English Language Education in Kurdistan

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A critical history of ***English Language Education*** *in Iraqi Kurdistan, from the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1991 to the present day: reform, crisis and strategies for change.*

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Contents

Abstract

This study sets out to assess the impact of proposed government reforms for English language provision in public sector Higher Education in Iraqi Kurdistan throughout the period between 1991 up to the present day. A central premise is that an 'implementation gap' may currently exist in such provision, a gap, that is, between reforms intended by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) as formed in 1991, and actual classroom practice at ground level.

At the time of writing, the emergent (and now partially independent) nation of Iraqi Kurdistan is recovering from a long period of instability. It is nevertheless still (at the time of writing) described as a 'warzone'. In this emergent period, training in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is currently very much in demand, for a number of reasons. The new nation has a need to participate in ongoing dialogue with its English-speaking allies and protectors, for example. Foreign companies

(with strong affiliations to the UK and USA) are also now moving into the region, wishing to work with the local people and invest in the Kurdish economy. Adequate fluency in English as an international language is therefore increasingly needed by politicians and people alike, both to obtain employment and to take part in social, economic and political issues on a global scale.

The researcher argues however that despite government efforts to rebuild basic infrastructure and modernize the educational system, the culture of the classroom generally (and the EFL class in particular) remains extremely conservative, particularly at tertiary level. The teacher's authority is often maintained by fear of punishment or sanction, for instance, rather than the quality of the instruction being provided. This authority may also rest on differing political allegiances, which are thus carried into the classroom.

A central proposition is therefore that complex factors may combine with factional politics to obstruct

government reform of the education system in the public HE sector, resulting in the 'implementation gap' in English language provision identified above. It is suggested that such a 'gap' may be partly explained by the persistence of a teacher-centred approach, with students as passive receivers of knowledge 'about' English. The teacher will lead the class strictly and rapidly through a set text, for example, which habitually culminates in written tests. The researcher thus draws on his own student experiences of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies to demonstrate why such 'teacher-centred' methodology is ineffective in EFL teaching, and that in particular it may obstruct the achievement of practical communication skills. Operation in such a system requires students to develop only knowledge-based skills such as 'rote learning' and memorization, for example, which results in a narrow focus on examination results. The study thus serves also to demonstrate students' awareness that current EFL provision may not promote the skills that they need,

resulting in frequent dissatisfaction with their educational experiences.

There is no suggestion that this 'implementation gap' is deliberate, however. Rather, drawing on his own 'insider' knowledge as a Kurdish national, the researcher postulates as above that constraints such as conflicting party allegiances for teaching staff may limit change at classroom level. In addition, men who whose energies were previously focused on fighting (in what still remains a war zone) may lack the skills, knowledge and expertise to translate theory into practice. The researcher's wider purpose in this study is therefore an attempt to provide a practical methodological study followed by specific recommendations that might serve to help educational policy-makers in the difficult task above.

Chapter 1 demonstrates how the 'implementation gap' hypothesis is first tested via preliminary data gathered 'in the field', using results from perception-based

questionnaires completed by a sample population of 100 students and 20 teachers. The results of multiple interviews carried out with both students and teachers are also explored, in order to portray a balanced view of realities 'on the ground'.

These preliminary findings confirm the researcher's premise that little in EFL provision in the HE sector has changed over the past 19 years. The overall principle of rote learning for examinations based on the memorisation of a single set textbook remains unchanged.

Chapter 1 also presents a second source of data, based on researcher observation notes. To obtain this data, five months were spent in Kurdistan, attending a wide variety of classes in different HE establishments. The purpose in this is to further cross-reference preliminary findings as above by observing at a personal level whether or not any change had taken place since the researcher's own recent educational experiences.

Observation studies consolidate the initial premise that the traditional methods which he experienced remain largely unchanged.

Also noted is that tried and tested EFL methodology validated in the literature for the development and promotion of the English language skills which the government (and the HE institutions under its direction) claim to target is not apparently in practical use. In contrast, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies are very much evident in the private EFL learning centres also visited and observed for comparative purposes. The researcher is thus able to use his practical observations to draw up contrastive criteria to demonstrate that these methodologies have not impacted on the government-controlled HE sector. Findings are additionally cross-referenced throughout the investigation with the researcher's theoretical readings and with his own experiences of English

language learning both in Kurdistan, and in British academic culture.

As stated above, the principal aim in these data-gathering and cross-referencing processes is to draw analytical conclusions as to how English language provision in Iraqi Kurdistan at HE level could be rendered more effective in order to assist Kurdish EFL policy-makers in translating their professed aims into effective classroom practices. These conclusions are set out in chapter 2.

In brief, the main conclusion is that there are profound implications for practical training programmes to support Kurdish teachers in delivering language tuition at HE level via the core principles of CLT methodology as internalised by the researcher himself as a result of the MA TEFL programme currently being undertaken in British HE. The resulting awareness for Kurdish teachers of how students learn, and of tools to bring about effective learning, might thereby result in the

development of greater student competency in English, and in turn improve the success rate of EFL teaching in Iraqi Kurd state universities.

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Introduction: general background to the study

Years of economic and military instability dating back to 1991 and beyond (including high profile persecution under Saddam Hussein's now defeated regime) have decimated the Kurdish region. Nevertheless, since gaining a partial independence, the Kurdish nation is rapidly emerging from what is still (at the time of writing) classified as a 'warzone'. It is against such a background that this investigation takes place, at a time when educational reform has become a national priority as the region's basic infrastructure is re-built. Modernization of the outdated educational systems as described is indeed a main concern of the present Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), particularly as Training in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is currently very much in demand.

It will therefore be of particular interest to the present investigation to assess how far the KRG have succeeded

in their proposed educational reforms. A specific focus in the investigation is upon the current teaching of 'English as a Foreign Language' [EFL] at tertiary level in the public sector of this region. The study begins from the premise that the general style of English language teaching and universities may still remain much as it was, and that practical measures are now needed as a matter of priority to work with the government to help HE teachers deliver effective programmes of EFL instruction. It is therefore hoped that (in the absence of such practical classroom research in this area) the findings of this research will serve as a basis for educational policy-makers in the difficult task of implementing the changes which they proclaim to target.

With this aim in view, the investigation will firstly commence with an assessment both of the current state of EFL provision in Iraqi Kurdistan at HE level, and of any measurable impact at 'classroom level' as a result of

policy reforms proposed by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) as formed in 1991. To begin with a review of the nature of the educational system under Saddam Hussein's government, all these mechanisms were under his control and anyone in disagreement was swiftly dispatched. His control extended to education at all levels, where Iraqi Kurdistan has been compared to 'a stagnant pond, disabled and without a soul' (www.krg.org[1]). Teachers and students were unable to voice any opinion other than the 'acceptable' one, as whole families would be targeted if the wrong things were said (www.dangubas.com[2]). Everyone was under pressure. In such dire circumstances, it was thus impossible for education to develop along positive and beneficial lines. The conflict between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) also impacted negatively on education (Rajee 2002: 32-39). Students constantly missed their classes because of fighting. During lessons the sound of bombs and tanks warned them to hurry back home.

Teaching issues to be addressed

Specifically, the provision of English Language Teaching (ELT) at the time of Saddam's regime commenced from year five (10-11 year olds), with the learning of the alphabet and some very basic phrases. In year six (11-12 year olds), students went on to study grammar and simple dialogues. The ensuing years built on this, but very little new material was offered and students had only one or two lessons per week. Much the same principle was applied to the study of English at HE level, as the researcher can testify from his own experiences as a Kurdish national. Classes were extremely formal and 'teacher-centred', where instructors used traditional methods whereby they did 'all the talking' (TTT), while children were expected to listen or copy from the board. Teaching rooms were cramped and the classes large, with individual worksheets, visuals and audio aids being unheard of. Classes only lasted for thirty minutes, where students were expected to maintain a respectful silence while the teacher as

'knower' held forth. One website reports, for example, that any observer would think that he was in a courtroom, with 'the teacher as judge' and the students as 'guilty parties' (www.varseen.kurdblogger.com[3]). Qaradaghi (2006) also reports that the shortcomings in teacher training were very obvious, and that (importantly for the study) teachers did not seem to understand the rudiments of classroom management, that all students at every level deserve to be treated equally, that each learner is individual and learns at a different pace, or that each deserves the opportunity to experience new methods and enjoy the education process.

Nevertheless, since gaining its partial independence, the Kurdish nation is now a nation which has begun to feel optimistic about the future following the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein's regime, as the researcher can state from insider knowledge. Local people have reported to the researcher (for example) their hope that original

territories lost would be regained, and that a new government would be formed that could move the region forwards, particularly in the area of education. However, a primary concern (as above) is that in reality, many of the old educational systems appear to have been retained, with only the few small changes as described. In many ways the system may not yet therefore have reached the desired level. Progress is slow, despite the fact that most teachers are apparently meeting the requirements as far as government inspection reports are concerned, as the present investigation will demonstrate.

The researcher has observed, for example, that due to the ravages of war, schools and universities are in need of rebuilding, in order to create an educational environment which is condusive to new learning. However such building projects are not funded, which means in turn that teachers, parents and the community in general are attempting to finance

projects themselves. The researcher can also testify that a huge underlying problem has been the poverty which persists in Iraqi Kurdistan, with lack of finance impacting on teachers themselves, as being amongst the lowest earners. These poor conditions may deter many potentially good teachers from taking up the profession, for example, whilst others are leaving to find better paid work. It is thus not uncommon for teachers to find after-school employment in order to make enough money to live on (www.zarikrmanji.com [4]). This reduces their preparation and marking time and lowers the quality of education given even further.

The lack of adequate Teacher Training Programmes is also problematic. Although such programmes are in place, principles remain very basic. The researcher is especially aware of the shortcomings of current pedagogical training in contrast to the Master's Degree (MA) which he is currently undertaking in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The

methodological teaching principles needed to develop student communication skills in English (with which he is now familiar) are not yet recognized in Iraqi Kurdistan, for example, as will be shown. Study resources such as coursebooks, library provision, international communications technology, and so on are also poor, with profound implications for current EFL provision. How such difficulties can be addressed in low-cost ways will therefore be a major theme in the study.

An important backdrop to the study is that all of the above factors have combined to result in a national shortage of teachers in Iraqi Kurdistan, which have reached various peaks. One of these 'peaks' occurred in the two-year period from 1994 – 1996. The national shortage meant in turn that the government at that time were obliged to adopt 'emergency measures', allowing teacher applicants to simply follow short (but very basic) training courses (as above) to become primary, secondary, and even university tutors. These

short courses provided only the rudiments of basic teaching methodology, with the result that posts were filled by people who have little or no real aptitude for the profession. It is possible that many of these very basically qualified teachers still remain within the education system, for whom it may well be necessary to design sympathetically oriented professional development training, as suggested (among others) by Parrott (2007: 252-253 & 312-314).

In addition, this already desperate situation has been exacerbated by a mass exodus of many disillusioned Kurdish academics, who have taken their skills far afield to Europe and the United States (www.kurdistannet.info[5]). It is perhaps in an attempt to offset this 'exodus', that Iraqi Kurdistan continues to employ and retain very basically trained tutors, who are often sent abroad for short training courses and then allowed to teach even in Higher Education (www.emrro.com[6]). Some of those receiving such basic

training may well be graduates from English departments in Kurdish universities, even though a deep understanding of their academic discipline may not necessarily qualify them to teach. Yet the government appears to employ them as teaching staff (perhaps as a means of avoiding unemployment) even though they lack effective training (Bwar Magazine 2009: 29-32).

Learning issues: the need to achieve operational effectiveness in English

It is against such a background, then, that this investigation takes place, at a time when educational reform has become a national priority as the nation's basic infrastructure is re-built. Modernization of the outdated educational systems as described is indeed a main concern of the present Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), particularly as Training in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is currently very much in demand. A key factor in such demand is that the

present government was formed under the increased protection of the USA and its allies. The new nation's need for ongoing dialogue with its protectors (and more globally) thus makes it more and more imperative for politicians and people alike to be able to take part in the resulting 'global conversation' by improving their English language skills. Many foreign companies who are now working and investing in Kurdistan have already established such links, and have very strong relations with the UK and USA. It will therefore be vital for the Kurdish people themselves to 'take control' and play an active part in this 'global conversation'. Not to do so might mean exclusion from it, with others 'speaking for them', with consequent ignorance of the issues being discussed.

This need is clearly recognized by Kurdish leaders, many of whom now even have a private English tutor. The results of this language education and wider world view can be seen when Talabani (President of Iraq, Kurdish

by birth and leader of the PUK) visited the UK and USA and was able to speak with other world leaders in English. Many young people thus feel that English is very important for understanding media broadcasts from around the world. This has helped the younger generation to realise also how important developing diplomatic links with foreign powers is for Iraqi Kurdistan's wish to become an independent state.

Having spoken with many young people on this topic, the researcher can testify to their belief that if they can understand political debates in a more global way and take part in them, then this increased understanding will move their country toward its goal of becoming a nation. For many Iraqi Kurds studying university English, the wish to build this new nation of Iraqi Kurdistan is an important motivation for learning the English language, which they view as the main language of international media and diplomacy (www.peivnet.com[7]). The researcher can also state (again drawing on insider

perceptions) that the people of Kurdistan in general speak of a growing awareness of their increasing need for adequate fluency in English as an international language, not only because they may then be able to improve their financial situations by working with the rising number of companies that are based in their country which require English language knowledge for employment, but also because of their awareness of the need to take part in international dialogue as above.

The current situation in EFL provision

Some small improvements have already taken place at primary level, with English now being taught as early as year one in Primary schools, for example. A set of two much more 'interactive' text books than those previously in use *(*an English textbook of Swedish origin named *Sunrise*) are being trialled in the EFL classroom, where one is an 'activities' book whilst the other is a 'reader'. These are texts where it is apparent that the

main four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are being addressed, and that a more up to date methodology of teaching is now needed to ensure effective delivery. Such texts are in direct contrast to previous practice, where grammar teaching was prioritised, with a focus on 'rote learning' of set texts, as discussed. Instead, the use of new, interactive material provides potential for the teacher to develop a more interactive and communicative classroom. On the other hand, the researcher has as yet found little research as to how such potential is realized at 'ground level', hence the need for the present study.

In the sense above, then, there has been a gradual 'picking up of pieces' in Kurdistan, with some attempts also to improve curricula offered by educational institutes (particularly in their EFL programmes), as well as in the rise of English language teaching provision in the private sector. The American University of Iraq – Sulaimani (AUI-S)[8] is one instance of such provision.

There has even been a shift in emphasis, where (in some universities) the lectures are delivered in English, as in (for instance) the University of Kurdistan Hawler (UKH)[9]). There is in addition (as above) a significant growth in government and domestic companies that require a reasonable level of spoken English from their employees, a trend that bodes well for the future development of English Language training in Iraqi Kurdistan. Thus, a key recommendation to be made is that the gradual changes described above now need to be built on and extended as a matter of urgency. As indicated, the study begins from the premise that the general style of English language teaching and universities may still remain much as it was, and that practical measures are now needed as a matter of priority to help teachers deliver effective programmes of EFL instruction

It is thus a central hypothesis that this principle of 'teacher as knower' and student as 'passive receiver'

may persist as the dominant model, with the class being led strictly and rapidly through a set text, which habitually culminates in written examinations to measure what has been memorised and reproduced for the benefit of the examiner. Being himself of Kurdish origin, the researcher can also state from his own student experiences that 'affective' factors (particularly anxieties which are fuelled by 'fear' of punishment) will often inhibit learning.[10] Teachers are not viewed as impartial educators, for example, but as biased individuals who will penalise those they take a personal dislike to and reward those pupils that they favour. Frequently this situation is aggravated by differing political allegiances being transferred to the classroom setting. The highly politicised society of Kurdistan, as one might expect after years of conflict, in this sense disrupts the classroom.

This means in turn that the culture of the classroom generally (and the EFL class in particular) remains very

conservative in Iraqi Kurdistan. The teacher's authority is (as above) frequently maintained by fear of punishment or sanction, rather than the quality of the instruction being provided. It is suggested here that maintaining an authority which is based on such fear creates a very poor environment for EFL teaching, which (it is argued) requires trust and equality. It is thus a further premise of the study that the focus should be upon enabling learners to internalise and use the new language in communication with each other, instead of viewing them as 'receptacles' of information 'about' English.[11]

However, the problems run deeper than factional politics interfering with education, as it does with many other aspects of Kurdish life. It is the researcher's intuition (as stated above) that long years of economic and military instability have in a sense combined with other complex factors to block reform of the education system in Iraqi Kurdistan. Traditional EFL teaching

principles persist, where the teacher leads the class strictly and rapidly through a set text, which culminates in a written test. The suggestion here is that this type of approach continues to produce a mismatch between teaching style and student needs, which is currently generating considerable tension within the Kurdish education system. This is a tension which is especially problematic in EFL teaching, where using traditional 'rote learning' and 'teacher centred' methods militate against the development of practical communication skills. Rather the need is for active participation from learners themselves.

As a Kurdish national, the researcher can also state from his own experience that EFL students (and students more generally) increasingly recognize that their learning needs are not met, and are consequently more and more dissatisfied with their educational experiences. This in turn means that they are calling for more modernised forms of EFL teaching such as more

interactive lessons, more opportunities for the students to express ideas or learn essay writing and presentation skills, and more communicative activities in the language class. How existing provision can be adjusted to help educational policy-makers provide for such active participation will therefore be a major theme of the study.

