

The Techniques Used in Teaching the Four Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in Iraqi Schools¹

*Al-Zahraa Sinan Ali, *Duha Ayad Salim, *Sajad Ahmed Aziz, *Yakeen Jabbar Abu, *Al-Hood Zahraa, *Sabah Ghanem, **Prof. Bushra Saadoon Mohammad Al Noori

**Students, **Professor*

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Al-Mansour University College English Department, Iraq

ABSTRACT

English has not only become the most generally spoken language, but also the most important language around the world. This bold statement lies in the fact that people around the world cannot do without English. It is the major language of science, medicine, monetary interaction, and more importantly, the international language of communication.

In education, therefore, English is equally important, if not more urgently important. Such acquired importance of English has made it an essential language to be learned by all non-English people in the field of education and otherwise. As a result, at the personal level more and more individuals have made sure to learn English, sometimes in addition to some other languages, to increase their chances of a better life in today's highly competitive world.

However, mastering English would require the mastering of its four crucial skills; namely, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Those skills are vital and the key to mastering English as a language. The current research aims to investigate the importance of those four skills of English in teaching English for Iraqi learners. The research includes four sections, concluding remarks with references.

Keywords: *Teaching English Language, Skills; Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, Iraqi Learners.*

SECTION ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Introductory Note

This section will include the Importance of the Study and its significance, the aims, limits, and definitions of the basic terms.

The Importance of the Study

Learning English language skills plays an essential role in improving college students' performance in the recognition and production fields. Besides, the English language is an international language and it is considered to be the major window to the world.(Richards and Schmidt ,2002:293).

Reading and Listening are described as the receptive skills whereas writing and speaking are considered to be the productive skills (Yule, 1995:4).Receptive and productive skills are called communication skills. (Harmer, 2007: 246).

Iraqi students are not good at English Language in general, and learning the four skills in particular. Although most students studied English primary schools, the problem is an unsolved matter in our country Iraq because of our old teaching methods and curriculum used in schools previously which focused on grammatical rules memorization and practice exercises , That is to say the main emphasized by teachers of English was based on one skill (grammar), whereas the four skills (listening, speaking reading and writing)were less emphasized. Therefore, students' facing difficulties can be clearly seen in the communicative skills usage.(Nunan, 2002).

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Aims

This research paper aims at answering the following questions:

1. Determining the English skills that are most frequently used by EFL students according to their frequencies.
2. Discovering the difficulties that are related to speaking, listening, and reading skills for students.

Limits

The research paper was conducted for Iraqi schools for intermediate school for females in the second semester in the morning studies .The current research paper is a modern one, written in 2022_2023 .

Procedures

This research paper has a great value for both students and teachers. In case that learners often have strengths or weaknesses in particular skills, and in some cases can achieve high levels in, for example, reading and writing, while not being able to speak or listen at a comparable level , so the teacher will deal with this problem in order to make his/her pupils become Influent.

Definition of Basic Terms

The most important terms in this study are:

1. **Four Skills** : is a term that is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002:293) as “the mode or manner in which language is used”. It represents the four skills of EFL: **listening, speaking, reading and writing**.
2. **Listening skill**: is a skill that contributes to your ability to accurately receive information when communicating with others.(Jennifer,2021).
3. **Speaking Skill**: Bygate (1987) defined speaking as producing auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners.
4. **Reading Skill** :Brown (1994) defined this term as the ability for someone to interact with a text and take in the words. If you have the ability to read, you can do this.
5. **Writing Skill**: as Joyce defined the writing skill as the skill you use to write effectively and succinctly. A good writer is someone who can communicate their point to their audience without using too much fluff and in a way that the other person can understand.(Eliot,2008).

SECTION TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RELATED PREVIOUS STUDIES

Introductory Notes

This section will cover all the information and give a clear description about The Techniques Used in Teaching the Four Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in Iraqi Schools.

The Historical Background of four skills

1. The Historical Background of Listening skill

Listening, as a major language skill that naturally develops faster than speaking and influences the development of reading and writing skills in a new language, was not brought into prominence until the late 1940s. Listening, at that time, was defined according to successful transmission and recreation of messages. The problem with such a view was that listening would suffer from the assumption that exposure to language would lead to mastery in the acquisition of language listening skills. (Goh,2008).

