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## **Pedagogical Barriers of Teaching English Language at Kurdish Schools**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This case study sheds the light on the pedagogical barriers that English language teachers encounter during the process of teaching English language; in addition to the most effective methods of teaching English language in middle schools in Erbil. The researchers investigate the obstacles that English language teachers face in the process of teaching English language along with the methods that are implemented by the English language teachers. For testing the hypothesis, a close-ended questionnaire was given to 20 English language teachers in middle schools in Erbil. The questionnaire aims at finding the barriers that English language teachers encounter, in addition to the most used method for teaching English language in the middle schools. The findings of the study illustrate that English language teachers experience serious problems in the process of teaching English language that prevent them from implementing the most effective teaching methods.

## **1. Introduction**

Teaching methods are a set of assumptions that are used to define ideas, principles, and beliefs about the nature of the learning process and the learners. Teaching methods can be divided into learner-centered and teacher-centered methods. Teacher-centered methods are guided, individualistic, disciplinal, and



teacher-denominated. Meanwhile, learner-cantered approaches are direct, collaborative, integrated, constructivist, and interactive (bhatti, 2017) . According to (Schmidt, 2010) methods are an overall plan for the systematic presentation of a lesson based on selected approaches and teaching methods tend to follow a set of procedures with different implementation depend on the type of learners and classroom subjects (Mezel, 2021). Thus, these two aspects are considered essential for determining the effectiveness of teaching methods. Moreover, (Bhatti & Bajwa., 2017)believe that, the decision to use a particular teaching method, approach and technique are mainly a result of the need to improve and to enhance students’ academic performance (Al-Sulaimaan & Ahmed, 2017). As a consequence, these methods, approaches and techniques are used to make the foreign language learning process clearer, more encouraging, and motivational to the students to participate more in the learning activities.

## **2. The Problem of the Study**

Methods of teaching English language in general vary from the traditional one to the most recent ones. However, applying the up-to-date- methods can be an ideal way of teaching English language, but teachers hit the reality, especially in public schools where the equipment and facilities are limited. Here are the main problems of the study:

1. Teachers are not able to execute the up-to-date methods of teaching English language in their classes.
2. Many Pedagogical barriers prevent teachers from following the most recent effective methods of teaching English language in Kurdish public and private schools.

## **3. The Aims of the Study**

This study aims to determine the effective methods of teaching English language that are generally used by the teachers in Kurdish middle schools and the difficulties that they face in the process of delivering the teaching material.

#### **4. The Objective of the Study**

The present study aims to achieve the objectives:

1. To find out the barriers of methods in teaching English language at middle schools in Erbil.
2. To find out the effective methods in teaching English language without barriers at middle schools in Erbil.

#### **5. The Hypotheses of the Study**

The study hypotheses are as the following:

1. The level of barriers of methods in teaching English language at middle schools in Erbil are average.
2. 2-The level of effective methods in teaching English language without barriers at middle schools in Erbil are average.

#### **6. Literature Review**

Various studies examine the use and implementation of different teaching methods in different academic situations like EFL, ESL, mathematics, et cetera. Such methods affect the comparability of the obtained findings. Another study by (Hikmat, 2019) uses interviews conducted on English teachers at Kabul Education University to analyze “The Effects of English Teaching Methods Course of the English on Secondary School English Teachers.” It is established that English teaching methods are not always evenly and smoothly used to teach students and require additional out-of-class methods to support and boost their effectiveness. This aligns with propositions suggesting that teaching methods like grammar-translation, task-based learning, etc., are not always effective enough to enhance students’ academic performance. Thus, out-of-class teaching methods were recommended as an effective way of enhancing the implemented use of English language teaching methods which is represented by a study of (Intarapanich, 2013) under the title of “Teaching Methods, Approaches and Strategies Found in EFL Classrooms” to determine specific methods effectively applied to teach EFL students in LAO DPR. The study used a combination of interview information collected from five English language teachers and observations to determine the best teaching methods to teach Vientiane Municipality students. It was revealed



that the total physical response, grammar translation method, and communicative language teaching methods were the most desirable teaching methods used to teach foreign language courses (Al-Sulaimaan & Khoshaba, 2017). The study highlighted that using these methods to teach primary school students narrows down their scope and effectiveness compared to secondary schools. Thus, using such methods to teach secondary school students is viewed as capable of enhancing their communication skills. This study explicitly draws ideas from related EFL empirical studies to enhance understanding of the subject matter.

