

Identifying the Factors that Impede Pupils' Learning of English at Primary Schools

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Abstract: The present study searches on the factors that have a negative impact on learning English at primary schools as well as on the solutions for this problem. Social factor, teacher efficiency, school management and curriculum are the main areas of learning at the primary school. Curriculum represents the corner stone of learning process. It (Rafidain English course) has been published in 2002, the aim is that the pupil can understand, respond and produce English in oral and written forms. The sample of this study consists of eighty teachers. A questionnaire. is sent to the sample. The results of this study indicated that the social factors and teacher efficiency have a negative effect on learning ,whereas the school management and curriculum design play an active role. On the basis of these results, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made

1. Statement of the problem

Primary education in most countries is considered the basic stage for the development of human resources. It aims to enable the pupils to achieve basic literacy and numeracy as well as establishing foundation in science, geography, history, language and other social subjects. It is better here to say that this stage constitutes the ability of organized scientific and logical thinking (The Center of Primary education, 2001:1).

Language learning seeks to help the learners to acquire the ability to communicate with others in a foreign language Bavaro (1989:33).

Language learning is mainly depended on some areas : social factors ,teacher efficiency ,curriculum and school management . Under the heading of each area, there are many factors may play a negative role in the learning process .

To the best of the researcher's knowledge no investigation has been conducted in an attempt to study the factors that impede learning of English at the primary schools. Therefore, this study is needed to fill this gap of information. The present study is an attempt to achieve deep knowledge about the factors of pupils' learning obstruction at the primary schools on one hand and to determine the solutions of this problem in other hand.

1.1 Aims of the study

The study aims at:

1. identifying the factors that impede pupils' learning of English at the primary schools, and
2. finding out some solutions and suggestions which reduce the impact of these factors at primary schools.

In order to achieve these aims, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1-What are the factors that impede pupil's learning?

2-How could we reduce the impact of these factors in learning English language.

1.2 .Limits of the study

This study is limited to the investigation of the factors that impede pupils' learning at the primary schools of Missan Governorate in the year 2009-2010.

2. Primary Education.

Primary or elementary education is the first stage of formal, structural education that occurs during childhood. Primary education generally begins when children are six years of age. The major goals of primary education are achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all students. The relative priority of various areas, and the methods used to teach them are areas of considerable political debate Artikel (2005:1).

2. 1 Objectives of Teaching English Language at the Primary Schools:

The objectives of language teaching at primary stage and other stages of education are varied; Al-Mutawa and Kailani (1989:5) state the objectives of teaching English language as follows:

1-The behavioral objectives are defined by the English syllabus for each stage of learning. They are classified in relation to the cognitive ,effective and psychomotor domain.
2. The reception skills (listening and reading) and the productive skills (speaking and writing) are specified and graded according to these taxonomics or classifications. It is started clearly what performance from the pupils at the end of each school year regarding each area of learning.

The objective of teaching English language at the primary school as cited by the" Rafidain English course" for fifth stage Darwesh & etal(2002:7),

Concerning listening, reading and writing ,the general goals are :

A-listening and speaking:

1-recognize and produce the basic elements of the English sound system.

2-recite the names of the English alphabet.

3-respond to spoken commands and requests.

4-use limited material in simple statements and questions.

B-reading:

1- identify and name the letters of the English in their print script forms both small and capital.

2-associate letters with sound.

3-read the words phrase and sentences.

C-writing:

1-write the letters of the English alphabet in their small and capital forms.

2-copy words and very simple material.

3-write simple words and sentences.

4-write very simple paragraph using dialogues and familiar material.

3.Population and Sample Selection

The total number of the involved sample is ninety-eight primary school teachers. This sample has been selected randomly from its original population whose the total number is 118 teachers .The sample is distributed as follows: Two of the teachers are excluded because they are abroad in a scholarship of study. Sixteen of the teachers are reserved for the purpose of obtaining test reliability .After excluding the sixteen teachers, the total subjects is eighty teachers (forty male and forty female)

3.1 Construction of the Questionnaire

The first thing to be made is the selection of the study instrument . The researcher has constructed a questionnaire which includes thirty items distributed among four major

areas : social factors, teacher efficiency, curriculum design and school management, The questionnaire is used to collect the required data which have been treated statistically as follows: each item which is assigned “high” takes (2) , each item which is assigned “Fair” takes (1) and each item which is assigned “Bad” takes (zero).

See table (1).

