

## The Pedagogical Orientation of Teaching and Learning English in Iraq: A Subject Review

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### Abstract

The present subject review concerns specific researchers' remarks about some educational issues. This involves fourteen studies about the curriculum, teaching methodologies and quality, and learning styles. The study aims at reviewing the pedagogical remarks of education, the consequences of these remarks and the possible tracks for solutions. The study is qualitative and traces the reviewed studies in data analysis to give an overview of the pedagogical orientation to point out critical issues and trends for reform. The study concludes that education needs to be supported and reinforced with guidance to involve a teacher, learner and curriculum reconciliation. The present subject review concerns specific researchers' remarks about some educational issues. This involves fourteen studies about the curriculum, teaching methodologies and quality and learning styles. The study aims at reviewing the pedagogical remarks of education, the consequences of these remarks and the possible tracks for solutions. The study concludes that education needs to be supported and reinforced with guidance to involve a teacher, learner and curriculum reconciliation.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical Orientation, Curriculum, Axial Poles

التوجه التربوي لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية وتعلمها في العراق: مراجعة موضوع

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### المستخلص

تتعلق مراجعة الموضوع الحالية بملاحظات باحثين محددين حول بعض القضايا التعليمية، ويتضمن ذلك أربع عشرة دراسة حول المناهج وطرق التدريس والجودة وأساليب التعلم، وتهدف الدراسة إلى مراجعة تلك الملاحظات التربوية للتعليم وعواقبها وتقديم الحلول المناسبة لها، الدراسة نوعية في توجهها وتتابع المراجعات المقالية في التحليل، كما انها تعطي نظرة عامة عن التوجه التعليمي و أبرز المعوقات و الحلول لتلك المعوقات، وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن التعليم يحتاج إلى تعزيز و دعم ارشادي للتوفيق بين المعلم والمتعلم والمناهج الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوجه التربوي، المنهج، الاقطاب المحورية

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### معلومات البحث

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### Introduction

Education is a sacred message which builds the mind and creates the soul of knowledge. This is a reciprocal responsibility among the teacher, the learner, the parent and the government. Even if the curriculum is not ideal to achieve learners' needs and interests, all participants should work together to consolidate the schooling corporation and follow the system designated by the curriculum.

Thus, we can have a sober system of education. In fact, the short of facilities is not a rationale to hinder education and progression in learning if efforts incorporate to raise the level of education. Though education is the message of life, for many learners, it has become a means to pass the examination or to get a promotion in a job. Education in this sense is divested of its noble

message. Education in Iraq suffered of the hard times and circumstances over four decades. Years of war, embargo, terrorism, strikes and political, economic and social crises; all led to educational regression in spite of the enterprise in the global artificial intelligence. The environmental circumstances have led to a set of issues on the joints of education. Teachers, learners and the curriculum of English may not be up to the modern modes of education over the world, which are encapsulated into connectivism and the use of technology in learning. Education in Iraq passed by a set of stages in methodology and approaches to teaching. The classical method was implemented in the grammar translation method and the direct method in the years which preceded the seventies of the last century. The next phase of teaching English was guided by Prof. Khalil Ibrahim Hamash, until the commencement of the present century, relying on the audio-lingual method.

The new era of our democratic country received a curriculum with a communicative approach, i.e., "Iraq Opportunities". This curriculum was received with enthusiasm because it presented a new mode for learning and cured the informative gaps in the former curricula. It takes into consideration learners' level and teachers' abilities and skills. This curriculum was ceased to the fourth preparatory classes and was substituted with the "English for Iraq" curriculum. Practically the last curriculum owes more to the audio-lingual method than to the communicative approach, simply because it focuses more on structure and the repetition of linguistic forms, as indicated in the reviewed studies, and with less interest on genre. The topics in the "Iraq opportunities" curriculum, as stated in Obaid's (2017) study, were more interesting for the students and gave a better

chance for communication. The quality of the curriculum affects the mode of teaching, but not more effective than the teacher's development or learning styles. A subject review of previous studies in pedagogy may delineate the educational issues and establish for reforms.

