

Evaluating the teachers' performance in teaching English language at the primary stage

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1- Introduction

The art of language learning and teaching is considered one of the important tasks in language learning. Many approaches and methods are used in language learning. Developing the foreign language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) is considered one of the main aims of foreign language learning in Iraq at the primary stage.

There is a lot of attention towards investigating the suitable techniques in language learning. The eclectic method and the communicative approach are adopted in order to fulfill the objectives of language learning in Iraq.

Teachers always incorporate features of different approaches in their particular methodology.

Teachers feel that various techniques can be used to overcome the problems associated with the theoretical approaches in order to increase their professional competence. In the light of the above, the present study will evaluate the teaching techniques used by teachers of English inside the classroom at the primary stage.

The Problem of the Study :

Most of the English language teachers tend to be eclectic in their teaching. Due to the importance of English as a foreign language, it is found necessary to investigate what techniques Iraqi teachers use in teaching English language at the primary

stage. These techniques are considered the main instrument in teaching/learning this language.

Teachers can tackle many of the problems related to the learner, the text and the material by using effective teaching techniques. The research carried out so far to discover and identify the real factors and principles behind the performance of the trainees in TEFL at the primary stage. The problem of this study is best expressed in this question "How is English language taught at primary stage?"

1-2 Significance of the Study :

The significance of this study can be explained by the following points :

1. exploring what is really going on inside the classroom.
2. giving an idea about the official recommended techniques in teaching English language at the primary stage.
3. identifying the favorable techniques that are used in language teaching at the primary stage.

1-3 Aims of the Study

This study aims at :

1. identifying the techniques used in teaching English at primary stage.
2. evaluating the teachers' performance on the basis of certain techniques.

1-4 Limits of Study

1. the sample of this study is limited to the teachers of English for the sixth class at Baquba centre during the academic year 2009- 2010.
- 2.the study is limited to teaching English language at the primary stage.

2-Theoretical Backgrounds

2-1 Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the Primary Stage :

Al-khafaji and el-shayib (1997:36) state that there are three basic steps for the teaching of the language activities. These steps will be explained in detail as follows:

A- Presentation :

It includes the following steps :

1. reading the material once / twice without explanation.
2. explaining the material "work book idioms" as well as expressions.
3. emphasizing on the pronunciation of difficult words or expressions.
4. using teaching aids as necessary.

B- Imitation (Practice)

1. using choral and individual repetition for learning and mastering the language .
2. dividing sentences into parts if it is too long and dividing the large number of pupils into groups.

C- Production

1-production can be done by various forms like substitution drills, transformation drills, asking questions and answering them and doing some homework exercises or writing in class or at home. (Ibid:37)

2-2 Communicative Approach and Eclectic Method:

2-2-1 The Communicative Approach :

Al-Hamash and Younis (1985 : 86) state that one of the central ideas in the communicative approach is the distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence. The first is associated with usage and the second is associated with use and discourse.

The aim of a language course is to develop communicative competence as well as linguistic competence. The second being subsidiary to the first, thus, the course should concentrate on the

functional-notional categories of language rather than on grammatical categories. In the process of training to inculcate a notion or a language function a variety of grammar patterns may be introduced. (Ibid:87).

2-2-1-1 The Main Principles of the Communicative Approach

Richards and Rodgers (2001:96) mention the main principles of the communicative approach as follows:

1. building a relationship with and among students is very important.
2. language is for communication.
3. any new learning experience can be threatening. When students have an idea of what will happen in each activity, they often feel more secure.
4. the teacher should be sensitive to students' limitations.
5. students feel more secure when they know the limits of an activity.
6. the students' native language is used to make the meaning clear.

2-2-2 The Eclectic Method

El-shayib et al (1993:22) maintain that eclecticism is a type of methodology that makes use of the different language teaching approaches instead of sticking to one standard approach. Not all pupils, respond to a teaching situation in the same way. So teachers may try something else-other techniques from other approaches for example, since every approach has something positive about it.

Al-Mutawa and Kailani (1989:27) point out that experienced teachers are very sensitive to the limitations of different methods, so they reject the weak points of each approach and retain only those aspects that are applicable in the particular teaching situation in which they find themselves.

3- Procedures:

The procedures that are followed to carry out the aims of the study as follows :

3-1 The Population :

This refers to any set of items , individuals, ect. which share some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken . (Richards et al , 1992:282).

So the population of the study includes (86) teachers of English for the sixth class at Baquba centre during the academic year 2010.

3-2 The Sample :

This refers to any group of individuals which is selected to represent a population (Ibid:321).

The sample of the study includes (40) teachers of English for the sixth class at Baquba centre during the academic year 2010.

