Assessment of English Language Learning Problems in Iran and their Solutions

Mahdiyeh Karimvand Sarab*, Fariba Nourani Arough

PhD Candidate, Department of English Language, Ataturk University, Erzurum, Turkey.

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: To create international communication and the emergence of the phenomenon of globalization, the need to create multi-lingual capabilities among people in society is felt more and more. Many sustainable development approaches are based on education. Hence, countries, especially developing countries, prioritize language teaching programs. Meanwhile, Iran is not an exception as a developing country. However, no significant progress has been achieved despite public and private investment in learning language. Therefore, the necessity of identifying negative factors in learner learning can lead to significant changes in this field. In this research, we identify these problems and evaluate the correlation of known factors with the random sample of size 1985 with an error of less than 0/03.

Keywords: Problems of Learning English, Educational Policy, Culture, Educational, Environment

INTRODUCTION

The effort to communicate with others in expressing thoughts, feelings and sharing individual knowledge leads people to learn the languages of other nations. So, in order to take advantage of this opportunity with goals such as education, acquiring jobs, business, etc., learning English is so much considered as an international language.

English as a language with high-level and high-impact domains is recognized by countries as one of the means of moving towards sustainable development. In recent years, many scholars like Bern (2010), Brinton (2014), James (1996), Llurda (2004), Liu (2005), Ozsevik (2010), Salihoğlu (2012), Sarıçoban (2012) and others, have focused their studies on the problem of teaching and learning English language. In Iran, English language learning has also been taken into consideration during these years. In fact, Iran has also worked as a developing country to empower manpower and promote internal and external social interaction, in order to publicize this training. The English Language Education in Iran was officially introduced in 1304 as the title of Association of Iranian-American Relations. After the Islamic Revolution and the dissolution of the Association, in 1358, English language teaching centers started to work, and their progress has continued so far. Therefore, andragogy and pedagogy have been developing in the field of English language education in Iran. Language teaching in Iran is taught based on the four skills of writing, speaking, reading and listening. As a result, many students have participated in these classes and courses so far, but their performance goes against expectations. Learners' effort is important but it is not enough in language learning. Language is the cradle of history and developments. In fact, language teaching requires a proper set-up and selection of

methods tailored to the target community (Alptekin, 2002; Babatunde, 2011; Çelik and Arikan, 2014; Harmer, 2007; Kavak and Baskan, 2009).

In other words, learning English in Iran with the view of learning a foreign language is vulnerable. In the case of the mother tongue, each person learns it due to the favorable environment and the great amount of exposure to the language (McKay, 2003; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Against, learning a second language requires conscious efforts to learn it and the exposure to the second language in most cases is limited (Bose, 2007, p.5). Many of the Iranian students have favored classroom instruction for second language acquisition, but they have not made much progress. Many factors effect on the process of learning English language as a second language, including attitude, motivation, self-confidence, family background, duration of exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, and availability of competent teachers. Also, the general classification of the range of learning problems is summarized in the classes: educational policy, culture, teaching and learning methods, sources and texts used and the educational environment. In this paper, attempts have been made to investigate the various factors affecting the learning of the English language with respect to the Iranian target community.
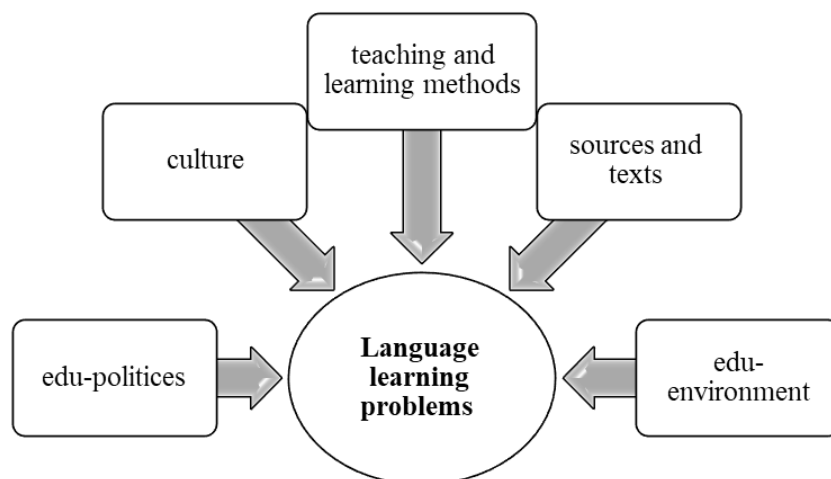

