

Iraqi Learners' Problems in Communication of English Language: An English Teacher Perspective

Nadhim Obaid Hussein

Ph.D. in TESL, Ministry of Education, Iraq

E-mail: nadhimiraqi@yahoo.com

Abstract:

This current research deals with the problems of communication that Iraqi learners face in the classroom. The research focused on the most important elements of communication that teachers must follow. As well as, the research highlights the obstacles teachers encounter, focusing on solving their problems in the English language, the lack of basic elements of communication, including vocabulary, the four skills, and insufficient exposure to native speakers of the target language. The research confirmed the essential role of teachers in developing communicative competence, particularly the application of motivation and its attributes. The utilization of communication components to promote accurate learning and problem-solving among students.

Keywords: *Problems, Iraqi learners, elements of communication*

1. Introduction

As for English, it is one of the most important languages that began to be used as a basic language, and it has become an effective role in most European countries and the Arab world, it was introduced into the educational system as a source of teaching. That's why the Arab countries are studying the English language in many schools. In the Arab world, teaching English has become a priority in all universities and schools. Through teaching the English language, many teachers faced different problems, the majority of which have to do with the educational system and environmental concerns. Teachers deal with a variety of issues and challenges that contribute to the process's slowness and weakness. Arab learners' problems in communication have appeared clearly in recent years, especially in universities and schools. The reason is due to several things, including the lack of focus on the four skills. According to experimental studies adopted by, Abdel-Haqq (1982), Al Hosni (2014), Abbad (1988), and Cooper (2015), confirmed the problems faced by English language learners, especially Arab learners, due to their weaknesses in communication, including speaking and writing skills. For example, English language learners in Iraqi schools, they study English as a foreign language in their original country, where Arabic is their native tongue. The only way to acquire English is through formal education, that is, in classrooms with Arabic-speaking native instructors. Furthermore, learning English correctly through normal interaction in the target language is unlikely. This is only feasible when they converse with English language

native speakers and when they do so in locations where international visitors are present. So the English language is not used in most areas (Elttayef and Hussein, 2017). Most Iraqis speak, which is the language used everywhere. But there is a difference in other countries, for example, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, where the majority of people utilize English in their daily life since the population is multilingual and the language is widely spoken there. Iraqi English language learners encounter challenges while attempting to communicate in English in everyday settings.

Regarding the communicative problems faced by English language learners in Arab countries, there are different examples. In Syria and Jordan, for example, several empirical studies have been conducted on this topic, in social communication, learners commit mistakes during their English conversation (e.g., Abdel-Haqq, 1982; Zaghoul and Tamanian, 1984). Abdul Haq (1982) says, there are specific errors in the writing skills of secondary school students, and this refers to weakness in linguistic structures.

Regarding Iraq, before 2003, English was taught in schools from the fifth grade of primary school to the sixth grade of secondary school, approximately eight years before entering university. In the recent period after 2003, there was a change in the educational system. The English language is taught from the first grade of primary school to the sixth grade of Secondary School, approximately sixteen years before

entering university. Despite the change in the educational system in Iraq, learners still face problems, one of the most important problems is a weakness in communication.

In Iraq, there are specific matters in teaching English that include example activities at the secondary school. Here, Students need to be able to write English passages with proper grammar, comprehend it, and use a range of communication techniques. Linguistic notions are grounded in real-world experiences. As a result, it is required of all educated Iraqi high school graduates to have the grammar and language skills necessary to speak English fluently and freely on a variety of academic subjects (Elttayef and Hussei, 2017). The results of experimental studies conducted in Iraq have proven this conclusion The main goals set by the Ministry of Education in Iraq were ambitious in different ways, but have not yet been achieved. Hence, this study sheds light on these problems and tries to find some solutions to overcome such problems.

2. Iraq English Department Majors' Problems

Although the main role of English in Iraq, it is considered a compulsory subject in the educational system, there are still significant issues with teaching English from the first grade of primary school to the sixth grade of secondary school, particularly in the three intermediate phases (Elttayef and Hussei, 2017). Therefore, these problems affect students' communication in the English language.

Through my experience as a teacher of English in Iraqi and other educational schools, believe that graduates of the English language in Iraq, can speak Arabic fluently, which is their mother tongue, but they face difficulties in using English as a language of communication especially when they communicate in real situations, they often lack of elements of communication include vocabulary and a lack of four skills or language elements they need to convey their meaning (Hussein and Elttayef, 2016). As a result, they face problems keeping the reaction going for a long period.