3-3 the questionnaire :

A checklist is built and developed through constructing a closed questionnaire contained the desired techniques of teaching English at the primary stage. The questionnaire contained (38) items distributed among (4) stages of language teaching inside the classroom; presentation, practice (imitation), production and evaluation.

The items of the questionnaire have been collected on the bases of related literature which deals with teaching techniques of English at the primary stages, then exposed to a jury of specialists in teaching English as a foreign language. (See Appendix1).

Each member in the jury has been kindly requested to modify, change or add what he/she finds suitable to the checklist.

3-4 Face Validity of the Questionnaire :

Face validity refers, not to what the test actually measures , but to what appears to be superficially measuring. Face validity pertains to whether the test "look valid" to the examinee, who takes it, the administrative personnel who decide on its use, and other technically untrained observers (Harris, 1969:21; Anastasi, 1976:139) .

According to the suggestions of the experts of the jury members (Table 1), some items have been modified and (8) items

are excluded. Thus the remaining items are (30) which constitute the final version of the checklist .

Table 1

The jury members (names are arranged alphabetically)

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amthal Mohammad Abas (Assit. Prof) College of Education/ University of Diyala. 2. Ashwaq Nsaef Jasim (Instructor) College of Education/ University of Diyala. 3. Izat Suhaeel Najeem (Instructor) College of Basic Education/ University of Diyala. 4. Khalil Ismail Rijia(Assit. Prof) College of Education/ University of Diyala. 5. Muslim Mahdy Jasim (Assit. Prof) College of Basic Education/ University of Diyala. 6. Nizar Hussein Waly (Instructor) College of Basic Education/ University of Diyala. 7. Sarab Khadeer Mukeer (Instructor) College of Basic Education/ University of Diyala. 8. Zainab Abas Jwad(Instructor) College of Education/ University of Diyala. |
|---|

3-5 The checklist

The checklist developed in the present study is built on the basis of tentative questionnaire submitted to the jury members.

The final version of checklist contained (30) techniques supposed to be used by teachers of English at the primary stage. The checklist has a (four- point scale) ranging from "always" to "never", (See Appendix 2).

3-6 The Administration of the Checklist :

The final application of the checklist started on march /2010 and ended on May /2010 . All the teachers are observed for getting the maximum use of the classroom techniques of teaching English at the primary stage. All the techniques used are recorded and compared with the techniques written in the checklist.

3-7 the statistical means :

The present study used the following statistical mean:

Percentage of using the teaching techniques by the teachers of the sample.

4 – conclusions :

After checking the percentages for the techniques used by the teachers in teaching inside the classroom, certain points come out as follows:- (See Appendix 2)

A- the techniques that are used by all the teachers are the following :

1. explaining the material "workbook idioms" as well as expression.
2. using choral repetition for learning and mastering.
3. using individual repetition for learning and mastering.
4. asking more than one pupil to read from the material.
5. announcing the correct answer orally.
6. giving time to pupils to write down what is written on the board.

B- the techniques that are no longer used by teachers are the following:-

1. using the pupils' native language wherever necessary.
2. using the key word method to teach content word.
3. answering pupils' questions concerning the other aspects of language.
4. asking pupils to read silently for few minutes.
5. encouraging pupils to correct their classmates error orally.
6. asking pupils to write miss-spelled words in their correct forms three to five times each.
7. discussing common mistakes with pupils.

8. showing the pupils cards with words or phrases and asking them to write down these words or phrases.
9. discussing individual answers to the questions of the material.
10. giving short quizzes (a- oral , b- written).

C- The other techniques that are mentioned in appendix(2) as suggested teaching techniques are used in different levels among teachers.

The researcher declare that teachers may give more a lot attention to the variety of using teaching techniques that make the lesson more attractive. They can avoid limiting themselves with certain technique and try to create new techniques to reach their goals.

Flexibility in using the teaching techniques makes the lesson more active and gives better understanding for the material taught.

Finally, most of the suggested techniques are used by teachers in teaching English language at the primary stage

Appendix1

Questionnaire submitted to the jury members

Dear, Sir. The researcher intends to conduct a survey study entitled "Evaluating the teacher's performance in teaching English at the primary stage ". the instrument of the study is a checklist containing the expected techniques that may be used in teaching English at the primary stage.

As a specialist in the field of teaching English as a foreign language , please read the items of the questionnaire and kindly state if they are suitable as techniques for teaching at the primary stage or not. Any addition or modification will be highly regarded .

