

Evaluating Teaching English for Postgraduate Students at the College of Education from their Own Viewpoint

Shoaib Saeed Fahady
Lecture
College of Education

Wassan Adnan Rasheed
Assistant Lecturer
College of Basic Education

Abstract

The present study aims to evaluate teaching English for postgraduate students from their own point of view. It is restricted to postgraduate students (diploma and master) in the College of Education/ University of Mosul. They are (98) male and female students distributed among (10) scientific and humanity departments. A sample of (40) students has been chosen randomly from the population for this research. A questionnaire of (6) domains and (27) items has been prepared and used for the purpose of collecting data. These data have been analyzed statistically using Z test formula for one sample. The research concluded that there are weak points in most of the domains. However, there are good signs in some of them. In the light of the findings, some points have been recommended.

Significance of the Study:

Foreign language learners are growing in amazingly huge numbers, and English language (EL) users are likewise surging to as many as two billion or even more. Simultaneously, the functions of EL users are becoming surprisingly numerous that they are no longer restricted to a specific learner category. The interest in EL may also reflect the mounting increase in the uses of English for educational and scientific goals (Stevens, 1987: 56).

As a whole, the last twenty years have witnessed a really spectacular interest in EL learning. Equally significant to increase the interest in ELT are the recent explorations in ELT fields and methodology.

The recent approaches in ELT fields have rendered English “notoriously subject to fashion”. Furthermore, Robinson also refers to ESP as the “most prestigious fashion of recent years” (1980: 1).

The term ESP, which has been the subject of controversial arguments, has undergone some changes arising from its significant and manifold uses. Formerly, the term was adopted to mean English for special purpose. But methodologists now object to the existence of a special language, and they therefore concentrate on the principle of selection from language to meet the purpose defined by the course—organizers and institutions.

Robinson informs us that scholars and practitioners nowadays tend to use ESP to mean English for specific purposes because “English for special purposes is thought to suggest special language, i.e. restricted languages which for many people is only a small part of ESP whereas English for specific purposes focuses attention on the purposes of the learner and refers to the whole range of language resources (1980: 6).

It is self-evident that the first step in ELT is to specify the purpose for which a certain course or programme is designed. Such a specification will enable us to define what needs to be learnt. This is why such questions as “what is the language used for?” “what do students do with the language?” and “which textbook shall we teach them?” etc. are often brought into the foreground (Rivers, 1983: 25).

Unfortunately, the Iraqi institutions and methodologists have very rarely thought of the purpose for which they compel their graduate students to study English. There is no awareness of the objectives of studying English at this stage, and the relevant

departments do not have satisfactory answers to why their students should study English.

Besides the non-existence of a well-defined objective, ESP for postgraduate students in Iraq has proved ineffective due to the tendency among teachers to allow terminal needs and students quality to determine teaching procedures. Almost all postgraduate students (in both humanities and sciences departments) do not have textbooks because they are not available: they actually do not exist. It is true that the course book alone cannot secure a right and fruitful approach to achieve the principal goal, but the availability of such books enlightens the way for skillful methods and profitable devices to attain the essential aim of the task.

It is not fallacious to state here that the approaches adopted by the university teachers in ESP for postgraduate students are primarily concerned with the "language knowledge" not the "language use" (researchers own observations). This means that learning English is mistakenly based on using the language in the realistic situation. Most of the teaching procedures at postgraduate classes tend to describe sets of rules and usages in an entire conceptual vacuum. The peril of these procedures is that they orient students into thinking that the classroom is a place where right answers and book learning are essentially expected. It is also evident that even when some uses are taught, the teaching procedures now in progress are devoted to what David Wilkins views as "the process of reporting". The language of reporting means teaching a language that enables students to narrate events and not to perform a role (Wilkins, 1980: 5).

Essentially, Iraqi postgraduate students participate in English courses not because they have interested in English, but because they are obliged by the university regulations to pass the examination as a requirement of their graduate program. This

apparently means that they do not have an actual interest in learning English as a foreign language; therefore, they perceive the whole task as quite irrelevant to the field of their study. In addition, the students' reservations caused by the failure of past schooling and inadequate methods of teaching encourage the feelings that learning English at this stage is, in one way or another, purposeless, or even valueless. "This understanding, however, causes serious problems and creates important difficulties for their teachers because it may manifest uneasiness, confusion or even resistance in the requirements of classroom activities" . (Deckert, 1987: 17).

The Problem:

The recently-adopted approaches in ESP and the new techniques and theories in this field have made it sometimes difficult for Iraqi teachers to adopt a specific approach to enable students to cope with the language. Iraqi classrooms have been (sometimes formidably) made into fields where the validity of new theories is tested. Consequently, we are now familiar with a variety of methods in ELT. One of the fields that suffer from incongruities of these approaches is the teaching of English for postgraduate students.