In the same view, Suleiman (1983) added that one of the most important problems that learners suffer in communication at the university level is a weakness in their mastery of the four language skills; that is, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Also, Zaghoul (1987) confirmed the most important element of social communication is control of the four skills. Suleiman also pointed out the problem closest to the learners is the lack of communication and the lack of real application of the four skills in the classroom.

Faculty members confirmed in the evaluation of language proficiency of graduates of the University of Oman, Ibrahim (1983) found that the evaluation graduate students, were not completely satisfied with the quality of the English language. They are disappointed with the level of students because they lack communication in the English language. They have a certificate in the language, but they lack the process of communication between them.

The reason for the lack of communication among English language learners is attributed to, a lack of knowledge for part of school graduates when they enter university, in addition, changes in the new curricula that confused educational system, and the lack of detailed linguistic structure, and weakness in using the four skills within educational lessons (Zaghoul, 1983, 1987; Suleiman, 1983; Ibrahim, 1983; Maktash, 1983; Hussein and Elttayef, 2016).

As well as, Suleiman (1983) stated in his article that there is a change in the basics of the curricula that have confused education, due to the lack of basic standards in curriculum design, testing, and oral communication skills that develop conversation and oral communication, weakness in developing productive skills, failure to develop strategies that facilitate the process of education, etc.

There's another reason English majors' weakness in communication, is caused by a lack of exposure to the target language or English situations with native speakers. When native speakers are absent, there will be a weakness in pronunciation. As for students who are exposed to traveling or living with foreign speakers, they will have more communication and be able to speak in their original language (Zughoul, 1987).

Another problem that learners suffer from it, is the absence of motivation, hence, there should be used motivation in teaching English, which directly helps in developing the learners' skills. And empower them to communicate effectively. There are applied studies conducted such as (Ansari, 2012, Saleh, Rababah 2001, and

Hussein and Elttayef, 2016) indicated that it is necessary to use motivation in classroom activities to encourage learners to learn the English language effectively (Zaghoul, 1987). See figure (1) below, show "Iraq Learners' Problems in communication".

