

Exploring the EFL Students' Use of English Jargon

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المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة النجف الأشرف

Abstract:-

Students, in countries where English is regarded as a foreign language, encounter plenty of obstacles that hinder them from using English language outside the classroom. Students in such countries need to acquire vocabulary through practice because vocabulary is the starter refence of learning the language. Hence, this study is targeted specifically at exploring the students' current use of English jargon in ELT classes. It has been used a descriptive qualitative method as a research design. Sixty students were chosen from 2nd grade of Al-Ahrar intermediate school for boys in Najaf, Iraq to represent the study sample. A questionnaire has been selected to collect the data of interest. It consists of ten items with five Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The items comprise two topics: first, approachable classroom language (5 items), second, English jargon effect on engagement (5 items). The collected data have been analyzed via Google Forms. The study findings shows that students hold negative attitudes towards using English jargon, and consider it as unwelcome classroom language. In respect of engagement, the negative reactions given by the students reveal an actual problem of communication.

Keywords: exploring, EFL students, English jargon.

المخلص:-

الطلبة في بلدان مثل العراق حيث تعتبر اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية يواجهون الكثير من المعوقات التي تمنعهم من استخدام اللغة خارج الصف، هؤلاء الطلبة بحاجة الى اكتساب مفردات عن طريق التمرين لان هذه المفردات هي مرجع اولي لتعلم اللغة. لذلك هذه الدراسة تهدف الى استكشاف استخدام الطلبة الحالي لمصطلحات اللغة الانكليزية في صفوف تعلم اللغة. تم اختيار البحث الوصفي النوعي كتصميم للبحث. ستون طالبا تم اختيارهم من متوسطة الاحرار للبنين في النجف، العراق ليمثلوا عينة البحث. تم اختيار الاستبيان لجمع البيانات المطلوبة، والذي تألف من عشر فقرات لكل فقرة خمس اختيارات: اتفق جدا، اتفق، محايد، لا اتفق، لا اتفق جدا. تضمنت الفقرات موضوعين رئيسيين: الاول هو لغة الصف القابلة للوصول (خمس فقرات) والثاني هو تأثير المصطلحات الانكليزية على الاندماج (خمس فقرات). تم جمع البيانات وتحليلها عن طريق خدمات محرك البحث كوكل. اظهرت نتائج البحث ان الطلبة لديهم موقف سلبي تجاه استخدام المصطلحات الانكليزية و يعتبرونها كلغة غير مرحب بها في الصف. فيما يخص الاندماج، كشفت المواقف السلبية للطلبة بان هنالك مشكلة حقيقية في التواصل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استكشاف، الطلبة الذين يدرسون اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية، مصطلحات اللغة الانكليزية.

1. Introduction

One of the seven components of culture is language, which plays a significant role in human life. Language has become one of the essential tools by which people communicate with one another. Human life development usually goes with the development of the language used. The language alters and grows from time to time in order to adjust human life. Since language and society are closely related, the changes are becoming more common. Language and society may have a number of relationships (Ronald, 2006). One is that the language structure and/or behavior may be influenced by or determined by the social structure.

Concisely, words that are used to define the unique terminology of a professional or trade organization are called jargon. Jargon terms have been studied in sociolinguistics research that looks at how people in a particular group use language differently (Fromkin and Rodman, 1979).

According to Thornbury (2006), training and development require not just learning new skills and procedures but also a particular language to communicate and understand what other experts are saying. Murray (1998) adds that learning specialized language helps members of the group communicate with one another, serves as a crucial first step in socialization, and provides linguistic resources for this new identity (Murray, 1998). However, communication can be hampered by ambiguous wording (Hirst, 2003); when learners experience something for the first time, a natural reaction of unfamiliarity comes out (Song and Schwarz, 2009).