Table (1)

The Constructed Questionnaire with its Area and items

	Item Content	high	Fair	Bad
Social factors	1-low general intelligence.			
	2- health disorders.			
	3- students absence during lesson period.			
	4- students’ poverty.			
	5-decreasing the cultural level of family.			
	6-dislike of teacher.			
	7- lack of guidance inside the family.			
	8-dis agreement of environmental school.			
Teacher Efficiency	9-preparing daily lesson plan.			
	10- involving all pupils in the lesson.			

	11-suitability of the time for English lesson.			
	12- joining the lesson with some facts.			
	13-communicating with pupils inside classroom.			
	14-asking the students to do their homework.			
	15- selecting suitable audio-visual aids.			
	16-testing the pupils as much as possible.			
Curriculum Design	17-suitability of curriculum to the daily, weekly and monthly lesson plan.			
	18- all the syllabuses are arranged in difficult way.			
	19- each unit has few exercises.			
	20- the syllabuses don't serve the aims of learning.			
	21- decrease number of language activities of English lesson.			
	22- disagreement between the syllabus of the lesson and its period..			
School management	23-incorporation of two classes into one class.			

	24-decrease the number of teachers.			
	25-lack of visual aids.			
	26-placing the English lesson at the end of the day.			
	27- pupils skip their lessons,			
	28-disagrement between the total number of pupils and the size of class.			
	29-availability of English book.			
	30-punshement of pupils’ absence.			

3.2 Pilot Study:

Sixteen teachers of English at primary schools in the City of Missan are chosen randomly in order to find out the appropriateness of the questionnaire items to the field of this study. The following four areas are specified as the most important ones; social factor, teacher efficiency ,

curriculum design and school management. As a result of this pilot study, a few modifications are made to the questionnaire items.

3.3 Questionnaire Validity:

An instrument validity is a reflection of how well it measures what is designed to measure Bergman(981:150).Validity of a test is “the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else” Heaton(1988:159).Face validity is achieved by exposing the test to a jury of specialists in the fields of EFL. In the light of the juror’s comments and suggestions, some items are dropped out, and others are rewritten.

3.4 Reliability:

Gronlund (1981:199) states that reliability is an important characteristic of evaluating results. Brown (1987:221) regards reliability as" the careful specification of analytical scoring instrument that can increase scorer's reliability".

In order to check the reliability of the adopted questionnaire ,a sample of sixteen teachers is chosen from the original population of this study. Data obtained by the researcher himself and another observer have been statistically correlated to each other by using person correlation coefficient .The correlation coefficient is 0.85 which is considered a high degree of reliability.

3.5 Administration of the questionnaire:

After the questionnaire has gained its validity and reliability qualification, it has been applied to the selected sample which consists of eighty teachers on the 6th, January 2010. The researcher applies two technicians to compute the respondent’s marks on each item included in the adopted questionnaire. Therefore he has distributed the questionnaire to the sample so as to compute the social factors, curriculum design and the efficiency of schools management .Then he

has observed the teachers inside their classes in order to compute the teachers efficiency in English language. Later on the questionnaires are collected to be calculated.

3. 6 The Statistical Tools:

The following statistical means have been used to achieve the aim of this study:

1-Percentage

2-Pearson Correlation Coefficient:

$$R=\frac{N \sum XY-(\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N\sum X^2-(\sum X)^2][N\sum Y^2-(\sum Y)^2]}}$$

3-Weighted Mean(Fisher formula).

$$X W=\frac{N1x1+N2x2+N3x3+----}{N1+N2+N3+-----} \qquad \qquad \qquad (Fisher,1955:237)$$

4. Analysis of Data:

At the end of this study and in order to realize its aims , the collected data have been analysed statistically after the administration of the questionnaire to the sample of this study.

4.1 Social factors :

It is clear from table (2) that social factors have negative effect on learning English language at the primary school in general, since the average weighted mean of this area is 1.04 which is less than the theoretical weighted mean (2).The ranking order in table (1) is distributed as follows : items 2,3,1,4,5,6 and 7 have the weighted means 0.97, 0.95, 0.93 0.91, 0.9 ,0.84 and 0.80, respectively, These items are related to "health disorder", "student absence during lesson period" "low general intelligence", "students' poverty",

“dislike of teacher”, “decreasing the cultural level of family”, and “lack of guidance inside the family”. only , item 8 takes the weighted mean 2.1 which is higher than the theoretical mean this item is related to “disagreement of environmental school”.