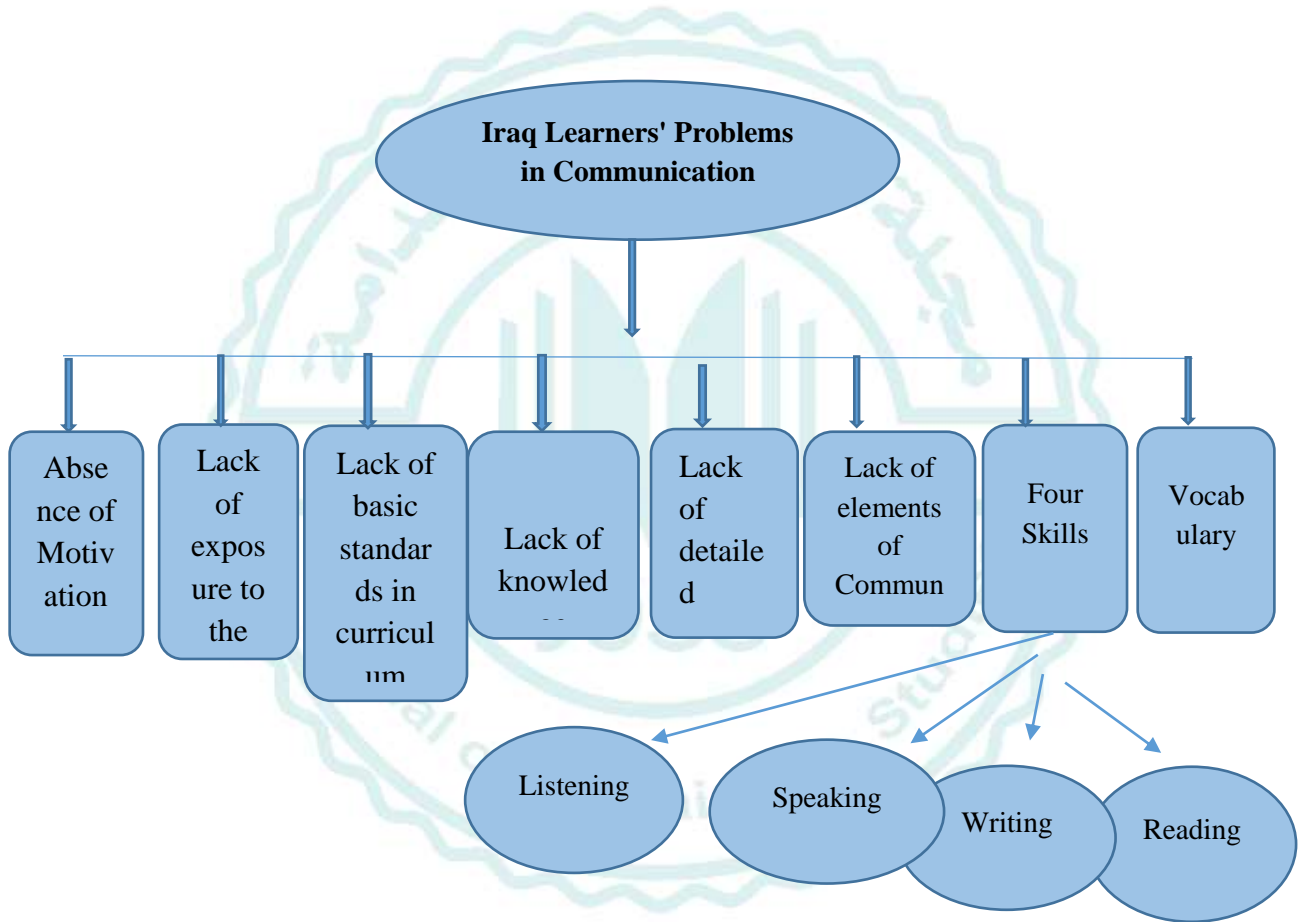


Figure (1): "Iraq Learners' Problems in communication".

3. What is Communication?

Communication: implies the act of exchanging thoughts, ideas, news, views, and any other information with another person or people, either verbally or non-verbally.

4. How the Communication Process Works?

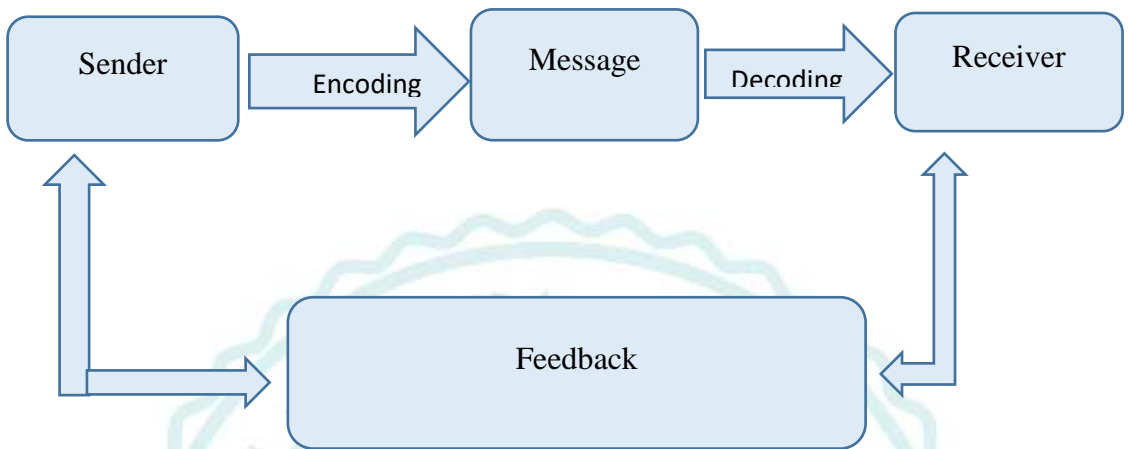


Figure (2): Communication Process

5. The Role of Teacher in Communication of English

Communication is an important part of the educational process, and communication cannot be effective unless the teacher's role is essential in developing communication by focusing on activities, tasks, drills, items, and creating the appropriate educational environment that helps learners develop their language skills perfectly. The teacher is also an evaluator because he accurately evaluates the learner's work to provide insight into how well they perform daily. At the same time, the teaching should be well-organized in a foreign language so that he can organize the communication process effectively. He focuses on the basics of communication that develop the learner's mind so that he can comprehend the lesson. Another role is the motivator, he pushes learners to listen to cognitive and behavioral objectives (Wang, 2010).

One of the most important elements of communication is motivation, which is an effective task for teachers to encourage and motivate learners to overcome all the obstacles they face while learning. As for education, it is not based solely on one direction. Other elements are necessary to advance the scientific reality to achieve success. In addition, to use the four skills correctly, the teacher must use communication skills that play a major role for students and create a friendly atmosphere among them. To greatly encourage learners to be more effective and be able to guide them through the learning process. (Kanaan, 2009).