Figure 1: Classification of the range of learning problems

Preliminaries
Educational Policy

There is not much detail about how English was taught in Iran until the 1925s. Based on historical documents in the Institute for Contemporary History Studies of Iran (IICHS), prior to the aforementioned years, English language teaching was conducted selectively by Christian schools and some Jewish schools (very few). Since the year 1304, many methods have been used to teach and learn English. Educational policymakers in the post-revolutionary years paid more attention to teaching and learning English at school lessons as one of the courses studied in high school. Many attempts to teach language in public schools only focus on reading and writing skills. According to the comprehensive national education program in Iran (2005-2010), many schools are required to practice listening skills in English language lessons. But what has been achieved as a result of these efforts is a drop in the level of learning of students and learners, and along with that, people are welcoming private classes and schools to learn a language. In fact, school hours do not have the proper returns of the individual and the need for private classes is quite evident. In out-of-school educational environments, many educational policies focus on teaching and learning English-language factors, regardless of the cultural and religious nature of a wide range of communities. For example, Audio-lingual can be noted, or grammar translation method (GTM).

As a process, step by step to form the habit, the Audio-lingual methods approach language learning. It favors using speaking drills rather than written forms to effectively teach the language and extensive oral instruction is required in Audio-lingual classrooms where the target language is used (Ozsevik, 2010, p.7). Dialogues, repetition drills, replacement, rewriting sentences and retelling them, completion, combining sentences in spoken mode, moving parts of sentences, and restatement drills were used in the Audio-lingual method. This method requires a permanent learning environment and, in the absence of it, is in most cases a failure. Combining methods, as Direct Method and GTM, were developed as a new approach along with the process of optimization and collective and individual experience in learning the second language, since 1991 till now. The learners should be directly connected their meanings to the target language and try to avoid translating them into the native language as in GTM (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). So with this approach,

1. Vocabulary is taught in the long lists of isolated words.
2. Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are taught.
3. Grammar is taught as the rules for forming the sentences by putting the words together as the logical way, and instructions focus on the form of words.
4. Reading of Modern and classical texts is on the agenda.
5. Little attention is paid to the content of texts.
6. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Therefore, this hasn't helped students to become competent speakers of English. According to 2015 statistics, about 80 percent of public and private schools used language teaching methods to teach English. And in this way, learners also face problems with poor language skills (Report of the Education Organization of Iran, 2015).

Recently, some schools use the new method called CLT, which has been encountered in a short time by students. In fact, CLT is a method that Brown defines as follows:

"An eclectic blend of the contributions of previous methods into the best of what a teacher can provide in authentic uses of the second language in the classroom."

In this method, the main aims of language learning are to communicate rather than learning about the form of the language. So,