The experience of ELT for postgraduate students has not yet been rightly evaluated. Studies in the field of ESP have been generally devoted to the teaching of English regardless of the educational level at which language is taught.

Furthermore, almost all students in ESP fields tend to concentrate on the teaching of English for students who need guidance and an economical use of English to pursue a course of academic study. But nothing has been done in respect to ESP for postgraduate students due to the fact that the approach to the task of teaching are essentially alike, and the purpose is no doubt identical.

This research is primarily concerned with the assessment of the present situation and the suggestions that may pave the way for further investigations.

Aim of the Research:

The present research evaluates teaching English for postgraduate students at the College of Education / University of Mosul from their point of view.

Limits of the Research:

The current research is limited to postgraduate students at the College of Education (Humanity and Scientific Departments) for the academic year 2007–2008.

Definition of Terms:

1. Teaching: It has been defined as follow:

- A process of interaction between a teacher and a student in a classroom or a laboratory (Brumfit, 1985: 107).
- A social process of transporting knowledge, values and experiences from the sender namely "a teacher" to the receiver namely "a student" (Hills, 1985: 297).
- A planned procedure followed by a teacher in dealing with students to facilitate learning (Sa'eed, 1990: 11).
- Operational Definition:

The researchers define teaching as "group of activities and practices done by English teacher to interact with students and fulfill the educational aims of teaching English to postgraduate students in the College of Education and as it is mentioned in the questionnaire.

2. Postgraduate Students:

It has been defined operationally as "a university academic stage following the bachelor degree. This stage includes diploma, master and doctoral degrees. Students in this stage study academic and scientific subjects concerning their field of study. They also have to present a thesis or dissertation concerning their degree and field of study.

Literature Review:

The following are some of the related studies which have been carried out in the same field of the current research:

1. Al-Bagoa (2000):

This study aimed at analysing the verbal interaction in teaching English , that occurred between teachers and students, for the second class in the intermediate schools by using Flanders` System. The sample includes (16) classes chosen randomly from the population. The researchers depended on direct observation to collect data. The result show that the percentage of teachers` instant responses and instant teachers` questions was higher than the standard percentages. While the percentages of pupils` initiation and pupils` steady state were lower than the standard percentages. The findings also showed that there are differences in the patterns of class interaction, concerning gender, in the percentages of pupils` talk, silence and disorders. (Al-Bagoa, 2000)

2. Al-Janabi (2001):

This research went about evaluating teaching Arabic Grammar in the secondary schools in Mosul for the academic year (2000-2001) . Population of the research included (79) teachers, (26) of them have been chosen randomly as a sample. An observational forum had been set by the researcher including (41) items distributed among four aspects. After analysing the collected

data statistically, the findings showed high and low standard of teachers (male and female). There was also no significant statistical difference between teachers concerning their gender in the whole aspects.

(Al-Janabi, 2001)

3. Abdul Fatah (2004):

This research aimed at evaluating styles of teaching English in the preparatory schools in the city of Mosul for the academic year (2001-2002). The population consisted of (57) male and female English language teachers, (16) of them have been chosen randomly as a sample. Tuckman`s tool had been adapted to evaluate styles of teaching English. After analysing the collected data statistically, the researcher indicated positive (high) standard teaching styles concerning the adapted tool. (Abdul Fatah, 2004)

4. Kubaysee and etal. (2008):

This research investigated the standard of (Arabic, Kurdish, and English) language teacher`s performance concerning principles of active teaching at the institutes of preparing teachers from their students own point of view. The sample includes (100) students in the academic year (2007-2008). A questionnaire of (47) items distributed among five aspects had been prepared and adapted by the researchers for the purpose of this study. After analysing the data statistically, the findings indicated that teachers of (Arabic, Kurdish, and English) languages have good ability to teach their subjects actively from their students` point of view.

(Kubaysee and etal., 2008)

Procedures:

The present research has been performed according to the following procedures:

- The Population:

The population included all postgraduate students (higher diploma and master) in the College of Education/ University of Mosul for the academic year 2007–2008 who studied English. They were (98) postgraduate students distributed among ten departments.

- The Sample:

A sample of (40) postgraduate students has been randomly chosen from the population; (14) students from the scientific departments and (26) students from the humanities departments. The sample represented (40%) of the population.

- Instrumentation:

The researchers prepared a questionnaire of (27) items distributed among (6) fields of evaluating the teaching of English language. The validity of the prescribed tool has been fulfilled by presenting it to a jury of specialists in measurement and evaluation and linguistics (Appendix). The reliability has been also computed using re-test method. The correlated coefficient was (76.4%). Hence the questionnaire was fit to evaluate the teaching of English from postgraduate students view.