Through the 1960s and in the wake of the influence of behaviorism on language learning, listening was defined as analyzing and classifying input, so that it could be stored and retrieved efficiently. Perception and decoding of the sounds, phonemes, word stress, and sentence-level intonation were all the focus of instruction back then. The main

listening activities included drills for discriminating sounds at word and sentence levels on the basis of a linear processing of information. In the 1970s and 1980s, definition of listening is interpreting the cultural significance of speech behavior and earned acceptance. It was then in the 1990s when listening came to be labeled as the parallel processing of input. From the 1990s afterwards, some models have been presented to describe the nature of listening comprehension. The theoretical foundations are presented in the following entries.(Krashen,1982).

2. The Historical Background of Speaking Skill

Speaking was a crucial tool in the public area. Socrates. During this period Pericles, the Athenian ruler and Aspasia's partner, treated Aspasia as an equal and allowed her every opportunity to engage in dialogue with the important and educated men of society.

Socrates (469-399 BCE) greatly influenced the direction of the Classical Period. Most of what we know about Socrates comes from the writings of his student Plato. Plato (429-347 BCE) wrote about rhetoric in the form of dialogues with Socrates as the main character. Plato defined the scope of rhetoric according to his negative opinions of the art. Cicero (106-43 BCE) is considered one of the most significant speakers of all time. Cicero is most famous in the field of speaking for creating the five canons of speaking, a five-step process for developing a persuasive speech that we still use to teach public speaking today. Overall, the Enlightenment Period served as a bridge between the past and the present. The speakers and teachers looked to Cicero and others to inspire defense of the new republic. Throughout the 20th century, rhetoric developed as a concentrated field of study in high schools and universities. (Quintilian,2019).

3. The Historical Background of Reading Skill

The history of reading is a topic that probably interests all readers. Reading what someone else has written brings with it a sense of continuity and solidarity. This sense of solidarity is strengthened when we get to know how others read. What we read and how it affects us can reflect our personalities and our experiences as individuals. The history of readers and reading can offer much insight into the nature and history of the society as a whole. The topic is a fascinating one, and one that has several absorbing aspects. Join us as we try to construct the bare bones of the process of the evolution of readers and reading over the course of history.(Anne, 2018).

4. The Historical Background of Writing Skill

Scholars generally agree that the earliest form of writing appeared almost 5,500 years ago in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). Early pictorial signs were gradually substituted by a complex system of characters representing the sounds of Sumerian (the language of Sumer in Southern Mesopotamia) and other languages. From 2900 BC, these began to be impressed in wet clay with a reed stylus, making wedge-shaped marks which are now known as cuneiform. The process of writing cuneiform stabilized over the next 600 years. Curves were eliminated, signs simplified and the direct connection between the look of pictograms and their original object of reference was lost.(Ewan, 2019).

The Techniques of Four Skills

1. The Techniques of Listening skill

1. Consider eye contact.
2. Be alert, but not intense.
3. Pay attention to nonverbal signs, such as body language and tone.
4. Make a mental image of what the speaker is saying.
5. Empathize with the speaker.(Fran ,2022).

2. The Techniques of Speaking Skill

1. Don't be ashamed to make mistakes.
2. Embrace pauses : The biggest fear of a person with weak communication skills is a pause.
3. Keep a mental count of filler words.
4. Speak at a pace you are comfortable with and try to calm down and slow down your pace.
5. Write down the mistakes you made.(Reshmi, 2021).

3. The Techniques of Reading Skill

The five techniques of highly skilled readers include :

1. Activating.
2. Summarizing.
3. Monitoring and clarifying.
4. Visualizing and organizing.
5. Searching and selecting. (Patricia,2015).

4. The Techniques of Writing Skill

1. Review grammar and spelling basics.
2. Read what you want to write.
3. Use simpler words and phrases.
4. Minimize the number of negatives in a sentence.
5. Write shorter sentences, but avoid choppiness.(Chad,2016).