Table (2)
The Ranking Order and the Weighted Means of the Items
Related to Social factors

Item No.	Item Rank	Item Content	Weighted Means
8	1	disagreement of environmental school.	2.1
2	2	health disorders.	0.97
3	3	students absence during lesson period.	0.95
1	4	low general intelligence.	0.93
4	5	students’ poverty.	0.91
6	6	dislike of teacher.	0.9
5	7	decreasing the cultural level of family.	0.84
7	8	lack of guidance inside the family.	0.80
Average			1.04

4-2 Teacher Efficiency:

It is obvious from table (3) that primary school teachers are less efficient in this area. This thing is concluded from the fact that the average weighted mean is 1.39 which is less than the theoretical mean which means (2) nevertheless, those teachers are efficient in the items 9, 14 and 16 which mean” preparing daily lesson plan”, “asking the students to do their homework” and “testing the pupils as much as possible”, respectively. See table (3).

Table (3)

The Ranking Order and the Weighted Means of the Items
Related to Teacher efficiency.

Item No.	Item Rank	Item Content	Weighted Means
9	1	preparing daily lesson plan.	2.9
14	2	asking the pupils to do their homework.	2.7
16	3	testing the pupils as much as possible.	2
12	4	joining the lesson with some facts.	0.93
11	5	suitability of the time for English lesson.	0.75
10	6	involving all the pupils in the lesson.	0.72
15	7	selecting suitable audio-visual aids.	0.69
13	8	communicating with pupils inside the classroom.	0.50
Average			1.39

4-3 Curriculum Design :

This area has an active role on learning pupils at the primary school in general, this finding is manifested in table (4) where the average weighted mean is (2.11)which is higher than theoretical (2). The ranking order of these items is distributed as follows :items 17, 22 have the weighted means 3.6 and 2.99.Whereas items 19, 20, 18 and 21 have the weighted means 1.9, 1.7, 1.5 and 1, respectively .These items have the weighted means which are less than the theoretical mean. i.e(2).

Table (4)

The Ranking Order and the Weighted Means of the Items Related to Curriculum Design

Item No.	Item Rank	Item Content	Weighted Means
17	1	suitability of curriculum to the daily, weekly and monthly lesson plan.	3.6
22	2	disagreement between the syllabus of the lesson and its period.	2.99
19	3	each unit has few exercises.	1.9
20	4	the syllabuses don't serve the aims of learning.	1.7
18	5	all the syllabuses are arranged in difficult way.	1.5
21	6	decrease number of language activities of English lesson.	1
Average			2.11

4-4 School management :

Table (5)shows that the role of school management is active in general, since the average weighted mean of this area is 2.02.The ranking order in this table is distributed as follow: items 29, 30 , 26 and 25 have the weighted means 3.7, 2.9, 2.8 and 2.2 ,respectively. These items are related to" availability of English book", " punishment of pupils' absence" , " Placing the English lesson at the end of the day" and "lack of visual aids" these items have an active effect on learning . Whereas items 24, 23, 27and 28 take the weighted means 1.5, 1.2, 1 and 0.88 these items are related to" Decrease the number of teachers. ", " incorporation of two classes into one class"," pupils skip their lessons" and "disagreement between the total number of pupils and the size of class. These items are less effect on learning. See table (5)

Table (5)

The Ranking Order and the Weighted Means of the Items Related to School Management

Item No.	Item Rank	Item Content	Weighted Means
29	1	availability of English book.	3.7
30	2	punishment of pupils’ absence.	2.9
26	3	Placing the English lesson at the end of the day.	2.8
25	4	lack of visual aids.	2.2
24	5	Decrease the number of teachers.	1.5

23	6	Incorporation of two classes into one class.	1.2
27	7	Pupils skip their lessons.	1
28	8	Disagreement between the total number of pupils and the size of class.	0.88
Average			2.02

4.5 Conclusions

1- Social factors have negative effect on learning English language at the primary school.

2-The achievement of the teachers in this study is unsuitable and, this will have a negative effect on the learners at the primary school.

3- Curriculum is designed in an acceptable way which suits the aim of learning at the primary schools in Iraq.

4-School management plays an active role in the process of learning at the primary school.

4.6 Recommendations

1- There is an urgent need to make some programmes by the national governorate .These programs will develop the social factors especially the economical level of the learners' families . This will be reflected in developing the learners achievement at the primary schools.

2-It is necessary to develop the pre-service programmes for developing the teaching efficiency of teachers of English at the primary education .

3-School management represents the corner stone of learning at primary school, therefore it is necessary to evaluate the achievement of school management every year.

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