The questionnaire has been given to the definite sample on December 2007. The collected responses have been substituted by numbers concerning the alternatives given within the questionnaire (always =3, sometimes =2, rarely =1), for the purpose of statistical analysis. The collected data has been treated statistically using ratio means and percentage formula and Z test for one sample (Ferguson, 1981: 266).

Results:

To evaluate teaching of English and know its standard, a ratio means and percentages score have been computed for each item in the questionnaire. Then the computed percentage has been tested with the instrument's norm (66.66) using Z test formula for

one sample. The Z computed value for each item has been compared with the tabulated one (1.96) to test the statistical significant.

Table 1 describes the statistical results of the questionnaire being used. It is clear that there are some significant items and another non-significant. This will be illustrated concerning domains and items.

Table 1: Ration means, percentages and Z computed values

No	Domains and Items	Ratio Means	Percentage (%)	Z computed values
	First–The Subject Matter			
1.	The teacher presents new and novel knowledge.	2.475	82.5	2.636
2.	The teacher gives enough references to enrich knowledge.	2.05	68.33	0.228
3.	The teacher gives multi practices related to the subject.	2.25	75	1.218
4.	The teacher presents a lesson which enrich and develop my potentials to solve problems.	2.175	72.5	0.827
	Second–Class Administration			
1.	The teacher determine the curriculum activities (reports, research plan, translation etc.).	2.55	85	3.248
2.	The teacher attends the lecture at the time.	2.5	83.33	2.828
3.	The teacher completes the syllabus as a whole.	2.55	85	3.248

No	Domains and Items	Ratio Means	Percentage (%)	Z computed values
4.	The teacher invests the whole lecture in teaching.	2.325	77.5	1.641
	Third-Subject Presentation and Illustration			
1.	The teacher gives regular and clear preface.	2.525	84.16	3.031
2.	The teacher illustrates the subject in a regular way.	2.475	82.5	2.636
3.	The teacher presents his subject in a clear way.	2.475	82.5	2.636
4.	The teacher stirs up my interest in the subject.	2.225	74.16	1.083
5.	The teacher practice right methods in presenting the subject (lecture, debate, inquiry, etc.)	2.35	78.33	1.791
	Fourth – Class Interaction			
1.	The teacher encourage students part in illustrating the lesson.	2.375	79.16	1.946
2.	The teacher accepts opinion and thoughts concerning his subject.	2.3	76.66	1.495
3.	The teacher encourages my progress in the lesson.	3.325	77.5	1.641
4.	The teacher admires his students.	2.6	86.66	3.72
5.	The teacher accepts inquiries and answer them.	2.175	72.5	0.827
	Fifth – Testing			
1.	The teacher evaluates answers	2.4	80	2.109

No	Domains and Items	Ratio Means	Percentage (%)	Z computed values
	logically.			
2.	Test prevails the whole syllabus.	2.275	75.83	1.354
3.	The teacher corrects tests in time.	2.3	76.66	1.495
4.	The teacher gives enough test in a course.	2.1	70	0.561
5.	The teacher distributes marks among questions regularly.	2.2	73.33	0.953
6.	The teacher uses different questions (open question, closed questions, subjective questions, etc.).	2.3	76.66	1.495
	Sixth – Homework:			
1.	The teacher asks me to read other references to enrich knowledge.	2.425	80.83	2.276
2.	The teacher asks me to prepare some research plans, reports and abstracts related to the subject.	2.025	67.5	0.113
3.	The teacher follows up my homework.	2.375	79.16	1.946

Z tabulated value = 1.96

From the findings in Table (1), we can conclude the following:

First domain: concerning the subject matter presents by the teacher to postgraduate students, table (1) declares three non-significant items in comparison with the tabulated value. This means that those teachers are careless and doesn't have any interest in re-new the syllabus and enrich their knowledge using novel

references. This may be attributes to their misunderstanding of the syllabus demands for each department and each academic specialization which they teach. However, there is a good sign in the first item about presenting few novel information and knowledge to the students.

Second domain: it is clear from table (1) that there are three significant items in class administration. This means that there is an interest in this domain. English teachers determine the activities, attend lectures at the time, and work hard to finish the syllabus in a course. But there is a sign that they do not invests the whole lesson in teaching English. This may related to the first domain that they do not have a clear thought about the subject demanded to each academic specialization.

Third domain: concerning presenting and illustrating the lecture, it is obvious that those teachers interested in illustrating their lecture. There are three significant items in this domain. Those teachers take care in giving a clear preface for their lesson. They present their lecture in logical and regular way. But they don't care of stir up students' interest and they do not use different methods in their lessons.

