skills which affects negatively on motivating learners.

C. Some researchers as (McGrath :2002) strongly support the idea of using culture in language learning. Including the foreign language culture help learners to gain information about the target language.

Textbooks may establish an effective resource for self-directed learning and it may reflect pre-determined learning objectives, and support for less experienced teachers who may

be lacking in confidence(Cunningsworth :1995).

1.8 Teaching Methods

The main purposes of the teaching methods is improving language skills of learners.The language skills are given different weighs inside the classroom. Reading comprehension and writing are more emphasized than the other skills.

Some teachers do not use suitable techniques to guide learners use the activities included in their textbooks to achieve the desired goals. Communicative language teaching is one of the new approaches in language learning.It presented a set of techniques as the age and the sex of learners,thus it succeeded inside the classroom as effective techniques.To indicate this fact (Edge, 1996 :18) points out that it seems necessary that rather than relying on ,methodology , expertise and materials controlled and distributed by western EFL countries.They may struggle to improve language teaching methods that take into account the cultural and social factors and most important of all ,the EFL situations in their countries.

Chapter Two New trends in language learning and Teaching

2.1 Teacher- Centered or Learner –Centered Instruction

Dewey (Richards J.& Renandya W. 2002 :2) favored the learner –Centered approach which emphasized on pupils by giving learners alot of time and practice in order to encourage them to become increasingly self-directed and responsible for their learning .This style of language learning helps to to acquire language skills .Dialogues among learners and between teachers and learners and thoughtful analysis of interpretation become the focus of instruction. Pupils were passive according to their role in language learning .Pupils were listening to their teachers .The role of pupils was limited in doing simple and limited activities inside the classroom .Teachers were active due to the methods and approaches that are used in language learning .Teachers do most of the activities inside the classroom .According to this type of learning ,those who are learning are teachers not pupils.

2.2 The Old and New Role of Teachers in Language Learning

In the last fifty years, language teaching has been faced a number of changes .The traditional role of language learning is emphasized on explaining things to pupils. Teachers work hard to make learners know the language , clarify how it works and explain its meanings .If teachers have agreement with this view of language learning, they take their normal position in the class in teaching language activities.

The old distribution of time inside the classroom gives(75%) of the time to teachers and(25%) to pupils. According to this division of time, teachers will learn English because they take most of the time and this is a great mistake in language learning .The new approaches and methods of language learning point out this mistake ,thus they changed the distribution of time inside the classroom when it became(25%)for teachers and(75%) for pupils according to the new approaches and methods that are adopted for teaching English at the primary stage in Iraq. Today, the role of teachers has changed completely .Teachers can control and manage the class and divide energy and effort into the process of teaching. The new methods and approaches in language learning and teaching involve using a variety of techniques and materials .This new trend of teaching aims at making the learners active in using language . Teacher give opportunities for the learners to participate to improve their language skills .These techniques are useful to make learners independent of the teacher .The new task of teachers is to play a counseling role by advising learners about self-teaching .Teachers can offer many truthful information in the classroom for communication by using different kinds of teaching techniques like drama and, stimulation.

Good language teacher study their learners ,analyze their needs ,choose suitable materials ,and adapt their teaching to the level of their pupils .The language teacher is found to serve learners. The success of the learner should be the aim of teaching and the ultimate test of good teaching. Today, there is a

(revolution) in the methods of language learning and technology .The basic tools for teachers and the knowledge that teachers need to prepare themselves for teaching English. It keeps them an open mind on new ideas about teaching and learning. Teachers can create an interesting and new ways, but they should not limit themselves on one method. Group work is an interesting technique in language learning .Pupils behave in one of three patterns in group work technique as follows :- (Harmer J. 2007 :52).

- A.Help the group to finish its assigned task
- B.Serve to create cooperation and support, and
- C.Focus on individual needs.