A study by (Bhatti & Bajwa., 2017) in their study under the title of “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Teaching Methods Used for GCE and SSC Levels,” which argued the effectiveness of teaching methods varies significantly. Observations sheets were used to collect information from sixty students, and the findings provided support the activity-based method, direct method, and grammar-translation method being the most powerful and effective language teaching methods. However, the study acknowledges differences in implementation effectiveness of teaching methods citing that this is caused by differences in the environmental context in which they are applied (Muhammed & Goran, 2019). Hence, this shows that different teaching methods have different effects on EFL students depending on the context and other circumstances under consideration.

Another study by (Short, 2018) on the “Effects of Teaching Methods on Achievement of English Language Learners” highlights that each teaching method has specific effects distinct from other teaching methods. As such, the study uses the Kruskal-Wallis test to examine how teaching methods affect students’ achievements. The study results showed a combination of in-class teaching methods like the grammar-translation method, direct method, and communicative language teaching have a significant positive effect on English students’ achievements compared to the out-of-class teaching methods. This is similar to a relative study conducted to address similar issues (Hikmat, 2019). However, teachers were recommended to use both in and out-of-class teaching methods to boost students’ achievements.

Besides, (Yang & Lin, 2019) conducted a study entitled "Challenges and Adaptations in Implementing an English-Medium, Medical Program: a Case Study in China" to



represent the existence of challenges affecting the use and effectiveness of teaching methods. Their study used surveys and student focus groups to collect information from English language students. The data were analyzed using SPSS, and the findings showed that students' graduation scores were not significantly different from students who use the English language as a medium of instruction and those who do not. However, students' perceptions were a significant challenge limiting the effective use of teaching methods in English language courses. These findings show the importance of identifying challenges affecting the effectiveness of teaching methods in English language learning.

## **7. Methodology**

To test the hypothesis, data were collected through a close-ended questionnaire of 5 variables and 10 items designed on the Likert scales and the value of the range starts from 1 to 3. The scoring of the study arranged as follow: 1= yes, 2 = sometimes, 3 = no. The questionnaire is designed in a way that covers all the objectives of the study starting from the most effective methods of teaching English language at middle schools; besides the pedagogical barriers that English language teachers face when they teach English language to middle school students. For that reason, a sample of 20 lecturers, who are specialized in teaching English language at middle schools, was selected randomly. Regarding the method, descriptive method is followed as the study deals with both numerical and theoretical data. Moreover, the reliability and the validity of the data were checked. Concerning the data analysis, data were collected and analyzed through the (SPSS) program.

## **8. Findings**

The findings of this paper analyze the effective methods for teaching English language along with, the pedagogical barriers of methods in teaching English language at middle schools in Erbil.

**Table (1). Students read texts and translate them from English into Kurdish and vice versa. It is more important for my students to read and write than to listen and speak. Besides, I write down the rules of grammar on the board for my students and make them to memorize the new vocabularies from the book.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	4	20	2.05	2.207731629
Sometimes	11	55		
No	5	25		
Total	20	100		

Table (1). Represents whether English language teachers in middle schools apply grammar translation method (GTM) for teaching English language. The table shows that 20% of the teachers apply grammar translation method while 25% of them do not find it suitable to be applied. On the other hand, 55% of English teachers sometimes find it necessary to apply the grammar translation method for teaching English language. Furthermore, the mean of item (1) is 2.05 which indicate to the fact that Grammar translation method is sometimes implemented by English language teachers for teaching English language.

**Table (2) Students are not allowed to use the Kurdish and they should learn to think in English. My students read aloud and I focus on pronunciation and writing more. I teach grammar through examples not through rules. I act as a director and I make sure to correct students’ grammatical and pronunciation mistakes by giving them choices. Most of the time students’ feelings are ignored.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	11	55	1.6	2.402630138
Sometimes	6	30		
No	3	15		
Total	20	100		

(2) Table Illustrates if English language teachers follow direct method (DM) for teaching English language. 55% of English language teachers believe in direct method and apply the method in classroom. On contrary, 15% of teachers believe that direct method is not an appropriate method to be followed. Moreover, 30% of English

language teachers believe that it is sometimes essential to follow direct method. Thus, the mean of item (2) is 1.6 which indicate to the fact that direct method is sometimes implemented by English language teachers for teaching English language.