As will also be shown, it is the researcher's intuition that many teachers may understand the need for such methodological reform, but feel constrained by the ideology that lies behind government education policy. This is an ideology which appears to emphasize student 'acquisition of knowledge', but which stops short of practical understanding, application and analysis on the part of the learner. It is further the researcher's view that this is an ideology which translates into a theory of pedagogy operating at the most 'surface' level of the cognitive domains categorized by Bloom *et al,* 1956,[12] and which is consistent with the 'Grammar-Translation'

method briefly described by Martin Bygate as still having ‘a huge influence in language teaching, marginalising the teaching of communication skills’ (in Carter & Nunan [Eds] 2001:14). It is this theory of pedagogy which in turn translates into classroom practice requiring set texts to be learnt by heart and reproduced in written examinations, enforced by government directives. It is a matter of compulsion therefore to follow these texts, and progress through them is then centrally monitored by the teacher’s Heads of Departments within state schools and universities. EFL teachers may not therefore feel confident enough to use newer methods under this rigid system. This is in contrast with the private sector, where more progressive methodologies are attempted, as will be shown via researcher observations ‘in the field’.

Purpose of the study

In brief, the demand for the teaching of practical communication skills in English as seen in the private

sector has grown steadily since 1991, particularly since the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime, and with this the emergence of partial independence for the Kurdish nation. In response to this demand, a programme of modernisation is being attempted by the government, as indicated. The researcher's main premise is that this attempted modernization has not as yet however impacted in real terms at ground level on the field of EFL teaching in the HE sector. Instead, an 'implementation gap' exists between government-proclaimed modernization of EFL policy and actual classroom practice. The overall rationale of the study is therefore that this 'implementation gap' urgently needs to be addressed, in a context where students will often be preparing to contribute to the 'global conversation' by continuing their academic studies abroad, in English-speaking HE institutions.

Aims and Objectives

Following from the above, the principal aims of the study are twofold:

1. To measure 'in the field' the extent of the 'gap' identified, which is here formally defined as that space between the government's proclaimed prioritisation of English language teaching at tertiary level and the actual reality of classroom processes 'on the ground'

2. To propose practical strategies as a basis for government policy-makers in the difficult task of reform.

Practical objectives to carry out these overall aims are in turn drawn up as follows:

i) To firstly assess the complexities governing the present state of EFL provision, using published sources to validate insider perceptions

ii) To secondly identify possible obstacles to the programme of modernization proposed by the government which may account for the 'implementation gap' identified, also via published sources

iii) To draw up a methodological plan for 'in the field' research to test hypotheses across the 4 main institutions of *Duhok, Salahaddin, Koya* and *Sulaimani* and affiliated colleges

iv) To design instruments to gather primary data on student and teacher perceptions of current classroom processes (via preliminary questionnaires and researcher observation)

v) To then study data for emerging patterns as to the current mode of EFL provision

vi) To observe (as a second source of data) current classroom practice in both public and private sectors

vii) To assess any differences noted between teaching methodologies in the two sectors

viii) To cross-reference data to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses proposed

ix) To ground 'theory-building' throughout the study by cross-referencing with the literature

x) To cross-reference findings with the researcher's own preparatory learning experiences

xi) To draw conclusions and make practical recommendations for change to aid government policy-makers.

It must be said however that the 'implementation gap' under study is not viewed as deliberate. Rather, the researcher's premise (as shown above) is that specific factors combine to block the methodological changes needed for more effective English language provision, leading to the following broad research questions:

- What specific factors exist that could ‘block’ the KRG’s proposed reforms for EFL provision?
- Do constraints created by conflicting party allegiances for teaching staff contribute to such a ‘block’’?
- What ‘blocks’ to improvement and change do teachers themselves perceive?
- What ‘blocks’ do learners perceive to their effective learning of EFL?
- How does classroom practice as observed compare with teaching methods in private institutions?
- What recommendations would be workable to translate government aims into effective classroom practice?

Government 'intent' versus 'implementation'

As a start point in mapping out provisional answers to these broad questions, it will be useful to first establish the nature of government aims as publicly declared, in order to measure the 'gap' which has been identified between 'intent' and 'practice' at classroom level. One example of such public declarations took place at an inaugural congress in Erbil called on December 11th – 13th 2007 by the Education Authorities, entitled "The Developing of Higher Education". Here, a group of Iraqi Higher Education Ministers (London Branch), the Ministry of Higher Education of Kurdistan and five hundred academics from Iraq and abroad (www.niqash.org[13]) met to discuss numerous educational issues (www.wmin.ac.uk[14]). Their purpose here was to draw attention to the considerable progress which had been made towards educational reform, and thence to improving education. The researcher has also noted that some (misleading) TV reporting channels

(particularly those which act to disseminate government-led information) highlight the impact of such improvements, and suggest a much more forward-thinking approach to the education of their student population, particularly in the provision of EFL, to make possible much wider participation.

Web sites of Higher Education institutions in the public sector also testify to 'government aims' for English Language provision (see Appendix 7). In some instances, however, these sites carry claims for effective EFL programmes on offer which are woefully miss-spelt, and in some cases barely understandable. A case in point is that for Salahaddin University at www.suh-edu.com where the proclamation is as follows:

> the aim of this depaetment (*sic)* is to produce specialists in the filed (*sic*) of English language. Bachelor, M.A, and PhD aer(*sic)*admitted to the department . (sic) higher studies in this department started in the year 1993.

The basic level of the language and the absence of capital letters to signify the beginning of a new sentence (together with grammatical errors and spelling mistakes) are a clear indicator of the need for improvement in English-speaking standards, and hardly inspire confidence in the level of English language provision offered. On the other hand, the web site for the University of Sulaimani (www.univsul.org) articulates government aims reasonably well. Here it is stated, for example, (among other claims) that graduating students should be:

> (...) equipped not only with the necessary research skills but also with the necessary critical and creative thinking abilities that help them to become long-term learners after their graduation

It is at this point, then, that a clear 'implementation gap' is seemingly apparent; the outcomes which are 'claimed' (as above) are not matched by a pedagogy which will achieve those outcomes, as the study will testify. As a Kurdish national, the researcher can

evidence a ‘skills shortfall’ in his own learning experiences in English, for example. Drawing on the awareness of how learning takes place (as assimilated from the Master’s Degree in TEFL which he is currently undertaking), he consequently begins from the premise that learner development of the advanced thinking skills targeted demand a very different teaching approach. Learners need to ‘understand’ and ‘apply’ the text book knowledge acquired, as well as learn to operate at the ‘deep’ cognitive levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (*op.cit,* above). They will, in other words, need to develop thinking skills which as yet operate only at the first level of ‘surface’ mental activity, that of ‘knowledge acquisition’. It is suggested that the skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation will fail to develop in a system where rote learning for examinations based on the memorisation of a single set textbook prevails, resulting in just such an ‘implementation gap’ as that identified above.

On a wider scale, the researcher would also suggest that the long-term implications of failing to 'close' this 'implementation gap' may be grave indeed, as Homer Qaradaghi affirms. Qaradaghi argues (for example) that if reforms in present pedagogy do not take place, then the aspirations of teenagers and adults for the future may become stagnant, and in turn cause crime rates to rise rapidly, on the grounds that general disillusionment often creates negative behaviours. He goes on to note that while some steps have been made towards improving a previous, highly discouraging literacy figure of only 27%, statistics continue to indicate the need for reform and a formal, fair standardising of policy on a global scale to cover all educational areas, as well as encompassing political, social, and economic perspectives (Qaradaghi, 2006: 9-12).

Taking together all the above factors then, the researcher recognizes the urgency (as a preventative measure) of carrying out such investigations as the

present dissertation, in order to work with the Ministry of Education to offer practical measures to form the basis of future educational policy.

A methodological plan proposing how the research is to unfold now follows.

Methodology (objective iii] above)

In brief, then, measurement of the extent of this 'gap' consists of the following main steps:

- Literature review for theoretical background
- Cross-referencing of insider experience with secondary data
- Contextualisation of the cultural setting
- Identifying factors 'in the field' which may account for the 'implementation gap' identified

Sources of primary data to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses and suggestions presented include:

- Results of completed questionnaires
- Interviews with teachers and students
- Researcher observation
- Past EFL experience as a preparatory learner

- Past TEFL experience as teacher trainee

Figure 1: Methodological Plan and Data-gathering Instruments

The nature of current EFL provision will first be measured by gathering student perceptions via questionnaire and interview techniques. Preliminary data gathered will then be used to build an accurate picture of the nature and quality of their learning. Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of their methodologies in promoting learning will be measured in the same way, so as to balance differing viewpoints. As a further source of cross-referencing data, the researcher will also 'sit in' on a range of actual classroom processes across principal institutions and monitor these processes via 'participant observation'. For comparative purposes, a benchmark for this process of measurement and theory-building will be the researcher's own student experience of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques in preparatory

colleges in London, and as a trainee teacher in the MA TEFL currently being completed.

In line with these aims, the researcher will continually 'ground' his observations and perceptions in published sources, and in this way 'theory-build' from the data itself, as suggested by Strauss (1988).[15] One primary function of the literature review is thus to use these published sources to contextualize the investigation in the geo-political and historical setting which shapes EFL provision in Kurdistan. The literature review in the same way provides the theoretical framework to interpret overall results, while at the same time 'staying close to the data'. This framework consists of Bloom *et al's* Taxonomy (*op.cit*) as indicated above, which has the advantage of providing specific descriptors of what students are expected to do by the end of each learning session. Bloom's model thus represents a valuable measurement tool to assess the extent of 'implementation gap' identified.

In this way, an accurate picture of the current state of English language education in Iraqi Kurdistan can be constructed. This picture can then be measured against the programme of teacher training now being undertaken, as described. From this perspective, a survey of published sources will substantiate the researcher's own EFL experiences (both in Kurdistan and in this country) and enable him to present these experiences in an objective and impartial manner. The importance of contextualizing the study in this way in its 'cultural setting' is verified by David Nunan's *Research Methods in Language Learning* (1992). Ethnographic principles as defined by Nunan are principles which confirm the researcher's intuitive view as an 'insider' that political, social, and even geographical factors may influence (and possibly constrain) current EFL provision in Kurdistan, and that these shaping factors should therefore first be portrayed as accurately as possible.

Literature Review: contextualising the study (objectives i] and ii] above)

In line with stated objectives, another significant question to be asked concerns the political constraints that may be created for teaching staff at HE level by conflicting party allegiances, to confirm or disconfirm the researcher's premise that these may in turn may be carried into the classroom to create the 'implementation gap' under study. It has been suggested, for example, that teachers selected by specific political parties may feel under pressure to uphold that party's notions of appropriate EFL curricula and classroom practice, rather than being open to methodological change. In an attempt to answer this question, it will be useful to briefly consider the political, historical and geographical background to the position Iraqi Kurdistan currently finds itself in today.

The history of Kurdistan as a country dates back to 700 BC when the tribe known as *Madakan* were in power.

This fiercely powerful tribe succeeded in uniting the Kurdish people and their territory for more than 150 years. It was perhaps therefore at the moment when the *Madakan* were forced to capitulate after a prolonged war with the *Ashorin* that the previous unity of the region began to fragment. It is perhaps this fragmentation which in turn created open vulnerability to fierce warring, decimating raids and incursions across borders, resulting in killings and massacres of large numbers of Kurdish people (www.dnoor.org[16]). This is a fragmentation which persisted right up until 1918, at which time the British initiated and supervised a state of independence for the region after World War 1.

This temporary independence lasted only until May 1919, however, when an angry but unsuccessful uprising against British influenced rule took place, led by Mahmūd. This uprising was fuelled mostly by the fact that leading British politicians and diplomats had wanted to amalgamate southern Kurdistan and the

British ruled Arab Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) for largely financial and administrative reasons (Eskander 2001:1-2). Despite the Cairo conference of 1921 ruling that Southern Kurdistan (now Iraqi Kurdistan) should be helped towards autonomous state status, this was a ruling apparently set aside by British politicians. The focus was instead to set up Iraq as independent country in its own right (*ibid*).

A further short-lived independence occurred after World War II, in 1946, when many of the Kurdish tribes were unified under the leadership of Qazi Muhammad, aided by both British and Soviet support. This independence took place only in Eastern Kurdistan, however, and lasted only 11 months, collapsing and re-fragmenting with the withdrawal of Soviet support. With this withdrawal, the president Qazi Muhammad was captured and executed by the Iranian government (www.i-cias.com[17]).

Today Kurdistan remains fragmented, with deep-rooted political, economic and social tensions persisting between the four main regions, each of which is ruled by a separate country. These four parts consist of the Northern region (ruled by Turkey), the Eastern region (ruled by Iran), the Western sector (ruled by Syria) and South Kurdistan itself (partially ruled by Iraq). It is this Southern region (as stated) which is the focus of the study. Significantly for the Higher Education EFL provision under study, although this emerging region is ruled by Iraq in the south, it now operates with some degree of independence under Kurdish rule in the north, as shown in Appendix 3, Map 1. For ease of reference, Southern Kurdistan (ruled by Iraq) is highlighted in white, with the region to the north (ruled by the Kurds themselves as above, but nevertheless known as Iraqi Kurdistan) is marked in a dark yellow. The estimated population of the whole Kurdish region (all four segments) is approximately only 30 million, who inhabit 410,000 square metres of territory in total

(Mehrdad 1992: ix). A breakdown of population figures in each of the four sectors in shown in graph form in Appendix 4.

Iraqi Kurdistan is itself further divided geographically into three main areas (as highlighted on map 2, appendix 5). These three areas are (significantly for EFL provision in the HE sector) in turn controlled by differing political factions. The first of these is the region from the Ibrahim Khalil Bridge (on the Turkish border) to Erbil and its surrounding villages, which is controlled by the KDP (the Kurdish Democratic Party). The KDP leader is Masud Barzany, currently the president of the whole of Iraqi Kurdistan; the KDP is classified politically as a 'centre' party (www.kdp.se[18]).

The second region is that from from Koya to the cities of Kalar and Kfry, controlled by the PUK (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talabani, currently the President of Iraq); the PUK is in this case a 'socialist' party (www.bbc.co.uk/news[19]).

The third geographical area (the County of Halabja) has also now come largely under PUK control (www.bbc.co.uk/news[20]), destabilizing the conservative BIK (the Kurdish Islamic Movement) previously in power.

Thus, Iraqi Kurdistan is not (as is sometimes thought) one single region, but three, as described. Interestingly, these three natural geographical divisions (each tied to its bordering nation state) appear to translate into political divisions. These are divisions which may in turn explain some of the problems that are found within the education system on the ground. For example, the administrative systems within the three regions differ significantly. These are differences which in turn have major effects on the educational policy of each region, and impact again on the wider political decisions and activities that take place within them. For instance, every University controlled by the PUK is obliged to display a picture of the president (Jalal Talabani). The

PUK also controls the Students' Union, and decides upon which teachers are selected for employment within the University. This may mean in turn that political tensions and allegiances are carried into the classroom, as suggested above. The same is true for those regions dominated by the KDP, which exerts an even stronger influence on the educational establishments under its control. In this sense, it cannot be said that one centralised government of Iraqi Kurdistan exists, given the complexities described.

One very serious consequence of conflicting allegiances to one or the other of the two main political parties is the non-cohesion which can then disrupt administrative actvities within the universities. The *Kurdistan Post,* for example (www.kurdistanpost.com[21]) comments on this. The researcher has himself commented on the profound implications which ensue in his various publications in his home country. It is an issue which can lead to lack of coherent administration of courses in

particular, as factional political positions can effectively dislocate smooth educational policies, procedures and processes. Such political divisions can also lead to conflict between heads of department and their staff, or between individual teachers, for example, who should be co-operating on the same teaching team. The resulting consequences may then seriously reduce the quality of education available to many students in today's Iraqi Kurdistan, through selection processes which are based on such political allegiances, for instance. Such factors may well contribute to the 'implementation gap' identified, as is a major hypothesis in the study.

As a further example of conflicting political allegiances, students are rarely treated with equality. Favour tends to be given to those whose families are in government positions, where bribes to secure places on desired courses have become common currency (*ibid,* Kurdistan Post, as above[22]). By the same token, the reverse is true

for those students who belong to the 'wrong' political group, who may then be forced to enrol in departments not of their choice. This may mean in turn that there are many dissatisfied students following courses in which they have no interest (www.knwe.org[23]). The financial impact on teachers is also severe, in that they are not treated equally and receive unbalanced salaries and benefits according to the political allegiances described. This can cause tension between teachers themselves, and, again, those who are members of the right political groups are favoured (*op.cit,* www.kurdistanpost.com[24]).

Within these educational complexities, there is the researcher's intuition that teachers may recognize the limitations of traditional EFL methodology, where the class is led strictly and rapidly through a set text, culminating in a written test, as indicated. Further, teachers may also recognize that such methodology fails to promote deep-level language learning, with wholly negative results such as student disaffection and

boredom (as confirmed by data presented in chapter 1). Taken together with the geo-political and historical constraints discussed, however, any lack of confidence to experiment with newer methods is understandable, particularly in the absence of systematic teacher training programmes.

The researcher will therefore need to take into account these complexities and how they may affect responses to preliminary questionnaires, what can be openly stated during interviews, and the workability of recommendations for reform, as will be expanded in the two chapters that follow. The first of these (chapter I) will present research methodology, preliminary data gathered from student and teacher questionnaires and interviews, followed by researcher observations of class-room processes both in the HE sector, and in private institutions where modern communicative language teaching (CLT) strategies are increasingly being used. Chapter II then moves into further discussion of

data presented, draws conclusions ‘grounded’ in published sources, and makes practical recommendations that will hopefully provide a sound basis for future educational policy-makers.