2.3 Teacher-Pupil Relationship

Teachers struggle to be effective in the classroom. In fact there isn't a perfect formula for this effectiveness .In language learning ,pupils should feel comfortable in the cases of making mistakes and taking ownership of their learning. Teachers need to take the leadership in building relationships and fostering this kind of relationship for encouraging classroom environment .They can create an atmosphere that facilitate pupil work in the class which affect positively on their achievement ,then the results will be fruitful. One of the teachers' techniques of creating positive relationship with pupils is to talk with them on a daily basis, reading what pupils write .One of the advantages of the positive relationships between teachers and pupils can be a way to decrease and even prevent behavior problems .Teachers can also create this relationship through cooperative learning activities which is considered a key way to increase pupils' motivation and decrease pupils anxiety. Teachers have to create the conditions as homework options ,seating arrangements and praising efforts within which pupils motivate themselves .Positive teacher-pupil relationships play an important role in supportive classroom atmosphere , enhancing pupils sense of autonomy through providing of different choices in front of pupils. Building positive relationships with pupils is vital (Linse Caroline T. 2005 :14).This positive relationship will

yield many positive outcomes for both pupils and teachers EFL class who are faced each day with the challenging in a new culture. Creating positive relationships are the foundations of a successful classroom .Teachers should learn about their pupils experience and backgrounds so that they can connect them to learning situation .Teachers also need to know what their pupils are interested in and what their goals are in order to create lessons that engage pupils and are relevant to their lives .Grading in using mother and second language is needed at the early stages of language learning .Preventing pupils from using their primary language does not promote a positive learning environment where pupils feel safe (Ferlazzo L & Sypniski Katie H. , 2012 :12).Whether teachers are an aspiring new or not these new techniques will help them to make every teaching day the best.

There are many tasks related to the role of teachers in classroom as follows:-(Ibid):

A.keep your language short, simple and direct through visual as role-play situations.

B.Present new language in context ,and

C.Avoid asking questions to learners unless teachers are taught pupils how to answer them correctly.

2.4 Modeling

One of basic tasks for teachers is to play an active role in developing the language skills .Teachers may help pupils to show curiosity for creative thinking ,be self- confident and enthusiastic about going a head of the conventional ways of learning .Teachers need to work hard to use the time inside and outside classrooms especially if they are studying English in their own countries. Presenting an interesting examples by teachers to their pupils helps them in language learning .Researchers have found that pupils generally progress much more quickly from beginning , intermediate and to advanced (Gebhard Jerry G. 2006:9).Teachers are considered models for pupils in what they are expected to do or produce .Thus ,they are expected to be positive models .They can give an interest in explaining and demonstrating the learning actions by using

many effective instructional strategies and activities to use with ELL pupils .Teachers may give oral and written instructions which help in response to the inevitable repeated question ,it gives a better understanding to the materials presented by teachers .They have to check regularly pupils and understand what pupils think .Teachers may give a chance to respond for pupils in all language activities.

2.5 Features of successful Teacher

Teachers have to work hard for implementing cooperative learning .It is a new technique leads to a more dynamic classroom interaction. Some of the benefits of cooperative learning can be stated as follows:-

- A. varing pupils' talk and motivation pupils for learning.
- B.a greater amount of comprehensible input.
- C.Limiting teachers' talk and increasing pupils' talk.
- D.More negotiation of meaning and more relaxed classroom atmosphere

2.6 Strategies of Language Learning

A strategy can be defined as a mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stages in language learning(Cook V. 2008 :529). Employing language learning strategies as actins,behaviors,or techniques may help in order to improve learners' skills .Most teachers deal with crowded classes of fifty pupils or more which make the job of teachers more difficult.The interaction of learners among themselves and with the teacher need alot of time and effort.In addition ,class management which is needed for learning may be absent in these situations. Many techniques can be adopted of making pupils more active participants in learning process. The current strategies in English language classroom confirmed on improving pupils thinking in dealing with learning activities.

Language learning strategies can be classified as follows :-*(ibid)*

- A.Metacognitive strategies which contain a plan about learning as planning for developing speech , or writing and evaluating pupils' progress.

B.Cognitive strategies which include mindful ways of tackling learning ,such as assessment and evaluation.

C.Social strategies which mean learning by interacting with others such as working with fellow pupils or asking the teachers' help.

People who are good at language might behave in different ways from those who are less good ,or they might behave in the same way but more efficiently.

2.7 New Styles of Language Learning and Teaching

Several theories have developed tools that help to evaluate an individuals' unique style. Kolbs' learning style inventory is probably the most widely used device ;it helps to identify a persons' preference for certain learning behavior ,grouping the behavior into face statistically styles. These learning styles consisted of the following:-(Lindsay P, 2000 : 34).

A.Converges

It deals with activities that require the practical application of ideas.It focuses on specific problems.

B.Diverger

It deals with an imaginative aptitude and the ability to view complex situations for many perspectives.