According to such views, English jargon is the cornerstone of language that must be overcome by students in order to master a classroom language. With regard to Iraq, English is one of six to nine subjects that are taught at school level. One of the purposes of teaching English at school is to help learners improve their ability to express a feeling, an idea, or a thought. Since English is not regarded as a first language in Iraq, students should make an effort to increase their English vocabulary. The use of indirect methods to learn English jargon is insufficient; students also need a fundamental strategy that enables them develop their English jargon. It goes

without saying that the students' accomplishment of learning jargon depends thoroughly on the teacher's system. As a matter of fact, the teacher's approach and appearance demonstrate a notable commitment to the situation. Unluckily, it has been noticed that there is communication gap between teachers and their students regarding the use of English jargon at classroom. This gap is paved the way for a more detailed exploration of jargon use in ELT classes. Therefore, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. Is the classroom language approachable for students?
2. Does the use of English jargon affect engagement between students and their teacher, and among students?

Aim

This research aims at exploring the students' current use of English jargon in ELT classes.

Value of the Study

1. Explaining the meaning of jargon in clear terms.
2. Enabling students to know the English Jargon used at classroom.
3. Providing some references for other researchers who may tackle relevant study.
4. Improving teacher's knowledge about the use of English Jargon in ELT classes.

2. Literature Review

Jargon: The linguistic term

A Jargon is the writing or speech utilized by group members who share a particular profession, trade, or any group related to the same area of interest. Jargon consists of unique words and idioms that may be unfamiliar to outsiders (Richards and Schmidt, 2010).

Particularly, each branch of knowledge, trade, and profession has specific words called jargon. Terms like phoneme, morpheme, lexicon, phrase structure rule, and others make up linguistic jargon. This specialized language is used to improve communication clarity and to help speakers connect with other people who share their

interests (Fromkin et al., 2011). With regard to lexicon, every jargon has a unique lexicon (AIKhuli, 2006).

In terms of register, jargon represents the fundamental features which tend to link people who consider themselves as insiders and to separate outsiders (Razmjoo, 2004). It also pertains to unique technical terminology connected to a particular activity or subject as a register strand (Yule, 2006). Generally, it is a particular language of an interest or a profession group, and frequently serves to exclude as well as to include (Coleman, 2004).

In sum, Jargon is specialized terms or idioms that are difficult for non-specialists to grasp and are used by a certain profession or set of people (Hornby, 1995).

Presence and Absence of Jargon in ELT Classes

Jargon can seem like a communication barrier to the outsider because it is often rather opaque. However, jargon industry, at its best, offers a standard collection of vocabulary, phrases, and acronyms that make it easier and faster for ELT professionals to interact. This implies that you are free from the necessity of glossing each word or defining your phrases. Every science, according to Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1782) needs a unique language because each has its own concepts. It sounds like one should start by creating this language, but humans usually start by speaking and writing, thus the language has to be created (Condillac, 1782). This claim is supported by Scharrer et al., (2017) when they state that academics can minimize the use of jargon and expand on what is already known in a number of ways (Scharrer et al., 2017). Generally, the maintenance, development, and manipulation of a specialized language should not be considered as insignificant (Robins & Crystal, 2019).

Socially, jargon use can give the profession a societal and novelty value that prioritizes codified over uncoded knowledge (Kerr, 2005), and as noted by Bader (1989), power is demonstrated by getting others to use your terminology (Bader, 1989). Both social and linguistic function diversity contribute to language variation. As a technical or a specialized vocabulary, jargon uses a connection with everyday language that enables it to change new objects (Haag et al., 1997). According to Fromkin (2003), different professional and

social groups use jargon in such a broad and vague way. Specific groups of people utilize jargon, as a distinct lexicon, to improve communication, create a sense of community, and keep outsiders away.

The language of science is yet another way to view jargon in a broader sense. It describes communication meant to transmit technical details on the state of research to highly knowledgeable audiences (Krieger & Gallois, 2017). As observed by Krieger and Gallois (2017), the issue with jargon use is that a specialized terminology will make scientific material less understandable and hamper comprehension for nonexpert audiences. These two defects are serious issues that also harm public opinions of using jargon broadly (Brooks, 2017; Krieger & Gallois, 2017; Rice & Giles, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to have a clearer understanding of the use of ELT jargon in particular and the language of science in general.