Chapter I: Field Research Methodology and Data Presentation (objective iv] –x])

1.0 Introduction

As stated, this chapter will discuss how 'in the field' investigations unfolded, including presentation of the data gathered from completed student and questionnaires, with a final section outlining classroom observation notes from HE institutions across the three very different geo-political areas described in the introduction. The chapter includes comparisons between classroom processes observed in the government-controlled HE context, and insights drawn from researching private institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan which now use CLT methodologies. Further comparisons are made throughout with the researcher's own language learning experiences as a student, both in preparatory colleges in London, and in the MA TEFL currently being undertaken.

1.1 Methodological constraints

As indicated, the researcher was aware (as an 'insider') of the potential difficulties that he might face in conducting this research. He was advised (for example) that his study of education in Iraqi Kurdistan would prove more difficult than would normally be the case in other cultures. This warning was based on the fact that teaching English in this newly emerging region has no long history. It would thus not be an easy task to find pertinent references. In addition, the historical conflicts described earlier culminated in the persecutions perpetrated against the Kurdish people by the regime of Saddam Hussein. Consequently, while some degree of freedom (together with a self-ruling system) has been obtained, the region is not as yet viewed as a separate 'country' (www.down.lledu.cn[25]). This means in turn that some areas remain undeveloped, resulting in exclusion from mainstream re-building and modernization programmes elsewhere. All of these factors combine, with the result that up-to-date

information is not yet documented. Clashes between the controlling Kurdish political powers have also damaged the morale of the general Kurdish population (www.edition.cnn.com[26]), who are consequently highly politicized, and unusually wary of the dangers of voicing political allegiances.

A particular problem anticipated was therefore the bias that might arise in responses to preliminary questionnaires and interview questioning, because of the political constraints described. Teachers in particular might be fearful of betraying views that could be interpreted by government officials as 'subversive', for example. The researcher himself might be suspected of being a government 'plant' with a brief to spy on any would-be dissidents. The aim of the questionnaire was the straightforward one of gaining confirmatory insights into how EFL instruction is working at ground level within the HE sector in Kurdistan, and to assess the practicality of any recommendations envisioned. But

the fact had to be faced that, after long years of political struggle and warfare, respondents would naturally be suspicious of supplying information to a researcher unless they had met him personally, and thereby developed some degree of trust.

These intuitions were confirmed by the very low response to the first version of the questionnaire, which was emailed to over 500 addresses, and responses invited. Very few of these were completed and returned electronically. This poor response rate could be explained by the obvious fact of limited student access to internet facilities across Iraqi Kurdistan, but (in the researcher's view) uncertainty as to what use data gathered would be put was an issue here. A further factor (as was realized retrospectively) was the open-ended nature of questions asked, rendering them too time-consuming to think through, as well as too numerous to be realistic. Nunan (*op.cit,* 1992: 144 ff) warns against such pitfalls when investigations are

carried out by a ‘stranger’ who might not share the cultural meanings of the respondents. The researcher found, however, that these pitfalls were just as applicable to him, despite his Kurdish origins.

In the light of these complexities, it was decided to make several visits to Iraqi Kurdistan, with the aim of re-distributing the revised questionnaire in person. It was realized that the proposed methodological sequence of collating primary research through questionnaires, interviews and observation was dependent on first building a relationship of trust by talking freely with participants, thereby hopefully developing a willingness to take part. Once such trust and willingness was in place, then it would perhaps be more fruitful to hand out questionnaires personally and wait for the responses. Three research visits to Iraqi Kurdistan were thus arranged, from December, 2008 to February, 2009, from March, 2009 to May 2009 and finally from August to October 2010. The intent was to visit the major

representative universities in Iraqi Kurdistan (*Duhok, Salahaddin, Koya* and *Sulaimani*) as well as a range of smaller 'institutes' which were affiliated to them.

The questionnaire itself was first carefully revised, shortened and simplified, according to Nunan's advice below:

> When constructing questionnaire items, it is important, first of all, to be very clear about the objectives of the study, and each item should be directly referenced against one or more of the research objectives (*ibid).*

In line with this advice, the researcher put considerable thought into re-wording and reducing the previously more open-ended questions to reflect more narrowly what he felt to be the realities of EFL provision as described. Completion was made easier for respondents by asking them to tick whichever of three simple choices (a), b) or c) represented their perceptions. It was further realized that using this kind of question would at the same time render analysis of responses easier, and

allow the use of quantifying software for data analysis, as set out in appendices 1 & 2.

One final question concluded the questionnaire which allowed more open comments and discussion of issues tied to stated objectives as above (see p.8 ff), which yielded some rich insights, as will be shown. A further source of up-to-date survey data was cross-referenced with these insights, taken from the website run by the researcher (www.omarali.co.uk[27]). On this site, questions were posted about Iraqi Kurd EFL education, inviting responses and discussion, some of which are referred to in what follows.

1.2 Experiences 'In the field': data presentation and discussion

Considerable time was spent arranging research preliminaries, such as offical permission to speak with students and staff across the HE sector. The length of time which it took to obtain this written confirmation was at times frustrating in the extreme. Recipients of

the researcher's letters requesting access sometimes claimed that they did not know what was wanted, for example. The prolonged deliberation over granting the necessary permission is possibly a further indicator of the political constraints which surrounded the investigation.

The realities of undertaking field work finally began with the journey from London to Kurdistan, proceeding immediately without incident to *Duhok* University for the first visit. Arriving at the University at sunset with darkness imminent, the researcher met with a group of students, and explained the aim of the research project to them. The students then provided a welcome to their rooms for that night. Most expressed great mutual interest in the investigation, which was discussed in considerable detail. Accurate notes were kept of what was said, sometimes through audio recordings.

These trust-building procedures were attempted (where this was possible) across the other main HE institutions

in Iraqi Kurdistan (*Salahaddin, Koya* and *Sulaimani*) as well as smaller institutions affiliated to them as discussed below. Data-gathering began at sunrise in most cases, when students start going to their various classes, providing the opportunity to meet with both male and female learners. Of those interviewed, a sample population of 100 students in total across the HE sector professed themselves willing to participate in the research, and duly returned completed questionnaires.

No respondents from *Sulaimani* University took part in the questionnaire survey, however. The researcher's unanswered request for permission to involve students in the investigation was followed up in person, but in the event (as above) he found that his explanatory letter to those in authority was seemingly not understood, despite several unsuccessful attempts to clarify his intent. A formal Ministry of Education permit was even requested (as was the case elsewhere), which would have been almost impossible to obtain.

In view of the guarded attitude, there was no choice but to exit. In this sense, the sample population was 'self-selecting' rather than forming part of 'in-the-field' pre-planning. This was one of the constraints of the study, given that the researcher was obliged to operate within the political tensions described. All student participants were studying EFL at University, from Levels 1-4, corresponding to the year of study; that is, Level 1 is the first year, while Level 4 is the final year. A BA qualification in Iraqi Kurdistan typically spans this four-year programme across all academic disciplines. In accordance with usual ethical guidelines for academic research, participants were assured that all responses would remain anonymous, and that no names would be mentioned in the study unless with express permission.

A further constraint (in addition to the zero result above at *Sulaimani* University) was the lack of opportunity to meet teachers themselves in the remaining three institutions. Of the limited number of interviews that

took place, some useful data was nevertheless supplied. Disappointingly, of the 150 questionnaires distributed to teachers, only 20 were completed and returned (see Appendix 2). It is recognized that this is a limitation of the study, since results cannot therefore be generalized across HE settings.

Some teacher respondents promised to email finished questionnaires to the researcher, but these did not eventuate. This very limited response confirmed the intuition previously described that political constraints might lead to teacher suspicion regarding the purpose of the information being asked for. Perhaps there was also apprehension about being seen in conference with a researcher who was clearly collecting information on the courses of study provided by the HE institutions. Such 'conferencing' could be interpreted by an outside observer as a criticism of government policy, and reported as such to government officials, for example.

1.3 Emerging Patterns in the Data

Cross-referencing of data gathered from completed student questionnaires (as shown in Appendix 1) with that from interviews manifested a learner perception profile of EFL provision at HE level which was in general consistent with the researcher's own when at High School in Iraqi Kurdistan. Main patterns generated by the data fall into the three main categories: programme evaluation (by students and teachers themselves); implications for teaching and learning (with a particular focus on 'de-motivators'); and student self-appraisal (particularly of their 'skills deficit'), as below:

1.3.1 Teacher and Student Programme Evaluation

Questionnaire results confirm that the traditional system of English language education experienced by the researcher still persists. Further, this system has changed very little from that established under the regime of Saddam Hussein, with rote-learning of a set text remaining as a central feature. The teacher

response rate of 100% to question 8 (which asks whether or not the English programme had changed in the last 19 years) is striking in this respect (see Appendix 2). A high ratio of teachers (75%) also responded with 'no' to the question of whether or not students achieve competence at the end of the year in the English programme provided by the government (question 9, *ibid*). This finding upholds the 'implementation gap' hypothesis above (hypothesis 1).

A very high percentage of student respondents (92%) also proclaimed their dissatisfaction with EFL provision (Appendix 1, question 4). Significantly for the study, their issue was with teaching methodology (not with the teachers themselves), as indicated by the very high percentage (97%) who felt that teaching approaches should be changed in order to help them as learners achieve language effectiveness (question 8). This is a finding which further upholds researcher intuitions regarding the need for practical change strategies

(hypothesis 2). Interestingly for future development, a high percentage of teachers themselves (85%) confirm this 'poor' assessment of the English language programme, with only 5% viewing provision as 'good'. This is a finding which may indicate teacher willingness to participate in effective teacher training programmes such as that currently being undertaken by the researcher. The resulting awareness of how students learn, and of tools to bring about effective learning, might thereby result in the development of greater student competency in English (hypothesis 3).

Another indicator that traditional notions still persist is the student rating of English seminars for English 'conversation', where a high percentage (84%) state that they 'never' actually speak in English with each other in this context. This is a striking finding, given that such 'practical' seminars are (one assumes) intended to promote speaking skills (see cross-semester subject grids, Appendix 7). Unsurprisingly, 67% consequently

found their English seminars to be of 'no value'. A small percentage of 29% found them to be 'sometimes' of value, but only a 4% minority judged them 'helpful' (question 7, *op.cit,* Appendix 1).

These results appear to confirm the researcher's assessment of a system of EFL provision which teaches students 'about' English, but which offers no opportunity for actual 'learning' through applying that knowledge in active participation and interaction (hypothesis 4). In this regard, it is telling that teachers themselves perceive that the greatest student skill deficit is in the area of 'speaking' (question 13, Appendix 2). One might say therefore that while 'teaching' appears to take place, student 'learning' (in the sense of active application of what is 'taught') may not. Results from question 9 above appear to confirm this kind of 'learning shortfall', given that 75% of teacher respondents (75%) confirm that their students

do not achieve the English competence targeted by the government (*ibid*).

A further hypothesis of the study is thereby upheld. A teaching ideology which emphasizes student 'acquisition of knowledge' (but which stops short of practical understanding, application and analysis on the part of the learner) may fail to provide opportunities for 'learning' on the part of students themselves, given the absence of active participation or 'experience' of what is to be learned.

This is a deduction which is further strengthened when the construct of 'learning' is itself defined, following Fontana (1995: 141):

> Since it is always helpful to start with a definition, let us say that most psychologists would agree that learning is a relatively persistent change in an individual's potential behaviour *due to experience*. This definition draws attention to three things: first, learning must change the individual in some way; second,

> that this change comes about *as a result of experience*; and third, that it is a change in his or her potential behaviour.
>
> (Note: Italics are the researcher's own).

Thus, the lack of methodological change at classroom level over the past 19 years noted above may mean in turn that students have no such 'experience' of decoding and encoding in order to actually 'communicate' in English, for example. The need for this kind of active participation is clearly recognized by learners themselves, however. This recognition is reflected in responses to question 13, where 81% confirmed that 'conversation work' would be most 'beneficial' to their study 'in the event of change' (Appendix 1). The present emphasis on acquiring knowledge 'about' the language is in sharp contrast to the researcher's own language learning experiences as a student in preparatory colleges in London, and in the MA TEFL currently being undertaken. To cross-reference this intuition with the theoretical framework selected,

findings seemingly uphold the hypothesis that the theory of pedagogy which operates in HE institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan functions only the 'surface' cognitive level as categorized by Bloom *et al,* 1956.[28]

1.3.2 Implications for Teaching *versus* Learning: de-motivational factors

It is suggested that one of the most profound implications of such a 'surface' theory of pedagogy (based on 'acquisition of knowledge') is a preoccupation with 'what the teacher does to teach', rather than upon 'what the learner does to learn'. It is further suggested therefore that lack of opportunity for learner 'change' (causing a shortfall in his or her English language 'experience') may in itself block active and deep-level language learning, with wholly negative 'affective' results such as student disaffection and boredom, as noted.

Findings also confirm the researcher's own student experiences of 'de-motivation' in the face of such teacher-centred methodology. It is suggested that such a teaching approach may lead directly to such 'de-motivation', a construct here defined as 'the loss or absence of the complex internal energy or power which makes one want to achieve something').[29] Put another way, the suggestion is that this type of teacher control and dominance fails to allow for active student participation, and thence 'engagement' of the self in the learning process. Further, the need for such engagement is neither recognized nor provided for. Instead, the emphasis is solely upon memorisation and regurgitation of teacher-dictated input in final testing. The result is a 'poor attitude' to study, and 'disengagement' from the learning process, as confirmed by responses to question 6 (Appendix 1). A high percentage of students surveyed (84%) admit to committing themselves to study only 'before examinations'. Absenteeism is also high, with 66%

admitting to irregular attendance (*ibid*: question 9). Teachers also note that 65% of the student population fail to complete homework tasks (Appendix 2, question 6).

Findings are thus consistent with the researcher's intuition that programmes where the English language is taught purely with a view to passing exams (*op.cit,* Appendix 1, question 6) may not result in actual 'student learning'. By way of further confirmation, the researcher noted that on each university campus, large numbers of students had apparently chosen not to attend lectures, and were instead passing the time in playing noisy and boisterous games, playing loud music, and so on. The hypothesis that disaffection (resulting from non-learning) may be inherent in such a 'surface' pedagogy is thereby again reinforced.

Further 'de-motivating' factors for student learning right across the HE institutions surveyed were: the scarcity of library books; failure to make available university library

facilities to learners at a time when they were free to access them; and failure to provide internet access and IT resources. These are problem areas which strongly feature in comments and suggestions invited in response to question 19 above (*ibid*). A particular focus was the difficulty of obtaining books, for example. Learners stated that they did not feel motivated to study further when they were not able to access the information they needed to produce worthwhile work. The researcher noted for himself that university libraries across HE settings consistently opened only during lecture times, when students were unable to access the learning resources needed. Opening times were mornings only (up until lunch time), when they closed until the next morning. This was an arrangement which in effect debarred students from library use unless they deliberately missed their lectures, which sometimes lasted as long as 4 hours without a break.

It is suggested that such marked unhelpfulness on the part of HE institutions in the provision of self-access resources in effect debars the learner from taking control of his or her own independent learning. This 'de-barring' is all the more unfortunate, given that adequate library and internet provision for students can to some extent compensate lack of teaching guidance or support, as will be expanded in chapter II (hypothesis 5 – impact of scarce resources).

Data confirms that no such teaching guidance or support is in evidence. Little or no attempt is made by teachers to counteract disengagement by 'supporting' student learning, either inside or outside the classroom, as confirmed by 79% of learner respondents (question 3, *ibid*). A sixth hypothesis is thereby upheld, thereby generating a seventh, as follows. It is suggested that the political constraints in which teaching staff are forced to operate (as discussed above) may result in a 'teacher disengagement' which is comparable to the students'

own. This ‘disengagement’ would be intensified (it is argued) by the prohibition of supplementary materials ‘to make the class more interesting’ (Appendix 2, question 4).

The size of classes may be an additional factor in this ‘disengagement’, given the observed teacher tendency to ‘crowd control’ when classes are large. In the cases surveyed, class size is confirmed by 75% of teacher respondents as ‘too big (over 40 students)’ (*ibid,* question 5). It is possible therefore that a ‘surface’ pedagogy which favours ‘acquisition of knowledge’ (as highlighted above) is felt by educational decision-makers to the only feasible option available to them, in view of sheer numbers. Nevertheless, a programme of systematic teaching training would perhaps open all eyes to classroom management techniques such as ‘controlled group work’, with seating ‘in the round’ rather than in regimented rows. This is a technique which allows for learner participation and interaction,

featuring group work which could then by monitored by the teacher as ‘facilitator’ rather than ‘controller’. Such groupings might also address the problem of ‘mixed levels’ indicated by 80% of teacher respondents to question 12 (Appendix 2).

As a further counter to the ‘disengagement’ factor discussed, it is suggested that the proposed teacher training programmes might serve to ‘enhance the teaching self’ in terms of ‘professional development’. At the same time, awareness might be raised of the need to develop rapport with learners in order to promote language learning itself, perhaps through tutorial systems. Such one-to-one contact would give teachers insights into individual learning difficulties, as well as providing ‘needs analysis’ data for further work, for example. ‘Confidence building’ in this way might result in greater engagement on both sides. This in turn might create a more ‘affective-friendly’ learning environment.

Despite all this, (surprisingly) a very positive 'affective' feature emerges from the data in this regard, which bodes well for such EFL developments for both students and teachers. A high percentage of student respondents (84%) actually 'liked' to study the English language itself, with only 14% answering in the negative. A mere 2% indicated 'indifference' (question 10). Their issue was rather with the teaching methodology itself, as indicated by the very high percentage (97%) who felt that methods themselves should be changed in order to help them achieve language effectiveness (question 8).