Another essential element of communication is vocabulary, vocabulary is a very important element that the student needs them. In the Arab world, learners face many difficulties in learning English, especially in vocabulary, the learner complains among most of the students who study English. Because most students do not have enough details about their ideas and attitudes. They also have no opinion on how to use the instructions for correct advice. Teachers must focus on memorizing vocabulary and verbs in the past and their meaning in the sentences. (Adas and Bakir, 2013).

6. Conclusion

To conclude this research, Iraqi learners face many different problems in communication, which were explained in this study. These communication problems include the communication skills; reading, writing, listening, and speaking, especially when learners pronounce mispronunciations made during their production in oral

performance, and others are written, as shown in the Author's study (Brown, 2014). This study shed light on the most important problems and this is an indicator that indicates how serious problems are, especially in Iraq, and that this situation needs to be resolved and basic elements must be put in place to develop the educational process and raise the scientific level.

Through my experience as an English language teacher, and academic researcher in the field of teaching the English language, the researcher supports the idea of raising learners' awareness of communication and using the basic elements to develop education. We invite all teachers to provide learners with their communication strategies. As well as exposure to the target language, it is very important and helps them pronounce phrases correctly.

7. Recommendations to teachers

1. Teachers must focus on the basic elements of communication, such as vocabulary and the four skills, to develop the educational process.
2. Emphasis on the use of linguistic structures that help to develop effective communication, and encourage learners to develop their knowledge
3. Teachers should allow learners to be exposed to the target language through using means of communication and listening to the foreign speaker's language.

4. Emphasizing the motivation element, which is considered one of the basic elements to encourage learners to participate in the educational process.

References

Adas, D. & Bakir, A. (2013). Writing difficulties and new solutions: Blended Learning as an Approach to Improve Writing Abilities, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9) 254-266.

Abbad, Aziza. (1988). An Analysis of Communicative Competence Features in English Language Texts in Yemen Arab Republic. PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois at UrbanaChampaign

Abdul Haq, F. (1982). An Analysis of Syntactic Errors in the Composition of Jordanian Secondary Students. Unpublished MA Thesis. Jordan. Yarmouk University.

Al Hosni, S. (2014) Speaking Difficulties Encountered by Young EFL Learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2014, PP 22-30
Ansari, A. (2012). Teaching of English to Arab Students: Problems and Remedies. *Educational Research (ISSN: 2141-5161)* Vol. 3(6) pp. 519-524, June 2012.

Ansari, A. (2012). Teaching of English to Arab Students: Problems and Remedies. *Educational Research (ISSN: 2141-5161)* Vol. 3(6) pp. 519-524, June 2012.

Brown, H. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching*, 6th Edition, USA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Cooper, A. (2015). *Facilitating the Development of Basic Language Skills in the English as a Foreign Language Classroom*.

Elttayef, A and Hussein, N (2017) Arab Learners' Problems in Learning English Language: A Teacher Perspective, *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, ISSN 2422-8435 An International Peer-reviewed Journal, Vol.40.

Hussein, N. and Elttayef, A. (2016) The Impact of Utilizing Skype as a Social Tool Network Community on Developing English Major Students' Discourse Competence

in the English Language Syllables. Journal of Education and Practice Vol.7, No.11, 2016

Ibrahim, M. (1983). The role of English Departments in Arab Universities. In Dahiyat and Ibrahim (eds.), Papers from the First Conference on the Problems of Teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities. Amman: University of Jordan.

Kannan, R. (2009). Difficulties in learning English as a Second Language, ESP World, 8, 5 (26): 1-4.

Mukattash, L. (1983). The problem of difficulty in foreign language learning. In E. Dahiyat, and M. Ibrahim (eds.), Papers from the First Conference on the Problems of Teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities. Amman-Jordan: University of Jordan.

Rababah, G. (2001). An Investigation into the Strategic Competence of Arab Learners of English at Jordanian Universities. PhD Dissertation. University of Newcastle upon Tyne.UK.

Suleiman, S. (1983). Teaching English to Arab students at the university level. In E. Dahiyat, and M. Ibrahim (eds.), Papers from the First Conference on the Problems of Teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities. Amman-Jordan: University of Jordan.

Wang, T. (2010). Instructional strategies and teacher-student interaction in the classrooms of a Chinese immersion school, Ed.D. Dissertation, University of San Francisco, United States -- California. Retrieved April 7, from Dissertations & Theses.

Zughoul, M. and L. Taminian. (1984). The linguistic attitude of Arab university student.

Zughoul, M. (1987). Restructuring the English department in the Third World universities: Alternative approach for the teaching of English literature. IRAL. XXV/3: 221 236.