Classroom language

It is vital that learners regard the use of English in the classroom as a normal thing from the very beginning. From the first lesson, it should be evident that a foreign language is more than just a subject to be studied; it is also a medium of communication. To do this, it is necessary not to postpone the use of English as a classroom language, and exploit the contextualized situations that arise in the classroom from the first day (Salaberri, 1995).

As a matter of fact, teachers need to speak in English at the start of each English lesson in order to aid learners in learning the language. Teachers also should keep in mind that the more English the learners are exposed to, the more they will learn. It is worth mentioning that students will pick things up gradually: they won't always express themselves clearly at first. Therefore, teachers must support them by providing encouraging feedback (Slattery & Wills, 2001). In addition to talking frequently in English, teachers need to focus on things that students can see. Generally, it is not worrying if a student uses his/her mother tongue at first because teacher can answer or recast a mother tongue question in English (ibid). The above point of views urges the researcher to suggest a simple classroom language to be used by teachers, and to be understood by students. Here are some of them.

Greetings

Greeting is a word or a group of words that someone articulate to greet others. (Hornby, 2007). It refers to a polite and friendly way of saying or doing something towards someone you welcome or meet (Walter, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that there are several ways to address a classroom teacher depending on the learner's country. In some countries, it is normal to address a teacher by name, whereas the word "teacher" is used as a title in others. However, titles like Mr., Mrs. and /Miss can be used in some cases (Slattery & Wills, 2001). Teachers can exchange greetings with their students at the beginning of a lesson.

Examples:

Teacher: Good morning/afternoon

Students: Good morning/afternoon teacher

Teacher: How are you today?

Students: Very well. How are you?

Teacher: Fine thanks (Slattery & Wills, 2001).

Starting point

If this is the first-time meeting between a teacher and his/her students, it will be a good idea to start the lesson by introducing himself/herself to the class, making the setting appear as natural as possible, and utilizing any contextual aid to help them convey the message.

Examples:

My name is and I am your English teacher.

I've got (three/four/five) lessons with you per week (Salaberri, 1995).

Routine question

It is favourable then to aske a routine question which demands short answer, e.g. yes, no, or a word.

Examples:

Teacher: Good morning. Is today Monday?

Teacher: What day is it today?

Students: Thursday/Monday.....

Teacher: great! (Slattery & Wills, 2001).

Checking attendance

It is up to the teacher whether he/she would like to check the roll at the beginning or at the end of a lesson.

Examples:

Teacher: Let's check/call the roll/take the register/check to see who is here.

Teacher: Everybody/everybody except ... (ibid.).

Instruction

There are many expressions that can be used in every part of a lesson: from the beginning to the end.

Examples:

We'll learn how to

Get out your Student's Books / Activity books / Notebooks.

Open your books at page

Turn to page ...

Listen to me.

Repeat after me.

You have (five) minutes to do this (Salaberri, 1995; Puchta & Stranks, 2014).

Finishing the lesson

Similarly, there are many phrases to utilize when bringing the session to an end.

Examples:

It's time to finish.

Pack your (books/notebooks) up.

Don't forget to bring your homework on Monday/Thursday....

OK, that's all for now.

We have to stop now.

It's time to stop / go home / have a break.

That's all for today. You can go now. Put your things away (ibid.).

Additional expressions

It is worth mentioning that there are some expressions which can be as a lesson develops:

Drawing students' attention

If the students have just arrived for class or have been working on something else, it is important to attract their attention.

Examples:

Silence, please

Pay attention, please

Stop talking, please

Settle down, everybody. (ibid.)

Linking adverbs use

It is often needed to offer instructions regarding the stages order of an activity. These instructions call for linking adverbs like:

first,.../then,.../ next,... Finally, (Salaberri, 1995).

Offering and requesting something

Offering or requesting something is very common in a classroom. Teacher might ask the learners for something or the learners might ask one another.

Examples:

Can I help?

Could you share with Please?

Can I have/borrow your please?

Could you come to the front please? (ibid.)

Opportunity of talking English

It's a bright idea to have a chance to ask the learners about what they're interested in.

Examples:

Did you play a football match yesterday?

Did you have a good weekend? (ibid.)

White/black board use

In case of using the board, Teachers can give the following instructions.

Examples:

Who wants to come to the board?