Teacher perceptions here are also reasonably favourable, with 60% answering 'yes' to question 2, which simply asks whether or not the English language is liked (Appendix 2). This 'liking' in addition augurs well for the development of what Brown (2001: 76-77) terms 'intrinsic motivation'. This 'intrinsic' variety is 'strong', and occurs only where learning is motivated by an interest in the subject itself. The contrast is with the

'weak' and 'extrinsic' form observed above (with the focus on examination results, for example).

1.3.3 Student Self Appraisal

Self-appraisal patterns are equally positive in upholding the hypotheses of the study. A high number of students identified their skills shortfall as being in the 'productive' areas of writing (82%) and speaking (89%) (Appendix 1, questions 14 and 15 respectively), which again upholds the researcher's 'implementation gap' premise. This is moreover a finding which confirms the second premise that such a shortfall is inherent in a 'surface' knowledge-acquisition approach without provision for learner 'experience' of what is being taught. Also consistent with this 'surface' approach is student rating of their 'passive' skills of listening as less problematic (64%), with a mixed self-rating in reading skills of 'good' (46%), 'average' (34%) and 'poor' (20%) (*ibid*).

Learner self-appraisal above is to some extent confirmed by teacher respondents. A percentage of 65% highlight a 'speaking' shortfall, for example. Interestingly, however, 'writing skills' are judged to be defective by only 20% of teachers surveyed. It is significant, however, that students' ability to express themselves in English in written form is tested only through 'short-answer' questions, as confirmed by 95% of teacher respondents (Appendix 2, question 14). Only 5% use 'essays' as a measure of student progress. A further negative aspect of the researcher's own student experience is at the same time confirmed as still persisting. Learners are not encouraged to develop their writing skills, nor taught the necessary 'thinking' skills with which to express themselves in English in this form. It is therefore suggested that multiple issues are thereby raised for student assessment techniques which genuinely measure those aspects of learning which they purport to measure. This will be one of the principal

recommendations to be made in chapter II (sub-hypothesis – skills shortfall).

1.4 PUBLIC SECTOR HE SETTINGS

Researcher Observations (objectives v], vi] and vii])

This section sets out further data for purposes of comparison and cross-referencing, based on researcher observation of a series of classroom processes across the principal public sector HE settings discussed. Also included are contrasting findings gathered from research into some of the private English learning centres which are profiting from the gap in the market created by poor university methodologies.

1.4.1 *Duhok* University: teaching observations 1 and 2

The first teaching observation took place on 3rd January 2009, with level 4 English Department students attached to the College of Arts. The content was 'English

Literature', with a focus on poetry as a literary form, as per cross-semester grids (Appendix 7).

The first factor to strike the researcher was the unrealistically cold teaching environment, which he felt to be unfavourable to learning, so much so as to inhibit focused mental activity. This is a 'basic needs' factor which (it is suggested) needs attention if 'deep-level learning' (as categorized by Bloom *et al, op.cit,* 1956) is to take place, as will be expanded in Chapter II.

The second striking factor was the methodological approach evidenced. This was entirely 'teacher-centred', confirming the researcher's hypothesis that the 'surface' pedagogy previously in place under Saddam Hussein remains unchanged. It was noted, for example, that the teacher as 'knower' sat at the head of the class in the position of 'lecturer', explaining the text to learners who were silent throughout, focusing on the text under discussion. No visual aids were used to assist them in processing this heavy information load. No

active participation took place, aside from a 5-minute session at the close of the 40-minute session, where learners were briefly questioned about basic facts such as the poet's name; the time context in which he wrote his poetic expressions; and his principal achievements. Aside from this brief period of questioning, there was no provision for the kind of cognitive 'change' which brings about student 'learning' as defined by Fontana above (*op.cit,* 1995:141). The premise that current teaching of EFL may fail to provide for engagement of the 'self' to bring about such 'learning' is thereby upheld.

Interestingly, however, a further session on the same day evidenced some attempt at involving learners in just such a 'deep-level' way. The focus was upon student presentations on the life of the poet under study. Two students had been instructed to present jointly, and (in preparation for this) to copy out from their textbooks the passage under discussion. The value

of this copying exercise was uncertain. The researcher assumed an educational intent connected with the 'learning by rote' principle. One student had apparently failed to complete this task, but had not alerted the teacher to this fact. As a result, the second presenter was therefore required to present alone. She had clearly prepared to the best of her ability, but her difficulties in articulating her points in English were obvious. She was frequently forced to revert to Kurdish in order to convey her meaning. The general impression conveyed throughout was that she had failed to understand the content of her talk. There was no attempt at analysis.

It was noted that the presenting student's language difficulties prompted much laughter from classmates. The student's increasing humiliation, embarrassment and tension was clearly visible, but no attempt was made by the presiding teacher to stop the unacceptable behaviour of the 'audience'. When the teacher then began to provide feedback on her poor performance,

the student (understandably) seemed even more distressed. The outcome of what should have been a positive learning experience was thus entirely negative, resulting in discouragement, anxiety, and loss of confidence. It seemed that the student had been asked to present without the benefit of skills development in giving verbal presentations. Observations thus appear to cross-reference with questionnaire data to confirm that the pedagogy presently in operation may not only fail to provide for supported experiential learning, but may also fail to promote communicative skills development (skills shortfall)

The presiding teacher may also have been ignorant of the significance of 'affective factors' in creating an environment conducive to learning (as affirmed by Krashen's 'affective filter' hypothesis, *op.cit*). The humiliation inflicted by fellow students on the unfortunate presenter above would not be permitted in the presence of a fully-trained teacher, for example.

‘Respect for the learner’ (including such aspects as valuing individual contributions) is a central principle in the MA TEFL which the researcher is currently undertaking. Observation data here (as elsewhere) thus helps to single out those areas of teacher training which urgently need to be addressed. Awareness-raising in the key nature of affective factors as drivers of learning is of central importance, for example. Training should further include the development of students’ presentation skills (and confidence-building in using those skills). Also (as stated) teachers will need targeted support in helping students to develop the analytical skills noted as absent in the presentation. Clearly, such targeted support will above all need to focus on the teaching of the deep-level pedagogical approach needed to develop students’ analytical skills. The ‘implementation gap’ thought to exist between government ‘intent’ (as set out on university web sites cited in Appendix 7, for example) and classroom practice is thus verified (teacher training)

1.4.2 Salahaddin University: teaching observations 3 & 4

Teaching observation 3 took place the following day (4th January 2009) with level 3 English Department students. The content was 'Translation' from English into Kurdish (as per cross-semester grids, Appendix 7) using a political article written in English, but taken from a Kurdish magazine. The content selected seemed unjustifiably narrow. More personal, non-political concerns might have been meaningful for students, such as music, or cultural issues, for example. No attempt to compare and contrast language structures across English and Kurdish was evident. Instead, material was seemingly chosen to limit student responses to domestic political problems, with an unaccountable emphasis on regional variations in translation into Kurdish. The question of finding equivalents in the English language for those known in the mother tongue was seemingly unimportant.

As the lesson commenced, lively and uncontrolled discussion amongst students continued. The teacher seemed oblivious to the high noise levels, and made no attempt to intervene, in direct contrast to the complete silence noted on the previous day at *Duhok.* No effort was made to focus chatting students on the lesson itself, or to limit their continuous laughter and asides. There were constant (and disruptive) comings and goings, with no teacher comment. Permission for leave-taking was at no time requested, nor was there any apology from late-comers. This uncontrolled classroom 'noise' was matched by that in halls and corridors outside the classroom, confirming the impression of student overcrowding and congestion. This was an environment equally unfavourable to learning in the researcher's view, and one which equally inhibited focused mental activity, although for differing reasons.

The methodological approach noted as operating at *Duhok* was again evident. The teacher as 'knower' sat at

the head of the class in the position of 'lecturer', with direct 'transmission' of information to those members of the student audience who were actually paying attention. Only a 5-minute participatory slot towards the close of the lesson, and a final concluding exercise gave any opportunity for 'student participation'. The lesson began with the teacher assigning to one student the task of writing out the text in English on the whiteboard. The teacher himself translated the English version orally into its Kurdish equivalent. The focus then shifted abruptly from the study of English itself to how this would translate according to the three main regional variations and dialects in Kurdish. This exercise (it was assumed) was a way of overcoming evident comprehension difficulties for students. The teacher then read out the text at the next stage of the lesson, with the focus on differing regional variations (again orally). Lively discussion then took place (also in Kurdish) amid much laughter as to the accuracy of these variations. The study and application of English

equivalents was not however dealt with. Again the emphasis was seemingly on 'knowing about' correct translations into Kurdish. No attempt was noted to support students in the processing, internalising and application of the English language in active participation and interaction.

Lesson procedures and processes for teaching observation 4 more or less replicated those above, with the emphasis on knowledge 'about' the content. No attempt was made to engage with the content itself. The 'surface' cognitive level noted as being in consistent use was again confirmed as the dominant teaching model.

This second observation at the University of Salahaddin took place later that day, but on this occasion with first-year students (level 1), with a focus on 'English Grammar'. As before, teacher 'explanations' (sometimes in English, sometimes not) dominated as the lesson unfolded. Much student time was devoted to

painstakingly writing out specific sections of text on the whiteboard, as instructed by the presiding tutor. Oral 'explanations' from the teacher accompanied this writing exercise. Only a 5-minute closing exercise provided any opportunity for individual 'thinking' or reinforcement in connection with lesson content.

Also as before, no attempt was made by the presiding teacher to control constant comings and goings, or to stop students' noisy exchanges in Kurdish. External noise levels from adjoining classrooms and hallways were also high, as noted previously, suggesting considerable student overcrowding and consequently cramped facilities. Teacher training issues thus include the need for classroom management and discipline, as well as the need to create an environment which is conducive to learning. Focused mental activity is simply not possible amid the distractions of constant comings and goings, loud noise levels, and laughing and chatting, for example. As above at *Duhok,* such 'basic needs'

factors first need to be provided for if 'deep-level learning' (*op.cit,* Bloom *et al* above) is to take place. As stated, further discussion on this and other issues raised will take place in Chapter II.

1.4.3 Koya University: teaching observations 5 & 6

Teaching observation 5 took place later in the year (on 5th April 2009) with level 2 English Department students. The syllabus slot timetabled was 'Drama' (as per cross-semester grids, Appendix 7) although the teacher had apparently chosen as his content a piece of imaginative non-fiction. This piece was read aloud (by the teacher) while the students 'listened'. A brief 'explanation' followed. No attempt was made to assess whether or not any of this input had been understood or processed.

To the researcher's surprise, attention then shifted abruptly to his own research project. He was closely questioned (in English) by the teacher as to the reasons for his presence as 'observer' in the classroom, the

purpose of his research, and so on, while students again 'listened'. Selected items from this exchange (as judged appropriate by the teacher) were then translated by him into Kurdish for the benefit of students. A valuable opportunity for authentic engagement in English was thereby lost. Students could have been helped with question forms, for example, and invited to question the researcher for themselves. The teacher could then have stood back, providing help with meanings only where this was needed.

A period of 15 minutes or so was spent on this close questioning exercise. The teacher then excused himself and left, cutting short the allotted period by 15 minutes. No reference was made to the 'drama' content previously dealt with, nor was there any attempt at lesson 'closure'.

Teaching observation 6 took place later that same day, and was (interestingly) timetabled as 'conversation'. Much shouted 'conversation' certainly took place

amongst students before the teacher himself arrived, interrupting animated exchanges. As for the timetabled ‘conversation’ in English, however, this consisted of the teacher reading aloud a written dialogue, on which students were then closely questioned. This ‘question and answer’ technique stimulated a reasonable degree of student ‘engagement’, with hands shooting up enthusiastically with responses.

Again the researcher felt that an opportunity for authentic learning was lost. It would have been a more valuable exercise to ask students themselves to work together in groups to adapt the model dialogue in English into their own (more personalized) version, and then perform in turn the outcome for comment from peers and teacher as ‘facilitator’ rather than ‘controller’. They could then have activated their ‘passive’ knowledge ‘about’ English structures by actual experiential use of these structures, with the teacher circulating to provide input as needed.

1.4.4 Sulaimani University: teaching observations 7 & 8

Teaching observation 7 took place ten days later, on April 15th, 2009. Students were in their first year, attached to the English Department. The lesson focus was 'literary criticism' '(as per cross-semester grids, Appendix 7). After the customary 're-cap' of the previous session, the lesson unfolded in the usual manner, with the focus on teacher 'explanation' of the set text, while students dutifully 'listened'. Again (as elsewhere) much time was then devoted to writing out specific sections of text on the whiteboard, as instructed by the presiding tutor. The point of writing out passages in this way was unclear, given that all sections were taken from a set book already in the students' possession. Perfecting handwriting in English (rather than Kurdish script) was perhaps the purpose. If so, then this laborious task could perhaps be done as homework rather than taking up valuable lesson time. Again (as was usual) there was no opportunity for students to

engage with the text itself, or to process and internalize the English text through experiential activities.

A similar pattern was noted in the eighth observation (April 17th), which was timetabled as focusing on the 'Phonology' of English. Here it was particularly unclear how the teacher meant to support students in the process of linking the sounds of English phonemes with the meaning which they carry. Without such 'linking', communication is problematic, as the researcher can testify from his own experience. Incorrect pronunciation often means that the learner will not be understood by native speakers (for example). Nor will he or she understand when spoken to, because of wrong notions of individual sound chunks, and how these sound when run together. A set procedure of teacher or student reading aloud from the set text (with continuous teacher 'explanation' of that text in the mother tongue) therefore makes little sense in this context. The same pattern was observed here (as elsewhere) of learning

'about' the topic of study (in this case phonology) without attention to how new knowledge is to be put into practice.

Students did complain to the researcher privately about the low level of teacher support at this university, however, and seemed generally extremely dissatisfied with the standard of what was offered. It is interesting that the researcher's own experiences with this institution were entirely negative, as noted earlier. Attempts to obtain official permission to involve students in the questionnaire survey were excessively frustrating, as described in section **1.2,** on page 24 (methodological constraints 'in the field').

In addition to the above observations, the researcher also attended various lessons at Institutes of Learning attached to the University of Sulaimani and elsewhere, as set out below. Methodological approaches were in each case operating at the 'surface' level of cognitive

activity identified earlier as the dominant teaching model.

The Dokan Institute: Lessons procedures and processes unfolded in similar ways to those recounted above, with large classes and 'teacher as knower' presiding, use of whiteboard for copying texts as the main class activity, with oral teacher 'explanation' at intervals.

Immediately striking here was the almost total absence of classroom discipline, with students exhibiting appallingly rude behaviour and lack of respect for their teachers. In addition, a number of students were noted idling away their time at various points of the campus instead of attending lectures. The campus itself was unusually dirty, This grimy environment seemed to impact on student attitudes, judging by their generally unkempt and untidy appearance. Little development was observed on the campus in terms of new building works or maintenance of existing works. Playstations and various computer games were much in evidence,

with chain-smoking and high-level noise testifying to their concentration.

Technical institute of Halabja: This institution was noteworthy for its punishing 4-hour lecture regime. Students were visibly exhausted at the end of this time, and understandably impatient for the lesson to finally draw to a close. Those interviewed rated their study experiences as 'not enjoyable', and commented that the overly long hours in class (without a break) intensified their dissatisfaction. While university environments attended elsewhere 'in the field' were excessively cold, here the reverse was the case. Heat levels were overpowering at times, and more conducive to sleep than focused mental activity. The campus itself was noted as pleasingly clean and tidy, creating a much more amenable environment for student inmates.

Interesting language problems emerged in this observation session. The presiding teacher was an Arabic speaker, which meant that his 'transmission' of

lesson content was either in English or Arabic, with some (very limited) Kurdish input. An intriguing situation was thereby raised, since students attending understood nothing except that Kurdish input. In fairness to the teacher, there was a desultory attempt on his part to check comprehension. One (female) student was asked whether she was able to understand what was said, to which she replied 'Yes, I do'. Others, however, were not questioned in this way until after the lesson. In this latter case, the overwhelming response was 'no', on the grounds that students knew neither English nor Arabic. When reminded that one amongst them (the female student checked earlier) had no such problems, the immediate reply was that 'she must have been lying'. It is suggested, however, that the student may have answered in this way out of fear of punishment or 'shame'.

If, alternatively, the student concerned had genuinely 'understood' what was said in English, then this would

offer an excellent opportunity for 'student engagement'. She could, for example, have acted as 'assistant teacher' and 'learning resource' for her classmates, with teacher guidance. She could have worked with them in groups to help them link what she had understood to their rich first language knowledge. The teacher could next follow on by circulating amongst groups, building on this with more English consolidation. Explanation in Arabic (historically the language of persecution and oppression) could then be avoided. The researcher can testify from his own experience that the use of Arabic in the classroom is naturally connected with the repressive central government of Iraq at the time of Saddam Hussein. Clearly such damaging psychological associations are not helpful in creating an environment where new language learning can take place.

The researcher shares such negative psychological resistance to Arabic when enforced from above.

Evidence of such ‘resistance’ was duly noted during the lesson. For example, learners studiously copied down (as usual) what had been written on the whiteboard, but seemed to ignore teacher explanation in both English and Arabic. Some made a show of writing diligently, taking a suspiciously long time to copy the text, perhaps as a message to the teacher of ‘non-engagement’. The temperature in the classroom was in any case too hot to permit effective learning to take place (as noted above) which gave rise to the sleepiness and yawning noted. The male contingent sat at the back of the classroom, making markedly less effort with their ‘writing’ exercise than female students sitting nearer to the teacher, all of which contributed to the feeling of ‘resistance’. Notably, the teacher ‘blanked’ this resistance, and made no attempt to question learners. Some students nevertheless did begin to ask for more explanation to help them with comprehension. Teacher responses were then given (interestingly) in an admixture of three languages (Kurdish, Arabic and

English) to help them understand. There was no break in this very long lesson.