### **Methodology**

This subject review is a qualitative study that strives to touch upon the diverse perspectives of the evaluative orientations towards teaching and learning in regards to the current syllabus "English for Iraq" and in one point to "SunRise" (which is talked in Kurdistan of Iraq) in secondary schools. A set of studies (fourteen academic articles) about education in Iraq are reviewed for their remarks about teaching methodologies, learning styles and curriculum quality. The main pedagogical issues about teachers, learners and the curriculum are manifested, and the collected data are restricted to the axial points of education. The pedagogical issues derived from researchers' findings and concluding remarks focus on the three axial poles: the teacher, the learner and the curriculum in regard to the diverse teaching skills and activities. The remarks are distributed to these educational joints with their evaluative perspectives. The study owes to these remarks to give an evaluative feedback about the pedagogical orientation of teaching and learning in Iraq for the recent period and present time. In the following section is an analysis of some academic articles which tackle some educational issues which can reflect the pedagogical orientation of education, published between 2016 and 2025. This involves fourteen articles. The data analysis reflects the extent to which teaching supports the goals of the curriculum and fosters deeper understanding of learning styles, teaching strategies and curriculum

alignment, taken from the perspective of these studies.

### Date Analysis and Discussion

The data analysis manifests the researchers' remarks in regard to the components of the axial poles to involve the main teaching activities and skills (CAPS). Researchers' remarks are distributed to the CAPS and they are matched to the

evaluative impacts of the axial poles, ranging between insufficient (C) and weak (D), and respectively match their remarks. Each Article is given a number due to their sequence in the appendix, though they are arranged according to the year of publication. Table 1 manifests the CAPS in regard to the assigned remarks with their evaluative impacts derived from the reviewed studies.

**Table (1): CAPS in regard to researchers' remarks**

#	CAPS	Remarks #	Evaluative impacts	Total remarks
1	Use of English	1, 2	C, D	2
2	Teaching grammar	2	C	1
3	Reading	11	D	1
4	Writing	11	D	1
5	Speaking	11	D	1
6	Listening	1, 11	D, D	2
7	Pronunciation	5, 11	D, C	2
8	Teaching environment	1	D	1
9	Learners knowledge	1	C	1
10	Methods of teaching	1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 13	C, C, C, C, C, C	6
11	Text quality	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12	C, C, C, C, C, C	6
12	Style of learning	2, 11	C, D,	2
13	Staff development	1, 4, 11, 13	C, C, C, C	4
14	literature focus	14	D	1
	<b>Total remarks</b>		<b>31</b>	

On the light of the reviewed studies, researchers' remarks are higher in regard to the methods of teaching, text quality and staff development. This proposes that the central issues for remedial education should concentrate on the methods conducted by the teachers and the curriculum alignment to achieve its goals. The orientation of language teaching and learning, as indicated in the diverse studies, has not been advanced conspicuously on the level of the teacher or the

learner. This may be evident from the style of learning and teaching methodologies which prevail in the educational community. This reflects the gaps in the educational institution. As stated in some reviewed studies, more than ninety percent of the students in the sixth preparatory classes substitute their textbooks with alternative sketches (or handouts) adopted by teachers in the remedial courses. Homework has become a sort of figment because teachers present their sketches with

already done exercises and readymade writing passages. This prevalence has led the students to reject teachers' assignments for them to do homework or write passages. So, for a teacher to proceed, he has to come up with his students. Reading passages are attached with their Arabic translation and the grammatical notes are explained in Arabic, with ascriptions not always related to the English grammar. This is clear cut in the kind of the substitutive sketches which prevail to be the main text to teach students in all remedial courses and in most schools. Instead of language acquisition, learning processes have become for most learners just a picking up of linguistic forms. Teaching activities have taken different orientation. Reading activity does not exceed a pronunciation check. Listening activity is restricted to the aural test in mid-year and final examinations. Writing activity is substituted with readymade passages which students are supposed to memorize. This deviation from the designated orientation of the curriculum transferred education into an instructive means to pass the examination. That is why we see the retreat in the number of students who succeed for the first attempt in the final examinations.