Take a marker/chalk

Write on the board

Clean the board

Rub out/off (ibid.).

Technology use

In terms of technology, there are many expressions of instruction that can be used for technological aids.

Examples:

Can you plug in/unplug the tape/videorecorder?

Can you turn it on/off?

Can you switch it off/on?

Can you turn the volume down/up?

Can you press the stop/pause/paly button please? (Salaberri, 1995)

Use of audio-visual aids

As soon as an activity with an audio-visual aid gets underway, it's necessary to make sure everyone can see and hear properly and to direct their attention to what you will do next.

Examples:

Can you all hear/see?

Wait a minute, I'll turn the volume up.

Point to the

Now listen and repeat (ibid.)

It is also crucial to give learners the language they require in order to find pictures and vocabulary, and to comprehend how to describe the place. The phrases listed below may be helpful.

Examples:

Write on the left/right of

Point to the left-hand side/right-hand side of

Look at the top/bottom of ...

It's in the centre/middle. (ibid.)

Dealing with problems

Teachers can use the following phrases in order to keep the class under control.

Examples:

Stop that/ Stop fidgeting.

Calm down.

Don't disturb the others, please.

Don't cheat/ No copying. (Puchta & Stranks 2014)

Praise giving

It is very important to encourage students when they are doing well or they are trying to do their best at classroom activities.

Examples:

Excellent/Well done.

You're nearly/almost there/ Not exactly.

Try again/ You can do this! Try a bit harder/ I know you can do better.

Have a guess, if you don't know (Puchta & Stranks 2014).

Students' phrases

Apart from the language used by teachers throughout the classroom activities, learners also need to know about how to respond effectively to the teacher's explanations and questions.

Basic phrases

I don't understand/remember/know.

Can you help me, please?

Can you speak slowly, please?

I can't hear the CD/see (ibid.).

Situational phrases

Can I close/open the window?

Can I work with (.....)?

Can we listen again?

Can you check this for me?

Can you write that on the board?

How do you say this word?

What does (.....) mean? (ibid.)

Presentations

In this picture you can see ...

Here/this is a picture/map of ...

Have you got any questions?

Where/What exactly is ...?

Can you tell us more about ...? (Puchta & Stranks 2014)

3. Methodology

Research design

It has been used a descriptive qualitative method as a research design to explore the students' current use of English jargon in ELT classes.

Research Sample

Sixty students were chosen from 2nd grade of Al-Ahrar intermediate school for boys in Najaf, Iraq to represent the study sample.

Data Collection Instrument

A questionnaire has been selected to collect the data of interest. It consists of ten items with five Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The items comprise two topics: first, approachable classroom language (5 items), second, English jargon effect on engagement (5 items). The reason behind putting items in such categories is to address the research questions.

Part I: Approachable classroom language

1. I don't understand some instructions when my teacher uses English language only.
2. I feel I don't have enough vocabulary to use in everyday English lesson.
3. I prefer teachers who use Arabic most of the time in their English lesson.
4. I grasp the main points of a lesson when it is translated into my mother tongue.
5. I don't understand most of the language which teacher uses in class.

Part II: English jargon effect on engagement

6. I feel bored when there is a lack of communication in English between me and my teacher.
7. I face difficulty during a short English dialogue between me and my classmate.
8. I face difficulty of what and how to use a particular word while speaking English with my teacher.
9. I don't understand the meaning of some words/expressions while reading an English passage.
10. A great deal of unfamiliar words come across when I listen to a recorder in English lesson.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Experts in EFL field were consulted over the content validity of the questionnaire to assure its validity. Some items have been changed, added, and removed after consultation. Additionally, some students who participated in a pilot study of the questionnaire said it was clear-cut. Cronbach Alpha coefficient has been used to gauge the reliability of the data obtained. It has been showed a value of 0.801 which is regarded significant according to Richards and Schmidt (2010).

Data Analysis

As a matter of fact, Google Forms provide a vital service to the researchers in general. Therefore, the questionnaire has been written and delivered to the students online, then the data collected, and analyzed via Google Forms. The upcoming section presents and discusses the analysis' findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

The outcomes, which are presented here, are based on the questionnaire. The questionnaire items are of two strands, each consists of five items.