Thank you
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No.	Items	suitable	unsuitable	Suggestions or modifications
A	Presentation			
1	Writing the title of the lesson on the board			
2	Listening to a model a: teacher b: tape recorder			
3	Reading the material once , twice without explanation			
4	Explaining the material "workbook idioms " as well as expressions			
5	Giving additional examples to illustrate difficult expressions			
6	Explaining the material by linking its events with the pupil's life experience and knowledge			
7	Explaining the meaning of new language items			
8	Emphasizing on the pronunciation of difficult words or expressions			
9	Using teaching aids as necessary			
10	Keeping the use of the learner's native language to an absolute minimum			
11	Using the key word method to teach content word			
12	Asking pupils questions about the material of the lesson			
13	Being sure that pupils have recognized and understood the material presented before moving to the next step .			
B	Imitation " practice"			
14	Using choral repetition for learning and mastering			
15	Using individual repetition for			

	learning and mastering			
16	Helping pupils to formulate their answers a: oral b: written			
17	Motivating pupils to ask questions about the material			
18	Answering pupils questions concerning the other aspects of language			
C	Production			
19	Answering part of each exercise as example before assign it as homework			
20	Giving clear and simple instructions about homework assignment			
21	Asking pupils to read silently for few minutes			
22	Asking more then one pupil to read form the material			
23	Calling the more able learners before the weaker ones to participate in class activities			
24	Encouraging pupils to correct their classmates errors orally			
25	Announcing the correct answer orally			
26	Writing the model answers on the blackboard by pupils or the teacher			
27	Encouraging pupils to find their oral errors			
28	Giving time to pupils to write down what is written on the board			
29	Summarizing the material orally			
30	Asking his pupils to spell some words			

31	Asking pupils to write miss-spelled words in their correct forms three to five times each			
32	Discussing common mistakes with pupils			
32	Showing the pupils cards with words or phrases and asking them to write down these words or phrases			
34	Holding up pictures or objects and asking the pupils to write the names of these things			
35	Asking a pupil to perform a certain action "opening the door , for example ", and the pupils have to write what their classmate doing			
D	Evaluation			
36	Discussing individual answers to the questions of the material			
37	Correcting pupil's errors a- oral errors b- written errors			
38	Giving short quizzes a- oral b- written			

Appendix 2

No.	Items	Always		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
A	Presentation								
1	Writing the title of the lesson on the board	30	75	8	20	1	2.5	1	2.5
2	Reading the material once , twice without explanation	25	62.5	15	37.5	0	0	0	0
3	Explaining the material "workbook idioms " as well as expressions	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Giving additional examples to illustrate difficult expressions	23	57.5	10	25	7	17.5	0	0
5	Emphasizing on the pronunciation of difficult words or expressions	20	50	12	30	0	0	8	20

6	Using teaching aids as necessary	26	65	7	17.5	4	10	3	7.5
7	Using the pupils' native language wherever necessary	11	27.5	8	20	8	20	13	32.5
8	Using the key word method to teach content word	13	32.5	12	30	8	20	7	17.5
9	Asking pupils questions about the material of the lesson	26	65	7	17.5	6	15	1	2.5
10	Being sure that pupils have recognized and understood the material presented before moving to the next step.	30	75	5	12.5	3	7.5	2	5
B	Imitation Practice								
11	Using choral repetition for learning and mastering	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Using individual repetition for learning and mastering	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Helping pupils to formulate their answers a: oral b: written	33	82.5	4	10	3	7.5	0	0
14	Motivating pupils to ask questions about the material	20	50	7	17.5	5	12.5	8	20

15	Answering pupils' questions concerning the other aspects of language	15	37.5	14	35	7	17.5	4	10
C	Production								
16	Answering part of each exercise as example before assign it as homework	33	82.5	4	10	2	5	1	2.5
17	Asking pupils to read silently for few minutes	12	30	0	0	0	0	28	70
18	Asking more then one pupil to read form the material	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Calling the more able learners before the weaker ones to participate in class activities	32	80	4	10	3	7.5	1	2.5
20	Encouraging pupils to correct their classmates errors orally	16	40	6	15	0	0	18	45
21	Announcing the correct answer orally	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	Writing the model answers on the blackboard by pupils or the teacher	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0
23	Giving time to pupils to write down what is written on the board	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

24	Asking pupils to spell some words	34	85	3	7.5	0	0	3	7.5
25	Asking pupils to write miss-spelled words in their correct forms three to five times each	15	37.5	13	32.5	8	20	4	10
26	Discussing common mistakes with pupils	13	32.5	17	42.5	6	15	4	10
27	Showing the pupils cards with words or phrases and asking them to write down these words or phrases	12	30	10	25	0	0	18	45
D	Evaluating								
28	Discussing individual answers to the questions of the material	15	37.5	10	25	5	12.5	10	25
29	Correcting pupil's errors a- oral errors b- written errors	34	85	6	15	0	0	0	0
30	Giving short quizzes a- oral b- written	18	45	0	0	5	12.5	17	42.5

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