**Table (3) using English language through actions, pictures, realia. My students repeat the dialogs and memorize it. In most cases, I emphasize positive reinforcement, which leads to correct habits. I teach grammar through examples not through rules. I pay attention more to listening and speaking than reading and writing.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	10	50	1.55	2.587495233
Sometimes	9	45		
No	1	5		
Total	20	100		

Table (3) Tries to find out if English language teacher applies audio lingual method (ALM) for teaching English language. Basically, % 50 of English language teachers apply audio lingual method for teaching English language. Also, 45% of teachers find it important to apply audio lingual method sometimes. While, only 5% of English language teachers do not find audio lingual method an appropriate method to be followed. Moreover, the mean of item (3) is 1.55 which shows that audio lingual method is sometimes implemented by English language teachers for teaching English language.

**Table (4) forcing my students to figure out all kinds of things on their own. Mostly I use gesture to teach the language, so my students react and help each other if they have questions and follow self- correction while I keep silent. I don't give any homework to my students. All the four skills are practiced in my class, first oral skills then the written ones.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	9	45	1.85	2.029616246
Sometimes	5	25		
No	6	30		
Total	20	100		

Table

(4)

Focuses if English language teachers implement the silent method for teaching English language. Generally, 45% of English language teachers find the silent way to be very useful. While 30% of English language teachers find the silent way hard to be applied. On the other hand, 25% of English language teachers believe that silent method can be sometimes useful for some students. As a consequence, the mean of item (4) is 1.85 which indicate to the fact that silent way can have some advantages sometimes for teaching English language.

**Table (5) focusing on the process of interaction and communication among my students for that reason, I give tasks to my students so that they can exchange information and interact with each other and help each other with the tasks. Some tasks are given in groups and each given a part of the information to complete.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	10	50	1.6	2.424436994
Sometimes	8	40		
No	2	10		
Total	20	100		

Table (5) Introduces whether the task-based approach is appropriate to be implemented for teaching English language. The table shows that 50% of the English language teachers apply the task-based method for teaching English language. 40% of English language teachers sometimes find the task-based method useful to be

followed. While. Only 10% of English language teacher do not believe in implementing the task-based method for teaching English language. The mean of the item (5) is 1.6 which illustrates that task-based method is sometimes implemented for teaching English language.

**Table (6) teaching English as an instrument for classroom communication so that students have a chance to express their ideas and opinions. Moreover, students negotiate meaning through games sometimes. Besides, I pay attention to the language forms and I remind my students about the roles. I act as a facilitator and adviser while my students are active communicators. From the very beginning, My students work on all the four skills. When my students make mistakes, I follow teacher correction, Self- correction and also peer correction.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	15	75	1.35	3.157843201
Sometimes	3	15		
No	2	10		
Total	20	100		

Table (6) Represents whether English language teachers apply communicative language teaching method (communicative language teaching) . The data shows that 75% of English language teachers implement communicative language teaching for teaching English language. while, 10% of English language teachers do not implement communicative language teaching. On the other hand, 15% of the teachers find communicative language teaching to be useful sometimes to be applied. As a consequence, the mean of the item (6) is 1.35 which indicates to the fact that communicative language teaching is implemented by English language teachers.

**Table (7) following the most suitable method for teaching English language is challenging due to the lack of equipment in my class.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	5	25	2.3	2.12590538
Sometimes	4	20		
No	11	55		
Total	20	100		

Table (7) Concentrate on the lack of equipment in the class as a barrier that prevents teachers to implement the best suited method by for teaching English language. For that reason, 25% of the teachers find out that not having any equipment prevents them from applying the suitable method for teaching English language. On the hand, 20% of English language teachers admitted that without equipment it will be very challenging to teach English sometimes. While, 55% of English language teachers consider not having any equipment not a problem. Hence, the mean for item (7) is 2.3 which shed the light on the fact that sometimes equipment is needed for teaching English language.