For many teachers, the lesson has become a maneuver to assist student to pass the exam, and not a strategic construction to obtain knowledge, information and skills. Students, specifically the sixth preparatory students, believe that the public teaching is not sufficient for the learner to pass the final examination. Because it is propagated that the public schooling can only help students to learn, students abscond the schooling commitments and adhere to the remedial courses and the substitutive sketches. These sketches are preferable for students because they rule out the critical thinking as designated for in the curriculum. In regard to

teaching strategies of the syllabus, most students do not interact with the teacher or the curriculum. Therefore, teachers are forced to change their teaching strategies which are designated in the curriculum. Students accordingly are not required to do homework or check vocabulary meanings or practice language activities. This has led students to a kind of lethargy, relying on remedial courses in which the lessons are teacher centered and some of them follow the parroting style of instruction. As stated in the reviewed studies, students study English for more than ten years and less than fifty percent of them in the public schools can read and write in an appropriate way. More than eighty percent of the teachers (most of them in private schools) use substitutive sketches (handouts) in teaching the sixth preparatory.

Some teaching strategies do not pertain any modern teaching methodologies, specifically those recommended for the syllabus. They are just a kind of instruction and feeding information. In the grammar translation method for example, students are required to translate texts from the foreign language into the target language; nowadays, students can find reading texts and writing passages readymade in the sketches with word to word translation. All grammatical structures are detailed in Arabic. However, use of Arabic can facilitate difficulties, but it is more likely that Arabic has replaced the English realization of instruction. Notwithstanding, the teaching methodologies assigned for the curriculum in hand are not present in the classroom activities for most of the teachers. However, the main issue lies not only in the conducted methodologies of teaching and styles of learning, but in the accumulative gaps of the linguistic knowledge which learners inaugurate because of the prevailing modes of learning.

## Conclusions and Recommendation

### a. Conclusions

In the course of time, between 2016 and 2025, education does not manifest any advance on the level of teachers and learners. So, there is an urgent need to reinforce the educational system with censorship and advisory committees of experts who carry higher degrees. On the light of the reviewed studies, it is clear that education needs reforming on its diverse joints, specifically the methods of teaching conducted in the classroom, curriculum alignment and teachers' development.

Teachers should adhere to the assigned curriculum and its recommended methods of teaching. Mentoring may be conducted by teachers with higher degrees (Ph.D.), specifically those who work on studies about pedagogy and work on the educational institutions. Students need to be directed towards the appropriate styles of learning which lead to obtaining knowledge and developing skills. Substitutive sketches may be submitted to governmental censorship to coincide the goals of the curriculum.

### b. Recommendation

The educational triangle, the teacher, the learner and the curriculum should be involved in a reconciliation cycle. So, there is an urgent need to support the educational system. The pedagogical regime may constrain the teacher and the learner to the assigned curriculum and its recommended methodologies and procedures.

The mentioned remarks about education are points of view and it just needs incorporative efforts to follow the assigned curriculum, the appropriate methods of teaching and the appropriate learning styles. All participants burden the responsibility for that with consultation of experts who work

specifically in the educational institutions, and especially those who worked on pedagogical studies on the educational issues. Such experts are in more contact with teachers, and more acquainted with the educational axial components, procedures and methodologies.

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## Appendix

The following extracts are remarks of some educational issues taken focal points in the reviewed studies.

1- Nada Rashid Saeed and Fatima A. A. Jafar (2016)

There are the problems related to teachers themselves in terms of experiences, the overuse of the native language Arabic in the classrooms, and the concentration on teaching grammar at the expense of other skills. Second, there are the problems related to teaching-learning environment and the availability of resources in the public schools; the insecure situation in Iraq as a whole, large number of students in the classrooms, sound pollution, lack of rich libraries, resources, teaching aids, supporting materials and audio-visual teaching facilities. Some additional problems emerged related to the students' themselves such as their educational background in the primary level that does not enable them to continue to the intermediate level (p. 58).

2- Abbas Idan Obaid (2017)

1- Teaching in Iraq is not in an urgent need to be developed with new methods more than a need for reforming in the educational system and finding solutions to the teaching obstacles, such as those of using helping sketches prepared by unprofessional teachers, students' diverge from the syllabus, abolishing homework activities, and presenting oversimplified rules of grammar to be considered as bases for learning language. Without a quality control over such phenomena, the syllabus textbook will be only a secondary and optional choice for the students to learn.

2- The students (of preparatory classes) in general conduct a mode that may help them pass the exam rather than learning the English language.