The Kalar Institute: This observation visit took place at the time of examinations. The researcher was therefore invited to view the examination room, and even to interview teachers and students, who further confirmed their dissatisfaction with the learning provided. The researcher noted that seating was not according to examination regulations as he had experienced in British Universities, where examinees are usally seated at some distance from other candidates to prevent cheating, under the threat of disqualification if caught. Instead, students in this context sat close to each other, so that cheating was easily possible. Nor did the teacher as invigilator pass around the room to ensure that each candidate's work consisted of their own efforts. Instead, he sat close to the exit, with his back to examinees, seemingly giving the message that a blind eye would be turned to any 'bad practice'. It was not known whether

teacher performance was rated by good student results, but if so, then such conduct would be understandable. External noise levels were in any case high, making it impossible for students to concentrate. No attempt was made by the teacher to quell this continued external disruption. He could, for example, have put in place a notice stating that examinations were in progress, and asking therefore for silence, as is customary in British Universities. Such precautions were not in place, however.

Closing observations

On a final note, the researcher also gathered insights drawn from classroom processes in private institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan which now use CLT methodologies. The American University of Iraq – Sulaimani (AUI-S)[30] is one instance. The University of Kurdistan Hawler (UKH)[31]) is another, where a shift in emphasis is evident. Lectures are actually delivered in English, for example.

Attendance at private institutions further confirmed that these are much more innovative in the way they teach, using more up-to-date communicative methods such as controlled group-work to provide opportunities for authentic student interaction. A variety of modern EFL course-books (such as the *Headway* series, for example) are also used (in contrast to the one textbook prescribed by the government authorities) together with rich learning resources such as the internet. It was also observed that many of the EFL teachers in such language centres are not only native speakers of English, but are also fully trained in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodologies, unlike the staff employed at HE institutions. Classes are also considerably smaller, allowing more teacher time per student. The emphasis is on student-talking-time (STT) rather than being teacher-dominated as in the traditional Grammar-Translation methods dictated by the prescribed government EFL syllabus, as discussed above. Most importantly, the researcher verified that

students enrolled at these learning centres are able to speak and interact in English.

It is therefore of profound significance for educational policy-makers that the various sources of data gathered and analyzed are found to cross-reference to confirm the researcher's central premise of an 'implementation gap' between government reforms intended, and actual practice at classroom level. To the writer's knowledge, this 'gap' has been spoken of, but not fully researched as yet. It is for this reason that this study has been carried out. The hope is that the practical measures which are now put forwards in the final chapter (and which are soundly based on data presented and analyzed) will serve as a basis for educational policy-makers in the difficult task of implementing the changes which they proclaim to target.

Chapter Two: Conclusions and Recommendations

2.0 Introduction

As stated, then, the researcher's wider purpose in carrying out this practical methodological study is to work with government policy-makers to help teachers of EFL in the tertiary sector to deliver programmes of EFL instruction which are more in line with the educational reforms that the KRG has publicly proclaimed. As discussed, it is for this reason that the study has focused on the difficult task of attempting to 'close' the implementation gap here identified, via an investigation of its 'deeper causative factors'. Conclusions and recommendations resulting from the findings of this investigation (as already presented in the previous chapter) will form the backbone of what follows.

Given the wider purpose stated above, it is of unusual importance to put forwards conclusions and recommendations which are 'fully validated' and therefore 'sound', especially in the absence of previous studies of this nature. It is for this reason that the British model of academic rigour and 'critical thinking' has been followed throughout. As an example, every attempt has been made to vary and cross-reference actual data sources in order to achieve 'construct validity', following David Nunan (*op.cit,* 1992:15). Every effort has also been made to make clear the characteristics of what is being investigated. The need for such clarity has been especially urgent in research of this type, not only because of the wider purpose stated above, but also because essentially 'un-measurable' psychological, cognitive and affective factors are under study. What is meant in this context by 'construct validity' is explained by Nunan below:

> A construct is a psychological quality, such as intelligence, proficiency, motivation or aptitude, that

> we cannot directly observe but that we assume to exist in order to explain behaviour that we can observe (such as speaking ability, or the ability to solve problems). It is extremely important for researchers to define the constructs they are investigating in a way which makes them accessible to the outside observer. In other words, they need to describe the characteristics of the constructs in a way which would enable an outsider to identify these characteristics if they came across them.

In line with Nunan, what is meant by the 'implementation gap' here identified is carefully defined, for example (p.14) as are such elusive constructs as 'de-motivation' (p. 32), the 'surface' approach to pedagogy (p.13) noted, what is meant by 'learning' (p.31), and so on. It will be seen also that (in the interests of clarity, validity and added weight) further comparisons are made throughout with the researcher's own language learning experiences as a student, both in preparatory colleges in London, and in the MA TEFL currently being undertaken, in line with objective x) above.

In the same way, the researcher's discussion of 'deeper causative factors' that underlie and explain the 'implementation gap' is thereby given sufficient weight to form the basis of practical strategies for addressing problem areas pinpointed. This discussion now follows.

Key findings and conclusions: Teaching and learning Issues

2.1.1 Clarifying aims, skills targeted & outcomes

The careful language, logic and structure of the study will also serve as an example for educational policy-makers of the model of academic rigour in which the researcher has had to learn to operate in the MA TEFL which he is currently undertaking. This 'deep level' learning is in sharp contrast to the 'surface' mode of EFL provision which he himself experienced as a Kurdish national, and which he has observed to be relatively unchanged across HE institutions, as discussed in chapter 1.

It will be a key recommendation therefore that future Kurdish students of the English language also need EFL provision at 'deep level' if they are to represent their nation effectively in the 'global dialogue' characteristic of the 21st century. A new focus on such learning is urgently needed if learners are to be enabled to develop the cognitive and communicative skills to equip them for effective operation in such a model (particularly in the 'productive' skills of speaking and writing'). The deeper implications here for supporting teachers in their professional development are profound, as discussed earlier. The most serious of these implications (needing priority attention) is the fact that while 'teaching' of the type observed takes place, 'student learning' may not. In other words, EFL provision as observed does not incorporate the type of 'experience' of the language as a meaning-making activity which leads to 'learning' (in the sense defined by Fontana, op.cit). Instead, it is a pedagogy which aims to 'transmit' (at surface level) knowledge 'about' such aspects of the

English language as Phonetics, Morphology, Linguistics, and so on, as set out in cross-semester grids in Appendix 7. Thus, in the absence of such 'experience' it has been argued that 'learning' is in effect 'blocked', resulting in the 'implementation gap' under study, and with it the 'skills deficit' noted.

As seen, data presented (collected from students, teachers, researcher observations, grounding in the literature and personal experience) points conclusively to such a 'skills deficit', as the perhaps inevitable outcome of that 'implementation gap'. Again implications for teacher-training are raised which need to be urgently addressed. There needs to be awareness-raising amongst teachers (for example) that knowledge 'about' English itself is only the first step towards learner acquisition of the cognitive and communicative skills needed to *use* the language in 'acts of meaning' across the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, as discussed in chapter 1. It is now further

suggested that such a 'skills deficit' (as part of the 'implementation gap') will surely occur unless the teacher is entirely clear about 'what the student is being asked to do', in which of the six 'cognitive domains' the learner is being required to operate, and what skills are needed in order to do so.

It is here that Bloom et al's (1956) 'Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains' offers a useful teaching and learning tool, in that its use in lesson planning will hopefully help teachers to clarify what kind of 'learning' is targeted at each of three 'surface' levels of cognitive activity (knowledge, comprehension and application) as against that targeted at the three 'deeper' levels (analysis, synthesis and evaluation):

1. **Knowledge**: simple knowledge of facts, of terms, of theories, etc.

2. **Comprehension**: an understanding of the meaning of this knowledge

3. **Application**: the ability to apply this knowledge and comprehension in new and concrete situations

4. **Analysis:** the ability to break material down into its constituent parts and to see the relationships between them.

5. **Synthesis:** the ability to reassemble these parts into a new and meaningful relationship, thus forming a new whole.

6. **Evaluation**: the ability to judge the value of material using explicit and coherent criteria, either of one's own devising or derived from the work of others

Fontana, *op.cit:* 158, citing Bloom *et al,* 1956

FIGURE 2.1: Cognitive Domains of Learning

A relatively simple exercise is thereby recommended here, as a first step towards 'closing' the implementation gap. The suggestion is that 'eyes have been in the wrong place'. Simply put, the focus has been on 'teaching' rather than 'learning'. To bring about such a 'reversal', it is suggested that use of Bloom's

taxonomy could enable teachers (through training) to shift their lesson planning focus away from their own 'performance' to the 'learning experience' being provided. As part of this 'shift', they will need to specify what is targeted in terms of 'learning aims, skills and outcomes', what learners will do to achieve those outcomes, and (most importantly) in which domain they are being required to operate. Such a simple 'shift of focus' might also help Heads of Departments in meeting government directives, in that assessment reports would consequently give a much clearer picture of learner achievement.

To clarify, it will be seen from data presented and analyzed in chapter 1 that students are currently operating only in the first cognitive domain, where the focus is almost exclusively upon the 'act of teaching', with learners as 'receptacles' for that teaching. The one exception to this (as noted) was the 'presentation' incident observed by the researcher at *Duhok* University

(in chapter 1). It will be useful to re-visit this incident as a demonstration of the 'gap' which can occur if both teacher and student are unclear about what is expected, about the aims of the session concerned, what learner skills are needed to meet such expectations, and what learning outcomes are anticipated.

In the absence of such pre-planning, the 'case study' student was not even able to operate at levels 2 and 3 in the absence of teacher guidance, for example. Hence, there was no question of her being able to function at the deeper levels of 4, 5 & 6. Much cognitive effort needs to go into speaker planning to enable listeners to follow thought processes, as well as the development of the specific skills needed for effective delivery of a spoken presentation, especially in a language which is not the speaker's own. A further recommendation would thus be to conduct 'rehearsal sessions' for presentations, to give 'experience' of language as a

meaning-making activity, thus enabling 'learning' to take place. Clear feedback would also be essential (according to specific criteria which can again be tied to the cognitive domain taxonomy) for areas which the learner needs to improve for more effective delivery.

As noted in chapter 1, being asked to present without the benefit of skills development in giving verbal presentations is surely a damaging experience for the student in terms of his or her developmental language pathway, and may even 'block' progress. In the case of the presenting student, it is therefore unlikely that language 'learning' came about through the 'experience' provided, in the sense of Fontana's definition given earlier (ibid: 141). Instead, she was made painfully aware of her 'skills deficit', and was consequently forced to revert to Kurdish in order to express what she wished to say. She had not understood English content in terms of 'acts of

meaning', and was thus unable to communicate that content, let alone 'analyze' it.

2.1.2 'Affective factors' as drivers of learning

This same 'case study' incident points to the need for teacher 'awareness-raising' in another key area. It is suggested that the focus noted upon the 'act of teaching' may lead to ignorance of 'affective' factors as drivers of learning. This 'ignorance' may in turn be a significant contributory factor to the 'implementation gap' under discussion. The embarrassment, humiliation and tension created for the presenting student in struggling with her language difficulties (amid much laughter from classmates) must have been extreme, for example, and would certainly have blocked 'learning'. Had the teacher been fully versed in the skill of creating an 'affectively sympathetic' environment which is conducive to such learning, however (as affirmed by Krashen's 'affective filter' hypothesis, *op.cit*), then he would not have permitted this humiliating scenario.

Instead, the principle of 'respect for the learner' (including such aspects as valuing individual contributions) would have been enforced, and other students stopped from ridiculing the unfortunate presenter. Such 'learner respect' is a central principle in the MA TEFL which the researcher is currently undertaking, for example.

In brief, then, such principles as 'affectively sympathetic learning environments' and 'learner respect' link much more directly with the complexities of 'learning' rather than those of teaching. Further, ignorance of such learning processes may be inherent in the 'surface' theory of pedagogy observed. Data gathered does confirm such a premise, as set out in chapter 1, section 1.3.2. In the same way, the need for learner participation is not recognized. 'Learning' through 'experience' (as defined by Fontana above) does not therefore occur. It is suggested, however, that a simple shift (as recommended) to a teacher focus on 'what the

student is being asked to do', together with attention to the specific 'cognitive domain' in which the learner is being required to operate (and what skills are needed in order to do so) might in themselves help to offset 'negative' affective results such as student disaffection and boredom.

This recommended shift from a 'teacher-centred' to a 'learner-centred' approach may in the same way counterbalance the general 'de-motivation' noted. Such 'de-motivation' tends to almost inevitably bring with it negative features such a 'poor attitude' to study (and thence 'disengagement' from the learning process), as highlighted in questionnaire responses to question 6, Appendix 1 (see section 1.3.2 above). Data gathered from the 'open-ended' question 19 (student questionnaire) also confirm that such feelings of de-motivation are further aggravated by scarcity of learning resources and poor learning environments. Here, there are small practical changes to be

recommended which would at least ease present tensions.

Libraries were noted to be open only at times when students were not able to access them, for example. It would surely not be impossible to adjust these hours of opening to afternoons, for instance, or evenings. The researcher will most certainly recommend to the Ministry of Education the advantages for student learning of financing teachers to offer private tutorials outside of lecture times (to take place in libraries). Such a strategy would raise university profiles, and eliminate the need for tutors to seek additional work in the private learning centres which are currently profiting from the gap in the market created by poor university methodologies, for example. Further, such tutorials would help to build rapport between teachers and learners, as well as providing insights into any student learning difficulties being experienced. It is suggested that such arrangements would help to build learner

‘confidence’, and result in greater ‘engagement’ on both sides. A more ‘affect-friendly’ environment might in this way be created. At the same time, the quality of EFL provision would thereby be raised, since teacher input and awareness of learning needs would thereby increase. Energies would not instead be put into alternative employment after hours in order to make a living.

The researcher will also recommend that book shortages could be dealt with in a number of ways. Students could be encouraged to submit their book requests to library staff, for example. Requests could then be dealt with selectively by the university authorities concerned, or passed to the Ministry of Education or Committee for Higher Education, who might perhaps consider setting aside a budgetary allocation for improved library provision right across the HE sector. Proposals for computer workstations in central library areas might also be considered by these

same educational authorities, with training workshops to be given in their use for teachers, learners and library staff alike.

2.1.3 Fulfilment of 'basic needs'

The problem of poor student accommodation and facilities is no less urgent. It is therefore recommended that such 'basic needs' be attended to as a matter of priority, in order to offset present feelings of dissatisfaction and de-motivation. While funding for such projects is clearly problematic, the researcher would suggest that perhaps incoming business organizations who are presently investing in the Kurdish economy would be prepared to sponsor 'improving educational facilities' projects for future student employees, for example, with government tax concessions as incentive schemes. Or, alternatively, perhaps some basic fee structure could be introduced for those students from wealthier backgrounds, to then be put aside for improving basic facilities. Another

possibility is that instead of the present 'bonuses' which are offered to students, a personal laptop with internet access could be offered as a reward for having obtained a specific level of achievement.

The importance of such projects should not be overlooked, given that 'basic needs' must be attended to before any individual can progress to the higher levels needed for academic achievement and self-fulfilment, where the 'intrinsic' motivation referred to by Brown (*op.cit*) is more likely to occur. Also more likely to occur once 'basic needs' are fulfilled is a feeling of 'self-belief' and thence 'motivation', as discussed by Fontana (*op.cit* above*:* 217). This is a view confirmed by Maslow's descriptive notion of an individual will which does or does not strive towards 'self-actualization', as set out in his 'Hierarchy of Needs' (cited by Fontana, *ibid*).

Maslow's suggestion is that the 'hierarchy' moves from satisfaction of 'personal needs' at the base of the

pyramid, to ‘self-actualization’ at the apex. Significantly, he argues that striving towards this apex does not take place without the fulfilment of those needs which are largely ‘innate’. These are ‘physiological’ (hunger, thirst, etc), ‘safety’ (security, and freedom from danger) or ‘belongingness and love’ (belonging, acceptance by others, social affiliation). In contrast, the social, intellectual and other ‘higher’ needs (also ‘innate’) combine more and more ‘with learnt responses’ (*ibid*), as shown in the diagram below.

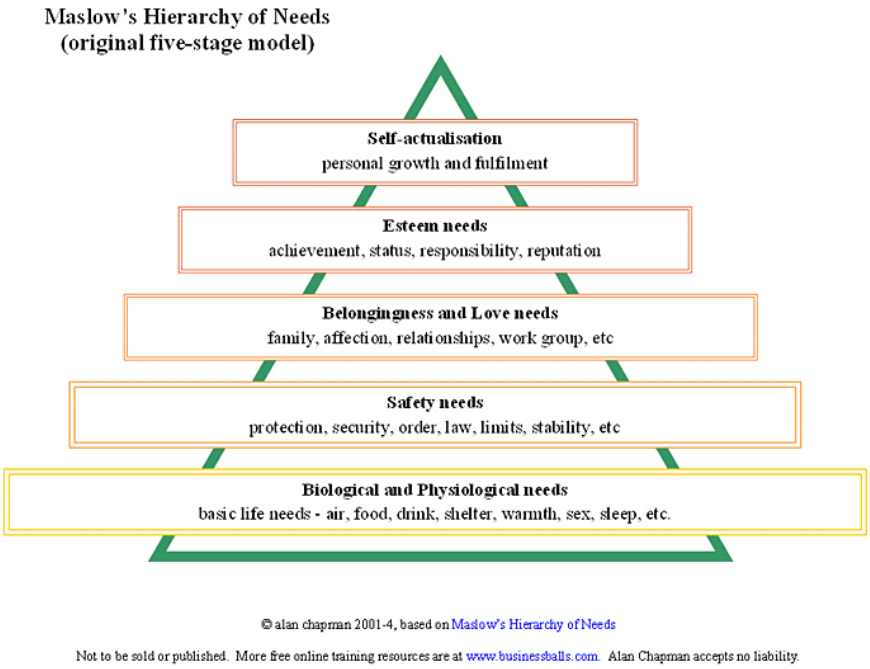

FIGURE 2.2: Stages in the journey towards 'self-actualization'[32].