**Table (8) following the most suitable method for teaching English language is hard due to weak background of my students in English language.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	9	45	1.95	2.14485308
Sometimes	3	15		
No	8	40		
Total	20	100		

Table (8) Shed the light on the weak background of students in English language. the data illustrates that 45% of the English language teachers believe that they cannot implement the best suited method for teaching English language due to the weak background of the students. On contrary, 40% of the English language teachers do

not find the weak background of the students as a barrier for not implementing the best suited methods for teaching English language. While, only 15% of the English language teachers sometimes find the weak background of the students in English language is a barrier for not following the best methods. As a consequence, the mean of the item (8) is 1.95 which shows that sometimes the weak background of the students in English language considers a barrier.

**Table (9) following the most suitable method for teaching English language hard to be applied due to great number of students in my class.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	5	25	2.45	2.733876176
Sometimes	1	5		
No	14	70		
Total	20	100		

Table (9) Demonstrates on the great number of the students in class as a barrier for not implementing the best suited methods for teaching English language. Only 25% of the teachers believed that having a great number of students in a class does not prevent teaching from applying the effective methods for teaching English language. While, 5% of the teachers sometimes find it a problem but not always. On the other hand, 70% of the English language teachers consider having a great number of the students in a class not a barrier for not implementing the best suited method for teaching English language. For that reason, the mean for the item ( 9) is 2.45 which indicate to the fact that sometimes having a great number in a class can be consider as a barrier for not implementing the best suited methods.

**Table (10) following the most suitable method for teaching English language is challenging due to the shortage of time.**

Category	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	5	25	2.05	1.954852263
Sometimes	9	45		
No	6	30		
Total	20	100		

Table (10) Clarifies the shortage of time as a barrier for applying the appropriate method for teaching English language. the data reveals that 25% of the English language teachers are unable to implement the most suited method for teaching English language. While, 45% of the English language teacher believe that sometimes in some cases the shortage of time can be a barrier. Furthermore, 30% of the English language teachers do not consider the shortage of time as a barrier. Thus, the mean of the item (10) is 2.05 which refers to the fact that sometimes the shortage of time is a barrier for implementing the best suited method for teaching English language.

### 9. Discussion and Results

Referring to the data, the English language teachers admit that not all the rules of grammar translation methods are applicable to be implemented for teaching English language, due to the fact that, in grammar translation method, mother tongue is allowed and it is a teacher- centered approach. Besides, speaking, listening along with pronunciation are ignored. Moreover, In the perspective of all the English language teachers not all the rules of direct methods are suitable to be applied as for the reason that, direct method is a teacher- centered approach and it emphasizes on speaking and listening more while written work and reading activities are ignored. Furthermore, it has been illustrated that only some rules of audio lingula method are implemented for teaching English language, as audio lingual method is only appropriate for weak students since it contains many repetitions. As well as, listening and speaking are the major focus in while reading and writing are neglected. Regarding the data, communicative language teaching (communicative language teaching) is the only method that has been approved and implemented by all the



English language teachers for teaching English language, due to the fact that, communicative language teaching works on all the four skills of language; reading, speaking, listening and writing (Khidhir & Abbas, 2020). For that reason, the method assists in enhancing students' levels in all the four skills of English Language. According to the data, the weak background of the students, the great number of students in a class, the shortage of time and the lack of necessary equipment inside the classes are considered as a barrier for English language teachers to implement a convenient method for teaching English language in middle schools.

## **10. Conclusion**

In summary, this paper argues the pedagogical barriers that English language teachers encounter in the process of teaching along with the most convenient methods for teaching English language in middle schools. As it has been shown that, all the methods of teaching in English language contain both weak and strong points. Therefore, the findings of the research illustrate that; the rules of grammar translation method, direct method, audio lingual method, the silent way and the task-based method are sometimes implemented by the English language teachers. The majority of the rules of communicative language teaching are applied by all the English language teachers in middle schools. The findings also exposed the fact that, the weak background of the students, the great number of students in a class, the shortage of time and the lack of necessary equipment can be an obstacle for the English language teachers to implement the most appropriate methods for teaching English language in middle schools. However, these obstacles can be tolerated and adapted in a way that full the needs and interest of the students, since the teachers' main job is to achieve the up-to-date methods of teaching along with the great revolutionary styles and methods of teaching any other topics. Here comes the role of the Ministry of Education which is responsible of graduating the new generation of the teachers and supervising its teachers who are already teaching in the schools.

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