Strand I: Approachable classroom language

It is important to note that this questionnaire strand addresses “approachable classroom language” which is the first research question.

Item 1: I don't understand some instructions when my teacher uses English language only.

Students seems to be cautious in their responses to this item because there are different points of view among them. The percentages are as follows successively 18.2%, 23.6%, 21.8%, 23.6%, and 12.7%.

Item 2: I feel I don't have enough vocabulary to use in everyday English lesson.

Percentages of 23.6% and 30.9% goes to “strongly agree” and “agree” choices. This means that students have a distinct lack of vocabulary which becomes an obstacle to understand classroom language.

Item 3: I prefer teachers who use Arabic most of the time in their English lesson.

Regarding item 3, about 30.9% of students strongly agreed and 29.1% of them agreed. This item clarifies that the current use of English language in class doesn't meet students' needs.

Item 4: I grasp the main points of a lesson when it is translated into my mother tongue.

Item 4 shows that students do better when the lesson translated into their mother tongue: massive percentages of 36.4% students strongly agreed and 47.3% of them agreed.

Item5: I don't understand most of the language which teacher uses in class.

Almost equal percentages are revealed in Item 5, therefore, they don't make a perfect sense.

Strand II: English jargon effect on engagement

This strand addresses "English jargon effect on engagement" which is the second research question.

Item6: I feel bored when there is a lack of communication in English between me and my teacher.

High percentages of students who are strongly agreed plus agreed on item 6, and they are 34% and 32.1% respectively. This indicates that the channel of communication between teacher and students is unproductive.

Item 7: I face difficulty during a short English dialogue between me and my classmate.

More than half of students 14.5% strongly agreed and 40% agreed to item 4. Apparently, students don't have the right number of vocabulary that avail them making up sentences.

Item 8: I face difficulty of what and how to use a particular word while speaking with my teacher in English.

This item is very close to the previous one. Percentages of 16.4% students strongly agreed plus 41.8% agreed on item 8. This denotes that students are unaware of the role that words play in sentences or how to effectively combine words to convey thoughts.

Item 9: I don't understand the meaning of some words and expressions while reading an English passage.

This item illustrates that English words used in class don't live up to students' expectation. High percentages of 36.4% students who are strongly agreed, and 40% of them agreed.

Item 10: A great deal of unfamiliar words come across when I listen to a recorder in English lesson.

Item 10 is in agreement with item 9. It shows that students are not familiar with English words used in listening exercises. Percentages range from 16.4% to students who are strongly agreed and 43.3% to those are agreed.

Concerning strand one of the questionnaire, and based on students' responses that are mentioned and discussed above, it has been noticed that classroom language is unfeasible for most of students. Regarding strand two of the questionnaire, it has been shown that English jargon affects engagement among students/between students and their teacher. There are a number of justifications and reasons behind such responses, some of them are lack of vocabulary, unsatisfactory classroom language, and unproductive channel of communication.

Conclusion:

The study findings reveal some important details related to using jargon in English classes. Firstly, students hold negative attitudes towards using English jargon, and consider it as unwelcome classroom language. According to them, the use of English jargon doesn't fulfill their language needs. As a result, students' progress has been hindered by their lack of English jargon. In terms of difficulty, some teachers use unclear language which is up to their students' level, while others barely use English throughout the class. Therefore, the classroom language needs to be accurate and well balanced, namely teachers should take into consideration individual differences among students. Some teachers relish the idea of keeping a classroom language manual near at hands. In this regard, some information is put forward "in Literature review section" which may be useful for teachers and students.

Secondly, as a matter of fact, teachers, in their daily class routine, use single/ compound words, phrases, and sentences as well. It is very important for students to know these jargons because they are the cornerstone of every English lesson at school level. In order to achieve this, teachers need to provide their students with a list of new words, phrases, and sentences to learn every day.

Thirdly, in respect of engagement, the negative reactions given by the students reveal an actual problem of communication. To overcome this situation, English classes need to be enjoyable and challenging in order to encourage students' interaction, enhance their ability to make and speak full sentences, and develop students' communication skills.

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