Looked at from this perspective, attention to learners' 'basic needs' (as tabulated) becomes especially urgent if students are to 'achieve' at the higher levels noted above. The example of *Duhok* University springs to mind, where students warmly welcomed the researcher

and invited him to stay with them in their halls of residence. It was observed in passing that not even basic human needs such as warmth, privacy for study, electricity or adequate cooking facilities were provided for. Each room on the campus housed two to four students, existing in excessively cold conditions, for example. Over-crowded conditions and high levels of noise made study almost impossible. No kitchens were provided. Instead a cooker was placed in the hall to use for cooking. Electrical supply was inadequate, with frequent power cuts.

It is therefore suggested that such poor living conditions may generate feelings of disaffection, low morale and low self-esteem at a fundamental human level, particularly when taken together with factors which 'block' learning, as discussed above. As stated, these 'blocks' include teacher dominance and disengagement from the learning process (possibly due to political constraints); scant learning resources; lack of internet

provision; over-large classes in regimented rows; failure to provide for experiential learning, and so on, as noted.

It is a practical recommendation therefore that such 'basic needs' are dealt with as a matter of urgency, to enable students to realize their full learning potential.

2.1.4 Enabling cognitive skills development: practical implications

As suggested above, the relatively simple shift of focus away from 'what the teacher does to teach' towards 'what the learner does to learn' should bring for teachers a greater awareness of the complex cognitive processes involved in learner skills development. Teachers asked to undergo 'new learning' in this way will nevertheless need targeted support in helping students to develop the analytical skills noted as absent. Clearly, such targeted support will above all need to focus on the teaching of the deep-level pedagogical approach needed to close the 'implementation gap' upheld as existing between government 'intent' (as set

out on university web sites cited in Appendix 7, for example) and classroom practice.

Effective EFL provision has already been instituted at primary level, with English now being taught as early as year one, however. Thus, while 'interactive' text books such as *Sunrise* which are now currently being trialled in the EFL classroom clearly operate at too basic a level for academic contexts, the need for skills development across the four areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing is being addressed, representing a model of good practice for Higher Education itself. Part of this 'model of good practice' is the recognition that enabling cognitive skills development for authentic 'meaning-making' activity (as would occur in 'real life') necessitates an 'integrated' approach to learning, rather than the current teaching tendency (as experienced by the researcher) to separate out a single focus on each of the four skills.

A student who is told that the focus is 'listening', for example, might feel unable to ask questions, or attempt to discuss issues arising out of listening exercises. Neither could they write notes or ask for help from another student. More significantly, the teacher as 'knower' operating in the present 'surface' mode of pedagogy would probably not permit such divergence from the stated focus. The need thus arises for sensitive awareness-raising in teacher-training programmes to overcome such ingrained modes of delivery, possibly learnt by HE tutors from compromised classrooms a generation before their students. Specifically, awareness is needed amongst teachers of EFL that such techniques as group work, conversation, role-play or eliciting learner responses can provide opportunities for 'experience' of the language, and thence 'learning' (as defined earlier by Fontana) and indeed 'engagement of the self'.

Enabling teachers to support the development of speaking skills in this 'integrated' mode will need particular support and awareness-raising, for the 'affective' reasons highlighted by Martin Bygate below:

> Speaking can be one of the most difficult skills to teach because many learners are shy or afraid of exposing their lack of language ability to their fellow students (Bygate, 1995: 3-5).

This is a skills development area which urgently needs to be addressed, however. As observed in chapter 1, internalisation of language input in terms of acts of meaning (rather than knowledge 'about' the input) is unlikely to occur where a high percentage of students state that they never actually interact in English. The introduction of various kinds of interactive EFL activities into 'conversation' seminars is thus strongly recommended, although this may need to be a step-by-step process. HE teachers will be faced with new problems such as diction, accent, error correction and pronunciation, but speaking exercises (as meaning-

making activities) will be an essential means of activating language input (Manlruzzaman, 2010: 3-5) and of thereby bringing about 'learning'. Equally essential will be the use of free discussion, as a further means for learners to 'experience' acts of meaning (thence also leading to 'learning') of the type to be used outside the classroom. Structuring role-play activities is yet another way of enabling rehearsal of real-life events in the safety of the classroom.

Mixed levels and large groups of 40 or more may be problematic for teachers, however, as discussed in chapter 1. Nevertheless, systematic training should help to build confidence in such classroom management techniques as 'controlled group work', with seating 'in the round' rather than in regimented rows. Language comprehension difficulties between teachers and students in such interactive activities might also be problematic, as observed at the Technical Institute of Halabja, for example. Politically endorsed selection of

Arab-speaking teachers (who mostly do not speak Kurdish) is thus something of an issue. (www.kurdistanonline.net[33]). The researcher will here need to consult with policy-makers and Heads of Department as to whether stronger students could be nominated to assist in the capacity of 'learning resource' for classmates, for example.

Teaching writing skills within an integrated approach is perhaps the most demanding cognitive area needing supportive training, however. While the present tendency observed of requiring learners to copy texts from the whiteboard (taken from books already in their possession) appears to serve little purpose, a dramatic change of focus to enabling learners to produce their own words (however simple the context) may need to be only gradually introduced. It will be a key recommendation however that learners are encouraged to consolidate language input through constructing simple but personalized sentences, for example, both in

group contexts and on a homework basis. Sentences could then be extended to paragraphs or short pieces of creative work that allow their own enthusiasms to appear. As learners move through the various cognitive levels towards more academic work, then essay-writing skills can be expanded to include more formal input, to a point where short projects can be attempted.

The target of the careful language, logic and structure of the present study will clearly need to be built up over a long period of time, but a learning context where writing skills are omitted in their entirety is clearly detrimental when English as an international language is increasingly needed to enable Kurdistan as an emergent nation to take part in social, economic and political issues on a global scale. It is also to be remembered that many students will wish to further their higher education in either Britain or America, and will therefore need to be equipped to operate effectively within the 'critical thinking' model valued in both

cultures. The researcher has not found it an easy matter to learn to function as expected in such a model, in view of the 'skills deficit' which he has identified as inherent in the current 'surface' pedagogy which he himself experienced.

2.1.5 A new perspective on 'teaching'

In brief, then, the recommended shift is away from the 'act of teaching' to the 'act of learning'. It is to be remembered, however, that the teaching role is no less central to classroom processes, but that role will now have multiple 'other' facets, as Jack Richards (1990: 165) confirms:

> No longer simply a presenter of materials or an implementer of a method, the teacher has a role that is not only more complex but more crucial, for the teacher must serve variously as materials developer, needs analyst, and investigator of his or her own classroom, negotiating both syllabus context and methodology with the learner.

Importantly for the study, Richards goes on to state however that methods in themselves should not deteminine classroom processes. Rather, it is the reverse. The *classroom* itself should provide the context in which 'planning, development and support activities take place' (ibid). Clearly, however, the political constraints and complexities described elsewhere will make the realization of such a classroom scenario a slow process. Nevertheless, in working with the Ministry of Education to implement practical recommendations made, the researcher could (with the help of a native-speaker teacher-trainer) work with teachers and students alike to introduce the small 'participative' changes suggested into classroom processes in a step-by-step manner. Results could be monitored and evaluated by teachers and students on an 'action research' basis, then perhaps be shared with colleagues on a 'workshop' basis, with Heads of Department invited as guests of honour.

In conclusion, then, the researcher's wider aim in this practical methodological investigation is to enable government policy-makers to help teachers of EFL in the tertiary sector to obtain just the levels of language competency targeted in the MA TEFL which he is currently undertaking. It is his belief that teachers will be in full agreement with his conviction that to leave the present situation untouched would be detrimental for the future of the Kurdish nation and its ability to produce well-educated and articulate scholars who are able linguistically to participate at an international level. It is further his belief that Kurdish teachers will be proud to be at the forefront of such educational reforms as their nation emerges to take its place in the global arena, and that the recommendations here discussed (together with the practical training measures proposed to support them in implementing those recommendations) will be warmly welcomed. .

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Statistical Report for Student Questionnaire

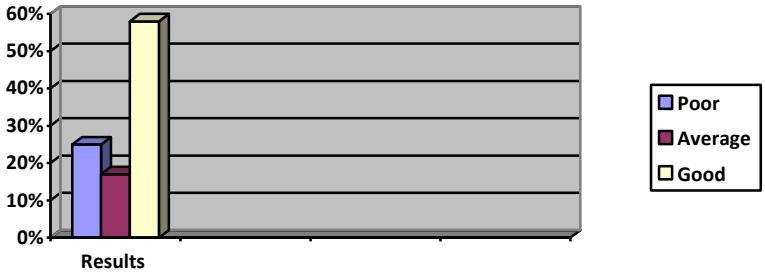
This report summarises the questionnaires given to students from all the Universities of Iraqi Kurdistan (University of Duhok, Salahaddin, Koya, and Sulaimani) and collates information from 100 responses. All the students answering the questionnaire were studying EFL at University, from Levels 1-4. The levels correspond to the year of University study, i.e. Level 1 is the first year of University English and Level 4 the final year (all students study for four years in Iraqi Kurdistan to gain a BA qualification). In the following summary report the structure of the original questions presented to the students is retained and then followed with a graph presenting the statistical summary of all the answers provided by the sample group of 100 students.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick one answer for each question.

1- How do teachers deal with students' behaviour in terms of classroom discipline?

A) Poor Discipline ( ) **B)** Average Discipline ( ) **C)** Good Discipline ( )



Statistical Result: Poor Discipline: 25% Average Discipline: 17% Good Discipline: 58%

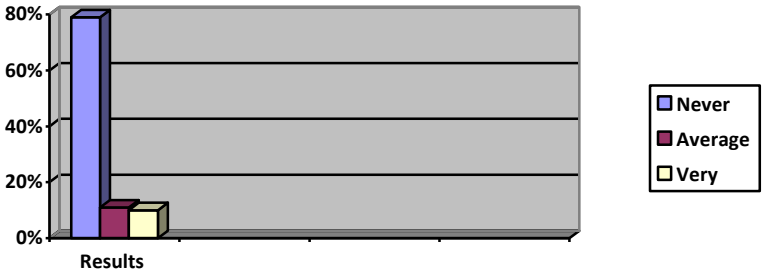
2- How would you rate the quality of EFL teaching that you receive in your English class?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C)** Good ( )

Statistical Result: Poor: 85% Average: 08% Good: 07%

3- Are teachers supportive of your learning inside and outside the classroom?

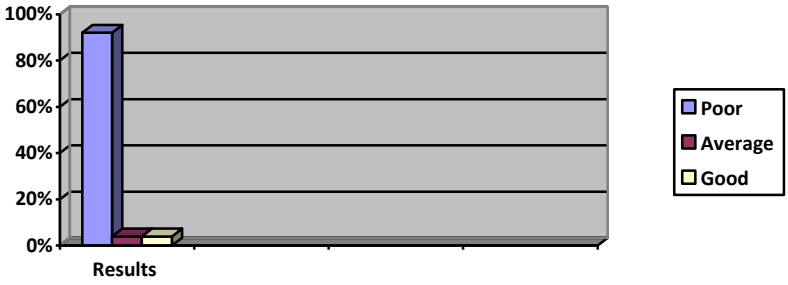
A) Never Supportive ( ) **B)** Occasionally Supportive ( ) **C)** Very Supportive ( )



Statistical Result: Never Supportive: 79% Occasionally Supportive: 11% Very Supportive: 10%

4- How would you rate the quality of your whole EFL programme, as opposed to the quality of individual teachers?

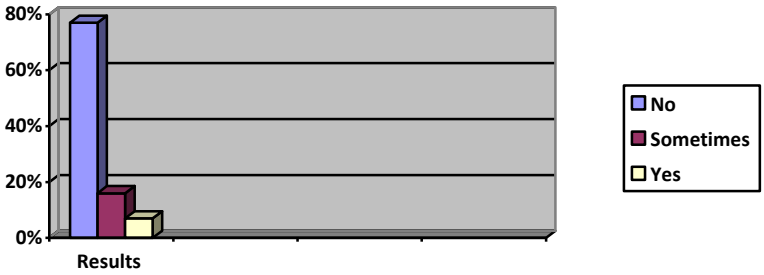
A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C)** Good ( )



Statistical Result: Poor: 92% Average: 04% Good: 04%

5- Have you benefitted from learning with the new private English learning centres which are now available?

A) No ( ) **B)** Sometimes ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

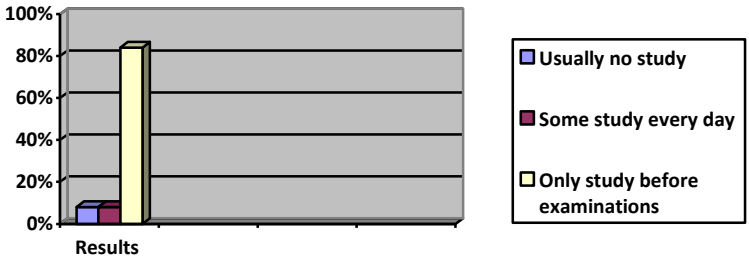


Statistical Result: No: 77% Sometimes: 16% Yes: 07%

6- Roughly how much English language study do you do in a day?

A) Usually no study ( ) **B)** Some study every day ( )

C) Only study before examinations ( )



Statistical Result: Usually no study: 08% Some study every day: 08% Only study before examinations: 84%

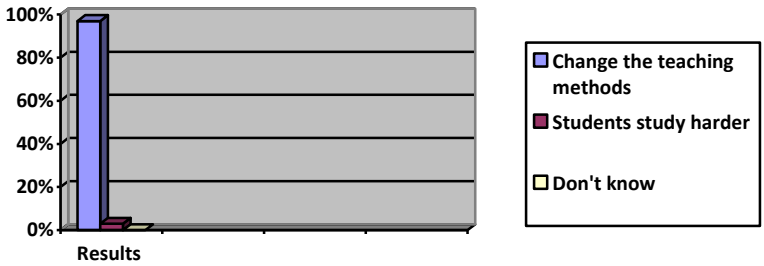
7- Do the English seminars help you with your studies?

A) No ( ) **B)** Sometimes ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 67% Sometimes: 29% Yes: 04%

8- In your opinion, how do you think students can achieve more highly in English?

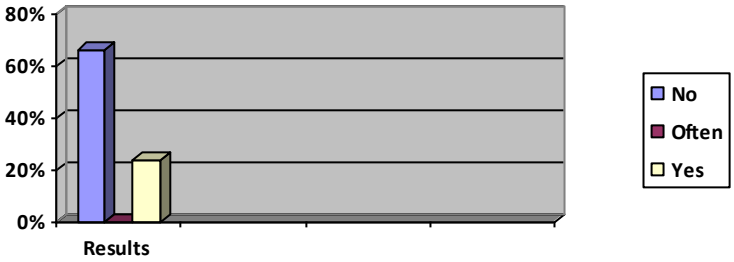
A) Change the teaching methods ( ) **B)** Students study harder ( ) **C)** Don't know ( )



Statistical Result: Change the teaching methods: 97% Students study harder: 03% Don't know: 0%

9- Do all students attend class regularly and punctually?

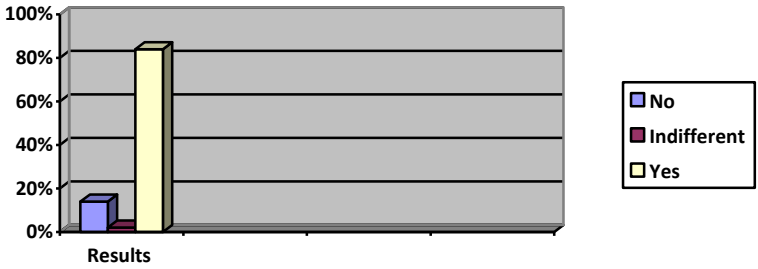
A) No ( ) **B)** Often ( ) **C)** Yes ( )



Statistical Result: No: 66% Often: 0%Yes: 24%

10- Do students like to study English language in Iraqi Kurdistan?

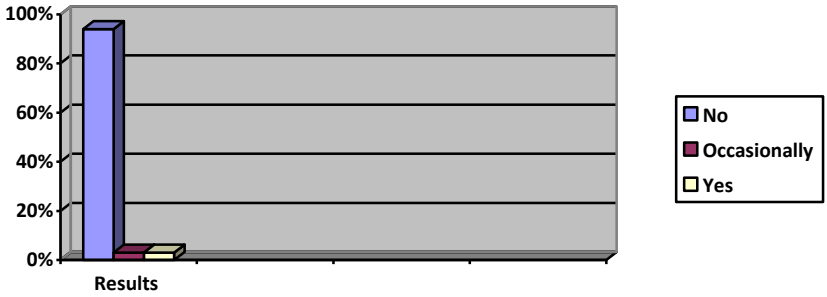
A) No ( ) **B)** Indifferent ( ) **C)** Yes



Statistical Result: No: 14% Indifferent: 02% Yes: 84%

11- Do students speak in English with each other?