C.Assimilator

It is a preferred style excel in the creation of theoretical models and inductive learning.

2.8 Techniques for Successful Teacher

Teachers can help pupils to answer on a sticky not that they place on their desks . Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding for language materials in classroom. This technique can help pupils to ensure that pupils are learning ,thinking ,understanding ,comprehend activities to use with ELL pupils .Teachers have to avoid asking (Are there any questions?) but teachers have to wait till the end of class .Pupils are interracting with these techniques,so they sometimes use signals with their teachers as nodding their heads to show understanding for subjects .There are certain new and effective learning activities help pupils in language to have a positive

atmosphere for language learning .some of the new and effective techniques for successful teachers are as follows:-

A. Breaking the ice

It means creating positive atmosphere for pupils in class .This new technique gives the chance to pupils a chance for a warm up activity .This technique of warm up activity fitted them perfectly and they create a sense of welcome ,and establish an atmosphere of collegial cooperation..

B.Think a loud

Silent reading is necessary in pupils learning .Part of that silent reading can be shared with partners. An important consideration is what the teacher is doing during this period of time .Thus, teachers must create positive model inside the classroom .walking around, asking questions, reading a loud are useful .Feedback is also considered effective technique to improve language learning skill.

C.Classroom-Language Game

Using language games can be challenging for pupils .Teachers have to use instructional tools to help pupils .Games by asking them questions about events in their lives particularly popular at the ESL .Among their many benefits are creating meaningful situation .Lindsay P. (2000 : 36) recommends the importance in showing interest in pupils lives by ,using time for individual conversation ,reinforcing pupils, being friendly through smiles ,a light and quick supportive touch on the shoulder.

D.Learning by Doing

It is one of the popular techniques in language learning . learning can be done by actually participations in an experience rather than by just being told about it .This technique can create positive atmosphere which makes pupils more comfortable inside the classroom.

E.Pupils' Motivation

Current research discusses the proper question is not ,how can people motivate others. But rather how can people create the conditions within which pupils will motivate themselves.

Teachers have to remember that pupils are thinking in two or more languages .Speaking too fast should be neglected .Using cues to help pupils in language learning as a technique for presentation to put the individual differences in mind in language learning. .

F.Looking a head

It is one of the techniques which give a sign post ,not detailed maps to become a good language teacher.it helps teachers with more detailed help and advice .To check teachers language awareness ,presenting a practical knowledge ,ideas and activities teachers need for teaching all aspects English language.

2.9 Language for communication

The past two decades of research and instructional theory in the area of children's second language development have witnessed a great shift in teachers' conceptualization about developing pupils' new language and supporting this development by teachers .Fortunately ,the recent work in first and second language development theory and the numerous instructional programs that have been implemented in relation to it have also yielded many teaching insights which can be applied for language learning as follows:-

A.The limited ability of pupils to epress themselvesby using English language is cregarded one of the main problems that face learners. Fluency is most of the time absent after studying English in schools and colleges.Thus, ,learners cannot communicate in English which lead to failure of students to get the expected level of proficiency in English.

B.The unhealthy conditions of teaching and learning English may be a reason of difficulty in language learning.Most of the categories which is regarded as important components of any education system are not presented effectively as (the standered number of students, teachers' qualifications, ,new trends in teaching and adopting recent teaching methods).

C. leasrners' need is considered one of the ecential matters for authors to write textbooks books teachers to do their jobs inside the classroom.Sometimes, learners have the desire to participate

in communicative activities in order to learn. Therefore, teachers responsibility is observeing learners' requirements and interests.

3.Conclusion

According to what has been discussed concerning language teaching and learning ,the study presents the following points:-

A.General aims

Changing the goals of teaching English focus on English as a means of communication, new oral and written techniques create positive atmosphere to pupils in participating in class activities

B.Textbooks

The new trends of language learning move towards the development of metacognitive awareness and making curriculum meaningful to pupils which focus on their strengths and build on their background knowledge.

C.Learners

Training learners in the use of effective strategies and helping learners to improve their language skills is considered one of, the basic roles of teachers to play an active role in developing pupils language skills, stimulating and maintaining pupils' strong interests in learning . Organizing around themes based on big questions can be suitable so that English learners can more easily develop academic languages.

D.Teachers

One of the basic role of teachers is to play an active role in developing pupils language skills , teachers have to use activities that help pupils use English for both social and academic purposes and work hard to use the time and effort scientifically inside the classroom.

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