- Classroom goals are focused on the components of communicative competence.
- Structural aspects of the language are linked to the objectives of the training.
- Language techniques are focused on the authentic, functional use of language.
- Time is considered in the learning process, and learners try to save time.
- Fluency and accuracy are trained as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques.
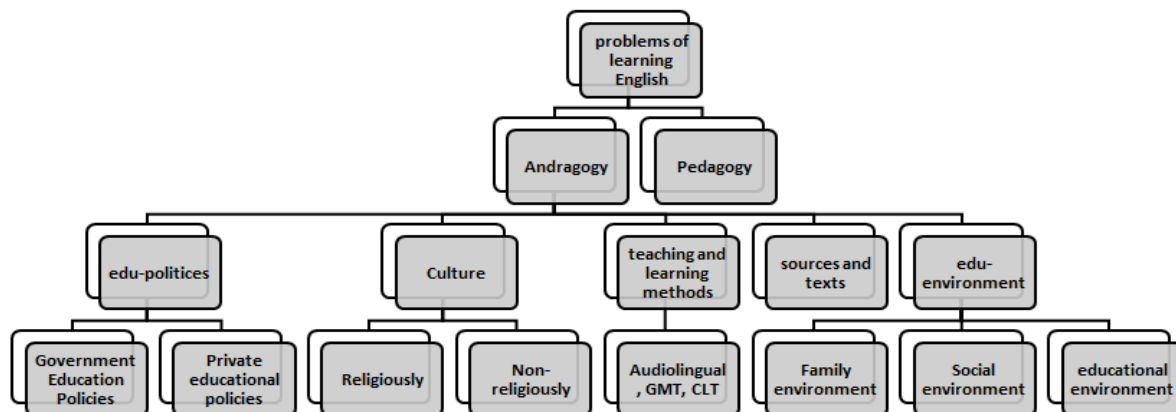

Figure 2: Graph of current research model in partial structure

Culture

Language means a tool for displaying behavior, and shared thoughts in a community. Language means a tool for displaying behavior, and shared thoughts in a community. There are various definitions of culture; however, it is clear that there is a direct and close connection between the culture and the language of a society (Menken and Garcia, 2010; Vahdani and Ghafarnian, 2015; Zok, 2010). Learning a language is learning the behavior of a given society and its cultural customs. In Taylor's (1871, p.37) book, "culture is "that complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by the human as a member of society."

All the meanings of anthropology and what human beings achieve is a result of the major part of the culture in which it has grown; so we can say that human culture without language is empty and isolated space. A particular language is a mirror of a particular culture. Brown (1994, p.165) said: "A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture". According to Gao's studies (2006), there is an interdependence between learning language and learning culture. Asserts that 'foreign language teaching is foreign culture teaching, and foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers (Wang, 2006). On the other hand, the International learning of the English language and the process of globalization are the main reasons to teach culture as a fifth language skill. The fifth-language skill is the technique of adopting the values, concepts, and methods of doing things unique in the culture of origin and other cultures. In this way, learners must strengthen this skill within themselves and embrace other cultures, especially the target language culture, in learning the concepts and finding common ground. Due to cultural differences, learners face incompatible concepts with problems. Surveys show that in many cases, English language learning concepts are not understood by the learner. Hence, the level of education and learning is reduced. The teaching of culture in learning language should include cultural knowledge of culture's institution, cultural values as the psyche of the country and patriotism, cultural behavior, knowledge of daily behavior, and the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness. Among the studies conducted in the current research, the following were observed regarding the role of culture in learning the language learners:

- Learners often find paradox and verbal confusion in linking the concepts of the mind with the cultural values of their language and target language.
- The words used by the learners to convey the concepts do not have a proper literary level, and therefore their verbal literature has an undesirable level.
- The English-language dialect has many terms and learners do not understand this plurality.
- Due to the lack of verbal alignment, the speed of speaking by the learner is reduced and psychological is lost.
- The lifestyle and English culture taught in the educational books of private schools in Iran, due to not having cultural commonality with the culture of the Iranian community, is a fantasy aspect for learners, and as a result, people do not have a proper understanding of the virtual environment created in the space of these books.