A) Never ( ) **B)** Occasionally ( ) **C)** Often ( )



Statistical Result: No: 94% Occasionally: 03% Yes 03%

12- Do you have the opportunity to use computers and the internet?

A) No ( ) **B)** A little ( ) **C)** Often ( ).

Statistical Result: No: 90% A little: 05% Often: 05%

13- Which one aspect of learning the English language do you feel would be most beneficial to your study in the event of change?

A) Conversation work ( ) **B)** Grammar study ( ) **C)** Not sure ( )

Statistical Result: Conversation work: 91% Grammar study: 07% Not sure: 02%

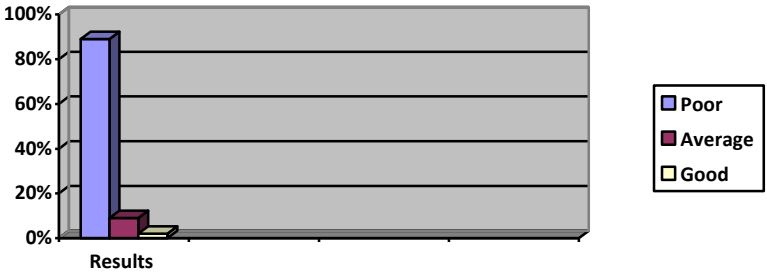
14- How is your English writing?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C/** Good ( )

Statistical Result: Poor: 82% Average: 13% Good: 05%

15-How is your English speaking?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C/** Good ( )



Statistical Result: Poor: 89% Average: 09% Good: 02%

16- How is your English listening?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C/** Good ( )

Statistical Result: Poor: 64% Average: 29% Good: 07%

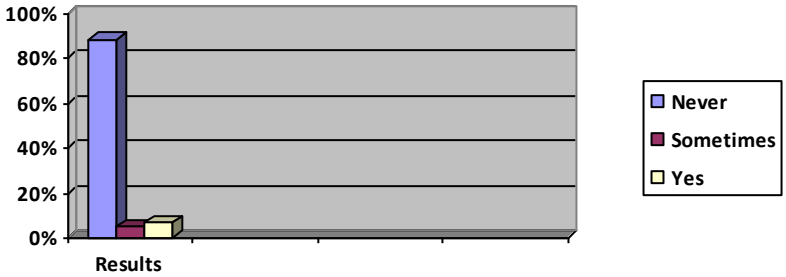
17- How is your English reading?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C/** Good ( )

Statistical Result: Poor: 20% Average: 34% Good: 46%

18- Is the library system and its opening times suitable for you?

A) Never ( ) **B)** Sometimes ( ) **C)** Always ( )



Statistical Result: Never: 88% Sometimes: 05% Yes: 07%

19- Is there anything further you would like to add which is not in the questionnaire? Do you have any suggestions?

General Summary: The majority of respondents criticised the government on a variety of educational issues. Many students also complained about library opening times, as well as the lack of books. Problematically, students were only able to access the published sources which they needed during breaks, as the library closed its doors at the same times as their lecture and class commitments. The researcher observed this fact for himself. Library doors were open from morning to lunch time, and then closed until the next day. The researcher also observed students with sufficient energy rushing across to borrow books during their brief breaks between classes. The obvious result was limited use of library facilities. Other problems that students complained about included the private EFL centres, where many of their teachers are in additional

employ. This is because salaries offered in the private sector are higher, and therefore supplement poor pay conditions in government-controlled HE institutions Students are thus encouraged by their teachers to attend these additional classes, but their feeling is that less effort is being put into university classes because teachers are working so hard for private schools. Another problem is that students cannot attend private centres because of the very high fees. Another significant point mentioned is that many students were uninterested and indifferent to the academic disciplines on offer, but enjoy and feel positive about their English classes – even though the teaching methodology needs improving.

Most students also complain about the living arrangements on campus, because they must share rooms with two to four fellow students. In addition, no kitchens are provided, so they are not able to cook for themselves. There are also frequent problems with

temperature control, and with power cuts which deprive them of heat and electricity for long periods. This is a further set of problems that makes studying in their own time difficult. The campus has little or no security, with students frequently fighting with each other, excessive noise levels, and general difficulties in accessing vital learning equipment such as computers and the internet. All these factors damage both their general studies and language learning in particular.

Appendix 2 - Statistical Report for Teacher Questionnaire

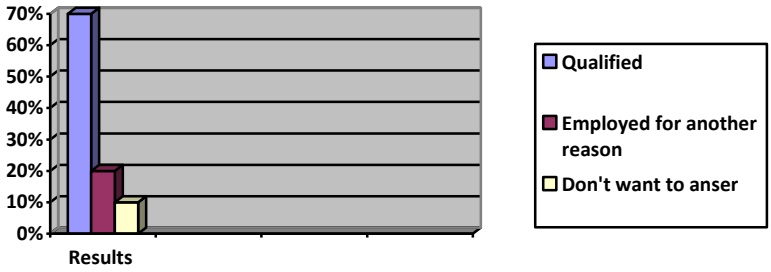
This report summarises the questionnaires given to teachers from all the universities of Iraqi Kurdistan (University of *Duhok, Salahaddin, Koya,* and *Sulaimani*) and collates information from 20 responses. All the teachers answering the questionnaire were teaching EFL at University. In the following summary report the structure of the original questions presented to the teachers is retained and then followed with a graph presenting the statistical summary of all the answers provided by the sample group of 20 teachers.

TEACHER QUESTIONAIRE

Please tick one answer for each question.

1- Are you qualified to teach at university level? Or are you employed because of some other reason?

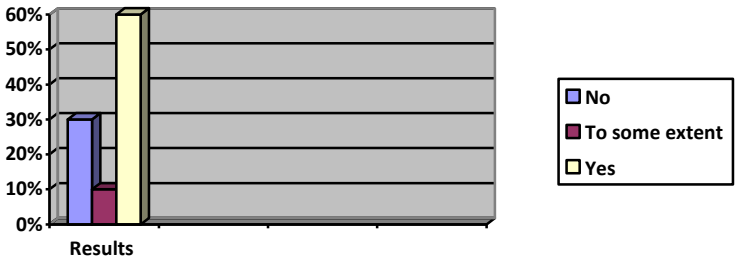
A) I do qualify ( ) **B)** Employed for another reason ( )
C) Don't want to answer ( )



Statistical Result: Qualified: 70% Employed for another reason: 20% Don't want answer: 10%

2- Do you like the English language?

A) No ( ) **B)** To some extent ( ) **C)** Yes ( )



Statistical Result: No: 30% To some extent: 10% Yes: 60%

3- Do you teach extra subjects which you are not qualified for?

A) No ( ) **B)** Often ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 30% Often: 40% Yes: 30%

4- If the school/college programme requires a textbook, are you allowed to use some different materials to make the class more interesting?

A) No ( ) **B)** Often ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 90% Often: 05% Yes: 05%

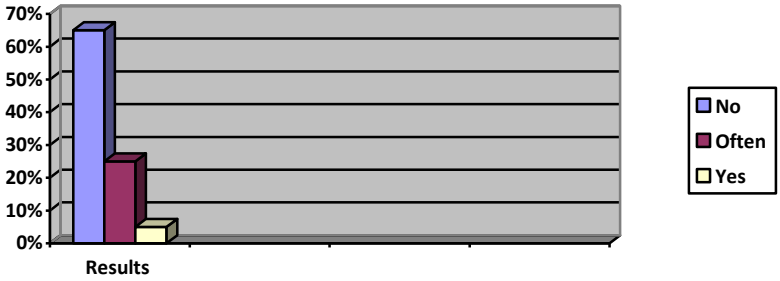
5- How would you describe the class size you teach?

A) Too big (over 40 students) ( ) **B)** normal (20-40 students) ( ) **C)** small (1-20 students) ( )

Statistical Result: too big: 75% Normal: 20% Small: 10%

6- Are students doing what you expect them to do? For example: homework, assignments or tests?

A) No ( ) **B)** Often ( ) **C)** Yes ( )



Statistical Result: No: 65% Often: 25% Yes: 05%

7- How would you rate the quality of your whole EFL programme?

A) Poor ( ) **B)** Average ( ) **C)** Good ( )

Statistical Result: Poor: 85% Average: 10% Good: 05%

8- Has the English programme changed in the last 19 years?

A) No ( ) **B)** To some extent ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 100% To some extent: 0% Yes: 0%

Note: The only change in the last 19 years is to the use of *Sunrise* books for use with year one to year eight Foundation school students. While this development is clearly an improvement in terms of 'good practice', such reform has not yet impacted on programme or textbooks used at tertiary level.

9- Do the students achieve language competence at the end of the year in the

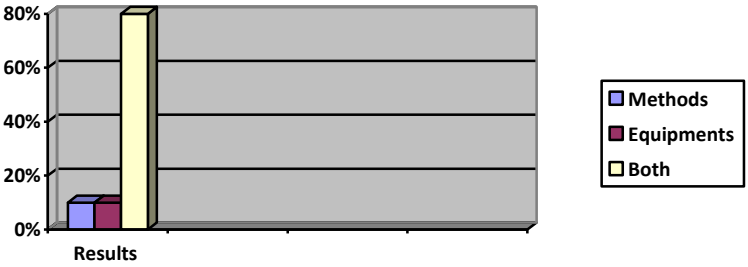
English programme provided by the government?

A) No ( ) **B)** Often ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 75% Often: 10% Yes: 15%

10- What problems do you have teaching English in the class? For example, not having the necessary equipment such as computers, projector or the methods of study?

A) Methods ( ) **B)** Equipments ( ) **C)** Both ( )



Statistical Result: Methods: 10% Equipments: 10% Both: 80%

11- Is English teaching interesting to you and are you happy doing it?

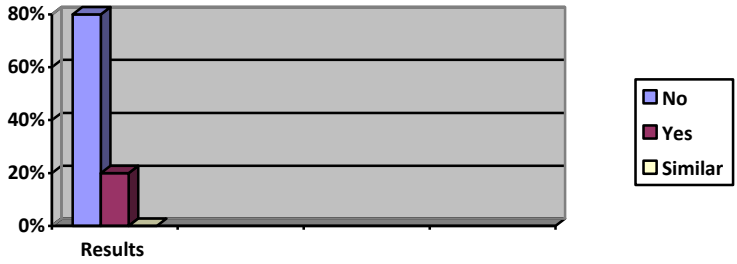
A) No ( ) **B)** To some extent ( ) **C)** Yes ( )

Statistical Result: No: 30% To some extent: 30%

Yes: 40%

12- Are all students in your English class the same level?

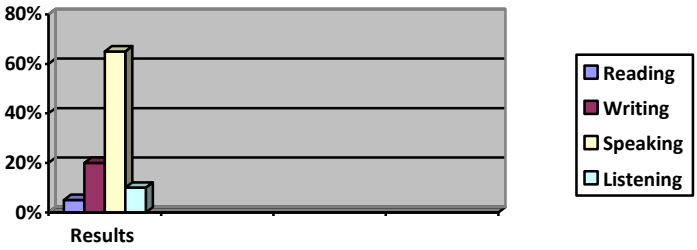
A) No, they are different levels ( ) **B)** Yes, they are the same levels ( ) **C**) Similar



Statistical Result: No: 80% Yes: 20% Similar: 0%

13- What is your students' weakest skill? Choose between reading, writing, speaking or listening.

A) Reading ( ) **B)** Writing ( ) **C)** Speaking ( ) **D)** Listening ( )

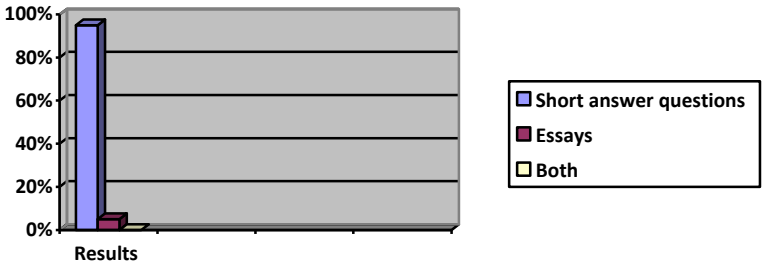


Statistical Result: Reading: 05% Writing: 20% Speaking: 65% Listening: 10%

14- Which methods do you use for exams in English?

e.g. Short-answer questions or essays?

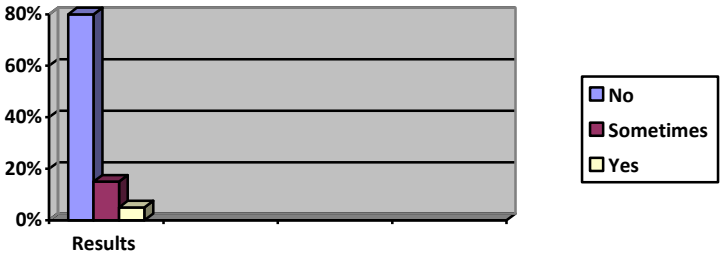
A) Short-answer questions ( ) **B)** Essays ( )



Statistical Result: Short-answer questions: 95% Essays: 05% Both: 0%

15- There are some new private English learning centres; are students getting help from using them?

A) No ( ) **B)** Sometimes ( ) **C)** Yes ( )



Statistical Result: No 80% Sometimes: 15% Yes: 05%

16- Is there anything further you would like to add which is not in the questionnaire? Do you have any suggestions?

Most of the teachers complain about students making little effort to work while some complain about the government. Most are not happy about the teaching

methods used and also condemn the lack of teaching resources and adequate equipment.

General Summary:

The teachers who agreed to participate in the questionnaire and interview survey thanked the researcher for carrying out this research. They hoped that findings would help the government, other teachers and students by providing information that might bring about reform of the EFL teaching system and (more generally) the education system in Iraqi Kurdistan. Those reforms perceived as most urgently needed by teachers participating in the survey are as follows.

Most universities in the modern world make things easier for their students by helping them with their studies, providing internet access, making available a wide range of books in their libraries, and encouraging their teaching staff to keep updating their

methodologies. In Iraqi Kurdistan, however, political problem have led the government to ignore teaching and learning systems and focus instead on immediate political issues. This narrow focus is understandable given the recent history of instability in the region. However, the political situation is now increasingly stable, and should now allow the government to address the present problems of EFL teaching and learning. To leave the present situation untouched would be detrimental for the future of the Kurdish nation and its ability to produce well-educated and articulate scholars who are able linguistically to participate at an international level. One can see from the questionnaires, for example, that because of fossilized systems, teachers are demoralized by the limited EFL methodologies which they are expected to employ, even though they love their subject. They are hampered by lack of resources, and further demoralized by de-motivated students who fail to do work set, as

confirmed by responses questions 2 and 11 on the teacher questionnaire.

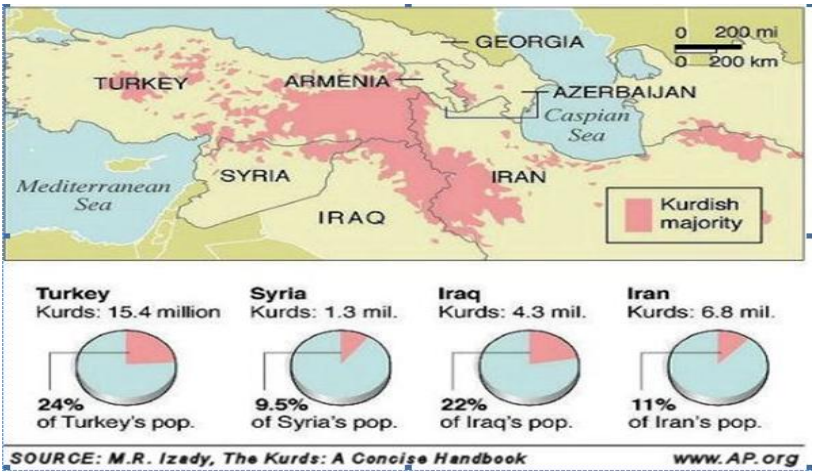
As discussed in chapter 1, the researcher cross-referenced data gathered via observations at selected private English learning centres which are profiting from the gap in the market created by poor university methodologies. He can therefore testify that these private language schools are much more innovative in the way they teach, and that they use more up-to-date communicative methods (such as controlled group-work) to provide opportunities for authentic student interaction. A variety of modern EFL course-books are also used (in contrast to the one textbook prescribed by the government authorities) together with rich learning resources such as the internet.

The researcher can also testify that many of the EFL teachers in such language centres are not only native speakers of English, but are also fully trained in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

methodologies, unlike the staff employed at HE institutions. Classes are also considerably smaller, allowing more teacher time per student. The emphasis is on student-talking-time (STT) rather than being teacher-dominated as in the traditional Grammar-Translation methods dictated by the prescribed government EFL syllabus. What was observed upheld the hypothesis that student 'learning' visibly takes place where there is such 'engagement of the self' in authentically participative classroom English language activities.

Appendix 3[34]: Map 1

Appendix 4[35]:



Appendix 5[36]: Map 2

Appendix 6:

Teaching Observation 1

Name: **Date:** 3rd January 2009

Location: Duhok University **Level:** 4

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) Preparation: Minimal, focusing on 'explanation' of the set text

B) Content: the life and works of a particular poet

C) Delivery/Performance/Organisation

Teacher as 'knower' explained the literary text to learners as follows:

I. Introduction

Contextual details such as place and date of birth of the poet, as contained in the set text (3mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Continuation of teacher-dominated reading aloud from the set text, with accompanying oral explanation, punctuated by occasional eye contact with students (30mins)

III. Closure

Brief Q & A session, to review the poet's biographical details and achievements (4mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students seemed to be listening attentively

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

No visual aids to assist students in processing the heavy information load.

No opportunity for student participation or ‘engagement’ with the material under study

No real assessment of whether or not learning had taken place.

Action plan and targets (areas for improvement)

The focus should shift from ‘teacher performance’ to the students’ learning experience. Learners need to engage with the poet’s work as a meaning-making activity, at a deep (rather than surface) level.

The class could be divided into groups, for example, and each given a different section of the poet’s work to prepare in advance, for discussion in class. One task could be to determine main themes, use of symbols to convey meanings, rhythm, and so on, with each group then reporting in turn to the rest of the class. The teacher could circulate from group to group as ‘facilitator’, giving help where needed as students prepare to present.

Another task set in advance could be to collect biographical details and/or literary analyses of the poet's work, then bring results to class to 'present' to classmates

Punctuality is an issue. Many students arrived late, with resulting disruption and loss of time.

Teaching Observation 2

Name: **Date:** 3rd January 2009

Location: Duhok University **Level:** 4

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) **Preparation:** Minimal. Two students were asked to present extracts from the set text (in their own handwriting) and 'explain' these extracts to classmates, but apparently without skills development and rehearsal.

B) **Content:** Presentations, as above. The focus was on the life of the poet under discussion. Two students had been asked to give talks on extracts from the set text, but only one had prepared as directed.

C) **Delivery/Performance/Organisation**

The student had copied out the text in her own handwriting, delivered as follows:

I. Introduction

Reading aloud from the text, giving biographical details, with names of selected poetic pieces (4mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Copying the text onto the white-board to accompany the 'read-aloud' exercise, together with attempts at 'explanation' (15mins)

III. Closure

Completion of the copying exercise (6mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

A first step towards experiential learning

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

Any benefit from this learning opportunity was negated in the absence of presentation skills development and rehearsal. Difficulty in conveying meanings in English forced reversion to Kurdish. Ridicule from classmates visibly humiliated and embarrassed the presenter, as did teacher feedback on performance.

Action plan and targets (areas for improvement)

It would have been wiser to defer this presentation exercise, rather than put such pressure on the one student who had prepared her work as instructed. Much more student rehearsal and skills development is needed to enable learners to 'present' effectively. Deep-level support is needed with 'meanings' and how to communicate these meanings.

One way of approaching this developmental process (and thereby building confidence) is to begin with 5-minute delivery of a news item of personal interest, for example. Students (and teachers) also need to be clear about the purpose of 'presenting' in this way. It is

difficult to assess what kind of learning outcome is expected from ‘explaining’ a copied text without understanding, for instance. It is recommended that teachers use Bloom’s Taxonomy of ‘cognitive domains’ as a teaching and learning tool to determine such ‘outcomes’, so that expectations are clearly stated, as suggested in chapter II (p.49 ff).

Greater teacher awareness is needed concerning affective factors as drivers of learning. Negative feedback on presentation performance should be given privately, for example, together with clear and constructive directions for improvement. The teacher should not allow classmates to ridicule learner efforts in this way. Classroom discipline is an issue, therefore.

Punctuality is a further issue, as before. Many students arrived late, with resulting disruption and loss of time.

Teaching Observation 3

Name: **Date:** 4th January 2009 **Location:** Salahaddin University **Level:** 3

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) Preparation: Minimal, and lacking in focus on English meanings

B) Content: A political article in English for translation into Kurdish

C) Delivery/Performance/Organisation

Sequential movement through the article as lesson content (teacher dominated).

I. Introduction

A student was selected from the class and directed to write out the first part of the English article on the whiteboard, with the teacher providing an oral translation into Kurdish (15mins).

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Continuation of the English text, but with oral (instead of written) delivery, with the teacher as ‘knower’ reading aloud to the class. The focus was removed from English meanings. Instead, the aim was seemingly to contrast Kurdish dialectic variations in the three different regional areas previously discussed (see p. 21 ff). Discussion was invited on these differing translations (15mins)

III. Closure

Selected students were asked to translate specific words (5mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students demonstrated some ability to translate into Kurdish specific items of vocabulary.

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

Exclusive focus on regional variations into Kurdish gave no opportunity for internalisation of English in itself. Student participation was limited only to surface acquisition of knowledge 'about' these variations. No experiential opportunities built in for students to 'apply' what was learnt, aside from a brief lesson closure (5-minute review).

Action plan and targets (areas for improvement)

The teacher could in future focus on translating articles of more personal relevance to learners (such as hobbies, sport, music, cultural issues, and so on) instead of narrowing input to the purely political.

Class discipline and lesson structure is an issue. Allowing continual laughter and joking between learners is disruptive, and takes attention away from the task of how English meanings can be understood and internalised, and Kurdish equivalents identified. Prolonged discussion on Kurdish regional variations is particularly unhelpful. The main aim should be to fix English meanings to their general equivalents, then support learners in practising and applying new understandings in practical exercises and communicative activities. Experiential learning opportunities of this kind should be structured into the lesson in future.

Teaching Observation 4

Name: **Date:** 4th January 2009 **Location:** Salahaddin University **Level:** 1

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) Preparation: Apparently minimal.

B) Content: Grammatical structures

C) Delivery/Performance/Organisation

Two modes of delivery:

a) A student was selected to copy out the English lesson text onto the whiteboard

b) The teacher 'explained' the text while the students listened

I. Introduction

Simultaneous oral explanation from 'teacher as knower' while the student copied the text under study onto the whiteboard (20mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Students directed to copy the finished text from whiteboard (10mins)

III. Closure

Students directed to complete a brief review exercise (5mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students demonstrated ability to copy hand writing

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

It is unclear what kind of ‘learning’ is targeted through this ‘copying’ exercise.

Disruptive external noise levels and much chatting amongst themselves interfered with students’ concentration. Constant comings and goings also negated learning. No comment was

made by the teacher when students arrived late, or left without seeking permission. Classroom management and discipline is an issue.

Action plan and targets (Areas for improvement)

For the future, the teacher should clarify for himself (and for students) what kind of learning is expected from this 'copying exercise'. If (for example) the aim is to improve handwriting, then this could surely be done as a homework task. The stated intent of the lesson is a focus on grammatical structures. Specific structures therefore need to be selected for presentation and study, then individual and group practice, followed by communicative activities, where learners use and internalize new input.

There are also issues of classroom management. The importance of punctuality should be stressed, for example. Students should also be forbidden to exit until the end of the lesson. The teacher should also prevent excessive discussion in the first language unless the aim in this discussion is to find equivalents in English.

Splitting the class into pairs or groups and monitoring progress by circulating amongst learners would also help to focus students' attention on the set task.

Teaching Observation 5

Name: **Date:** 5th April 2009

Location: Koya University **Level:** 2

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) **Preparation:** Apparently minimal

B) **Content:** English Literature, with a Drama focus

C) **Delivery/Performance/Organisation**

No particular organizational teaching sequence was apparent.

I. Introduction

The teacher as 'knower' read aloud to the students (using a dialogue from an imaginative text) while students listened (10mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

The teacher abandoned the lesson, and shifted instead to questioning the researcher about his investigation, while students listened. Selected aspects of this exchange (as judged appropriate by the teacher) were then translated by him into Kurdish for the benefit of students (15mins)

III. Closure

There was no lesson closure. Instead, the teacher excused himself and left, cutting short the session by 15 minutes

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

In the absence of learning checks of any kind, outcomes are difficult to assess.

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

Students were not given any opportunity to demonstrate what (if anything) had been learned.

Action plan and targets (Areas for improvement)

As suggested elsewhere, the teacher should clarify for himself (and for students) what kind of learning is targeted, and at what cognitive level learners are expected to operate (as in Bloom's Taxonomy, *op. cit*). Listening to a dialogue, for example, may not result in learning if students are not given the opportunity to first explore meanings, or given practice exercises to apply those meanings. Selection of texts at a level appropriate to student ability is also an issue which needs to be looked at, in line with Krashen's notions of 'meaningful input'.

The teacher's decision to abandon the lesson and instead question the researcher could have been turned into a student learning opportunity. Learners could have been prepared in advance with question forms, for instance, and invited to question the researcher for themselves, with teacher help when needed.

Teaching Observation 6

Name: **Date:** 5th April 2009

Location: Koya University **Level:** 3

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) **Preparation**: Apparently minimal

B) **Content:** Conversation

C) **Delivery/Performance/Organisation**

A sequential delivery of reading aloud a written dialogue, followed by Q & A based on what had been understood.

I. Introduction

Recapped previous lesson (5mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Reading aloud to students a written dialogue between two people (15mins)

III. Closure

Close questioning of students about aspects of the dialogue (15mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students did demonstrate ‘engagement of self’ by responding to teacher questioning.

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

The targeted student ‘learning’ of a model dialogue operated only at ‘surface level’. There was no exploration of words and phrases as ‘acts of meaning’.

Action plan and targets (Areas for improvement)

As suggested previously, the teacher should clarify for himself (and for students) what kind of learning is targeted, and at what cognitive level learners are expected to operate (as in Bloom's Taxonomy, *op. cit*). Learning a model dialogue does not approximate to normal social interaction, for example, given that what is likely to be said in a normal 'turn-taking' exchange is unknown. Without understanding, students cannot therefore adjust and respond appropriately in 'real-life' interaction in English. More teacher focus is recommended on conversational equivalents for what is already known in the first language, with participative learning activities where learners can apply such equivalents. Dividing students into A and B pairs using 'Information gap' activities would be a useful exercise here. As and Bs in each pair will thus have only their own responses, and must respond to whatever is said to them by their opposite number. Such an activity would help to build learner confidence in understanding what is said to them, and in responding appropriately. Students

might then feel able to participate in role play activities, to further internalize new input.

Teaching Observation 7

Name: **Date:** 15th April 2009 **Location:** Sulaimani University **Level:** 1

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) Preparation: Apparently minimal

B) Content: Literary Criticism

C) Delivery/Performance/Organisation

Lesson sequence progressed from reading aloud to students a written text already in their possession, followed by student writing of the text on the whiteboard with teacher 'explanation' of the text.

I. Introduction

Recapped previous lesson (10mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Reading aloud from the set text, then directing a student to write a specific paragraph on the whiteboard which was then ‘explained’ (20mins)

III. Closure

Students were directed to finish copying from the whiteboard by way of closure (10mins)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students did ‘engage’ with content to some extent by asking questions to clarify their understanding.

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

As before, it is unclear what kind of ‘learning’ is targeted in this copying activity, which occupied most of the lesson.

Action plan and targets (Areas for improvement)

In order to carry out the intent of 'literary criticism', teacher focus for the future needs to shift to learner understanding of the text itself. Very little is achieved by simply 'copying' and memorising a text already possessed if the content is not understood as a meaning-making activity. One way of bringing about such engagement with meaning is to assign different sections of the text to either pairs or groups, and to have them work together on meanings to 'report back' to the rest of the class. The teacher could then circulate amongst pairs or groups, given help and support where needed.

This kind of basic meaning exploration needs to take place before learners can progress to the cognitively demanding task of textual analysis in terms of metaphor, symbol, rhythm and so on.

Teaching Observation 8

Name: **Date:** 17th April 2009 **Location:** Sulaimani University **Level:** 2

Quality of Teaching by Teacher:

A) Preparation: Apparently minimal

B) Content: Phonology

C) Delivery/Performance/Organisation

The lesson progressed from teacher as 'knower' reading aloud (and explaining) from the textbook, to reading practice for learners themselves.

I. Introduction

Four different students were directed in turn to read sentences from the set text (10mins)

II. Lesson Core (Main Lesson)

Teacher-dominated reading aloud from the set book, with brief explanations following each paragraph (20mins)

III. Closure

Brief discussion about preparation for forthcoming examinations (10 mins, consisting of student writing)

Quality of Learning by Students

A) Positive (Learning Outcomes)

Students appeared to follow attentively, although it was unclear what learning outcome was targeted in 'read-aloud' progression.

B) Negative (Learning Difficulties)

No engagement with the text took place. There was no focus on English 'sounds' as conveying specific meanings, nor on how these sounds are produced.

Action plan and targets (areas for improvement)

For the future, the focus should shift (as before) from teacher performance to one of enabling learners themselves to engage with (and internalize) lesson content. Many excellent course books are now available which (as part of an integrated approach to learning) incorporate a detailed study of aspects of phonology in context. Accompanying teachers' books set out exact procedures for maximizing student learning to assist newly qualified tutors, or those lacking in confidence as to how to bring about such learning. *Cutting Edge* is one such example. As indicated in chapter II, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for existing teachers could incorporate support in such communicative language teaching techniques.

Appendix 7:

The following programme information, objectives, and cross-semester grids apply across all 4 of the principal HE institutions Iraqi Kurdistan.

University of Duhok (www.uod.ac [37])

With four years of study of English language and literature, the Dept. of English aims to prepare individuals with different career objectives. It prepares teachers of English for Intermediate and High Schools in the region; translators and interpreters to work in the various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations. It also aims at preparing researchers in the fields of linguistics and literature as a preliminary step to joining the post graduate study program in the department for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Linguistics, or in the rest of the universities of the country and/or the world. Study of the English language is a comprehensive recognition of English language and Literature. Moreover, the English department provides opportunities for students to display

their English prowess in journalism and on stage. This department is intended for those who want to concentrate on language and for those who want to concentrate on literary studies by offering a comprehensive recognition of English Literature and English as the universal language.

Koya University (www.koyauni.ac[38])

The main duty of this vital department is to educate competent cadres, professionals and experts in English language for the undergraduate and graduate students, consequently becoming teachers in the educational system of our country and involve in the intellectual institutions of the country.

The importance of this department lies in the fact that English language nowadays becomes a global, indispensable language throughout the world due to the appearance of globalization, and bringing about the communication revolution which combined individuals across the corners of the world. Nowadays, English language becomes the mouthpiece of science and this

revolution, thus, Kurdistan citizens are in dire need of this fast-developing moments further from any other era, the development of this vital language is crucial in our region so as to open our country to the world and be aware of the dramatic changes happening around us

University of Sulaimani (www.univsul.org[39])

English Department provides courses that aim at developing teaching and learning abilities, broadly conceived. The department is engaged with literatures in English as a means of teaching the language. The department attempts to raise student capacities in writing across the curriculum. It focuses on graduating students with linguistic and literary background to seek opportunity to pursue further academic endeavors. The department also helps the undergraduates to develop their skills for diverse purposes: to continue academic work in English studies, to write and edit, to teach, and to pursue various careers. The teachers are required to augment class work with innovative approaches to

mentored research, service learning, internships, and experiential learning.

- Graduate students with adequate qualifications in English language and literature.

-Enhance the learners' level of communication in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

-Creating opportunities for students to be acquainted with English culture and history.

-Graduating students who should be equipped not only with the necessary research skills but also with the necessary critical and creative thinking abilities that help them to become long-term learners after their graduation.

Salahaddin University(www.suh-edu.com[40])

the English Dept.was founded in the year 1985at Salahaddin Unversity first as an administrative paet for about one year. Later in 1986 it admitted students for study. the aim of this

depaetment is to produce specialists in the filed of English language. Bachelor, M.A, and PhD aer admitted to the department . higher studies in this department started in the year 1993. More than 20 students got masters in linguistics and 9 students in literature and 5 students were awarded PHD in Literature.

An undergraduate course of study with *English Language* Departments consists of the following subject areas:

First Year, First Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		
	Theoretical	practical	Units
Literature	**3**		**3**
Computing	**2**		**2**
Vocabulary	**2**		**2**
Grammar	**3**		**3**
Composition	**2**		**2**

French Language	**2**		**2**
Phonetic	**3**		**3**
Kurdish Studies	**2**		**2**
Conversation	**2**	**1**	**2**
Total	**20**	**1**	**21**

First Year, Second Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		
	Theoretical	practical	Units
Poetry	**3**		**3**
Computing	**1**	**1**	**2**
Vocabulary	**2**		**2**
Grammar	**3**		**3**
Composition	**2**		**2**
French Language	**2**		**2**
Phonetic	**3**		**3**
Kurdish Studies	**2**		**2**
Conversation	**2**		**2**
Total	**20**	**1**	**21**

Second Year, First Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
Morphology	2		2
Phonetics	2		2
Conversation	2		2
Understanding	2		2
Poetry	3		3
Drama	3		3
Composition	2		2
Novel	3		3
French Language	2		2
Total	21		21

Second Year, Second Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
Morphology	2		2
Phonetics	2		2
Conversation	2		2

Understanding	**2**		**2**
Poetry	**3**		**3**
Drama	**3**		**3**
Composition	**2**		**2**
Novel	**3**		**3**
French Language	**2**		**2**
Total	**21**		**21**

Third Year, First Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
History of Language	**2**		**2**
Drama	**3**		**3**
Grammar	**2**		**2**
Article	**2**		**2**

Poetry	**3**		**3**
Novel	**3**		**3**
Translation	**2**		**2**
Total	**17**		**17**

Third Year, Second Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
History of Language	**2**		**2**
Drama	**3**		**3**
Grammar	**2**		**2**
Article	**2**		**2**
Poetry	**3**		**3**
Novel	**3**		**3**
Translation	**2**		**2**
Total	**17**		**17**

Forth Year, First Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
Linguistics	2		2
Art Criticism	2		2
Grammar	2		2
Drama	2		2
Poetry	2		2
Novel	3		3
Translation	2		2
Total	16		16

Forth Year, Second Semester

Subjects	Hrs./week		Units
	Theoretical	practical	
Linguistics	2		2

Art Criticism	**2**		**2**
Grammar	**2**		**2**
Drama	**2**		**2**
Poetry	**2**		**2**
Novel	**3**		**3**
Translation	**2**		**2**
Total	**16**		**16**

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A critical history of ***English Language Education*** *in Iraqi Kurdistan, from the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in 1991 to the present day: reform, crisis and strategies for change.*

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