Fourth domain: concerning class interaction. It is clear form the findings sitted in table 1 that the interaction between the teacher and students is low. There are four non-significant items in this domain. This may be attributed to the low linguistic competence of students in English. This interaction is important between the teacher and his students specially in teaching foreign language (English). The communicative competence in English built through interacting talks and thoughts between the two sides (the teacher and the student, and students themselves). There is a good sign in the fourth item for the benefit of teachers as they admires their students.

Fifth domain: It is clear from table 1 that there are five non-significant items in this domain in term that they obtained Z computed value less than the tabulated one . This means that there is a weak point in carrying out tests.

This also means that these teachers have no experience in testing. Their tests are in need of prevalence. There is no logical distribution of marks upon questions. There is no differentiation in questions. Therefore, there is a good sign for the benefit of those teachers in the first item as they correct the answers logically.

Sixth domain: There are two non-significant items in this domain (see table 1). This declares a weak point in assigning homework and they do not ask their students to prepare some reports or translate an essay in their specialization. They also do not follow up their students' homework. This may be attributed to what has been mentioned in the first domain that they do not have a clear sight of the subject and the students they teach. Therefore, there is a good sing of asking students to read more references and enrich his competence in English.

Conclusions:

It is clear from the findings sitted above that there is a weak in most of the domains such as the subject matter, class interaction, tests and assigning homework. However, there is a good sign in class administration and lecturers illustration and presentation.

It is fair to admit that the presentation of ESP for postgraduate students in the College of Education is not promising, because it widely departs from the ever-expected standard required by the course. This "departure" from the central objectives is caused by the failure of both college and teachers to fulfill the aim for which an English language course is organized.

Recommendations:

To bridge the "gap" between the present situation and the prospective one, it is thought profitable to take into consideration the following recommendations:

1. The cornerstone for the success of the whole task of teaching English at postgraduate classes is to precisely define the objectives of such a course—without a well-identified objective the task is performed in a vacuum.
2. It is essential that the university authorities reconsider some of the regulations concerning the EL course at postgraduate classes. There must be a serious regulation that not only demands a pass result, but also ensures a satisfactory level of EL competence. Admittedly, this level of competence could be fulfilled by enrolling the postgraduate students who will be admitted to postgraduate students on intensive preessional courses (in summer). The items, topics and length of these preessional courses may be determined in the light of the defined objectives.
3. It is equally significant to enroll the teachers themselves on some in-service training programs in the field of ELT, TEFL and ESP. Staff members who plan to teach English at postgraduate classes of different fields should also be given chances to acquaint themselves with the basic concepts of sciences and technology to help them overcome the crisis of confidence. Some intensive courses in methodology are equally recommendable because such courses explore the most recent approaches in ELT and ESP.
4. It is highly recommended that close attention should be paid to the inseparable links between the previous English language schooling and the designed courses. It is quite

expected that reservations to use English are caused by failure at previous schooling.

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Jury of Experts

No	Academic Status	Name	Specialization
1.	Prof.	Dr. Abas Jawda	Phonetics
2.	Assist. Prof.	Dr. Abdul Razak Yaseen	Methods of Teachings
3.	Assist. Prof.	Dr. Inas Younis	Methods of Teachings
4.	Assist. Prof.	Dr. Usama Hamid	Measurement
5.	Assist. Prof.	Dr. Wadallah Ahmed	Applied Linguistics
6.	Lecturer	Mawlood Ahmed	Applied Linguistics
7.	Lecturer	Ahmed Basheer	Applied Linguistics

تقويم تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية لطلبة الدراسات العليا في كلية التربية من وجهة نظر الطلبة

م. شعيب سعيد الفهادي
كلية التربية

م. م. وسن عدنان رشيد
كلية التربية الأساسية

الملخص

هدف البحث الحالي إلى تقييم تدريس اللغة الانكليزية لطلبة الدراسات العليا من وجهة نظرهم. وقد تحدد البحث بطلبة الدراسات العليا (الدبلوم والماجستير) في كلية التربية/جامعة الموصل. وقد بلغ عدد الطلبة (٩٨) طالب وطالبة موزعين على عشرة أقسام علمية وإنسانية. وقد اختيرت عينة منهم بلغت (٤٠) طالب وطالبة لغرض البحث. اعد استبيان مكون من ستة مجالات و(٢٧) فقرة واستخدم لغرض جمع البيانات. وقد تم تحليل البيانات إحصائياً باستخدام معادلة Z لعينة واحدة. وقد خلص البحث إلى وجود ضعف في معظم مجالات الاستبيان مع وجود مؤشرات جيدة في بعض الجوانب بما يخص التدريسيين. وفي ضوء النتائج تم تقديم عدد من المقترحات.