Andragogy and Pedagogy

So far, the issue of English language education has been taken into consideration. In this regard, Prator and Celce-Murcia (1979), and Leech (1983) can be exemplified. But the issue of adult education and child education has been examined in two distinct sections. The pedagogy is the Greek term, which means the pedigree and pedagogical management, and is gradually adapted to a general term. Pedagogy literally means the arts and science of children's education. Andragogy or adult education is one of the adult-based theories. Adult education is an organized process for raising awareness, cognition and skills in adults, so that they can move towards evolution and excellence and participate actively in the social, cultural, political and economic life of their society. Given the nature of learning and teaching, it should be noted that adult education and

child education are different. At the adult level, the objectives defined in this direction by learners are well-intentioned.

In contrast, the process of learning children is completely compulsory and there is no option for them in this regard. Many parents think that learning is necessary for their children. Obviously, this will eliminate the issue of child liberty. In this regard, the level of teaching for an adult group is quite different from that of children (Seidlhofer, 2001; Scrivener, 2007).

Paul Baron describes the philosophy of adult education as follows: The philosophy of adult education should: a) help adults to create their satisfaction in life and make their lives meaning; b) to identify themselves, discover the abilities and weaknesses of c) Adults Convinced that continuing education is necessary; d) Provides conditions for adult mental, cultural, physical, political and professional development; e) Includes training in lifelong skills, vocational training or health education within the framework of literacy.

Significance of the Study

English is considered as the main key to many sciences in the present age, and the lack of recognition of this language is a kind of illiteracy. By increasing the community's ability to learn a second language and multilingualism community members, the level of welfare increases and policies are designed to communicate with other countries. Many investments have been made in the field of learning and teaching English in Iran, but the expected results have not been achieved. Many students have a low level of knowledge about language skills. Some learners cannot write a text without a grammatical mistake or express their meaning according to their learning in the target language. Continuing this process will prevent the student from studying in this field, and his efforts remain unproductive. In general, the average international multi-language skills in Iran is reduced. On the other hand, Educational approaches are also slowly changing and adapting to the very slow pace of community needs. Therefore, the elites of this field seek to discover the causes of this decline in society. Many studies have been conducted on teaching methods, and the learner's role and learning level are not being studied. In this research, we try to evaluate the problems of learning English in Iran and to provide solutions to solve them.

Objectives

The objectives of the current study are:
- To identify the leading cause of problems in learning English as a second language.
- Study of language learning problems with regard to educational policies, culture and religion, common teaching methods in English language schools, educational sources and texts, educational environments.

Method

This research aims to study the various causes of language learning problems in Iran and provide solutions to solve them. Hence this study involved data collection through survey method.

Population and Sample

This research, according to the relevant literature, includes 10 State schools and 10 non-profit schools and 25 language schools in Tehran (one, three, four, five, seven, eight, ten, eleven, twelve, fourteen schools of education Tehran), also 5 State schools and 5 private schools and 10 language schools in Isfahan.

Tool Used

Data collection was done using a field questionnaire. The questionnaire is based on Likert Scoring System, with the severity of agreement 1 and severity of opposition 5. It was prepared on the basis of research literature and feedback from the experts of the university. The content validity was modified by providing a questionnaire to some of the professors and experts and using the construct validity method, the

questionnaire was modified. Finally, the questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.893 was used in the data mining process. Other statistical analyses were used by statistical analysis of data. The correlation of data was calculated using the Pearson correlation formula. Also, the coefficient of reliability was estimated using the Spearman-Prophecy formula. It should be noted that the statistical calculations were done using SPSS and PLS software.

Statistics Used

The collected data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation, t-test, ANOVA, and Post hoc ANOVA test.

Population and Sample

According to the Cochran formula, the number of members of the sample space with an error value of less than 0.022 is equal to 1985. In the analysis of the data obtained from answering the questionnaire, very interesting information was obtained. The relevant information is presented in Table 1.

Also, correlations are presented in Table 2. According to this table, there is a significant correlation between the components studied in the questionnaire. Research hypotheses have been analyzed in the form of a generalized model using partial least squares method. Table 3 summarizes them.