Related Previous Studies

1. There are previous studies discussing The Techniques Used in Teaching the Four Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in Iraqi Schools . One of these studies conducted by Oxford (1993:206) shows that "speaking, reading, and writing skills are developed depending on listening skill as an essential one. To Highlight interest in listening skills, English proficiency for students is developed depending on known listening strategies."
2. Another study conducted by Zinah (2019) shows that the four skills of English language are not only deemed important, but also would represent the standing pillars on which English language rests, and to master English it is highly imperative to master its four skills.
3. The last study conducted by Al_ noori (2023) shows that the teacher should make all his/her efforts in order to make the students master the four skills.

SECTION THREE

Introductory Note

This section includes Experimental Design, questionnaire and 8 Items for the questionnaire design and the experience of the Iraqi teacher.

Experimental Design

The researcher checks previous studies before writing the questionnaire items. According to the information the questionnaire items were designed. The questionnaire designed online by using google forms and published online for the students in social media apps especially, Telegram. The questionnaire items are a collection of questions designed to investigate the students' preferences and opinions about The Techniques Used in Teaching the Four Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in Iraqi Schools.

Questionnaire

The researcher has designed a questionnaire which consists of 8 items including the gender (Females).8 items, see **Appendix A:**

Choose your gender:

- Male
- Female

Grade:

- First grade
- Second grade
- Third grade
- Fourth grade
- Fifth grade
- Sixth grade

City

- Baghdad
- Others

Choose your preferred answer carefully:

1_ As a pupil, you become able to use the knowledge of relevant basic English from your teacher.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

2_ As a Pupil, you become able to be Influential in using your skills .

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

3_ As a Pupil, your level in mastering four skills has increased .

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

4_ As a Pupil, your level in mastering four skills has decreased.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

5_ The teacher uses the written skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

6_ The teacher uses the reading skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

7_ The teacher uses the speaking skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

8_The teacher uses the listening skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

The Experience of the Iraqi Teacher about The Techniques Used in Teaching the Four Skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in Iraqi Schools.

According to Listening skill, the teacher will do what suits his /her students and his / her own approach. Consider the following lesson plan:

Name:-----(student teacher) Date:-----
 Level: ----- Time:45 minutes

Learning Objective(s)

1. Listening for specific information(news broadcast).
2. Grammar/structure: Past continuous and simple past practice to check whether students can use what has been previously taught.

Personal Teaching objective(s)

To use more authentic material in the classroom.
 Vocabulary : Essential vocabulary in news reports. Anticipated knowledge and problems
 Cultural unfamiliarity with some items in recording.
 Solutions: Avoid using these items in student tasks.
 Materials: Recording of radio news broadcasts(5minutes in length)
 :worksheets.

| | | |
|------------|--------|-------------|
| Procedures | Timing | Interaction |
|------------|--------|-------------|

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Prepare students for listening task Brainstorming in pairs: What has been in the news? Write on the board what is relevant or needed. Elicit items that will be needed but not included.</p> <p>Listening tasks and feedback Show worksheet and give instructions, then check understanding. Students study task Allocate tasks Play tape. A's and B's pool information to complete worksheets.</p> | <p>3minute 3 minutes 3 minutes 2 minutes 2 minutes 2 minutes</p> | <p>student to student teacher to students students to teacher</p> <p>students to teacher student to student students to teacher students listen student to student tape to students students to teacher</p> |
|---|--|---|

| | | |
|---|-----------|----------------------|
| Play recording again. | 5 minutes | |
| Confirm students' answers. | 2 minutes | |
| Preparation for role play | 7 minutes | |
| Divide class into groups to play the roles. | 2 minutes | |
| Group A prepares to act as money scandal characters. | 5 minutes | students to students |
| Group B prepares to act as plane crash survivors. | 5 minutes | students to students |
| Role play | | students to teacher |
| Pair students from each group (A+B,A+B...). | 1 minute | student to teacher |
| Students A interview students B re: plane crash | 3 minutes | student to teacher |
| Students B interview students A re: money scandal. | 3 minutes | |
| Feedback | | |
| Make correction of errors heard. | | |
| Time permitting... | 3 minutes | teacher to student |
| Discuss actual current topics in the media and what media students use. | 7 minutes | |