3- Imitation and repetition, with a lot of tautology within the drills, prevail the general tone of the syllabus of EFI (p. 561).

3- Ibtisam Hussein Fayadh (2017):

a. The syllabus does not achieve the assumed national goals of education.

b. The presence of the local environment is not noticeable

c. The ideas of the textbook lack logic and organization.

d. The font size is almost smaller than normal.

e. The content is nearly not compatible with the student's culture and does not employ much knowledge about it.

f. There is no balance between controlled and free exercises of the textbook and these exercises lack gradation (p. 17).

4- Momen Yaseen M. Amin (2017):

"Lack of training courses for EFL teachers, and those courses which were provided by the Ministry of Education were not fruitful and could not encourage teachers for better teaching" (p. 580).

5- Nahida T. Majeed and Bekhal N. Hussein(2017):

(For the Fifth Preparatory SB) handling of pronunciation skill is not adequate as few exercises are devoted to the teaching of word stress, sentence stress and intonation. The accompanied CD is not available at most of schools. Students' performance is below the level of success at the achievement test (p. 71).

## 6- Hayder Al Hamdany (2018):

The syllabus is based on structural method of teaching, focusing on structure, rather than on meaning. It does "not teach students English communicatively". The way English is put in the textbooks designed for the tenth grade class of the secondary school in Nassiriya Iraq does not help teach the language in action, and consequently does not lead to teach language as a means of communication (pp. 180-81).

## 7- Ali Abdulridha Obaid and his followers (2019):

"Acculturation is not expected to take place with the use of these textbooks, and the materials are mostly introduced with culturally superficial themes" (p. 96).

## 8- Anfal Taha Yaseen (2020):

"There were not equal implication and balance distribution of the four language skills behaviour in the textbook units and lessons" (p. 1).

## 9- Mayamin Altae (2020):

"Although the new curriculum, which is currently in use was thought to be promising, it has so far fell short of achieving the purpose of its introduction and has not yet met the expectations desired" (p. 4).

## 10- Zahra Chafat Thajeel and Taif Abdulhussein Dakhil (2023):

"English programs in Iraq are ineffective in strengthening students' English-speaking ability. Learners' weaknesses can be attributed to a lack of exposure to the target language environment as well as a lack of motivation on their part" (p. 92).

## 11- Abbas Idan Obaid and his followers (2024):

- a. The recommended methodologies of teaching (the Communicative Approach and the Audio-lingual method) were not implemented in teaching English for the preparatory school student by most of the English teachers.
- b. Teaching reading skill is mostly substituted with pronunciation check. Other language skills are mostly absent from classroom activities.
- c. The substitutive sketches lack the pedagogical standards of quality and sobriety.
- d. All substitutive sketches are established on the grammar translation method.
- e. Teachers use the aforementioned (GT) method as a result of time constraints, excessive low levels of learners' background knowledge, and also for achieving learners' wishes as they (i.e. learners) almost pursue the shortest and easiest ways to pass the ministerial examinations.
- f. About sixty percent of teachers need to develop their teaching abilities and skills, and they need to be more acquainted with teaching methods and pedagogical methodologies (p. 46).

## 12- Najm Abdullah Burhan (2024)

The need for a change in curriculum to suit more learner-centered and classroom-centered language use that is balanced in use of the four skills is deemed pertinent– as is the need for professional development for the teacher to make improvements in approach to instruction. The need to replace outdated learning materials, timely assessment methods and adopted strategy of cooperative learning were highlighted to be of key significance to make students more attentive and productive (pp. 50-51).

## 13- Zainab A. Albayati and Muna M. Abbas Al-Khateeb (2024)

"Observations indicated a teacher-centered approach and traditional practices..... Traditional teaching methods still dominate, highlighting the need for comprehensive teacher training and professional development" (p. 527).

14- Arafat AbdAli Rakhees (2025):

Most (fourth preparatory) students find that integrating literature into English language classes is not helpful to their learning of language. They see that literature teaching has negatives more than positives in that the literary texts selected for studying are complex, ancient and contain more unfamiliar words. Besides, students are unaccustomed to many literary terms that usually used in literature which, in turn, makes literature learning monotonous (p. 9).