Table 1: Analysis of data derived from data mining - the main factors in classifying the problems of learning English

Dimention		N	sex	No.	Mean	T value	P value
edu-politices		1985	Boys	985	3.096	3.658	0.000
			Girls	1000			
Culture	Just culture	1985	Boys	985	2.795	2.730	0.000
	Just Religion	1985	Girls	1000		1.367	0.000
teaching and learning methods		1985	Boys	985	2.176	1.129	0.000
			Girls	1000			
sources and texts		1985	Boys	985	2.401	1.504	0.000
			Girls	1000			
edu-environment	Just Family environment	1985	Boys	985	3.199	1.904	0.173
	Just Educational environment	1985	Girls	1000		1.047	0.000

Table 2: Data Analysis - Pearson Correlation

		edu-politices	Culture	teaching and learning methods	sources and texts	edu-environment
edu-politices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.794	0.836	0.701	0.891
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	1985	1985	1985	1985	1985
Culture	Pearson Correlation	0.794	1	0.815	0.751	0.735
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	1985	1985	1985	1985	1985
teaching and learning methods	Pearson Correlation	0.836	0.815	1	0.698	0.863
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	1985	1985	1985	1985	1985
sources and texts	Pearson Correlation	0.701	0.751	0.698	1	0.722
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	1985	1985	1985	1985	1985
edu-environment	Pearson Correlation	0.891	0.735	0.863	0.722	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	1985	1985	1985	1985	1985

Table 3: generalized model using partial least squares method

	edu-politices	Culture	teaching and learning methods	sources and texts	edu-environment
problems of learning English	0.795008	0.831705	0.911247	0.891352	0.772114

Research Findings

According to the data in Tables, we can say that
- There is a significant meaningful correlation among the factors studied in the research.
- Among the factors studied, the impact of educational policy and educational environment on language learning problems was less consistent with ideas.
- Teaching and learning techniques, resources, educational texts, and culture, respectively, have an agreement level of 176.2, 47.2 and 7.29 respectively.
- Educational policy and education factors, educational policies and teaching and learning methods, teaching environment and teaching methods, and factors of resources and texts and teaching and learning methods have the highest correlation coefficient.
- According to Table 3, the impact of teaching and learning methods on language learning problems is higher than other parameters. Therefore, this needs to be reviewed by the relevant experts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As has been noted, it can be understood that there are several serious and challenging problems for learners which originated for various reasons in Iran. These problems were explained in five main topics.
In the first step, learners face with serious problems such as the mistaken conception of folk concepts (derived from the culture and lifestyle of target societies), the lacks of space matched to the depicted space and accessible in textbooks and...; on the other hand, in Iran purposes of language learning cannot be forced by practitioners and policymakers. And then, learners will not be able to differentiate between language learning and multi-language moves, along with their cultural and religious beliefs.
Methods of teaching and learning English as a second language have little adaptation to individual and social structures. Many people try to apply a method that suits their ability to learn the language, which reduces the speed of their learning. Many of the methods are based on repetition and practice, and eliminate the psychological abilities and mental capabilities of the learner under their framed moves, and this is the biggest challenge.
The decline of learning, especially the learning of international languages, is considered as a long-term disaster in the development horizon. The lack of attention to this topic is very effective in terms of internal and external communication, technological advancement and, ultimately, the future of manpower in terms of economic, specialization and business.
Creating effective learning environments tailored to people's thoughts, applying new teaching methods through skilled manpower training, and ultimately developing up-to-date and relevant textbooks are among the things that require special attention.
By forming a system or organization that has the nature of inspection and analysis of the learning of students and learners with short-term planning, it can prevent the loss of energy and manpower in long-term evaluations.
Also, many of the old methods will be eliminated globally from the training cycle and new approaches will be created. For example, take courses in educational programs on international languages in the media, or cultural or educational programs aimed at improving the level of verbal skills of language learners.

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