According to Reading skill , the teacher will do what suits his /her students and his / her own approach. Consider the following lesson plan:

| Procedures | Timing | Interaction |
|---|----------------|--|
| Lead in/ personalizationeating out, hotels/motels, favorite, food/restaurant | 5 min | teacher to students |
| Pre-teach essential vocabulary a. Distribute handout with key vocabulary words and their definitions. b. Wire focus question for following step on board. c. Brisk feedback, but deal with pronunciation difficulties on key words | 5 min. | students to teacher students to students, student to student students |
| First reading Set focus task: "Find names of nine professions." Students scan text | 3 min. | teacher to students, students to students |
| Second reading b. Set comprehension task(true/false statements) c. Check exercises. d. Check instructions. e. Have students work I pairs f. Monitor their works. g. Quick feedback. | 2min. 2 min | teacher to students, student to student student to student |
| Third reading a. Set grammar task. Divide students into groups. b. Check instructions. c. Have students work in pairs d. Monitor their works. e. Quick feedback on errors. | 10 min. | student to student |
| Follow-up a. Discussion and personalization. b. Monitor for outstanding errors; note errors for wrap-up. | 10 min | |
| Wrap-up a. Write errors on board and elicit problems or corrections "That is it. Well done, and have a good day!" | | |

According to writing skill , the teacher will do what suits his /her students and his / her own approach. Consider the following lesson plan:

LESSON PLAN (Writing Process)

Theme: World of Knowledge

Topic: Plants

Learning Standards:

3.1.1 Able to write in neat legible print with correct spelling:

(b) simple sentences

3.2.2 Able to write with guidance

(a) simple sentences

Learning objectives: By the end of the lesson, pupils will:

(i) write simple sentences based on the words heard spell the words correctly

Cross-curricular elements: Constructivism

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS ANALYSIS

Introductory Notes

In this section, the researcher will analyze the results of the questionnaire.

The Statistical Results for the Questionnaire

The participants were quite active with the researcher, and the majority of the kids were very interactive and completed the questionnaire correctly. The total number of participants according to their gender was 133. The analysis of the data collected from the student will be presented as the table below:

| The Questions | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
|----------------------|-------|----------|---------|
| The first question | 77.7 | 4.4 | 33.5 |
| The second question | 83.4 | 7.8 | 26.9 |
| The third question | 44.4 | 5.5 | 23.5 |
| The fourth question | 70 | 14.5 | 23.2 |
| The fifth question | 77.5 | 21.6 | 38.4 |
| The sixth question | 43.9 | 12.4 | 18.4 |
| The seventh question | 49.6 | 16.3 | 34.1 |
| The eighth question | 36.7 | 12 | 30.7 |

From the results above, it's noticeably that the pupils have proved that four skills are valuable and efficient in the students' way of learning. Today parents are becoming more and more conscious that students need to work in a relaxed environment. In this respect, it will be very helpful for parents who can afford materials for his students

because these four skills develop the students' intelligence. In contrast, the results have shown that teachers use almost all the written skills in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

The current research paper has been set out to discuss and demonstrate the importance of the four different skills of the English language. The paper began by introducing a brief background of the history and status of the English language in Iraq; first as a second language, then as a foreign language.

The significance and necessity of English in today's world has been investigated, too. The present research paper has then shown how important those different skills are in the process of learning English in the context of Iraq.

The argument has illustrated that in the case of Iraqi learners as well as any other foreign learners of the language studying English as a foreign language, mastering the different skills of the language is the doorway to mastering the language and to success.

In addition, the four skills of English have been shown to be virtually equally significant in the whole process of learning English for Iraqi and other learners for that matter.

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Appendix A

The model below as it will be shown in table is the questionnaire that it will be given to the pupils in order to choose the best option according their attitudes and preferences:

| | | | |
|--|-------|----------|---------|
| 1_ As a pupil, you become able to use the knowledge of relevant basic English from your teacher. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 2_ As a Pupil, you become able to be Influential in using your skills . | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 3_ As a Pupil, your level in mastering four skills has increased . | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 4_ As a Pupil, your level in mastering four skills has decreased. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 5_ The teacher uses the written skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 6_ The teacher uses the reading skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 7_ The teacher uses the speaking skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 8_ The teacher uses the listening skills more than the rest of the skills in the classroom | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |

